

Moral Issues We Face

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Michael Hatcher, Editor

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IS THERE AN ABSOLUTE STANDARD OF MORALITY?

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INTRODUCTION

*M*orality is the character of being in accord with the principles or standards of right conduct. Morals “constitute a standard of conduct and are seen as governing the way humans are to live.” In contrast, *immorality* is a general term describing, “any conduct that transgresses moral prohibitions, conflicts with moral principles or violates proper moral sensitivities.” While morality involves the actual practice of living out one’s beliefs, ethics is the study of why these practices are moral or immoral (Grenz and Smith 35, 59, 77). Geisler and Bocchino state:

The words *ethics* and *morals* are commonly used interchangeably. When we use the term *ethics*, we are referring to a fixed set of (moral) laws by which one can measure human behavior. Defining ethics in this way gives us a basis for making *moral* judgments. Ethics can be thought of as the standards, laws, or prescriptions that individuals are obligated to obey. Said another way, we can understand ethics as a set of standards (what ought to be) by which one *evaluates* human behavior and judges it as morally right or morally wrong. The term *mores* is indicative of the kind of behavior in

which a person engages—either good or bad—yet without moral *laws* (ethics) it makes no sense to speak of moral evaluations (309).

Thus, we learn that *morals* deal with the evaluation of conduct (right or wrong, good or bad) and *ethics* is the set of rules, standards, and/or laws behind *morals* to which one appeals when determining if an action is *moral* or *immoral*. In the remainder of this lesson we will prove that there is a universal moral standard, prove what the standard is, and discuss some practical considerations regarding moral obligation.

PROOF OF A UNIVERSAL STANDARD OF MORALITY

No one can successfully deny the existence of a universal moral standard. Whenever: (1) a victim cries out for justice, (2) a parent sets boundaries for a child, or (3) one person opposes another—a universal standard of morality is implied. The fact that one claims that he is “right” implies a system of morality! In settling any disagreement, there must be a standard beyond the disputants that will determine which, if either, is right.

Morality is universally and uniquely a human trait among the creatures of the earth. A snake does not feel the pangs of guilt when he raids the hen house and devours the chicken’s eggs. Nor does a lion feel remorse for killing and eating a baby gazelle. However, men have a *conscience*. Even infidels will admit to this fact. George Gaylord Simpson stated that “man is the result of a purposeless and materialistic process that did not have him in mind.” However, he admitted:

Good and evil, right and wrong, concepts irrelevant in nature except from the human viewpoint become **real** and **pressing** features of the whole cosmos as viewed morally because morals arise only in man [emphasis added] (Simpson 17).

The existence of and the need for morality are thus apparent. No sane person will argue that absolutely “anything goes.” The expression *ought* and *ought not* are as much a part of the atheist’s vocabulary as anyone else’s (Jackson 3).

The nature of the mind of man proves that there is a universal moral standard. The Bible refers to the mind of man as

heart, which is divided into four parts. The heart/mind consists of the (1) intellect, (2) conscience—Acts 2:37, (3) emotions, and (4) will. With the intellect, man *thinks* (Mat. 9:4), *reasons* (Mark 2:8), *understands* (Mat. 13:15), and *believes* (Rom. 10:9-10). The conscience urges one to do what he believes to be right and discourages the wrong. Thus, it can be *pricked* or *cut* (Acts 2:37; 5:33) and/or it can *condemn* or *commend* (1 John 3:20-21; Rom. 2:15) one's actions. With the emotions man *loves* (Mat. 22:37), *despises* (2 Sam. 6:16), *desires* (Rom. 10:1), and *trusts* (Pro. 3:5). The will gives man determination and so he *intends* (Heb. 4:12), *purposes* (Acts 11:23), and *obeys* (Rom. 6:17-18).

The previous paragraph demonstrates a clear distinction between the four component parts of the mind. The *intellect* gathers information upon which our actions are judged. The *conscience* takes that information, processes it, and determines whether the action is right or wrong. The action is either condemned or commended. Based on this determination, the *conscience* affects the *emotions*—guilt, sorrow, or remorse if one acts in the wrong way or fails to act in the right way—joy, happiness, or satisfaction if one abstains from wrongdoing and engages in that which is right. The *emotions* affect the *will*, which in turn determines our actions.

It must be understood that conscience can only act upon the information that it is given. If the intellect has faulty information, then the conscience can make incorrect judgments and commend wrong actions and condemn right actions. Thus, the conscience alone cannot be a safe guide. That is why we often see criminals who show no remorse for their crime. The apostle Paul stated: “Men *and* brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1). Yet Paul admitted:

I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against *them*. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled *them* to blaspheme; and be-

ing exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted *them* even unto strange cities (26:9-11).

How could Paul claim to have “lived in all good conscience” and yet do such despicable things to the Lord’s church? The simple answer is: he acted on faulty information, which led his conscience to commend wrong behavior. However, when Paul received the correct information, his conscience condemned his past actions and caused him much sorrow and regret (1 Cor. 15:9; Gal. 1:13; 1 Tim. 1:15).

To tie together the idea of moral obligation and the conscience, consider Paul’s statement in Romans 2:14-15:

For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and *their* thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.

From this we learn that although the Gentiles had no revealed, written law like the Jews, they nevertheless had a law—a **moral law** and they felt an obligation to live up to it. Their conscience testified in regard to certain moral obligations in agreement with the law—urging the right and discouraging the wrong. Furthermore, by correct reasoning, they made moral judgments on questions of right and wrong. If they did what was judged to be right (by the urging of conscience), then their thoughts (rational insights) pronounced approval of the action. If on the other hand, they did not do what they thought was right (although the conscience urged them to do it), then the thoughts (rational insight) pronounced condemnation of action (Lipe 43). The conscience is uniquely and universally human. No other living creature possesses a conscience.

At this point, we should consider some possible objections. First, some would attempt to deny a universal moral standard because the moral sanction of a conscience seems to differ radically. Although there may exist differences in moralities, as C. S Lewis points out, the differences have not “amounted to anything like a total difference” (19). They clearly would not “differ radically.” In

fact, there is generally broad agreement that lying, promise breaking, killing, and so on are indeed wrong (Mayberry 113).

Furthermore, even if there are differences, this does not argue against the universal nature of morality. This is true, because we have allowed for the possibility that the intellect can be educated with respect to the content of morality (i.e., Paul). The conscience sanctions moral insight and must operate within the limits of the information it is given (Lipe 44). A. E. Taylor observed:

But it is an undeniable fact that men not only love and procreate, they also hold that there is a difference between right and wrong; there are things which they **ought** to do and other things which they **ought not** to do. Different groups of men, living under different conditions and in different ages, may disagree widely on the question whether a certain thing belongs to the first or the second of these classes. They may draw the line between right and wrong in a different place, but at least they all agree that there is such a line to be drawn [emphasis added] (83).

Although men may disagree on a particular point of morality, they cannot deny the feelings of moral obligation!

Second, some have suggested that the deep-felt sense of moral obligation is nothing more than herd instinct. However, most basic of herd instinct is self-preservation. Yet, when one hears a cry for help, he finds himself faced with two strong desires: (1) a desire to render aid—resulting from the herd instinct, and (2) a desire to keep out of danger—resulting from the self-preservation instinct. Yet, there is another impulse—something with a binding force and overriding character—the feeling that one **ought** to suppress the feeling of self-preservation and follow the desire to render aid. This feeling of **oughtness** judges between the desires of 1 and 2 and urges one action over the other. This sense of **oughtness** must exist separate and above choice 1 and 2 to judge to rightness or wrongness of the action. An onlooker could correctly judge a person to be a **hero** or a **coward** simply based on what that person did or did not do in response to the call for help. The fact that the stronger of the two instincts (self-preservation) may lose out is evidence that moral obligation is not just **herd instinct**. It is usually the case that

when we are the most aware of our moral obligation, the conscience usually chooses the weaker impulse (render aid). Thus, one feels obligated to save a drowning man or rescue of child from a burning building and will usually do so.

Third, some would suggest that the conscience is simply the effect of social conditioning. According to this view, the demands of the conscience are directly related to society. The development of the conscience is a process whereby a child witnesses society's approval/disapproval of a certain action and because of social pressure, gradually (or immediately) begins to accept and express his/her own approval/disapproval for such actions. Since the conscience operates on the information it has, there is an allowance for social conditioning of one's concept of morality. However, as previously discussed, this is the *intellectual* side of a person. But, there is another side, which includes the *conscience*, which cannot be adequately explained by social conditioning.

The first difficulty with this position is called the *is-ought* fallacy. It must be understood that just because someone **is** doing something does not mean one **ought** to do so. In Nazi Germany, it **was** the case that society determined to exterminate millions of Jews. However, this did not prove that it **ought** to be done. It is often the case that one feels a moral obligation to adopt a course of action that is altogether different from society. This decision is made in relation to something altogether different from social conditioning—some law that transcends societal law and obligates everyone.

To summarize this section we note that all men have the experience of moral obligation. This experience is in response to an **ethical** law that obligates all men to act in a certain **moral** way. The conscience is that part of man that supports one's moral perception and imposes certain moral obligations on an individual. Since it is evident that there is a universal moral obligation, it behooves us to ponder its origin.

WHAT IS THE ORIGIN OF MORALITY?

Morality has its origin in one of two sources—God or man. If morality is from God, it is in man due to creation. Otherwise, mo-

rality would have to be by the process of evolution. We begin by stating that it is clear that raw matter is powerless to evolve any sense of moral consciousness. Consider the following inadvertent admission by Simpson:

Discovery that the universe apart from man or before his coming lacks and lacked any purpose or plan has the inevitable corollary that the **working of the universe cannot provide any automatic, universal, eternal, or absolute criteria of right and wrong** [emphasis added] (180).

Thus, atheists contend, as they must, that there is no ultimate, absolute ethical truth. This means that all **morality** is, in fact, **relative**. *Moral Relativity* is the view that when it comes to questions of morality, there are no absolutes and no objective right or wrong; moral rules are merely personal preferences and/or the result of one's cultural, sexual, or ethnic orientation (Beckwith 15). *Moral Relativism* is demonstrated in three similar philosophies—*Existentialism*, *Nihilism*, and *Pragmatism*.

Existentialism gives emphasis to individual existence, freedom, and choice. Although difficult to define, *existentialism* stresses absolute individual existence and, consequently, based on subjectivity, individual freedom and choice. This philosophy rejects absolute objective truth in general and for our purpose, moral truth in particular.

Nihilism, closely associated with *Existentialism*, has its basis in the atheistic notion that since there is no God, there can be no rational justification for ethical norms. It is argued that Nihilism is the condition, which allows that "everything is permitted." Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky, in his work, *The Brothers Karamazov*, has one of his characters imply that if God is dead, everything is allowed! (This philosophy is maintained throughout the book.) Jean Paul Sartre, leading advocate of Existentialism, wrote:

Everything is indeed permitted if God does not exist, and man is in consequence forlorn, for he cannot find anything to depend upon either within or outside himself.... Nor, on the other hand, if God does not exist, are we provided with any values or com-

mands that could legitimize our behavior (*Existentialism and Humanism* 485).

Sartre contended that whatever one chooses to do is right; value is attached to the choice itself so that “we can never choose evil” (*Existentialism, Reprinted* 279).

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 is right; if it does not, it is wrong. The pragmatic approach was also applied in determining what is true and what is not (Brown 8-9).

These philosophies result in **Irrationalism**. Each of these philosophies rejects and repudiates the “Law of Rationality.” The Law of Rationality states: “We ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence” (Ruby 127). They further violate the *Law of Contradiction* which states, “For things: ‘Nothing can be both A and not A.’ For propositions, ‘A proposition, P cannot be both true and false’” (Ruby 255). When the Moral Relativist affirms that an action can be right in one situation and wrong in another, he violates the above laws of correct reasoning.

The late Thomas Warren effectively used this line of reasoning to demonstrate that atheism is false in his debate with Matson. Brother Warren stated that atheism is false because it implies a logical contradiction. He argued:

The atheist holds that: (1) God does not exist, and (2) Value did not exist before the first human beings. **The implication is:** (1) Moral judgment is nothing but a function of a human mind; (2) Moral judgment is subjective; (3) Two people may hold contradictory views as to what is right/wrong, good/evil and both be correct.

Warren continued his argument by stating:

If Atheism is true, then this implies subjectivism (obviously true & atheist admits). **If Subjectivism is true** then this implies that a proposition or action can be true and not true at the same time

(obviously true; implied by atheism). However, this violates the law of contradiction. **The conclusion is: atheism is false** (29).

As previously stated, there are only two sources of morality—God, through creation, or man, through atheistic evolution. Since it has been demonstrated that it is false to claim atheism as the source of morality, then we must conclude that God is the source of morality.

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF MORALITY

It was previously shown that God is the source of morality. This fact has led some to ask, “Are certain actions right or wrong simply because God says they are?” Others have asked, “Does God command certain things because they are already right or wrong?” Saying that God commands certain things because they are already right or wrong implies an authority higher than God. Thus, God Himself would be submitting to some other standard. Yet, this would diminish His attributes, and He would cease to be God. Also, there are problems with saying that an action is right or wrong simply because God said so. This would make moral law arbitrarily based on God’s whim!

Right and wrong are not arbitrary decisions made by God. Neither does God command certain actions because they were already right or wrong. There is a third possibility. Right and wrong are determined by the nature of God. The Scriptures repeatedly state, “Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:16). Holiness is right because God is holy. God did not arbitrarily declare holiness to be right. Neither did He declare it to be right due to some higher standard. Holiness conforms to the nature of God—thus it is right. Since God is eternal, holiness was right even before creation, it is still right today and it will continue to be right throughout eternity!

Since the nature of God is the ultimate source of morality, a code of ethics based upon the nature of God will never grow old or become outdated. Thankfully, God does not change (Mal. 3:6). “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh

down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17).

MAN WAS CREATED IN GOD’S IMAGE

Man was made “in the image of God” (Gen. 1:26-27). Thus, in certain crucial ways man is like God and shares certain aspects of His nature. Because of these qualities, man has dominion over the beast of the field (1:28). Man is a dual being. He is both mortal and immortal. Thus, he has a physical and spiritual nature. Like all living creatures, man’s physical body is mortal and subject to decay and death. However, unlike other living creatures, man has an immortal soul that continues its existence after the body dies (2 Cor. 5:1). The soul gives man true kinship with God.

Man must recognize and respect this God-given nature. Though the Scriptures plainly state this fact, many have rejected it. Man has real intrinsic moral value. When Rover gets run over—he is “dead all over,” but the death of a man is different. Solomon understood this point and stated, “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Why is there a moral difference when a puppy is hit by car and when the same happens to an infant? The answer is, an infant is made in God’s image, but the puppy is not!

Being made in the image of God, man has a conscience. As previously demonstrated, the conscience is man’s moral compass. With the correct information, the conscience will either condemn or commend one’s actions. Unlike animals, man is not an unthinking being, solely guided by instinct or passion. Nor is man a robot, devoid of free will. God gave man a rational thinking mind and expects him to use it. Man has been given the right and ability to choose his own moral direction in life. Unfortunately, this gives man the freedom to soar to the greatest heights of righteousness or sink to the lowest depths of depravity.

Man can choose to reject God in his knowledge! 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 *barnyard ethics*. Since God restrains wrong behavior through His Word (119:11), there is no end to the moral decline of the man who refuses God. God is the only 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:

1. Evidence for the existence of God (the reference point of morality) is supplied abundantly in the created universe (1:19-20)

2. Every rational being is therefore amenable to that knowledge (1:20)

3. 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 (1:21)

4. By rejecting God, these men were turned from a life with pure goals and purpose to a life of darkness and despair (1:22)

5. To placate their own conscience, they rationalized their new way of life by pseudo-wisdom (1:22)

6. In essence, they defiled the creation (1:23)

7. 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 (1:24)

8. The result for these men was a life of complete debauchery. Their path is hedonistic (1:25-32).

When man stays focused on God, he has a reference point for morality. He can discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:13-14). When man rejects God and/or 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) (Smith 545-46).

CONCLUSION

For any government, religion, or even family to exist in harmony, there must be an established authority or code of law. There must be a rule to which men can appeal to solve and answer any disputes. This is recognized in all organizations, whether religious or secular. Yet, look at the confusion and division that exists among men today. Such confusion is the result of **Moral Relativism**, which we have proven to be **irrational!** God has not left man without a law to govern his life and worship and He is not pleased with the confusion that exists in the world today.

Man certainly has a code of ethics given to him by God. This code is contained in the Bible. It is the absolute standard to which men **must** appeal to find answers to all of the questions and problems of life. To this pattern men must conform if they would be acceptable to God. The Bible is not subject to alteration in any fashion. God imposes strict penalties to those who would pervert or change His Word (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). God's Word remains forever settled in heaven (Psa. 119:89). Jesus said, "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). We further read that the Bible is able to guide us in all things that pertain to life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). This includes instructions relating not only to this life but also the life to come.

We have endeavored to demonstrate that there is a universal moral standard. The conscience of man implies that such is the case. We have further demonstrated that the only source of an acceptable moral standard is God. This is true because atheism (the only other possible source of morality) is false because it implies a logical contradiction. Finally, we have demonstrated that good/bad and right/wrong are determined by what is in harmony with God's nature.

It is this writer's heart's desire and prayer that all who read this will accept God's standard of authority and submit to it. It must be remembered that one day we will all stand before God and give an account of ourselves before Him (2 Cor. 5:10). We are given this

life and the Scripture by which we will be judged (John 12:48) to prepare for that day.

To Timothy, Paul wrote, “All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We have the completed revelation of God contained in the Bible (Jude 3). Thus, the Bible is our only guide to heaven.

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PRINCIPLES OF MORAL DECISION-MAKING

Dub McClish

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He has done local work in Idaho, Texas, Alabama, Kentucky, and New Mexico. Dub is a well-known author, editor, debater, publisher, and speaker who has preached the Gospel in several states and foreign countries. He has delivered special lectures at various schools of preaching. He has contributed numerous articles to various brotherhood publications as well as hundreds of bulletin articles and chapters in almost 200 books. He has extensive radio preaching experience.

Dub was the director of the Annual Denton Lectures (1982-2002) and edited all 21 Annual Denton Lectureship books, along with editing the Annual Schertz Lectures (2003-2004). He is the Founding Editor of *The Gospel Journal* (2000-2005).

After 35 years of work as a local preacher in five states (the last 12 years of which were with the Pearl Street Congregation in Denton, Texas), Dub began devoting time to combined works of Gospel meetings, mission trips, lectureships, and to writing and editing sound biblical materials. He began helping with the establishment of North-point Church of Christ, Denton, Texas, in September 2005, for which he preaches (*gratis*) when he is not traveling.

Dub is married to Lavonne (James) and they have three children (Bronwen, Hal, and Andy), seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

When we speak of “morals,” “morality,” and that which is “moral,” what do we mean? This family of English words is the transliteration of a Latin term, *moralis*, meaning “custom.” In modern usage, the adjective, *moral* (e.g., *moral behavior*, *moral values*, *moral issues*, *moral decision-making*), refers to right or wrong, good or evil character and behavior.

The title above implies the existence of at least the following:

1. “Moral” behavior (i.e., morality)
2. “Immoral” behavior (i.e., immorality)
3. A standard for discerning “moral” from “immoral” behavior
4. One’s freedom to choose to abide by a standard of “morals”
5. Principles by which one can make “moral” decisions

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Once one has resolved that he will live by certain standards (i.e., his “moral standards”), one must then choose the standard he will follow. This choice is the crucial one in determining one’s behavior—one’s “morality.”

Another chapter in this book confidently asserts the existence of an absolute moral standard and that the Bible is that standard, to which I fully subscribe. The material in this chapter acknowledges that proffered standard, the Bible, as the infallible and absolute standard of right and wrong, and the **only** inerrant and objective standard. Its impeccability lies in the fact that it is from God rather than from a mere man or men. It is God’s revelation of His will to mankind (1 Cor. 2:6-13). More particularly for those who have lived since the cross, the New Testament of Jesus Christ, God’s only begotten Son, is that standard of conduct in both morals and religion (Col. 2:14; 3:17; Heb. 1:1-2; 9:16-17). Only in a standard that did not and does not originate with men (i.e., it is from God) can (and does) an objective standard exist. All others reflect human bias, opinion, desire, emotion, and/or the injustices common to respect of persons. All of the *standards* men have advanced are, by contrast with God’s objective standard, subjective, affected by such imperfections and fallibilities.

Once one has chosen the New Testament as his moral compass, Scriptural principles exist (some stated explicitly, others implied) that will enable one to implement this decision on the practical and specific level. A discussion of these principles is the burden of this chapter.

THE TEMPTATION FACTOR

The aim of our arch-Adversary from the beginning has been to persuade us to abandon God’s perfect standard of behavior to walk in his unprincipled paths. *Temptation* describes the tool by which Satan encourages our involvement in forbidden, albeit pleasurable fulfillments of fleshly desires. Thus James wrote: “but each man is tempted, when he is drawn away by his own lust, and enticed” (Jam. 1:14). *Temptation* is inconceivable in the absence of pleasure and/

or advantage of some sort. Where these elements (or expectation of them) are absent, temptation is nonexistent. When one yields to temptation, he makes a *moral* decision, albeit a harmful and sinful one.

The impulses with which God has equipped mankind (e.g., necessities of life, self-preservation, sexual fulfillment, “natural affection”) are innately innocent, yea good and even necessary (God gives only good gifts—1:16-17). The fulfillment of these desires outside of God’s limits for them is the means through which Satan tempts men. I will illustrate: God limits sexual fulfillment to marriage (as He defines it), identifying this fulfillment outside of marriage as “fornication” or “adultery” (Mat. 19:9; 1 Cor. 7:2; Heb. 13:4; et al.) that, if not repented of, will keep one out of Heaven (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21; et al.). Contrariwise, Satan tells us we are free to seek sexual fulfillment with any consenting person, including with those to whom one is not married, and that doing so is as acceptable as it is within marriage. Paul recognized this dangerous allurements of the devil when he wrote that each man should have his own wife and each wife her own husband to avoid fornication (1 Cor. 7:1-2). He labeled the doctrine of “forbidding to marry” as a “doctrine of demons” (1 Tim. 4:1, 3).

A study of the principles for making moral decisions is therefore a study of the way to confront and conquer our day-by-day temptations to violate God’s code of moral conduct.

EXPLORING SOME FLAWED PRINCIPLES

Worldlings who choose the wrong standard by which to gauge their behavior generally do so because they choose the wrong principles upon which to decide the way they will behave. We will do well to consider some of these defective and destructive rules.

1. “Is it fun?” or “Will it give me pleasure?” is all that matters, to the vast majority of the human race when decision-time comes concerning moral behavior. While this basis of behavior has been universally popular from the beginning (Eve believed the forbidden fruit would bring her great pleasure—Gen. 3:6). Epicurus, a fourth-century B.C. Greek philosopher, codified it and gave a name:

Epicureanism. This philosophy is utterly materialistic (denies God and afterlife) and holds that ultimate good rests in seeking pleasure and avoiding pain in the present. This approach to morals and life in general was apparently commonplace in first-century Corinth. Thus Paul argues that, if there is no resurrection of the dead (as some in Corinth were asserting), then “let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die” (1 Cor. 15:12, 32) (in other words, Epicurus got it right). This conduct code logically holds that nothing is “off-limits” as long as it will result in pleasure or avoidance of pain. One can readily see that it is at least a first cousin to Hedonism.

Perhaps the nearest thing to a modern incarnation of Epicureanism is Secular Humanism. Paul Kurtz, one of its principal leaders and advocates over the past few decades, wrote the following in 1980:

As secular humanists we believe in the central importance of the **value of human happiness here and now**. We are opposed to absolutist morality, yet we maintain that objective standards emerge, and ethical values and principles may be discovered, in the course of ethical deliberation (Kurtz—emphasis added).

For the first 175 years of its existence, our nation, perhaps more than any other (at least in modern times), resisted Epicureanism, due mainly to the general belief in God and the knowledge of and reverence for the Bible among its citizens. However, all of that began to change rapidly in the 1960s, symbolized by the anti-establishment and radical mop-headed hippies’ credo: *If it feels good, do it!* This malevolent movement did not just suddenly spring forth, however. Humanists in high places had been sowing the seeds of this poisonous cultural shift for decades. Humanist moguls in public education enacted policies and curricula that resulted in removal of Biblical influence from public schools, and Humanist theologians produced pulpiteers by the thousands who convinced their congregations that the faith of their fathers in the Bible was ill founded. Biblical morals had for generations held back the flood of indecency and immorality. With the breaking of that dam, we have been all but drowned in the flood of moral abandonment. Paul well described this dissolute

basis of behavior: “whose end is perdition, whose god is the belly, and *whose* glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Phi. 3:19). *Perdition* does not signal a pleasant end to such a life. The *is it fun?* principle, will eventuate in a destiny that will be anything but “fun.”

2. “Is it profitable?” or “What’s in it for me?” is the guiding principle of behavior for many. Like Scrooge McDuck of cartoon fame, these folk have \$ signs for eyeballs. Honesty and integrity are foreign concepts to them. This dictum embraces more than mere money, however. Pride, prestige, popularity, and power are the frequent fellow travelers with unmitigated covetousness. Our continued existence as a nation of free people in a constitutional republic is seriously threatened by many forces, among them a host of elected officials and/or their political appointees who live by this rule. Many are willing to engage in almost any sort of malignant behavior without a second thought if they see a selfish advantage. Among these are the liquor merchants and the drug dealers who care not that their actions destroy the lives of multitudes. The pimp who rules his prostitutes and the high dollar “call girls” who sell their bodies to the rich and famous are interested only in the income. In this class are the shyster televangelists who deceive the gullible masses with their fake *healings* and phony *tongues speaking* so they can live the lifestyle of kings. Paul well described all who live with wealth as their motive:

But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:9-10a).

Again, *perdition* is the Holy Spirit’s description of the unhappy future of those who serve mammon rather than God.

3. “Is it lawful?” is a more honorable basis for making moral decisions than the foregoing ones (pleasure and money-lovers are seldom restrained by pondering the legality of their conduct). As long as human laws do not contradict Divine law (Acts 5:29), we must obey human laws (Rom. 13:1-7). Our world would be a far

better place if all men were law-abiding citizens. However, merely using human laws as our basis of moral decisions is seriously flawed because living within the law does not equal moral uprightness. It is almost universally legal to sell and consume alcoholic beverages. Prostitution is legal in many areas of the world and in a few places in our nation. Various forms of gambling are not only legal, but are vigorously encouraged by state officials. Sodomy, once almost universally illegal in our nation, is now universally legal. “No-fault” divorce laws allow that which the Lord prohibits, except for fornication (Mat. 19:9). It is apparent from these few illustrations that this test has major defects. These defects all arise from one root: All human law systems are subjective, temporary, and mutable. They are subject to such things as changes in legislators, cultural influences, and public pressures.

EXPLORING SOME RELIABLE PRINCIPLES

Explicit Statements of Scripture

When the Bible student begins considering principles to help him make moral decisions, several passages come to mind. Some of these passages are preventive in nature, which, if followed, will help us avoid many temptations (every temptation we can avoid means a moral decision we do not have to make). Others of these Biblical statements have to do with making a decision at the time of confrontation with temptation. Consider the following:

1. “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Mat. 26:41). Jesus spoke these words in Gethsemane to the trio of sleepy apostles. While no one will ever be in that set of circumstances again, we may nevertheless extract the principle that, by joining awareness of Satan’s wiles with our earnest prayers, we may avoid at least some temptations. The model prayer of Jesus contains the analogous phrase, “And bring us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil *one*” (6:13).

2. “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33). One cannot reasonably excuse himself from succumbing to the temptation to drink liquor and engage in immorality if he runs with those who frequent bars and “gentlemen’s clubs.”

One is a fool who seeks, instead of avoiding, settings in which he knows temptation abounds. Concerning lewd women, Solomon advised his son: “Remove thy way far from her, And come not nigh the door of her house” lest he should go “after her straightway, As an ox goeth to the slaughter, Or as *one in* fetters to the correction of the fool” (Pro. 5:8; 7:22). Since avoiding such places and people will spare one many temptations, it follows that choosing for one’s closest companions and confidants those who are striving to serve the Lord faithfully will have the same result: “Righteous companions enhance good morals.”

3. “Be sober, be watchful: your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). A sober approach to life (life **is** more than a *party*, after all), coupled with vigilance of the prevalence of Satan’s determination to destroy us, will spare us many temptations.

4. Concerning the devil, Peter went on to say, “whom withstand stedfast in your faith” (5:9). Even when one takes every precaution, Satan will find ways to attack and assail us with his “fiery darts” (Eph. 6:16). When thus confronted, the general rule is to stand and fight. The classic passage on taking a bold stand is Paul’s “Christian soldier” analogy in Ephesians 6:10-17. Only when we put on (notice, please, the Holy Spirit does not put any part of it on for us) the “whole armor of God” may we be able to “stand against the wiles of the devil” and deflect his “fiery darts”) (6:10-13, 16). We should not wonder that so many saints fall when Satan makes his pitch. They stand naked of the protective armor the Holy Spirit supplies through His Word, and their carelessness leaves them with little more than a butter knife for a weapon, rather than the sharp, two-edged “sword of the Spirit” (6:17; Heb. 4:12). James counsels: “resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (Jam. 4:7).

5. Although the general rule is to stand and fight when Satan tempts us, in some circumstances, heavenly wisdom dictates flight rather than fight. Several passages so command. The Gentile saints in Corinth came from a background of (and still lived in) an atmosphere in which fornication and idolatry were practically the norm

(1 Cor. 6:9-11). They were not to *hang around* even to fight when Satan tempted them to resume those wanton and forbidden behaviors. Paul therefore ordered: “Flee fornication” (6:18), and “flee from idolatry” (10:14). Joseph wisely did not dawdle and attempt to reason with Potiphar’s wife when she tried to force him to her bed of iniquity, but “he left his garment in her hand, and fled, and got him out” (Gen. 39:12). Failure to run from such temptations at the moment of their appearance might well be disastrous.

After discussing the destructiveness of the love of money, Paul urged Timothy, “But thou, O man of God, flee these things” (1 Tim. 6:11a). Later he warned the young preacher to “flee youthful lusts” (2 Tim. 2:22a). Again, in some circumstances and temptations, the correct (and safe) moral decision is to run for one’s life.

6. Among the most effective preventive measures regarding temptation and moral decisions is engagement in righteous and wholesome activity. While Holy Writ does not contain the exact phrase, *An idle mind is the devil’s workshop*, it is there in principle. In both of the passages above in which Paul exhorted Timothy to flee, he immediately urged him to “follow after” such things as righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness, and peace (1 Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 2:22). Bible expositors have long observed that “at the time when kings go out *to battle*,...David tarried at Jerusalem” (2 Sam. 11:1). Had he been where duty called (in the field with his troops), he would never have seen and sent for Bath-sheba, leading him to compound his sin by murdering Uriah. His idleness brought shame upon himself, his nation, and God.

In a brief parable, Jesus told of an unclean spirit that departed his host, but later returned to find his former place “empty, swept, and garnished.” This evil spirit then found seven spirits more evil than himself, and they all moved in, making the man’s state far worse than before (Mat. 12:43-45). Nature despises a vacuum and ever seeks to fill that which is empty. It is thus in the spiritual realm, as well. No life will be devoid of both good and evil, but will be filled by one or the other. To be “always abounding in the work of the

Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58) is a powerful preventive measure regarding temptation and the inevitable moral decisions we must make.

7. The psalmist knew something about the role of prevention in making moral decisions when he wrote, “Thy word have I laid up in my heart, That I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). We understand the basis of the foregoing preventive measure from Paul’s familiar and sweeping description of God’s Word:

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

The Christian who spasmodically attends his Bible class and the worship assemblies, seldom (if ever) reads his Bible at home, and never thinks of buying or reading any supplemental books or periodicals to help him increase his Scriptural understanding; he has no excuse whatsoever for falling quickly “when Satan tempts him sore.” In fact, his very negligence of these fundamental sin-deterrents demonstrates that he has already succumbed to the sins of laziness and neglect, if nothing more. Even those who constantly add to their store of Bible knowledge are at times hard put to withstand the arch-enemy. Bible ignoramuses do not stand a chance.

“Common Sense” Principles Implied By Scripture

God’s Word implies some principles that are helpful in arriving at correct decisions regarding the rightness or wrongness of a given behavior. We now turn to these, which will be framed in the form of questions by which one may gauge his actions.

1. “How will this affect me?” Paul’s exhortations to the Ephesian elders (“Take heed unto yourselves”; Acts 20:28) and to Timothy (“Take heed to thyself”; 1 Tim. 4:16) imply the appropriateness of this question. Our bodies constitute “a temple of the Holy Spirit,” and we are to use them to glorify God (1 Cor. 6:19-20). We are to offer to God our bodies as “a living sacrifice” that is holy and acceptable (Rom. 12:1). The two *take heed* passages mentioned above relate especially to self-examination and self-care regarding

our spiritual health. Jesus identified the commandment that is “first of all”:

Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God, the Lord is one: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength (Mark 12:29-30).

In this statement he indicated that the entire being of each one of us must be involved in expressing our love for and devotion to God.

It is therefore necessary for us to ask ourselves about any practice in doubt, “How will this affect me?” Will drinking alcohol or using tobacco strengthen my body to greater service? Will this or that practice weaken me spiritually? Will what I am about to do corrupt my mind? If I must answer concerning the practice under consideration that it will harm me, weaken me, tempt me, or render me an unfaithful servant of Jesus, then I dare not do it.

2. “How will this affect others?” I must not only consider the effect a given act will have upon me, but the way it may influence others. While not all people have the same amount of influence (i.e., leadership roles amplify it), even those least known cannot escape their impact on others. Paul wanted Timothy to be aware that others would follow the pattern of life they saw in him. He therefore charged the young evangelist: “be thou an ensample to them that believe, in word, in manner of life, in love, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12). Influence can be both strong and long. Abel offered his authorized sacrifice at least 4,000 years before the Hebrews epistle was written, yet its inspired writer stated that by his offering Abel “yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4). Jesus taught that harmful influence is fraught with awful consequences:

But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and *that* he should be sunk in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh! (Mat. 18:6-7).

Paul emphasized this same truth even about a behavior that is innocent in itself, but the practice of which would lead a weak brother to sin by engaging in it and violating his conscience. He warned

therefore “that no man put a stumblingblock in his brother’s way, or an occasion of falling” by so behaving (Rom. 14:13). Let us not mistake the meaning of Jesus and Paul in these passages. The one who is led to *stumble* in this passage is not merely one who does not like, complains about, criticizes, or grumbles at my behavior, but one who sins because of my actions. Even if one should be so hardened as not to care if imbibing liquor, frequenting bars, engaging in fornication, or forsaking the assemblies of the church brings God’s wrath upon himself, he is unfeeling beyond belief if he cares not about the destructive influence he has on his own children, closest friends, or others near and dear to him. Christians (particularly females) who excuse their practice of parading in attire that covers little more than brief underwear sometimes excuse their doing so by saying, “It doesn’t bother me or violate my conscience.” They thereby ignore the harmful effect it may have upon others (particularly males).

Paul concluded: “Wherefore, if meat causeth my brother to stumble, I will eat no flesh for evermore, that I cause not my brother to stumble” (1 Cor. 8:13). If this is the worthy and safe test regarding an optional practice (i.e., eating flesh), how much more worthy it is in reference to harmful or even questionable matters.

3. “Will it pass the publicity test?” Would I want to hide these words or this act from public view? Why do most of the drinking, immorality, crime, and other such ungodly activities take place during hours of darkness and in places that are not well lit? Jesus answered this question by saying that “men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, lest his works should be reproved” (John 3:19-20).

Those who have nothing to hide and who are not ashamed of their behavior do not sneak around or seek the cover of darkness for their deeds. Jesus also made this point: “But he that doeth the truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, that they have been wrought in God” (3:21). The Lord’s faithful people are to

live so they are the “light of the world” that others see, and because of which they glorify God (Mat. 5:14-15).

That a young person would not want his parents to learn what he has done, or is doing, is a danger signal. If one would feel compelled to lie about his behavior, he should not engage in it. Would you be embarrassed and ashamed if your elders or your preacher learned what you are doing or thinking of doing? Would you have to keep this behavior a secret from your husband, your wife, or your children? Even if one were able to keep his behavior a deep, dark secret from every other human being, God still sees and knows: “And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do” (Heb. 4:13). If what I am planning to do will not pass the “publicity test,” I dare not do it.

4. “Will it pass the universal test?” There are numerous things men can do that are universally commendable, wholesome, and beneficial. God desires that **all** men not only hear the Gospel, but also believe it and submit to baptism to be saved (Mark. 16:15-16). He would have **all** men to know the Truth and be saved (1 Tim. 2:4) and to “come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). The worldwide practice of religion that is “pure and undefiled” (Jam. 1:27) would greatly bless our planet. Paul lauded the universal benefits of the nine-fold fruit of the Spirit by saying, “against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). All of the foregoing would bless our sin-laden world immeasurably, as would so many other general practices.

However, if one is doing or contemplating doing something about which he entertains the slightest doubt, the “universal test” will help him decide, if he is honest. What if every person on earth did what I am thinking of doing? Would it make the world better or worse, more righteous or more ungodly? Would I want my parents or my children to do this? What would I think of my elders if they did this? Would I still respect my preacher if he did this? Would I still respect the wives of my elders and preacher if they wore this? Would it increase or decrease respect for the congregation in the community if every member did this? Run down the list of

drinking, smoking, dancing, fornication, foul speech, lying, viewing pornography, road rage, forsaking the assembly, and many other things. Then ask if the world would be a better place if everyone thus behaved. If it is not good for my parents or children, my elders, my preacher, the whole church, the whole city, state, nation, or the world, it is not good for any of the Lord's people.

5. "Will it pass the prayer test?" Can you ask God's blessing on what you are thinking of doing? Can you ask Him to be with you in the place you are thinking about going? If you do what you are thinking of doing, can you follow Paul's directive concerning prayer: "in **everything** by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Phi. 4:6)? To deliberately engage in an activity, knowing that you cannot beseech God to bless you in doing so is an intentional affront to Him. Such behavior amounts to rebellion and does despite to the Creator. It represents the exaltation of one's own will above God's will, thus being a form of "will worship" (Col. 2:23) and causing one to "sin willfully" (Heb. 10:26). If one's present or contemplated practice will not pass the "prayer test," he will cease all interest in it immediately if he is sincere about being in Heaven at last.

CONCLUSION

Temptation is a reality for each one of us as long as we are in the earthly state of our lives. It will not end for all men until "the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan" is at last cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, and we are secured within the jasper walls of the golden city (Rev. 20:2, 10; 21:18). While temptation is unavoidable, yielding to it is not. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians in this regard must have encouraged them, as it should us:

There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it (1 Cor. 10:13).

The principles, tests, and questions discussed above will enable us to find that providential "way of escape" and make the right decisions regarding our behavior if we will apply them.

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All Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version unless otherwise indicated.

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HOMOSEXUALITY

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INTRODUCTION

For many years government, public education (some private), entertainment, news media, and some religions have promoted homosexual conduct as only an innocent alternative life style. They feverishly campaign for it under the banner of “gay rights”—their *right* to engage in homosexual relations and so-called homosexual marriages without anyone anywhere opposing them in any way at all. They say their efforts to obtain their “gay rights” are no different from slaves, women, and minorities who seek to gain their rights.

For the most part the previously-cited institutions advocate and champion the homosexual cause on the same basis as stated in the previous paragraph. Also, these institutions fully intend to mark any critics of homosexuality as ignorant, backward, biased, prejudiced, bigoted, intolerant, hateful, hypocritical, and opposed to the rights of others. Thus, many of them seek to create fear in all those who oppose the homosexual agenda. Through intimidation they intend to stop the mouths of their critics and at the same time sell homosexuality as morally upright and wholesome. Sadly, much of the western world has bought into the homosexual agenda as well as

their approach to the advocacy of their perverted cause and their opposition to their critics.

What this treatise is intended to do is prove that homosexuality is immoral and, thus, sinful—contrary to the Bible’s teaching. It will also show that all of those who engage in and defend homosexual conduct and die guilty of the same will be lost in hell’s eternal fires (Mat. 25:41, 46; Gal. 5:15-21; Rev. 21:8). Since God does not desire for any person to be lost eternally in such a terrible place of punishment, Christians also do not desire for anyone be lost therein (John 3:16; 2 Pet. 3:8-9). That being the case, God’s Word is appealed to with all boldness and without apology or shame to clearly establish the sinfulness of homosexuality, as well as beg homosexuals, along with all other sinners, by the mercies of Jesus Christ, to cease their sinful conduct, faithfully obey the Gospel of Christ, and serve the King of kings and Lord of lords faithfully in His church—the kingdom of Christ—until they die.

This study, therefore, is built upon the truth of the existence of God, the Deity of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, the infallibility and finality of the Bible—the complete, verbal, plenary, Holy Spirit inspired Word of God, the Gospel of Jesus Christ as God’s only power to save anyone from sin and keep one faithful to God so Heaven will be one’s eternal home (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1-2, 14; Eph. 4:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; Luke 8:11; John 8:31-32; 17:17; Jam. 1:18, 21, 25; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Jude 3; John 12:48; Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 2 The. 1:8; Mat. 25:23).

One not only can but must love the person in error. Being saved from sin, the Christian desires to be a part of saving others from the same. This is the fundamental reason the true Christian attacks, exposes, and refutes all error (sin). Moreover, in view of the strong attacks and criticisms launched by homosexuals against those who oppose their beliefs and practices, they above all people should acknowledge the rights of their critics to challenge and oppose their beliefs and practices.

Let it be clearly understood that this work does not advocate or condone any kind of misrepresentation of homosexual beliefs.

Moreover, it is not for the purpose of causing any kind of physical abuse or ill treatment of homosexuals. Such abuse is foreign to New Testament teaching and, thus, Christian conduct. Therefore, it is sin to advocate, encourage, or participate to any degree in the abuse of homosexuals or anyone else in the process of exposing and refuting their errors.

SOME FUNDAMENTAL HOMOSEXUAL PREMISES

The basic premises on which some homosexuals seek to argue their case and sell their agenda to the public are: (1) they were born homosexuals, or God made them homosexuals, (2) in practicing homosexuality they do not harm themselves or others, (3) no one forced them against their wills to be homosexuals—thus, their homosexual conduct is their own business, (4) there is no difference between heterosexual relationships and homosexual ones, and (5) the Bible does not condemn homosexual conduct. This work will examine these enumerated foundational premises on which homosexuals attempt to promote and defend their beliefs and conduct.

FUNDAMENTAL BIBLE TEACHING ON MARRIAGE AND SEX

In Genesis 1 and 2 the inspired Moses gave mankind the basic teaching on sex and marriage. When Jesus was questioned about marriage, divorce, and remarriage, He went back before the Law of Moses and restored the fundamental teaching on sex and marriage as Moses recorded it in the first two chapters of Genesis (Mat. 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12). Those Scriptures state that God created mankind “male and female” (Gen. 1:27). Thus, humans are created according to God’s plan, the pattern that is seen in the male (Adam) and female (Eve). In every way they harmonize and are thus suitable for and to each other.

Moses also teaches that God instituted and designed marriage for one man and one woman until they are parted by death (2:18-25). In the examples to follow it should be noted that a man and a woman are created to complement each other. (1) The male and female anatomy evidences that men and women are designed for or-

dinary husband-wife relationships—physically and psychologically. Therefore, the anatomical design of the human male and female bodies support heterosexual sexual relations between the male and female, but it stands in opposition to homosexual sexual relations. (2) Without males and females God’s commands to Adam and Eve and later to Noah to be fruitful and multiply would be impossible to obey (see 1:28; 8:15-17). (3) Furthermore, human sexuality is meant for more than producing offspring. The Bible makes it clear that sexual relations between husband and wife are good, intended for their pleasure, and to cement their relationship. (4) The husband and wife Biblical assignments fit each other in the family unit as a well-fitted glove does the hand it was designed to fit. God made woman, not inferior to man, but a suitable help for him (2:18), and there is certainly nothing inferior about the worthy woman’s role as discussed in Proverbs 31:10-31.

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

With the foregoing introduction completed we are now ready to study the Bible to learn what it teaches about homosexuality. We begin this study with an investigation of the pertinent Old Testament passages. Then we will investigate the New Testament Scriptures bearing on this topic.

The Old Testament

Genesis 19:4-11

But before they lay down, the men of the city, *even* the men of Sodom, compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter: And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, Where *are* the men which came in to thee this night? bring them out unto us, that we may know them. And Lot went out at the door unto them, and shut the door after him, And said, I pray you, brethren, do not so wickedly. Behold now, I have two daughters which have not known man; let me, I pray you, bring them out unto you, and do ye to them as *is* good in your eyes: only unto these men do nothing; for therefore came they under the shadow of my roof. And they said, Stand back. And they said *again*, This one *fellow* came in to sojourn, and he will needs be a judge: now will we deal worse with thee, than with them. And they pressed sore upon the man, *even* Lot, and came near to break

the door. But the men put forth their hand, and pulled Lot into the house to them, and shut to the door. And they smote the men that *were* at the door of the house with blindness, both small and great: so that they wearied themselves to find the door.

It must be understood that some time before the events recorded in the previous passage God had not only determined to destroy Sodom, but also the city of Gomorrah and the plain in which the two cities were located (19:18-33). Why is this fact important? Some who advocate homosexual conduct argue that God decided to destroy Sodom because of its citizens' *inhospitality* toward, and their desire to rape, Lot's visitors. But if that is the case, why did God destroy the city of Gomorrah and those persons in the plain? Were they guilty of being inhospitable to Lot's visitors too? Did they also desire to sexually abuse those same visitors? Although hospitality was very important in the culture of that time, there is nothing in the passage that indicates that it or the Sodomite's desire to rape Lot's visitors, constituted **the reason** God destroyed those cities. If anything, the Sodomites' inhospitality (as important as it was to that culture) was eclipsed by their strong desire to have sexual relations with Lot's visitors, even if it meant raping them.

Moreover, the Sodomites cared nothing for heterosexual relations with Lot's virgin daughters. To gratify their perverted sexual lusts they readily confessed their desire to sexually abuse Lot's visitors. The explicitly stated sin of the Sodomites recorded in the divine record—homosexuality—is **the reason** for Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction.

Some attempt to define the Sodomites' desire to *know* Lot's heaven-sent visitors as simply a desire to question them and/or get better acquainted with them. It is true that the Hebrew word *yada* is usually translated *to know* something through one's senses. However, in the following passages it means sexual relations: Genesis 4:1, Numbers 31:17, 35, Judges 11:39, 19:22, 21:11, 1 Samuel 1:19, and 1 Kings 1:4. We also notice that Lot said his daughters, whom he offered to the Sodomites in the place of his visitors, "have not known man." If we take the definition some homosexuals assign to

“knowing man,” then apply it to Lot’s virgin daughters who had “not known man,” then all Lot was telling the Sodomites was that his two daughters had never been interviewed by any man. Thus, they could take his virgin daughters and question them until their heart was content. Furthermore, if it is the case that *to know* one only means to get acquainted with a person, why would Lot plead with the Sodomites not to engage in their planned wicked actions toward his visitors? Why were they about to crash through Lot’s door simply to interview Lot’s visitors? To ask the preceding questions is to answer them. Is it not amazing to what ends some will go in attempting to defend the indefensible? In this case their effort is about as absurd as it gets.

It is no wonder that the name of the city of Sodom is employed by inspiration no less than 27 times in the Bible to represent crass immorality. Only one destructive event is greater than God’s complete and total destruction of the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah—the world-wide deluge that destroyed the wicked world of Noah’s day (Gen. 6).

Leviticus 18:22-23; 20:13

Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind: it *is* abomination. Neither shalt thou lie with any beast to defile thyself therewith: neither shall any woman stand before a beast to lie down thereto: it *is* confusion.... If a man also lie with mankind, as he lieth with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood *shall be* upon them.

Every Israelite was amenable to the whole Law of Moses, including, of course, these two passages. The immediate context of these Scriptures pertains to moral conduct. Some of the commands prohibit the following: (1) incest and sexual relations with family members (18:6-17; 20:11-14, 17, 19-21), (2) adultery (18:20; 20:10), (3) sacrificing children to idols (18:20-21; 20:2-5), (4) bestiality (18:23; 20:15-16), and (5) the use of diviners (20:6). There are only two commandments in the immediate context that have nothing to do with moral regulations—the execution of children because they cursed their parents (20:9) and the prohibition of sexual rela-

tions with a woman during her menstrual period (18; 20:18). Truly, there are commands elsewhere in Leviticus that have nothing to do with moral legislation. However, those passages not pertaining to moral matters do not set aside the fact that the immediate context of Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13—passages that prohibit homosexual conduct—are in a moral context and applicable to all Israel.

Some homosexual advocates attempt to set aside the clear meaning of these passages by alleging that they are not moral prohibitions but only ceremonial; that, therefore, they apply only to the priests. However, to assert something to be thus and so does not **prove** it to be the case. In the previous paragraph we saw that such is not the case. Furthermore, neither one of the passages are limited to homosexual conduct involved in idolatrous worship but are applicable to any Israelite at any time and place. Are those who advance this ridiculous and erroneous view regarding the application of these Scriptures prepared to argue for the same thing regarding the prohibitions of the Law of Moses pertaining to adultery, incest, sacrificing children to idols, and bestiality? We think not!

2 Samuel 1:26

I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: Very pleasant hast thou been unto me: Thy love to me was wonderful, Passing the love of women.

It is alleged by some homosexuals that David's lament over Jonathan's death recorded in the previously quoted Scripture reveals Jonathan and David as homosexual lovers. This allegation is formed by seeing this verse through their spectacles colored by their understanding of truth and the Western culture. Their false conclusion is the result of **eisegesis** (reading into the text what is not there) rather than **exegesis** (leading the meaning out of the text).

In part, this eisegetic approach to the study of the Scriptures comes from the belief that truth is subjective, relative, and not humanly attainable rather than believing truth to be objective, absolute, and humanly attainable (of course homosexuals are not the only people who approach the study of the Bible and other topics from this perspective). Moreover, there are all sorts of reasons that

people read into a passage of Scripture what is not there, but the foregoing is a major reason for one engaging in eisegesis.

Postmodernism also teaches that truth is whatever one thinks it is, that words are incapable of adequately expressing truth, and that truth changes from culture to culture as well as person to person. However, contrary to what the postmodernists teach, they really believe their words are objective, absolute, and humanly attainable, meaning the same to everyone in every culture. If that is not the case with them there is no way they can teach their objective, absolute, humanly attainable postmodernism. Although they are not the only ones guilty of the following, how inconsistent, self-contradictory, ludicrous, and absurd postmodernist persons are!

Although this study is not alleging that all homosexuals are postmodernists, it is the absurd self-contradictory position and thinking as just noted that strongly influences many people in their interpretation of the Bible, including the meaning 2 Samuel 1:26. Rarely, if ever, are such persons consistent in the application of their views to all situations, circumstances, issues, and aspects of life—and how glad the rest of us are that such with them is the case. Having set out some of the reasons some people come to the wrong conclusions about the meaning of a passage of Scripture, we now turn to determining what 2 Samuel 1:26 means.

In the ancient near East displays of affection between men were normal. Moreover, to this present day men in that part of the world will walk together holding each other's hands, kiss each other on the cheeks, and embrace one another. (Regarding the *kiss* in the near East, see Gen. 27:26; 31:28; 1 Kin. 19:20; Psa. 2:12; Luke 7:45; 22:47; Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 The. 5:26; 1 Pet. 5:14.) Near Eastern men do not routinely display public affection for their women as Western men do, but they will exhibit public affection for one another.

Regarding such displays, I witnessed two events in Cairo, Egypt: (1) In an Arab wedding reception in the Nile Hilton Hotel where the newly married bride and groom stood on a raised dais in a receiving line. As the people approached the bride and groom to ex-

press their congratulations, they kissed the groom and shook hands with the bride. (2) In a residential area of Cairo I witnessed a young Western man and woman in knee length shorts, wearing the typical upper garments that accompany such shorts, and wearing sunglasses. They were strolling down the street holding each other's hands. Following them were no less than 10 to 15 children, teenagers, and young adults laughing at, pointing at, and mocking the Western couple because such conduct between a man and a woman was very uncommon in their culture. Also, on several occasions in Pakistan I witnessed men holding each other's hands as they strolled along.

With the long predominance of Islam in the near East and its strong condemnation of and punishment for homosexuality, does anyone truly think that homosexuals would make such an open public display of their homosexual affection for each other? If such is their thinking we challenge them to go into these predominantly Islamic countries, publicly engage in their homosexual affections, and experience firsthand the application of Shariah law—if such characters could live long enough to reach an Islamic court.

With the foregoing in mind please consider the following quotation.

Abraham Rihbany (*The Syrian Christ*, 65), a native of the East early last century [19th century—DPB], bore with some patience the misinterpretations of modern Westerners (he named Robert Ingersoll particularly) who read the Bible through their eyes and tastes and missed certain points about what was being said and done. The particular instance of John 21:20 represents a custom “in perfect harmony with Syrian customs. How often have I seen men friends in such an attitude. There is not the slightest infringement of the rules of propriety; the act was as natural to us all as shaking hands. The practice is especially indulged in when intimate friends are about to part from one another, as on the eve of a journey, or when about the face a dangerous undertaking. Then they sit with their heads leaning against each other, or the one's head resting upon the other's shoulder or breast.”

By the same token, Easterners will use “terms of unbounded intimacy and unrestrained affection” to one another: “my soul,” “my

eyes,” “my heart.” Paul’s holy kiss (Rom. 16:16, etc) is no more of a homosexual exchange (“Was King David Gay”).

Based on this one verse homosexual advocates have suggested that David and Jonathan were homosexual lovers, despite the fact that no sexual acts between them is ever hinted at in Scripture. Craig Blomberg notes that “only modern Westerners unfamiliar with the physical expression of friendship between men in the Middle East would mistake the Bible’s references for homosexuality. ... David’s whole point in this text is that Jonathan was his ‘blood brother’ with a loyalty that surpassed that which mere eroticism creates” (Dulle).

Among those who champion homosexual conduct there are those who affirm that Sodom was overthrown because of the people’s arrogance and injustice, but not because they were homosexuals. They reference the following Scripture in their attempt to prove the foregoing.

Ezekiel 16:49-50

Behold, this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom, pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and in her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy. And they were haughty, and committed abomination before me: therefore I took them away as I saw *good*.

That the Jews to whom Ezekiel was speaking were guilty of other sins we do not question. Nevertheless, when we take the totality of what the Bible says about the sins of Sodom, we are forced to conclude that not only were citizens of that city guilty of the sins of arrogance, injustice, neglect of the poor, and a willingness to sexually abuse men against their will, but also the heinous debauched sin of homosexuality.

Remember, when the citizens of Sodom demanded that Lot allow them to *know* his visitors, Lot begged them not to do such an evil thing to them. Thus, because he attempted to protect them, the Sodomites threatened to do worse to him than they were going to do to his visitors. Clearly the Sodomites were guilty of committing all kinds of sins—but homosexuality is the abomination specified in the Scriptures for which God destroyed them.

THE NEW TESTAMENT

We now turn to the New Testament Scriptures bearing on this study. In so doing, let it be clearly understood that today God deals with mankind by the authority of His Son, Jesus Christ. Our Lord's authority is found only in His New Testament (Mat. 28:18; Col. 3:17; 1 The. 5:21; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; John 12:48; Heb. 8:8, 13; 9:15; 12:24). Thus, all people everywhere must approach God through Jesus Christ as He presents His Will or Gospel to mankind in His last Will and Testament (John 14:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 5:9).

Romans 1:26-27

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 (KJV).

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

In their commentary on Romans, Jamison, Fausset, and Brown offer the following remarks.

for even their women—that sex whose priceless jewel and fairest ornament is modesty, and which, when that is once lost, not only becomes more shameless than the other sex, but lives henceforth only to drag the other sex down to its level.

did change, &c.—The practices here referred to, though too abundantly attested by classic authors, cannot be further illustrated, without trenching on things which “ought not to be named among us as become the saints.” But observe how vice is here seen consuming and exhausting itself. When the passions, scourged by violent and continued indulgence in *natural* vices, became impotent to yield the craved enjoyment, resort was had to artificial stimulants by the practice of *unnatural* and monstrous vices. How early these were in full career, in the history of the world, the case of Sodom affectingly shows; and because of such abomina-

tions, centuries after that, the land of Canaan “spued out” its old inhabitants. Long before this chapter was penned, the Lesbians and others throughout refined Greece had been luxuriating in such debasements; and as for the Romans, TACITUS, speaking of the emperor Tiberius, tells us that new words had then to be coined to express the newly invented stimulants to jaded passion. No wonder that, thus sick and dying as was this poor humanity of ours under the highest earthly culture, its many-voiced cry for the balm in Gilead, and the Physician there, “Come over and help us,” pierced the hearts of the missionaries of the Cross, and made them “not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ!”

and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet—alluding to the many physical and moral ways in which, under the righteous government of God, vice was made self-avenging.

gave them over—or “up” (see on Ro 1:24). **to do those things which are not convenient**--in the old sense of that word, that is, “not becoming,” “indecorous,” “shameful.”

In his commentary on Romans, B. W. Johnson stated the following concerning the meaning of Paul’s comments:

For this cause. Because of the apostasy just described. **God gave them up.** Abandoned them to their own course, and thus it was shown to what depths men will fall without God. **To vile passions.** Vile, shameless, sensual indulgence, such as cannot now be named. The sodomy referred to here was common in the first century among the Romans, and is often spoken of without a sense of shame by their writers. It was prohibited neither by religion nor law, and was acknowledged without shame.

Misselbrook commented:

Paul’s use of ‘natural’ and ‘nature’ have to be understood in the context of the emphasis on creation and Creator in the previous verse. In one sense sin is ‘natural’ in a fallen world. Paul’s use of the term here is quite different, it means that which conforms to its created purpose. “These ‘natural’ relations are the ones God established for human beings in his creation.” Moo (16).

The late brother Thomas B. Warren wrote the following:

Again Paul says that God “*gave them up*” (cf.: 1:24). He gave them up to vile, degraded passions. This degradation was manifested in the *women* rejecting the normal practices of sexual inter-

course (with *men*) and in their acceptance (and practice) of sexual practices (with other *women*) which, of course, were unnatural (abnormal).

In the same way, the *men* turned from natural (normal) sexual intercourse with *women* and began to burn in lustful desire for sexual intercourse with *men*. This means that *men* engaged in horrible (extremely degrading) sexual practices with other *men*. As a result, they received (in their own persons—by way of even further degradation) the recompense which should have followed their sexual perversions. Sexual perversion cannot but affect the character of those who engage in it (1:27) (50).

As well stated and enlightening as the previous quotations are, without any of the foregoing comments, the meaning of Romans 1:26-27 is clear. Plainly, Paul was explaining what happens to people who deny God, repudiate His will, and with purpose of heart choose to live on the low level of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (1 John 2:16). They become abnormal in satisfying their fleshly desires and thereby their characters and bodies are corrupted.

DISEASE AMONG HOMOSEXUALS

As previously noted, brother Warren pointed out that those who engage in the horrible homosexual practices receive the recompense of their sexual perversions. Besides the corruption of their characters, their bodies are ravaged with terrible diseases as a direct consequence of their perverted sexual practices. So, regardless of what homosexuals and their fellow travelers say in their efforts to advance the false view that their immoral conduct is only another “life style,” the reality of their conduct is that homosexuality is abnormal, perverted, base, degraded, corrupt, filthy, and subject to more diseases than those who are not homosexuals.

Reuters reported in September 2010 that “nearly one in five gay and bisexual men in 21 major U.S. cities are infected with HIV, and nearly half of them do not know it” (Steenhuysen).

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in a September 2010 report revealed:

Gay, bisexual, and other men who have sex with men (MSM) represent approximately 2% of the US population, yet are the population most severely affected by HIV and are the only risk group in which new HIV infections have been increasing steadily since the early 1990s. In 2006, MSM accounted for more than half (53%) of all new HIV infections in the United States.

In August of 2009, *LifeSiteNews* reported:

An official with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the CDC's estimate Monday that in the United States AIDS is fifty times more prevalent among ("MSM") than the rest of the population (Craine).

Of newly diagnosed HIV infections in the United States during the year 2003, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) "estimated that about 63% were among men who were infected through sexual contact with other men" ("HIV Prevalence").

Also consider the following list of diseases contracted among male homosexuals as a consequence of their homosexual intercourse with one another:

- Anal Cancer
- Chlamydia trachomatis
- Cryptosporidium
- Giardia lamblia
- Herpes simplex virus
- Human immunodeficiency virus
- Human papilloma virus
- Isospora belli
- Microsporidia
- Gonorrhea
- Viral hepatitis types B & C
- Syphilis (Rompalo)

The infrequency of the diseases in the previous list among those who are solely heterosexual is practically unknown. Sexual transmission of some of these diseases is so uncommon in the exclusively heterosexual populace as to be virtually unheard of. Although found among those who engage in heterosexual and homosexual acts, they are primarily found among active homosexuals. Syphilis, for example, is found among heterosexual and homosexual populations. However, in 1999, 85 percent of the syphilis cases in King County,

Washington were found within the homosexual population (“Resurgent Bacterial”; Heredia).

Continuing on with our study we note that one of the views espoused by homosexual advocates regarding the meaning of Romans 1:26-27 is that Paul is condemning the *abuse* of homosexuality. When the rest of the Scriptures bearing on this topic are considered the view pales into an insignificant absurdity. Paul wrote that sex outside of marriage is sinful (Heb. 13:4). He also stated frequent sexual intercourse in marriage is acceptable to God (1 Cor. 7:3-5). However, the Bible does not authorize homosexual acts or so-called homosexual marriages. To the contrary it condemns all such perverted conduct.

One cannot abuse a sin. How many murders must one commit before murder is abused and thus becomes a sin? How many times must one commit fornication before it is abused and becomes sin? Such ludicrous absurdities are common among those who repudiate God and His authoritative Word as they go about to establish their own standards of moral and spiritual conduct.

Some hold that in Romans 1:26-27 Paul teaches that people sin only when they engage in sexual acts that violate their sexual orientation. According to this erroneous view Paul is forbidding homosexual conduct by people who are heterosexually oriented. Hence, one who is homosexually oriented does not sin upon committing homosexual acts with another of the same sexual orientation.

Of course the advocates and defenders of homosexual conduct only want this to be a one way street. They apply this absurd reasoning to heterosexually oriented people who engage in homosexual acts, but not to homosexuals who renounce and cease their homosexual conduct and become heterosexual. However, if it is sinful for heterosexually oriented persons to engage in homosexual acts because they are not homosexually oriented, then it is sinful for homosexually oriented persons to engage in heterosexual acts. According to this absurd reasoning both would be violating their sexual orientation, but, again, the homosexuals only want to apply their skewed and twisted reasoning to the heterosexual person commit-

ting homosexual acts. But in this case what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander.

Some homosexuals affirm the following false premise: “Homosexuality is something you are, not something you do.” To prove this premise it is imperative that a genetic connection to homosexuality exist. To date that has not been proved (1 The. 5:21).

The following studies are appealed to on a regular basis by homosexuals in their attempt to prove that there is a biological basis for homosexuality. The studies are: (1) *Hamer’s X-chromosome* research, (2) LeVay’s study of the hypothalamus, and (3) Bailey and Pillard’s study of identical twins who were homosexuals. However, all of the researchers were homosexuals, and thus their bias must be considered because they have a fixed interest in the outcome of these studies. Then, too, none of these studies have stood the scientific investigation and study done by other scientists (Daily and Sprigg). There is simply no reliable evidence to date proving that homosexual behavior is determined by one’s DNA. Moreover, even if a person is disposed toward homosexual behavior it does not mean that it is acceptable to God. Simply because one is bent toward pedophilia, alcohol, or anything else does not make such acceptable to God. When the thief cannot resist stealing, the law does not let him go because he is predisposed to thievery, and the same is true of the pedophile.

The research in this field points in the opposite direction—that homosexual inclinations are the product of teaching, association, and environment, but not one’s DNA. Furthermore, because something **is** the case does not mean it **ought** to be. An **is** does not an **ought** make. It is the case that some desire sex with animals. Does that mean that one is sexually oriented to bestiality and **ought** to engage in bestiality that, if he engages in sexual relations contrary to his sexual orientation, he sins. When one states something ought to or ought not to be, one is affirming a moral certainty.

Where in Romans 1:26-27 does Paul address his subject on the basis of one’s sexual orientation? The apostle speaks of and condemns one burning in his lust for the same sex, but in this passage

he does not address and he does not condemn one burning in lust for the opposite sex. Paul gave the inspired solution to men and women with this problem when he wrote, “But if they cannot contain, let them marry: for it is better to marry than to burn” (1 Cor. 7:9). As the context this passage proves (as well as the teaching of other Scriptures), when Paul wrote the preceding verse, he was referencing men and women engaging in heterosexual marriages (Mat. 19:6).

If it is natural (normal) for one to burn in one’s lust for the same sex, why does the inspired apostle condemn it? Furthermore, it may be that one has inclinations toward the same sex. If that is the case, that person must be determined at all costs to submit to God’s will concerning what the Bible teaches is morally right. One must not allow desires (fleshly lusts) to guide and lead one into immoral conduct. The last two sentences sum up the whole impact of what it is to live the Christian life—**exercising the human will to bring one’s self into subjection to the will of the Christ** (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 9:13; 10:5; Rom. 2:8; 6:1-18; 16:19, 26; 2 The. 1:7-9; Heb. 5:9). Indeed, no matter the suffering brought upon Him, Jesus set the example for all His servants when He subjected His will to His Father’s Will in going to the cross to die for the sins of the whole world (Mat. 26:36-44; Heb. 5:8). Jesus’ conduct and the Christian view of life is always, “Not my will, but thine be done.”

Continuing with our study of Roman 1:26-27, we note that the Greek *phusis* is rendered into our English word *natural*. It means the natural (normal) function of something. In this context it refers to the natural biological sexual functions of humans, i.e., as God designed them to function sexually with each other.

The next question then logically arises—**what determines human sexuality**? Is it one’s sexual desire, or is it God’s complimentary biological design of male and female bodies regarding their sexual relations one with another? We do not hesitate to affirm that one’s sexuality is determined by how God biologically designed and created human bodies to function sexually with each other.

It is wrong, therefore, to believe that what one craves sexually determines ones sexuality. The desire motivating one to seek sexual gratification with others of the same sex, rather than the opposite sex, is tantamount to informing God that He did not know what He was doing when He designed and created the biological bodies of the human male and female to complement one another in their sexual relations and, thus, to satisfy human sexual appetite. At the very least homosexuals are rejecting and rebelling against God's wisdom and authority to design and create the biological human bodies of the male and female. Thus, God, through the inspired apostle Paul, labels the desire to satisfy human sexual appetite in same-sex sexual relations "vile affection." Again, homosexuality is nothing less or more than another form of rebellion against God.

At this juncture in this study another question may arise—**is all sexual immorality unnatural or abnormal?** The answer is found in understanding that adultery is immoral (sinful), not because the act itself is unnatural/abnormal, but because the man and woman engaging in it, are not authorized by God's Word to do so—they are not husband and wife (Mat. 5:32; 19:6, 9; Heb. 13:4). Homosexual acts are worse than heterosexual adultery because they pervert natural sexual functions, homosexuals and their apologists notwithstanding.

It is very interesting and important to note the following Greek words that the Holy Spirit directed Paul to use for him to communicate God's Will to mankind on these matters. The two Greek words are *arsenes* and *theleias*. In consulting the Greek lexicons, one immediately notices that these two words are not often found in the New Testament. However, when the inspired writers employ them, they are meant to accentuate the gender of the topic. Paul is saying that homosexual activity is biologically unnatural to males (*arsenes*) and females (*theleias*). Thus, their homosexual conduct is unnatural (abnormal) for all human beings. Therefore, it is sinful, perverted, immoral behavior in which males engage because they have cultivated their "vile affection" to be satisfied only by sexual intercourse

with males. The same is true of females (lesbians) regarding satisfying their unnatural desire for sexual relations with other females.

We must also point out that in Romans 1:24-27, Paul is not condemning homosexuality **only** when it is involved with the worship of idols. If that were the case concerning homosexual acts, why would it not be the same for the other sins Paul lists in Romans 1:29-31 (unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whisperers, etc.)? Paul's condemnation of homosexuality is in the same context as are the sins in his list of vices found in Romans 1:29-31. Are such sinful acts to be condemned **only** when they are committed in connection with idolatrous worship? Again, notice how far these characters are willing to go into absurdities to push their immoral agenda.

We now turn our attention to other Scriptures bearing on this subject. We shall begin studying them by examining the Greek words found therein pertaining to our study. These passages of Scripture with the Greek words italicized are:

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

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 [Greek—*arsenokoitai*], Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals [Greek—*malakoi*], nor sodomites [Greek—*arsenokoitai*], nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (NKJV).

1 Timothy 1:9-10

Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind [Greek—*arsenokoitais*], for menstealers,

for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.

Knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for *the* ungodly and for sinners, for *the* unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites [Greek—*arsenokoitais*], for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine (NKJV).

In the above verse “homosexuals” and “sodomites” are translations of two different Greek words: *malakos* and *arsenokoites*. Only in the previous two passages of Scripture does the word *malakos* appear in the New Testament. In both cases it is found in lists of different kinds of sinful acts.

Of 1 Corinthians 6:9, Rienecker writes that “*malakos* [means] soft, effeminate—a technical term for the passive partner in homosexual relations.” He defines *arsenokoites* to be “a male who has sexual relations with a male, homosexual” (402).

In an online paper studying homosexuality Ashby L. Camp references several lexicons and other scholarly works in his study of the Greek words *malakos* and *arsenokoites*. He points out that the lexicons define *malakos* as “soft” and “homosexual.” The more definitive description of it is the passive male partner in homosexual intercourse. As in Greek, a number of other languages also have entirely distinct terms for the active and passive roles in homosexual intercourse. Also, the lexicons points out that *malakos* pertains to things: clothes, soft garments, soft clothes; of persons: soft, effeminate, especially of catamites, men, and boys who allow themselves to be misused homosexually.

Arsenokoites references a male who practices homosexuality, ped-erast, and is a sodomite. It references the male homosexual partner who takes the active role in distinction from *malakos*, the passive partner. *Arsenokoites* can reference homosexual or male to male sexual conduct in general and more specifically the active partner.

For the Greek lexicons, as well as other works dealing with these particular words and other studies in the Old and New Testaments,

see Ashby L. Camp's online study previously herein noted. It is clear that said words reference homosexual conduct, whatever the kind of male to male sex is involved. The context of the passages where these words appear determine whether one word or the other references the active or passive partner. Moreover, as an aside it should be understood that, when the NRSV and NIV translated *malakos* to be "male prostitutes," there is no genuine reason for those *translators* to have rendered the word accordingly.

Some think that *arsenokoites* does include the idea of sex, but it is referring to rape, prostitution, etc., for money. (Of course *some* think about anything or nothing on any topic.) Surely no one would take the position that homosexual sex acts, rape, prostitution, etc., would not be condemned unless money was being paid for sexual acts. It should be noted that *arsenokoites* is found in the lists of sinful immoral acts that are condemned (1 Cor. 6:9). In this list of vices *arsenokoites* has sexual sins before it and men stealers (kidnappers) following it. Taking all the New Testament has to say on *arsenokoites*, it indicates that the word condemns homosexual conduct—both active and passive.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, reminding them of their sins of which they were forgiven when they obeyed the Gospel, he included in the list *arsenokoites* of which some of the Corinthians were guilty (1 Cor. 9:10). If one tends toward homosexuality that tendency is not from God. Thus, that person must reject it and turning from it, rather than giving in to it. This is the case with anything that tempts us to sin. Moreover, it was the case with the sins that beset the Corinthians before their conversion to Christ.

As in his vice list in 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul places *arsenokoitais* in his list of vices in 1 Timothy 1:9-10. That being the case, then homosexual acts are against "sound doctrine" and thus condemned.

2 Peter 2:6-10

And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes condemned *them* with an overthrow, making *them* an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous

man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds;) The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: 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.

Jude 6-8

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day. *Even* as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Likewise also these *filthy* dreamers defile the flesh, despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities.

Regarding the previous Scriptures, some have tried to say that the men of Sodom were guilty of “going after strange flesh” because they wanted to have sex with angels. If such were the case (which it is not) the Sodomites did not know that Lot’s visitors were angels. As was pointed out previously, the condemnation of Sodom was determined prior to the angels coming to Sodom. Again, if such were the case how was it that Gomorrha and the people of the plain were guilty of the same sin as the Sodomites? The “strange flesh” that the Sodomite men sought was that of other males? All the side stepping, smoke screens, and sophistry in the world will not change the fact that homosexual acts are sinful and that the Bible condemns such conduct.

CONCLUSION

Let us be clear on what the Bible teaches concerning homosexuality: it is a sexual perversion contrary to the way God designed mankind to function sexually. It is immoral and sinful. Those who engage in homosexual acts along with those who do not, but condone those who do, are condemned by the Bible also. Furthermore, children of God who extend fellowship to those brethren are also guilty of sin for doing so. All involved need to repent of their erroneous actions.

Let us end this brief study on a positive note. As there is hope for all those lost in sin through the Gospel plan of salvation, so there is hope for the homosexual. If such a person believes in God and His only begotten Son Jesus Christ (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24; Rom. 10:17), repents of one's sins (Acts. 17:30), stopping his homosexual conduct along with all other sins (1 Cor. 6:11), confesses that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Rom. 10:10), and is immersed in water by the authority of Christ into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit to obtain the remission of one's sins (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:47; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21), the Lord will add that person to His church (Acts 2:41-42, 47). Therein Christians are to live all their lives faithful to God even if their faithfulness causes them to lose their lives (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10). Then, when time is no more, they will enter heaven to abide eternally with God and all that is holy (Mat. 25:34; 2 Tim. 4:7-8).

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SUICIDE

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INTRODUCTION

They were a happy, married couple in their late 40s. They had two fine children and an expensive new home. Everyone liked them. They even had a large “hobby farm” with a number of horses. They seemed to be a modern-day success. Then one day, the wife lost her job due to corporate “downsizing.” Ignoring all that she still had, one warm, sunny morning she went out and hanged herself in the horse barn. Did her death *solve* anything? No, absolutely not. It only caused **more** tragedy, first here on earth to her family, and second very likely to herself in the afterlife.

The husband, after grieving for his wife nearly a year, went to the local funeral home to make pre-arrangements for his own funeral, as do many people in our day and time. After filling out all the papers and giving a check for full payment to the unsuspecting funeral director, he went outside, took a 12-gauge shotgun out of his car and killed himself in the funeral home parking lot. Did his death *solve* anything? No, absolutely not! The couple’s two children, a son and daughter in their early and mid-twenties, are now left without either of their parents, and with the terrible knowledge and memory of what happened to them. We can only hope and pray that such tragic events for this family have now ended.

The taking of one’s own life by an accountable person does not *solve* anything; it just creates more misery here on earth and, more

importantly, in the afterlife (i.e., in the interim “torments” of Luke 16 and then finally in *Gehenna*). Even popular “health-related suicides” must first be proven to be ethically correct from a higher source than mere uninspired men. Those who would defend such killings which derive from the mere non-Christian philosophies of men like Derek Humphry of the Hemlock Society (who assisted in his wife’s self-murder) or Dr. Jack Kevorkian (with his patented suicide machine called “The Mercitron”) are under obligation to use the Divine Word of God as their necessary proof. Human liberty is not a license to do what I want, but rather is my freedom to live within what God’s law requires of me, as it is “instruction which is in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16) from the One who is absolute and objective.

Though there is such a thing as “benevolent suicide” when one forfeits his own life to save or attempt to save others (which we will discuss), the common suicide is a clear violation of the sanctity of life and a horrible personal tragedy which should absolutely **never** happen. It is truly heartbreaking for humans to dispose of the life they have been gifted by God because of life’s misfortunes which have led them to despondency, depression, humiliation, or any of the hundreds of other *reasons* often given to justify the act. What exactly was solved by the suicide of the adult son of one of the member’s where I presently preach? He was a long-term unfaithful member of Christ’s church who was living once again with his mother who is a faithful Christian. She told me everything seemed fine that morning when he left for work, but he simply drove himself to a nearby town, parked his small pickup truck, and used a pistol to blast himself into eternity unprepared to meet his God. It is my understanding that he ultimately separated with the Lord’s church over the men refusing to allow his sister to use instrumental music in her wedding ceremony.

I attended undergraduate and graduate school with a fellow Gospel preacher and personal friend who was finally overcome by pornography to the point that he had to give up on getting his M.A. and preaching altogether. From what I believe was personal sin and

unfulfilled accomplishments in secular life and in the church, he overdosed on two prescription bottles of “mood brighteners” about ten years later, penning goodbye notes to both his son and his daughter which were tucked into the empty prescription bottles, but he gave no parting farewell to his wife. Can you imagine how she felt about that? Mark, my childhood non-Christian friend, used a gun to blow himself away at age 21 in Tampa over what they said were concerns regarding a girlfriend and regret regarding his soldiering in Vietnam. One lady I baptized in 2003 had to cope with not only the loss of her daughter to suicide, but then about two years later she was faced with that daughter’s teenage son following suit by also hanging himself. Apparently due to the personal failure experienced in losing his job, another otherwise outstanding Christian brother and fellow-soldier of the cross took his own life, leaving his wife and two children to fend for themselves. By this time they had moved to another state from me; so I was not close by to help the bewildered widow or kids. Another fellow Gospel preacher parked his truck in the church parking lot in Nashville and used a pistol to murder himself, all brought on by his learning that the elders and his wife were now aware of his adultery. Most of us can give many more examples of this tragedy, involving both Christians and non-Christians, and all of us know of “attempted suicides sometimes called parasuicides” (Clemons 13). John MacArthur’s statement is shocking.

According to recent worldwide statistics, each year roughly one million people kill themselves by intentionally committing suicide, averaging out to one suicide every 40 seconds. Significantly, the number is higher than those who are murdered or killed in combat. Moreover, it is estimated that unsuccessful suicide attempts are up to 20 times more frequent than completed suicides. Based on such estimates, a suicide is attempted every 2 seconds. Around the world, suicide is among the top three causes of death among people ages 15 to 44; and even in the United States, the number of suicides (over 32,000 in 2005) is nearly double that of homicides (around 18,000 in 2005) (109-110).

The Suicide Prevention Action Network USA reports that in a country as blessed as America there is one suicide every 15.2 min-

utes and that it is: (1) the 11th leading cause of death overall; (2) the 3rd leading cause of death for young Americans between the ages of 10-24; (3) the 2nd leading cause of death for American college-aged students. SPAN USA says there are an estimated 864,950 attempts per year in the U.S. and that each suicide produces at least six and as many as hundreds of “survivors” (i.e., people left behind to grieve). SPAN reports that for every two people who die from homicides, three people die of suicide and that approximately twice as many Americans die from suicide than from HIV/AIDS. More women attempt suicide, but more men actually die from it. For more information also see Centers For Disease Control, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration in works cited.

DEFINITIONS

Walter Kaiser reports that:

Suicide was a word coined by Walter Charleton in 1651. His claim was that “to vindicate one’s self from extreme and otherwise inevitable calamity by *sui-cide* [his hyphenation], is not a crime.” This hyphenated word is not one Latin word; rather, it links two Latin words: *sui*, which is “self,” and *cide*, “to kill.” Earlier, John Donne, in his infamous *Biathanatos* (a garbling of the Greek “to die violently”) had proposed “self-homicide” as a milder and more neutral term, but Charleton’s “suicide” carried the day. In German, *Selbstmord*, “self murder,” is the usual term, but *Suizid*, “suicide,” is the more technical and clinically preferred term. However, suicide is no longer the antiseptically neutral term Charleton meant it to be. Taking one’s own life is a violation of the sixth commandment given by God.... The term *euthanasia*, like *suicide*, is also made up of two parts: in this case, the Greek prefix *eu*, meaning “good” or “easy,” and *thanatos* meaning “death.” However, from a Christian standpoint, what is promoted under this term is neither “good” nor “easy” (139-40).

Thus, *suicide* is the taking of one’s own life, or causing it to be taken by another, inclusive of any motive, circumstance, or method used. By this definition all of the Biblical accounts we will study qualify as suicide or attempted suicide. From the perspective of the Judeo-Christian tradition, suicide (including euthanasia) violates

the principle involved in the commandment: “You shall not murder” (Exo. 20:13—NKJV; cf. Deu. 5:17). Though some have foolishly attempted to argue that contextually this verse applies only to persons other than oneself (i.e., to other human beings), we can easily see the error by studying other Bible verses. These include the principle, “thou shalt love thy neighbor as **thyself**” (Lev. 19:18; Mat. 5:43; 19:19; Rom. 13:8-10). The right to harm self and neighbor stand or fall together. If you have the right to illicitly harm yourself, then you have a right to similarly harm your neighbor. If you have the right to kill yourself because you think your life is not worth living, then loving your neighbor as yourself would mean that you may kill your neighbor if his life is deemed by you as not worth living! Suicide hardly displays self-love in God’s viewpoint of it.

Human life is sacred because God made man in His own image and likeness (Gen. 1:26-28; 9:6; 1 Cor. 11:7) and, contrary to the utilitarian attitude of humanists:

this canopy of sacredness extends throughout a man’s life, and is not simply limited to those times and circumstances when man happens to be strong, independent, healthy, and fully conscious of his relationships to others. God is actively at work in the womb, for example (Ps. 139:13-16; Job 10:8-13), long before the human being can exercise the mental functions that secular humanists tend to see as the key criteria of value for human personality. The same God who lovingly is present in the womb can be present in the dying and comatose patient, for whom conscious human relationships are broken. The body of the dying can still be the temple of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Cor. 6:19), and hence sacred to God (Davis 191).

Know ye not that ye are a temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man destroyeth the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, and such are ye (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

While the authorized taking of life as in legitimate warfare or capital punishment would not be included here, who can believe that suicide is not a violation of these clear verses in wrongfully destroying the temple of God? If abusing oneself with alcohol and other recreational drugs is evil, then how much more is self-murder?

“And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 The. 5:23). The Bible additionally makes clear that no murderer has eternal life (1 John 3:15; cf. Rev. 21:8; 22:15)!

WHY SUICIDE?

Some main reasons for committing suicide include depression, schizophrenia, or other mental illness. Perhaps if we could know absolutely in particular cases that a suicide was due solely to a person being mentally *off* to the extent that they were not accountable (Isa. 7:15-16; Deu. 1:39; Neh. 8:2-3; Jon. 4:11; Rev. 1:3), we would be better able to cope, but this is extremely difficult to isolate from other related freewill actions by accountable souls. Some persons have difficulty dealing with life, especially if involved with alcohol (or other drugs), devastating money matters, and personal social relationships (i.e., loss of spouse through divorce, or loss of a boyfriend or girlfriend, etc.). Like the grandson above who lost his mother, some kill themselves out of bereavement over a loved one dying when they feel they cannot carry on without them. Today, we have all read of cases of bullying (either in person or over the Internet) which apparently led some immature, insecure, frightened, or embarrassed individuals to self-killing. It seems some individuals deliberately get themselves into a situation where they in effect *allow* law enforcement officers (i.e., a SWAT team) to do the actual killing, but which was planned out and brought on by themselves. Especially if unable to live independently any longer, some allow their old age to affect them into thinking it would be better if death came more quickly on behalf of themselves and/or their caretakers. When there is a serious or incurable illness, or when someone is in so much pain or is in quick deterioration, many would rather “die with dignity” than let it drag on. Borrowing a cardinal belief of PETA as to the equality of all species, they may say: “After all, they shoot horses, don’t they?” Such individuals may say: “I cannot go on—I’m going to **end** it all,” but it is **not** the end for we will con-

tinue to exist and must answer ethically to God in eternity (2 Cor. 5:10; Mat. 10:28) whereas a horse does neither!

Is it smart to think that suicide will ease one's earthly pain and weariness? The rich man of Luke 16 proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that one who murders himself is immediately going to desire to return to his earthly situation from that of lifting up his eyes in torments: "And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am in anguish in this flame" (16:24). One would surely be glad to endure the pain he feels upon earth for 1000 years or longer in comparison to this! Would not a little more time here on earth (which could be used to seek repentance and the salvation of the soul) of infinite value no matter what one's physical condition is now? Yet sadly, current "death education" in our schools treats suicide as just an alternative way to die and teaches that our children must make their own subjective choices in the matter without regard to God's absolute moral standard (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

A RIGHT TO SUICIDE?

The increase in suicides is keeping pace with the de-Christianization of a country, including America. Though Christ's law is primarily concerned with the rightness or wrongness of an action and not the pragmatic nature of it, Colson argues in numerous areas of life that Christians have

an extraordinary opportunity to make our case that living according to the biblical moral order is healthier for both individuals and society. And there's a growing body of scientific evidence we can use to back up our argument. Medical studies are confirming that those who attend church regularly and act consistently with their faith are better off, both physically and mentally.... Several studies have found that high levels of religious commitment correlate with lower levels of depression and stress. In one Gallup survey, respondents with a strong religious commitment were twice as likely to describe themselves as "very happy." Armand Nicholi, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and a deeply committed believer, argues from his lifelong experience that Christians are far less likely to experience mental disorders than their secular coun-

terparts. Why? Because “the one essential feature that characterizes all types of depression” is “the feeling of hopelessness and helplessness,” and Christians are never without hope.... *Suicide*: Persons who do not attend church are four times more likely to commit suicide than are frequent church attenders. In fact, lack of church attendance correlates more strongly with suicide rates than with any other risk factor, including unemployment (311-12).

It should be noted that believers who fail to “act consistently with their faith” will surely forfeit any advantages to themselves which their church attendance might otherwise procure! One must be consistent in “walking the talk” (Jam. 1:5-8). As we shall see, Bible suicides certainly back this up.

As Christians we ought to beware of any viewpoint which seems to be appropriated from the Humanist Manifesto II which declares:

As nontheists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity... we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species.... There is no credible evidence that life survives the death of the body (Kurtz 16-17).

This manifesto says that a democracy’s purpose is to enhance an individual’s freedom and dignity and that this “includes a recognition of an individual’s right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide” (Kurtz 19). One can see that from the premises of atheism that death is followed by a state of nothingness (i.e., non-existence) with eternity and eternal punishment not being real. Isaac Watts accurately explains why suicide is so common:

When an atheist is tempted to destroy himself, he has no concern whether it be lawful or no(t), for he knows of no law nor power that can reach to punish him. Such a wretch doth not believe there is any other world to receive him when he dies out of this, nor any God there to call him to account. He supposes that his soul vanishes into air, and his dust is safe from vengeance. These are the sentiments of atheism; and vile and irrational as they are, yet they are the only principles that can give any tolerable colour or pretence for self-murder (465).

Thus, the general belief that there is no God (or at least that we will not have to account for our sins after death to any Higher Power) has caused suicide rates to soar in our generation. Robert In-

gersoll was a leading atheist, macro-evolutionist, and skeptic in his day. A beloved brother died and Ingersoll conducted the graveside funeral himself. Included in his sad, cheerless words was the following paragraph as quoted by Kennedy:

Whether in mid-sea or among the breakers of the farther shore, a wreck must mark at last the end of each and all. And every life, no matter if its every hour is rich with love and every moment jeweled with joy, will, at its close, become a tragedy, as sad, as deep, and dark as can be woven of the warp and woof of mystery and death.... Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud, and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry (185).

Here is a clarion call for us to boldly teach the proofs of the Moral, Teleological, and Cosmological arguments for God's existence, followed by proof of the Bible so Final Judgment passages in it have authoritative significance to accountable men, women, boys, and girls! Death is not mere sleep for we "shall give account to him that is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Pet. 4:5)! Mankind's hope is in Jesus Christ (John 14:6)!

Certain societal pressures sometimes cause some individuals to feel they are not living up to other people's expectations to the point of taking their own life. But before we begin putting society in the place of God as if right and wrong in reference to suicide is to be determined by popular culture, we best think again. Kaiser points out that in India "a Hindu custom called *suttee* requires that a widow submit to cremation on the funeral pyre of her husband" (141). Despite some vehemently calling for the involuntary active euthanasia of certain individuals, we still doubt if these same militants would even go along with (much less demand) *suttee* for Grandma, Mother, or themselves even if culture demands it! But without God's absolute Word clearly and objectively deciding such matters (2 Tim. 3:16-17) cultural relativism can reign supreme! Once a society comes to accept the finite (and false!) philosophy (cf. Col. 2:8) that all that exists is "matter-in-motion" and that one's total being merely goes back to dust at death, it is easy to see how such ethical

nihilism leads to more frequent suicides. Accompanying this foolish fancy is the attendant denial of the Biblical fact that “the spirit returneth unto God who gave it” for ultimate judgment (Ecc. 12:7; Heb. 9:27; cf. Zec. 12:1; Isa. 42:5). As our society moves away from this paramount Bible teaching, it is easy to see that suicides increase in number. Erin Roach reports in October of 2010 on the rise in military suicides:

More than 1,000 troops have killed themselves during the past five years, driving the Army suicide rate above the civilian rate for the first time since the Vietnam War.... Jerry Jewell, a pastor [preacher] near Fort Hood, suggested that the increase in suicides is a result of a generation of soldiers raised in a society without the truth of the Scriptures.... “In the military we train people to kill without giving them any true moral standards to go by. In past generations our soldiers were given Bibles. Many of them were grounded in the Christian faith. Nowadays, most of these young soldiers don’t have any idea about God, and Jesus Christ is a curse word to many of them” ... “Secular humanism says you die and that’s all you are. Think about what we as a nation have taught them in schools.” ... “We’ve taught them that you come from animals—you evolved from apes—and when you die there’s nothing else. If you have the choice of continuing to live in the circumstances you can’t stand and don’t know how to fix or dying and ceasing to exist, many of them choose to cease to exist. Unfortunately that’s a lie.”

In the name of solving the problem, nearly all school programs on death *education* actually contributes to it because they refuse to teach absolute morals. If death is viewed as merely leading to a state of permanent unconsciousness, then why not kill yourself if life is unhappy for you? An independent Congressional report found the Pentagon’s suicide prevention efforts inadequate, with fewer soldiers dying in combat than by their own actions, including suicides and accidental deaths brought on by high-risk behavior! In times of such unparalleled tragedy, the Lord’s church should not be in the background. Clemon’s statement surely applies to us: “Our concern, our thought, our energies, and our faith are desperately needed to help turn the tide” (116). As a required means of suicide prevention,

we must return to public refutation of materialistic philosophy, to an emphatic affirmation of man's immortal spirit, and to a clear proclamation of a Final Judgment for every accountable person. We must answer the question of "If a man die, shall he live *again*?" (Job 14:14) with a resounding **yes!** We owe at least this to our present generation!

Some have the idea that the majority of the persons who commit suicide have low self-esteem or self-ego. After reading several books, studying material available over the internet, plus studying suicide in the inspired Scriptures, I would argue that generally this idea is not entirely accurate. People who commit suicide often believe that they are too important to suffer pain or disappointment. For sure, they usually are too important to themselves to worry about the effect of their actions on other people. Generally speaking, they are self-focused and selfish. While this may seem to be a harsh and insensitive judgment, unfortunately it is an accurate one, especially when one views God's Word in total context on the subject. Paul declared that each one of us is placed in this world to be available to God to do the things that He has in mind for us to do: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10; cf. Acts 22:10; 9:15-16). We are to present our "bodies a living [not dead] sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God" (Rom. 12:2). We do not really belong to ourselves but rather first to the Lord, and then to others through the will of God (2 Cor. 8:5; cf. Mat. 5:16).

The euthanasia mentality sees man as the Lord of his own life; the Christian sees human life as a gift from God, to be held in trusteeship throughout man's life on earth. "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19b,20). Determining the moment of death is God's prerogative, not man's (Job 14:5). Man does not choose his own death, but acquiesces in the will of the heavenly Father, knowing that for the believer, death is both the last enemy, and the doorway to eternal life. Because man bears the image of God, his life is sacred in every state of existence, in sickness or in health, in the womb, in infancy, in adolescence, in maturity, in old age, or even in the process of dying itself (Davis 191-92).

We can see, therefore, that while our omniscient God certainly is not surprised by a person's decision to commit suicide, such is definitely **not** the plan that Deity had in mind for him or her since the Bible makes it clear that He alone is the one authorized to give and take life (Deu. 32:39; 1 Sam. 2:6; Psa. 100:3)! We have the right to cause the death of a human **only** when that person has been Biblically judged "worthy of death" which normally involves a governmental process (Acts 25:11; Rom. 13:4; 1 Pet. 2:14; Gen. 9:6; Acts 23:12-24) so that the determining factor is guilt or innocence and **not** an alleged "meaningfulness" of life. Once a society adopts the so-called "Quality of Life" ethic, it is easy to see the progression of euthanasia from infants to the elderly on to others simply on the basis that life may be a bit difficult or inconvenient (or merely by virtue that life is merely *perceived* as such).

ARTHRITIS IN HER TOES

In the Netherlands, physicians have at times performed involuntary euthanasia because they thought the family had suffered too much or were tired of taking care of patients. American surgeon Robin Bernhoft relates an incident in which a Dutch doctor euthanized a twenty-six-year-old ballerina with arthritis in her toes. Since she could no longer pursue her career as a dancer, she was depressed and requested to be put to death. The doctor complied with her request and merely noted that "One doesn't enjoy such things, but it was her choice" (Anderson 27).

When society is allowed to place an arbitrary naturalistic standard of *quality* above God's objective, absolute standard of human value and worth, which is due to the fact that all humans are fearfully and wonderfully made by Him (Psa. 139), such subjective tragedies are inevitable. As Anderson points out, giving a person an alleged "right-to-die" is (1) tantamount to promoting Biblically condemned suicide, and (2) "denies God the opportunity to work sovereignly within a shattered life and bring glory to Himself" (29-30). The psalmist declares: "Before I was afflicted I went astray; But now I observe thy word.... It is good for me that I have been afflicted; That I may learn thy statutes" (Psa. 119:67, 71). Such times of grief and pain provide opportunities for openness to teaching

and serious introspection. Hezekiah received an *extra* 15 years of life out of a deadly illness as a result of his sincere pleading with God (2 Kin. 20:1-11). Most of us know of unfaithful Christians who returned to the Lord as a result of tragedy and/or illness (though we realize that similar circumstances can also push faithful disciples the other way). God's ultimate sovereignty must be accepted and not our own as Job acknowledged (Job 42:2-3). Yes, there is "a time to be born, and a time to die" (Ecc. 3:2), but this must be in accord with the prerogatives of God as set out in His Word. Life's termination, whether by illness or old age or accident, is to be viewed as under His providential control (Acts 17:28; Rom. 14:7-8). "Thine eyes did see mine unformed substance; And in thy book they were all written, *Even* the days that were ordained [by God Himself] *for me*, When as yet there was none of them" (Psa. 139:16). Life is not about always having fun and being comfortable, it is about having a relationship with God!

BIBLICALLY RECORDED SUICIDES

A few "anti-implicationists" have argued that since the word suicide is not found explicitly in the Bible, there is, therefore, no law that speaks against it. As Tony Warren points out: "That's like saying there is no word embezzlement in scripture, therefore there is no law against it." Based upon Scriptural guidelines set out earlier and upon Biblical accounts of suicides or attempted suicides, we can construct a lens through which to determine God's will regarding it. When self-killing is mentioned in Scripture, it is usually presented in a context of judgment, shame, and sin—as seen especially in the suicides of Saul and Judas. If anyone should imagine that willful, premeditated suicide can be made kosher with God by repentance for the act beforehand, he should note God's Word: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear" (Psa. 66:18; cf. Isa. 1:15). True repentance requires one to turn away from evil, not go on to commit it. Let us briefly examine the suicides recorded in the Bible to see if God ever condones it as that which is ever honorable, noble, or right.

Abimelech

This son of Gideon was an ambitious fellow who wanted the kingship of Israel so much that he slaughtered his 70 brothers. Judges 9:50-56 sets out the case of this man, who called for “assisted suicide” in commanding his young armor-bearer to run him through with his sword. Why? Demonstrating a laughable machismo, Abimelech did not want people to be able to say that he had been killed by a woman (9:54) who had just dropped a millstone on his head and cracked his skull! Like some who choose euthanasia today, Abimelech wanted to control the time and circumstances of his death. Since there is no explicit condemnation of this action by the young man one must look into other Scriptures (see above) to determine its ethical status before God, unless one incorrectly assumes this evil judge to be speaking God’s commands. His death was certainly morally required as “God requited the wickedness of Abimelech... in slaying his seventy brethren” (9:56), but to assume the suicidal details as approved by the Lord is to go too far. Motivated by gender, pride, and male ego, he said: “Draw thy sword, and kill me, that men say not of me, **A woman** slew him” (9:54). Unless one wants to align himself with such male chauvinism, he must surely admit that this motive of merely avoiding the supposedly disgraceful historical reputation of a “non-masculine, non-virile” death is no justification for murder. To prideful Abimelech, suicide was less demeaning than appearing as a wimp before his peers, since to be attacked and fatally injured by someone whom he considered so inferior was more than he could stand (but see 1 Cor. 10:13). Would anyone agree that Abimelech lacked in personal identity and self-worth in having such a view? God is able to remove excessive awareness of self which is a major cause of suicide and to provide courage if we really desire to do His Divine will (Luke 9:23; Psa. 36:1-2; Dan. 4:37b; Acts 18:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:10-14; 5:5-6; Isa. 41:10-13; Gal. 6:3; 2 Cor. 12:7-10).

Ahithophel

Here we have a prototype of a form of suicide that has been repeated many times in many cultures—the self-death of a trusted advisor when his best efforts have been rejected. This man was a

military counselor to would-be king Absalom who was attempting to take the kingship away from his father David who was the legitimate king of Israel. It must have really hurt Ahithophel's pride to see his admittedly superior advice spurned and replaced by bad guidance of another (2 Sam. 17:1-14). Samuel informs us that,

when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and gat him home, unto his city, and set his house in order, and hanged himself; and he died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father (17:23).

Is this apparent mental depression caused by pride sufficient reason to justify suicide? If so, Pandora's Box to suicide is wide open! "If you don't take my advice, I'll kill myself!" This is surely egotism gone wild! Though Ahithophel may have been thinking on ahead to his likely death by David's men, surely Biblical total context will allow us to inferentially condemn his Biblically reported action of using his job or career failure as justification for hanging himself. How many today use job failure or frustrated goals in their career to lead to self-murder which obviously cannot be *taken back*? Is one's job or material well-being what really counts? (See Matthew 6:25-33; 16:26; Luke 12:15). I would point out that medical science has linked **some** depression and suicidal tendencies to chemical imbalances which disrupt one's thinking, but we have no evidence of that here.

Zimri

The seven-day reign of this evil king is described in 1 Kings 16:15-20. Zimri rose to the throne by murdering King Elah and his entire family (16:9-11), including every man-child, kinsman, and friends. Upon hearing that his replacement had been chosen (16:16), Zimri found himself under battle-siege and apparently was fearful of capture. Scripture reports: "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the castle of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died" (16:18). Is self-cremation justified in God's eyes to avoid the unpleasant repercussions from one's sins (16:19-20)? Unlike Judas who was seized with remorse over his sins, the treasonous (16:20)

Zimri took his death out of the hands of his enemies, apparently thinking he could escape punishment in this way and thus keep his pride in place. Scripture makes clear that he did this act “for his sins which he sinned in doing that which was evil in the sight of Jehovah, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin” (16:19). During his whole life Zimri was in rebellion to God, committing atrocious sins but with plenty of opportunity to repent. He never did so and his suicide just confirms his rebellion toward God. Thus, this man passed out of this world in a blaze of fire only to enter the next life as a firebrand in torment! For the godly person facing such a death by his enemies, God’s will is proclaimed in Psalm 18:4-6,16-19, 28-31, 12:1, 5:8, 6:2-4, 7:1.

Saul and His Armor-Bearer

One of the most prominent Bible figures to commit suicide is King Saul (1 Sam. 31:4-6). With his sons already dead and greatly distressed by enemy archers (31:2-3), Saul ordered his armor-bearer to kill him (31:4) out of fear and failure. Unlike Abimelech’s servant, Saul’s armor-bearer refused the order because “he was sore afraid” (31:4). “Therefore Saul took his sword, and fell upon it” (31:4). There is a tendency in those left behind following a suicidal death to follow suit. Whether the result of fear, grief, or loyalty, when “his armorbearer saw that Saul was dead, he likewise fell upon his sword, and died with him” (31:5). This is what might be called an “impulse” or “copycat” suicide, which is alleged to account for 40% of teen suicides today. But was it honorable for this man to die this way with anyone—especially a king like Saul? Once again we must not fail to notice that total context here involves Saul’s sin and rebellion against the Lord leading up to this event. Saul at one time possessed the Spirit (10:6-13), but due to his refusal to truly obey God, the Bible reports:

Now the Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him (16:14).

And when Saul inquired of Jehovah, Jehovah answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets (28:6).

So Saul died for his trespass which he committed against Jehovah, because of the word of Jehovah, which he kept not; and also for that he asked counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to inquire *thereby*, and inquired not of Jehovah: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse (1 Chr. 10:13-14).

Saul viewed death by his own hand as favorable compared to an uncertain earthly future. According to several translations, the “archers hit him, and he was severely wounded by the archers” (1 Sam. 31:3—NKJV); so Saul no doubt had lost much of his ability to fight. Therefore, Saul’s stated reason for suicide was “lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me” (31:4). Does the avoidance of such possible torture or disfigurement qualify as an authorization for self-murder? There is no record in the New Testament of first-century Christians following suit in view of similar uncircumcised Romans causing their martyrdom. In fact, the Hebrews’ author well describes the terrible tortures endured by those in the Hall of Fame and Faith (Heb. 11:33-38). Rather than His choosing suicide, are we not glad that Jesus similarly endured His God-given duty to the end (John 19:30)? He first allowed (Mat. 26:53; John 18:10-11) *uncircumcised* Romans to mentally and physically abuse Him, murder Him (Heb. 2:8-9) on the cross, and to finally mistreat Him by piercing His dead body with a spear (John 19:34). Yet all of this was for the Father to make the Author of our salvation “perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10)? As we have previously shown, though none of us can do what Christ did on the cross, we all still have our duty to perform on behalf of God’s cause even as did the Messiah (cf. Jer. 29:11). When the Amalekite later lied and claimed that he had killed Saul (2 Sam. 1:9-10), King David believed him and instead of commending him for showing Saul empathy and mercy, he then had him executed for putting forth his “hand to destroy Jehovah’s anointed” (1:14-15). This surely confirms that unauthorized killing is sinful, for if euthanasia was a beneficial practice, David would have rewarded the man and not sentenced him to death.

Judas

Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is that to us? see thou *to it*. And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away and hanged himself (Mat. 27:3-5).

Instead of having godly sorrow that works genuine repentance, Judas let his remorse and mental anguish over his sin lead him to self-murder. Did this act do anything to alleviate his guilt or shame before the world? No. His name is still one of the most infamous in history 2000 years later! He simply could not see a way to undo the damage he had done in betraying his Lord. Unlike Peter who repented and came back after his betrayal, Judas either failed to see the Biblical way out of his predicament or he was in so deep he simply could not emotionally and/or spiritually face the public exposure of his wrongdoing. Luke adds that “this man obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out” (Acts 1:18), which parallels much of what modern day suicides leave for relatives and friends to face after the fact especially with the popular use of guns for performing suicide. Sadly, many funerals are “closed casket” due to this type situation.

In this one case we have no doubt left as to whether Judas went to hell or not, since Luke further tells us that Matthias was chosen “to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas fell away, that he might go to his own place” (1:25). Without this latter statement, I am convinced some would try to explain this suicide in a way whereby Judas is happily enjoying his time in Paradise. While we may not know the truth in every case, rather than merely assuming that “no suicides end up in hell,” we had best get back to pointing out “many suicides do end up in hell” to make people face squarely the quite likely prospect of Gehenna for their consciously chosen self-murder! We should also point out the selfishness of the act and what it does to those left to “pick up the pieces”—some-

times literally—to force anyone contemplating killing themselves to consider the pain of those loved ones who will live to feel the agony and loss, and who might even be led to emulate it. Surely the golden rule would preclude suicide for any person who truly loves God and their fellowman (Luke 6:31).

Samson

Judges 16:25-31 records the unusual case of Samson's suicide. It is true that Samson desired to kill his Philistine enemies due to his wanting revenge for their putting out his eyes and making *sport* of him as one of Jehovah's judges. But superseding mere private reasons, Samson's suicide was in effect an "act of war," offensively supporting his nation. His suicide was primarily a *sacrificial* or *benevolent* suicide due to his desire to kill his Philistine enemies for God and Israel (16:23-25). By causing his own death, he had a chance to destroy many of the enemy persecutors who attributed his capture to their god Dagon (16:23-24). Chained between two pillars of a temple, Samson prayed to God to give him his strength back just one more time (16:28), and as God did so, he deliberately pushed apart the two pillars to cause the collapse of the building. Scripture says: "So the dead that he slew at his death were more than they that he slew in his life" (16:30)—about 3,000 men and women (16:27). None of the petty motives exhibited in our earlier cases have the priority in this case, and therefore Samson is credited with being among the "heroes of the faith" in the New Testament (Heb. 11:32). This account of Samson's death by choice is an example of supreme sacrifice so common among members of the world's military forces, especially during warfare. Samson died because he wanted to defeat the enemies of God, just as many soldiers before and since have sacrificed their lives to win a battle or to save a comrade. Note McQuilkin's paragraph on this point.

Self-sacrifice is not sinful suicide. If it were, God himself would be the most guilty. No one took Christ's life from him. He laid it down of himself (John 10:18). In fact, "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13). Far from being the worst of crimes, it is the greatest of vir-

tues. The mother starving herself to feed her children, the friend leaving another with the life jacket and swimming off into the night—these are heroes, not sinners (332).

Thus, the selfless act of sacrificing one's life so others may be free from the actions of evil people (e.g., Samson), or to accomplish a greater God-authorized good (e.g., Christ) is not to be viewed as sinful. It is this Bible principle that allows a physician to go to the bedside of the plague-stricken to minister to them, the Russian worker to go back into a Chernobyl nuclear reactor despite knowing his own death is inevitable, the missionary to go into savage lands to preach the Gospel, or a fireman to enter a burning building with the prospect of dying to save others. All these things are lawful precisely because the act itself is good and upright, for in theory the persons in question do not have strictly in view (either as an end or means) the evil result of death. Furthermore, if they perish, this is largely compensated for by the good and useful result which they seek.

Jonah

The book of Jonah describes the prophet's *attempted suicide* in his telling the pagan sailors to throw him overboard to save them and their ship from ruin (Jon. 1:11-15). Of course, we realize that God saved him by means of a great fish (1:17). Would this case not fall under the same category as Samson—an attempted sacrificial or benevolent *suicide*? It is apparent that Jonah just wanted to avoid his duty to Jehovah (1:3; 4:2), not that he from the start desired to commit self-murder. We should note that later on, when Jonah was so angry at the Lord's display of mercy toward the Ninevites that he asked God to kill him (4:3), God would not do it. When he again asked God to kill him over the loss of his *shade* from the withered gourd-vine (4:8), God compares his petty complaint over such creature comforts to matters that really count (4:10-11). No doubt many other grossly superficial *reasons* offered to God for suicide ought similarly to be rejected by us today! At least Jonah recognized that his life was ultimately in God's hands by so asking Jehovah as he did rather than by his deciding to commit the sin of self-murder.

Compare Moses in Numbers 11:14-17 and Elijah in 1 Kings 19:2-9 to see God's similar rejection of their request to die, and to see God's solution to their problems.

The Philippian Jailer

The second attempted suicide in the Bible is the familiar story of the jailer at Philippi who thought that he had allowed his prisoners, including Paul, to escape.

And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison-house were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. And the jailor, being roused out of sleep and seeing the prison doors open, drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped. But Paul cried with a loud voice, saying, Do thyself no harm: for we are all here (Acts 16:26-28).

Talk about a high pressure job! Because he heeded Paul's admonition, this led to his salvation through Christ by means of his belief, repentance, and baptism (16:29-34). We can fairly assume that his motive for killing himself was primarily due to the possibility of his own imprisonment or a possible death sentence according to Roman law. Unless one wants to put Roman paganism on par with the Word of God, this case should not be cited as proof that one may rightly commit suicide if it looks as though death might be imminent. The best of this man's life was ahead! Yours may be, too! Paul here gives us what ought to be the cry of every Christian to anyone they see who is about to commit suicide or to themselves if they are personally contemplating such: "Do thyself no harm!" Remember there is no *restart* button!

CONCLUSION

Certainly no one could properly claim that the apostle Paul did not have a rough life (2 Cor. 11:23-33). There is no doubt that an *early* entrance into the afterlife would have been a great relief to him. Paul knew and lived in the confidence that his labors for Christ would turn out to his salvation according to his earnest expectation and hope that "with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether by life, or by death"

(Phi. 1:20). Then he declares: “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21), thereby indicating his longing to die and leave behind all of the things of this life which sometimes made it unbearable. He acknowledges that he is in a strait between the choice of life or death, and admits to “having the desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better” (1:23) for himself personally. Yet, Paul **does not commit or attempt suicide!** No, he would leave the timing of his death up to his sovereign Lord (cf. 1 Sam. 2:6; John 21:20-23; 2 Cor. 1:8-10) since he realized that he was needed on earth for the benefit of others (Phil. 1:22, 24-26; 1 Cor. 9:19-27). He constantly encouraged Christians to look beyond themselves and transform selfishness into a desire to serve others. My friend, **you** also are the Savior’s “workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God afore prepared that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Paul knew that value was not associated with what other people think of us nor with the humanistically-derived values of secular society; because he knew his value came from God through Christ (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 1 Tim. 1:15-16). The Lord encapsulated what it is all about by saying: “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:25—KJV). Every person has value regardless of age, appearance, abilities, illness, or physical handicaps. **Do thyself no harm!**¹

ENDNOTE

1. For some excellent advice to anyone tempted to commit self-murder, read the section giving advice to the tempted in “Suicide: Gateway to Peace?” by William C. Nichols [<http://www.intoutreach.org/GatewaytoPeace.pdf>].

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IMMODESTY

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INTRODUCTION

Are people interested in their bodies—their physical appearances, the clothing of them, and the accessories that pertain thereto? To ask that question is to answer it. People are not only interested, but many are interested to the extreme in their physical appearance—how much “skin” they expose to the public and its decoration. The tattoo and body piercing craze testify to that fact. Sex appeal is the underlying factor by which most of the aforementioned matters are governed and determined. The entertainment, fashion, and advertising businesses have long depended on the exposure of the human body, its clothing, and decoration in sexually provocative ways to magnify, attract, hold the attention of, and persuade people to embrace whatever it is that they are promoting or selling. For the most part those in the fashion business are only interested in clothing on the basis of how sexually attractive it is. Biblical modesty has no place in the thinking of those involved in developing today's fashions. If anything, the fashion elite stand diametrically opposed to the Bible's teaching about modesty.

In the midst of this flesh pot culture, God does not lower His standard for Christian living. Indeed, the leavening influence for

good (as the Bible defines the good) is needed now more than ever. God demands that Christians (as that term is defined and used in the New Testament) be radically different from any culture that is governed and dominated by “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16; Mat. 5:16). To one extent or another, all world cultures are governed thereby. To this world Christians are “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Pet. 2:11). They do not love the world, and thus they do not love the things in the world (1 John 2:15). Moreover, Christians know if they do love such things, the love of the Father is not in them (2:15).

To the Corinthian brethren Paul wrote, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33). “Evil communications” was rendered by the translators of the American Standard Version (1901) as “evil companionship.” It conveys the idea of keeping company with “evil people” (as the Bible defines “evil people”). Church members are companying with evil people when they have an indifferent and smug attitude regarding the worldly influences that are churning our society and invading the church.

Christians will seek to avoid situations and circumstances that encourage immoral thoughts and inflame lust (Luke: 9:23; 1 Cor. 6:18). Through faith in God and in His power they will keep themselves pure (10:13; Eph. 3:20; Phi. 4:13). Also, because Christians fear God and seek to please Him, they can overcome lustful thoughts as well as avoid those environments that encourage and tempt one to sin (Psa. 51:4; 2 Cor. 5:9-11; 7:1; 1 The. 4:2-5). Christians know the consequences of disobeying God and do not want to bring upon themselves God’s wrath (Heb. 12:9-11; Jam. 1:13-15). Furthermore, knowing that lust seldom remains a private matter, and because they are children of God, Christians are always deeply concerned about their own reputation (Pro. 22:1; Ecc. 7:1). Their love for God, His Christ, the Gospel system, the church of Christ, and the spiritual well-being of their fellowman motivates the faithful to consider the impact of their conduct on the lives of all those round about them (Mark 12:28-31; Eph. 5:3; 1 The. 4:6; 5:22).

According to Romans 12:1-2, Christians do not conform to this world, but they march to the Scriptural cadence of the Captain of their salvation—the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Only Jesus calls cadence for his army of saints through His authoritative New Testament (2 Tim. 2:15; Col. 3:17; Jam. 1:25; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; John 12:48; 14:6, 15). Thus, their minds are renewed and their lives thereby transformed as they walk in the light as Christ is in the light (1 John 1:7; Acts 2:42). The significance of this heavenly transformation is seen in the Biblical doctrine of modesty.

As a part of this life-transformation few believers in Christ would argue against the necessity of Christians controlling and guarding their speech and behavior. However, strange as it may seem, when it comes to the human body's presentation to the public, for whatever reason, some fail to realize that the way one clothes, decorates, and presents one's body is a part of one's behavior. Such behavior projects the spiritual and moral system forming, governing, and motivating a person. So the following question is posed—**Why is the preceding fact so difficult for some who claim to be servants of Jesus to understand and make the necessary application of it to their lives?**

Thinking people fully understand that the human body, the clothing of it, and how clothing is worn exercise a powerful influence over those around them whether for good or bad. Thus, above all people, Christians must realize that the presentation of their bodies, **what** they wear, and **how** they wear it send very strong messages to those around them. Also, the moral and spiritual principles molding one's character direct the choices one makes concerning the exposure of the body, including clothing and how it is worn. We, therefore, should not be surprised that Jesus said, "Ye shall know them by their fruits," and "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Mat. 7:16, 20). Clearly our Lord's statements find much broader application in the lives and conduct of Christians than some *believers* want to admit. Hence, if anyone on earth should be greatly concerned about one's appearance, it is the Christian. Remember *Christian* means "of Christ." Therefore, this defini-

tion should be enough to cause any Christian to realize that the appearance of one's body (how it is dressed and decorated), speaks volumes to one's fellow man about Christian character—the spiritual and moral precepts forming and controlling it.

MODESTY—WHAT IS IT?

We continue our study by noticing a dictionary definition of *modesty*—“reserve or propriety in speech, dress, or behavior.” However, that definition does not tell us the details of what it means to be “reserved” and “proper”—how those terms bear on our “speech, dress, or behavior.” Only God can correctly teach us the details in being “reserved or proper in speech, dress, and behavior.” The only place one can find God speaking about these matters is in the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25). With this important background material in mind, we go forward in this study of modesty.

The Bible's Definition of One Being Naked and Being Clothed

Without God's guidance people determine, engage in, and omit all sorts of things on the sole basis of what seems right to them. However, the Proverbs' writer tells us the consequences of man directing his own affairs: “There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (16:25). It is terrible thing that mankind in general has never learned and followed the message of Proverbs 16:25 in their approach to God and their interaction with their fellow man. Instead, the following best describes the routine conduct of most people throughout mans' history: “Every way of a man *is* right in his own eyes” (21:2). Therefore, from Eve's first bite of the forbidden fruit until this present hour (and I am fully persuaded till the end of time), Proverbs 21:2 will describe the approach most people take in determining what is right and what is wrong.

The first mention of clothing is found in Genesis 3:7. Eve and Adam's sin changed their view of themselves. In their sinless innocence, they did not know they were naked. However, following their transgression of God's law, their knowledge of things was greatly altered. With it came a change in their perception of themselves and,

no doubt, their understanding of many other things. Aware of their nakedness, they were ashamed because of it (3:7, 10-11; 1 John 3:4). In their efforts to cover their nakedness, they did not have God's guidance in the garments they made.

The divine record informs us that Adam and Eve “sewed fig leaves together” to make aprons to cover their nakedness. Although Adam was wearing his *homemade apron*, he knew he had not covered his nakedness. Notice his response to God: “And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself” (Gen. 3:9-10). Thus, he was ashamed to be in the presence of God in that condition—which is more than can be said for many today, including some church members.

God then killed animals, took their skins, and made coats from them to properly cover Adam's and Eve's nakedness. (Although it is a very interesting study in this investigation of what the Bible teaches about modesty, we will not consider if there is any significance in God killing the animals to cover Adam's and Eve's naked bodies with skin coats, the possible relationship of those coats to the couple's sin, their nakedness, their shame, and the first animal sacrifices.) It was only after Adam and Eve were covered (as God defined being properly covered) with the animal skin coats that He pronounced the first couple to be clothed (3:21).

Hebrew Words Bearing on the Meaning of Modesty

As we continue our study, we learn that the coats God made for Adam and Eve covered the upper body and extended well below the waist. It must be noted that in Genesis 3:21 the Hebrew word translated “coats” (“tunics” or “garments” in some versions), means literally “covering robes.” The Holy Spirit inspired Moses to choose these words to describe the part of the body covered by Adam and Eve's fig leaf aprons. The words are: “*Chagowr, khag-ore*’; and (feminine) *chagowrah, khag-o-raw*’; or *chagorah, khag-o-raw*’; from 2296; a belt (for the waist):—apron, armour, gird(-le)” (Strong 2290). Thus, as previously noted, Adam knew he continued to be naked although he was wearing his apron (Gen. 3:10)—and so did God

(3:21). This is the case because their aprons only covered the mid-part of their bodies and nothing else. The word used to describe both Joseph's coat of many colors, and the priests' clothing is the same Hebrew word translated "coats" in Genesis 3:21.

While they may have accomplished the following for Adam and Eve, their coats were not for the purpose of adornment, helping to keep them warm, or for the protection of their bodies. Let it be emphasized that the purpose of the coats God made for Adam and Eve was to cover their naked bodies. Also, one may be sure that whatever God made, it covered whatever God defined as *naked*. God knew and knows what nakedness is and how to cover it so man will be modest. By examining other Scriptures bearing on this topic one can get a better picture of God's definition of *naked* and *clothed*. By what He explicitly and implicitly teaches elsewhere in His Word one can learn more about the length of the skin coats He made for Adam and Eve; thereby one can understand God's view of a modestly dressed person.

God's Pattern for the Priest's Clothing

Under the Law of Moses, regarding the attire worn by the priests in their service around and in the Tabernacle, God gave the pattern for the priest's clothing. He declared, "Neither shalt thou go up by steps unto mine altar, that thy nakedness be not discovered thereon" (Exo. 20:26). Furthermore He directed, "And thou shalt make them linen breeches to cover their nakedness; from the loins even unto the thighs they shall reach" (28:42). Also, the following passage from Isaiah helps one to understand the Lord's definition of what nakedness is and what it is not. The great Messianic prophet of God declared:

Take the millstones, and grind meal: Uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, Uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers. Thy nakedness shall be uncovered, yea, thy shame shall be seen: I will take vengeance, and I will not meet *thee as a man* (Isa. 47:2-3).

In concise language God revealed that the "waist" and "the thighs" are to be fully clothed for one's nakedness to be covered. He makes it very clear that if they failed to cover themselves "from the loins

even unto the thighs” (28:42), they were naked. To expose one’s nakedness is the same as revealing one’s shame. To “make bare the leg,” and “uncover the thigh” one’s “nakedness shall be uncovered”—modern definitions of nakedness and unfaithful church members notwithstanding. Thus, when we take the totality of the Scriptural information bearing on what it is to be naked and what is to be covered, it is not difficult to see that the area from the shoulders to at least the knees was to be covered. To cover less of the human body meant that God judged that person to be naked.

As it was with Adam and Eve’s nakedness, throughout the Bible nakedness is not limited to one wearing no clothing at all. It also labels the improper covering of the human body as naked. Other examples of the human body being called naked when it was improperly clothed are the bodies of the following men: Saul, David, Isaiah, and the apostle Peter. They were considered naked because they were in their under clothes (1 Sam. 19:24; 2 Sam. 6:14, 20, 1 Chr. 15:27; Isa. 20:2-4; John 21:7). Indeed, Peter did not want Christ to see him until he was properly clothed.

Let us now notice the facts we have learned thus far from this study of Biblical modesty.

- It is the case that God determines the definitions of *naked* and *clothed*.
- It is also the case that Adam and Eve’s fig leaf aprons did not cover their nakedness and Adam knew it.
- It is the case that God made skin coats to properly cover their nakedness.
- It is the case that the Hebrew word translated *coats* means garments that cover from the shoulders to well below the waist.
- Moreover, it is the case that Exodus 28:42 and Isaiah 47:2-3 teach us that to “make bare the leg” and “uncover the thigh” is to expose one’s “nakedness.”
- Thus, it is the case that the skin coats God made for Adam and Eve covered from the shoulders to below the knee.

Family Members Are Not to Appear Naked Before Their Families

God also expects family members not to appear naked before one another. That general rule is seen in the case of Noah and his three sons found in Genesis 9:22-24. Of that event Moses wrote:

And Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brethren without. And Shem and Japheth took a garment, and laid *it* upon both their shoulders, and went backward, and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces *were* backward, and they saw not their father's nakedness. And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him.

Because of Ham's conduct he and his family were cursed because he saw his father's nakedness and told his brothers about it. It is very important to note how Shem and Japheth were careful to cover their father without looking on him. Obviously, as a general rule God demands that we do not see the nakedness of family members.

There are exceptions to this general rule. One of those exceptions is found in the husband and wife relationship (2:24; Heb. 13:4). A second exception has to do with caring for innocent infants, babies, and little children who must be bathed, clothed, and tended when sick. A third exception must be made for any ill family member, those with disabilities, and the infirmities of the elderly. Even in the previous cases modesty should be maintained as much as possible. This necessary viewing of naked people for the previous reasons, under these given situations and circumstances, is no more and in some cases less than what physicians, nurses, and other care-givers must experience in caring for patients. And, certainly, when one accidentally sees a naked family member it does not constitute sin. However, one should as quickly as possible remedy the matter. Of course we should attempt to avoid situations where this may happen. Fleshly Israel under the Law of Moses was taught in Leviticus 18:6: "None of you shall approach to any that is near of kin to him, to uncover their nakedness: I am the Lord." After all, it is in the home where children ought to be taught and trained regarding spiritual and moral matters—which would include being taught and

trained in Biblical modesty and what God's definitions of nakedness and being clothed are.

The Modest Mind

With the previous necessary information examined, we should be better equipped to understand the Bible's teaching concerning modesty and better able to apply it to everyday living. Actually the study of modesty does not begin and end with the clothes one wears and how they are worn. **Modesty pertains to one's attitude or mindset—especially as that attitude relates to, is associated with, and involves one's actions before and with other people.** One who craves the attention of others to the point of being bold, forward, and brash in getting their attention does not possess a modest attitude, and it will show up in the conduct of that person.

Concerning the Christian sister's attitude and demeanor Paul wrote:

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 (1 Tim. 2:8-10).

The apostle Peter had the following to say on the same topic:

Whose adorning let it not be that outward *adorning* of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; But *let it be* the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, *even the ornament* of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Pet. 3:3-4).

What did these inspired apostles desire their readers, especially girls and women, to understand by the following: "professing godliness," "hidden man of the heart," "the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit"? In answering the preceding question we will begin with *modest*. In the King James Version of the Bible our English word *modest* appears only in 1 Timothy 2:9. However, other words pertaining to modesty are found in the Bible. "Modesty" translates the Greek word *kosmios*, meaning "orderly, proper, decent, modest, respectable." *Kosmios* and *kosmeo* are derivatives of their root *kos-*

mos, meaning “order, adornment, decoration.” Also, the Holy Spirit guided the inspired writers to use *kosmos* to reference the Divine order of the universe (Mat. 13:35; John 3:16; 1 John 2:15; Jam. 1:27). Furthermore, in 1 Timothy 2:9-10 “adorn” translates *kosmeo* and “modest” is rendered from *kosmios*. Also, in 1 Peter 3:3-4 “adorning” translates *kosmos*. In that passage, Peter makes reference to the inward man or spirit when he writes of the “hidden man of the heart.” In other words, the way one lives reflects one’s character and one’s character is formed by the moral and spiritual standard that guides one’s life. One’s Christian behavior is directly related to one’s faith, or the lack of it, in God, His Christ, and His Word—for faith comes by hearing the Word of God and “we walk by faith and not by sight” (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 2:19).

Clearly one’s attire can and does send a message to others. “And, behold, there met him a woman *With* the attire of an harlot, and subtil of heart” (Pro. 7:10; see also the “brides attire” in Jer. 2:32 along with Eze. 23:15). That being the case, what do the following kinds of attire advertise the person wearing them to be—halter and tube tops, “Tanks,” “Tees,” and “Camis,” sheer blouses, low-cut shirts and blouses, mini-skirts, low-rise jeans, short shorts, dresses with low-cut fronts or backs, skirts and dresses with side slits, skin-tight slacks, blue jeans, etc.? How can a person honestly wear the name Christian while exposing their bare mid-riffs, short tee shirts or camis worn with low-rise pants to reveal less than unflattering bellies, gross navels more times than not pierced and with some ring or piece of metal, and tattoos just above the cleavage of the derrière. Then there are the dyed, bleached jeans (many of them full of holes), the patterns of which give emphasis to the private areas of the body.

If the previously noted and described attire is not characteristic of “the attire of a harlot,” what would a prostitute wear to advertise her immoral business? However, many so-called Christians—parents and their children—claim to see no contradiction in their approval, wearing, and defense of such attire with the New Testament principles of modesty and godliness.

At home and public pools, on the beaches, the river banks, the parks, the malls, in public school activities, the movies, television programs, the Internet, X-Box games, and in literature of every description, nakedness and lewd conduct is marching boldly and without shame through every level society in the culture of the Western world. Sadly, many of those who profess to be followers of Christ, not only participate in, but defend, and take pleasure in this ungodly activity.

Due to the differences in their physical bodies it is easier for a female to be immodest than it is for a male. But it is clear that the clothing in which God attired Adam, the Divine directives concerning the clothing for the priests under the Law of Moses, the teaching of the New Testament concerning Godly living, and what it teaches about modesty that men too must be greatly concerned about their own conduct. Of such matters the Psalmist wrote:

Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed *thereto* according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, That I might not sin against thee (Psa. 119:9-11).

In the New Testament Paul wrote to the young man Timothy, already an evangelist of Christ: “Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart” (2 Tim. 2:22). No one can follow the previous instruction from the psalmist, the great apostle to the Gentiles, and the rest of the New Testament’s teaching pertaining to Christian living and participate in and enjoy the previous unscriptural activities or the ones to follow.

For many years it has been acceptable in many cultures for males to go shirtless in public. Whether it is swimming or other recreational activities, men have disrobed to participate therein. This is the case because of man’s long accepted erroneous definition of what is and what is not naked. The skin-tight skimpy Speedo one sees worn by the Olympic male swimmers is a sad example of public male nakedness that has become acceptable to the United States

culture. Realizing that God put coats on Adam and Eve to cover their nakedness, would He not do the same today to the males and females who wear the commonly acceptable swimming and recreational attire of our culture? Indeed, Adam and Eve may have covered more of their bodies with their fig leaves than some people do *dressed* in today's swimming attire.

The Hip Hop attire of today is seen in the baggy trousers that are so *off the hips* it is difficult to understand why they do not fall down around the ankles of the wearer. This kind of dress originated in the inner-city culture and is anything but modest. The fashion of the Hip Hop culture cannot be separated from the explicit sexual lyrics of such music and its pornographic imagery that are a part of its performances.

Why is it that Christians do not know that they are as obligated to God to find Bible authority for the way they present their bodies to the public, including what clothing they wear and how it is worn, as much as they are to have Bible authority for anything else they believe and practice (Col. 3:17). Furthermore, Christians are obligated to apply the principle, "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 The. 5:21), in determining what is and what is not modest attire.

CONCLUSION

We have choices to make. We can believe and live our lives according to the following Scripture:

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether *it be* good, or whether *it be* evil (Ecc. 12:13-14).

Or, we can reject it and live according to the lusts of the flesh, eyes, and the pride of life. If we choose the latter, we must be prepared to face God in the final judgment and receive the eternal consequences of our failure to obey God. "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption" (Gal. 6:8).

Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, ha-

tered, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 6:19-21).

Christians are to “walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col. 1:10).

God expects parents to know what is involved in providing Spiritual training for their children. Training, instructing, and disciplining them is the obligation of Christian parents and God has not authorized them to pass the buck to anyone else—certainly not the public schools, or the parents of their friends, and believe it or not, the church is not charged by God to rear children. Parents are expected to set Godly examples before their children (Deu. 6:4-9; Eph. 6:4). For parents to discharge their God-given responsibility to their children, they must involve themselves in their children’s lives. This means they must know where their children go, who their friends are, the Internet sites they visit, the books they read, the movies they watch, and what they are taught in school.

Parents must realize that relativism, subjectivity, and emotionalism are taking the place of absolute objective humanly attainable truth; that moral standards and rules are being replaced with feelings and opinions. Privileges are now confused with rights and all authority is questioned and challenged at every level of our society. This means Godly parents have a responsibility on their shoulders that previous generations did not have. Today, parents are not going to receive help and reinforcement from the government, the public schools, the new media, higher education, and many other parents when it comes to teaching their children the Biblical doctrine on anything and that certainly includes modesty. Never-the-less God has obligated children to obey and honor their parents (Eph. 6:1-3), and parents must do their duty to their children according to the teaching of the Bible regarding the same.

Parents must set the example, teach, train, guide, and, when all is said and done, see that their children comply with the Scriptural

teaching about modesty. They must teach their children that there is no shame in being ridiculed and mocked because they chose to live like the Bible teaches regarding all of one's life—that certainly includes what it teaches about the modest mind and conduct.

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TELEVISION AND MOVIES

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“I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; *it shall not cleave to me*” (Psa. 101:3).

The invention and development of Motion Pictures and Television has changed the world forever. Like many other inventions and technological advancements, man has found a way to use them for evil. It is not that these mediums of communication and entertainment are evil in and of themselves, but it is the sinful way they are used that makes them a curse on mankind.

In stark contrast to today, early television was light-hearted and informative in the early years. People were not bombarded with graphic violence and profane speech. There was a *wholesomeness* and light-heartedness to much of the programming. It was a time when the family could gather together and enjoy *clean* entertainment and not be concerned with inappropriate material being thrust upon them. The industries had a code that set a standard based on moral values. Today it seems that those who run the entertainment industry are trying to destroy any semblance of decency. “The Code of Practices for Television Broadcasters” was established on December 6, 1951. Perhaps the reader remember seeing the “Seal of Good Practice,” displayed during closing credits on early television programs. The code prohibited the use of profanity, the negative portrayal of family life, irreverence for God and religion, illicit sex, drunkenness and addiction, presentation of cruelty, detailed techniques of crime, the use of horror for its own sake, and the negative portrayal of law enforcement officials, among others. The code

regulated how performers should dress and move to be within the “bounds of decency.” By the early 1980s the code was discarded (“Code”).

If the entertainment had kept to those standards, all of this corruption would be non-existent. The reality is that we live in a different (not in a good sense) world today, and the entertainment industry has led the way as the “Pied Piper,” and we, the gullible, are following. Television and Movies are not inherently evil. What makes them evil is the way they are used for evil purposes. There is the potential for much good through the proper use of these mediums and many have taken advantage of them to promote good. Our vote for good or evil takes place with our wallet. When we spend our money on evil things, we become partakers in the producer’s evil deeds.

From the beginning, movie producers did everything they could to keep all censorship in house. They were very successful in keeping the government from intervening for many years. The movie industry made no secret of the fact that they were contributing to the campaigns of any politician who agreed with them and opposing any who were in favor of government control. Today, we see the most radical and immoral Hollywood personalities using their influence to support the liberal agenda.

The “I Love Lucy” show was immensely popular and is revered by many even today. There is even a *shrine* to Lucy and her work at Universal Studios Theme Park in Orlando, Florida, where you can see a collection of memorabilia. In the early days of television, married couples had twin beds. In many episodes, Lucy was guilty of lying and trying to trick her husband. It seemed that there was always one underhanded scheme or another going on. Everyone laughed but, conditioning, desensitizing in its early stages, had begun. Remember the four stages for desensitizing one: first there is abhorrence, next comes toleration, then follows acceptance, and finally approval.

We have become desensitized to every vice imaginable in all of its graphic details and wonder what is wrong with the world—with the

church? No man can serve two masters. We used to wait for movies to come to the TV where the objectionable material would be removed for family viewing. Now television is hardly fit to watch. A Christian can find worthwhile programs, but he must be very discerning. Profanity and taking the Lord's name in vain is pervasive in almost the whole gamut of programming including such seemingly innocuous shows as cooking and home improvement. Almost every DIY (Do It Yourself Network) show ending has the homeowner exclaiming "Oh my God" or "Oh my gosh" repeatedly (Exo. 20:7). How can anyone not be affected by all of the trash we allow ourselves to be exposed to? The answer is simple, we cannot!

The next step in corrupting us is already in the works. It has long been a problem in the movie industry and pay TV but now the television industry is fighting to allow nudity on *regular* TV, which is regulated by the government to protect us from harmful material—the FCC. It was recently reported on the Internet about the latest ruling by the U.S. Second Circuit Court of Appeals, which tossed out a fine against ABC for a "NYPD Blue" episode that included a scene of a nude woman. This ruling will no doubt lead to more challenges and embolden the networks to air more of the same. No doubt, when (and there is little hope to say if) this happens, what will come next? We are getting dangerously close to the time when the TV will have to be tossed from the Christian's home. It is time to wake up and take control before it is too late. Need we be reminded of what Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:13: "But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

THE RATING SYSTEM

In America, the movies are rated by the Motion Picture Association of America as follows:

- G—General Audiences. All Ages Admitted
- PG—Parental Guidance Suggested. Some Material May Not Be Suitable For Children
- PG-13—Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some Material May Be Inappropriate For Children Under 13
- R—Restricted. Under 17 Requires Accompanying Parent or Adult Guardian

NC-17—No one 17 and Under Admitted [the old X rated]
 (“What”)

Television ratings:

TV-Y—All children ages 0-6

TV-Y7—Directed to children 7 and older

TV-Y7-FV—Directed to children 7 and older with fantasy violence in shows

TV-G—General audience

TV-PG—Parental guidance suggested [may have “suggestive dialogue, mild coarse language, sexual situations, moderate violence”]

TV-14—Parents strongly cautioned/May be unsuitable for children under 14 years of age [may have “highly suggestive dialogue, strong coarse language, intense sexual situations, intense violence”]

TV-MA—Mature audience—unsuitable for audiences under 17 (“TV”)

These ratings are widely abused by the industry. Just because it may have a G-rating does not mean that it is okay. Many of them promote occultism, New Age, fantasy, evolution, mockery of holy things, and other inappropriate material.

COLLUSION OR COINCIDENCE?

We know that Satan uses every tool possible to corrupt mankind. The evidence, when properly examined, should cause every right thinking person to conclude that there is a concerted, deliberate effort in the motion picture and television industries to corrupt all who hold any moral or religious convictions (especially Christian).

The following information available on the *American Humanist Association* website is included to show the connection between the Humanist agenda and the type of programs found in the television and movie industry. Many of the signers and members of the Humanist organization are found in the TV and motion picture industries. Concerning the Humanist Manifesto II, Paul Kurtz and Edwin H. Wilson write in the preface:

As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to live and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith. Salvationism, based on mere affirmation, still appears as harmful,

diverting people with false hopes of heaven hereafter. Reasonable minds look to other means for survival (“About”).

Notice these excerpts from this Manifesto:

Religion

In the best sense, religion may inspire dedication to the highest ethical ideals.... We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species....we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species.... No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.... Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.

Ethics

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is autonomous and situational needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest.

The Individual

We reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, dehumanize personality.... In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized....neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered “evil.”

Democratic Society

also includes a recognition of an individual’s right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide.... People are more important than decalogues, rules, proscriptions, or regulations.... The separation of church and state and the separation of ideology and state are imperatives.

World Community

We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to transcend the limits of national sovereignty and to move toward the building of a world community in which all sectors of the human family can participate. Thus we look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government (“About”).

By their own words, and they make no effort to hide their intentions, the humanists have declared war on every God-believing person. We must not fail to sound the alarm concerning the humanist agenda. By the way, this plan is not some future project; they have been implementing it since 1933 (the date of the first manifesto with the second being in 1973)! They have been very effective in promoting their agenda by means of TV and movies. They also highly influence our educational systems.

The best place to engage the enemy starts in your home. You can help stop this insidious evil immediately by taking control of your own TV and movie habits. Many books have been written, thousands of studies have been made and one common conclusion is clear; we are being destroyed morally and spiritually by the garbage spewed out of this monster, this eight-hundred-pound gorilla in the room. Not only are we allowing this filth in our homes, we are also going to the theaters and paying good money to be “entertained?” We think nothing of spending \$10 for a theater ticket or \$50-100.00 a month for cable/satellite service and then rob God by our meager giving on Sunday. How many of us are guilty of spending a small fortune in tapes, CDs, and DVDs that would not pass the test for airing among our church family? How long can we survive as Christians on the diet that Hollywood is feeding us? Have we been compromised to the point that we cannot see the evil for what it is? Are we like so many that have watched gore and horror movies so much that we say, “It doesn’t bother me”? One’s lack of sensitivity is not the solution—it just may be the real problem. Lot was surrounded by sin, but he never became desensitized to it. Peter tells us that Lot was vexed by the sinfulness around him (2 Pet. 2:7-8). Adam Clarke comments about verse 8, saying:

The word ἐβασάνιζεν *tormented*, is not less emphatic than the word καταπονούμενον, *grievously pained*, in the preceding verse, and shows what this man must have felt in dwelling so long among a people so abandoned (887).

How many times have we complained about not having enough time to do this, that, or the other thing? We generally make time

for the things we really want to do. If we would be honest with ourselves for a moment, we might realize that, if we would spend less time in front of the “idiot box,” we might have time to study our Bibles more, visit the sick, help the needy, talk to our neighbors about Christ, and attend all the services of the church. Who knows, we might even get to know our own family better. Here is a challenge for the reader: keep a diary for one week of all the time you spend watching TV. Then evaluate how much you benefited from all the programs you watched. Then ask yourself if you could do something better with your time. Here is a radical idea, try going without TV for a week. For the weak, try one day first.

The following articles are but a very few, but profound, proofs that TV is bad for the physical well-being of babies, adolescents, and teens.

Nancy Shute wrote an article titled, “TV Watching is Bad for Babies’ Brains.” She reported that the study, which appeared in the *Archives of Pediatric and Adolescent Medicine*

followed 259 lower-income families in New York.... Other studies examining higher-income families *have* also come to the same conclusion: TV watching not only isn’t educational, but it seems to stunt babies’ development.... But what about “good” TV, like *Sesame Street*? ... Earlier research by some of the same scientists... has found that parents whose children watch non-educational TV programs like *SpongeBob SquarePants* spend less time reading to their children or teaching them...clearly that electronic babysitter is not an educational aid.... This latest study adds more fuel to a recommendation from the American Academy of Pediatrics that babies under age 2 watch no TV at all.

Previously she had written:

Babies who watch TV are more likely to have delayed cognitive development and language at 14 months, especially if they’re watching programs intended for adults and older children.... Babies who watched 60 minutes of TV daily had developmental scores one-third lower at 14 months than babies who weren’t watching that much TV. Though their developmental scores were still in the normal range, the discrepancy may be due to the fact that when kids and parents are watching TV, they’re missing out

on talking, playing, and interactions that are essential to learning and development.

Coleen Cook wrote concerning the effect TV has on children's brains.

The latest research into neuropsychology suggests that TV and other electronic media are changing the actual brain structures of children. Scientists say that what children see and do every day changes their brains both structurally and functionally, particularly in the first seven years of life. Scientists confirm that early language and sensory experience can dramatically alter early brain development. Educational psychologist Jane Healy, the author of *Endangered Minds: Why Our Children Don't Think*, warns that the large doses of TV viewing now common in day-care centers and in some schools and homes are a major contributor to lagging national academic skills. Researchers now have documented evidence that both children and adults exposed to TV suffered a 20 percent decline in average SAT scores over the past twenty-five years. The long-term implications of this are enormous. Warns one researcher, such a decline could spell the end of America as a first-class technological power. Healy charges that TV and related video games have conditioned today's child to quick gratification and ceaseless, rapidly changing stimulation, damaging his ability to concentrate on sustained mental activities and leaving him in need of constant stimulation. Noteworthy is the fact that textbook publishers now cite this conditioned need for stimulation as a reason behind a growing trend toward occult-oriented textbooks now being offered children (259).

Coleen's exposé, from the viewpoint of an insider, not only enumerates many of the problems caused by TV but also challenges the reader to "Tame the Tyrant."

An article by Nancy Shute dealing with the problem of depression ("Television and Adolescent Depression") says:

Parents who don't want their children to turn into morose screen addicts may be wise to take a look at how their children use media, not just how much....a 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation study found that children average 6.5 to 8.5 hours of media exposure a day. It's as if kids are putting in a full workweek in front of the screen.... There's good evidence that kids get fatter as they watch more TV and that lots of gaming can increase a teen's aggression and anxiety.... The evidence already out there suggests

that people who watch lots of TV tend to be more depressed, but that could just be because unhappy people like to watch TV.... Teenagers who watched TV were more likely to report symptoms of depression, with the rate increasing 8 percent with every hour of TV watched....most teenagers watch three to four hours of TV daily.... It could be that one reason the depression risk goes up with TV dosage is that it keeps kids away from activities known to reduce the risk of depression, such as time with friends and family, sports, and exercise.... Get rid of the TV in the bedroom...kids with TVs in the bedroom gain more weight than kids who watch with the family.

Kurtis Hiatt, in his article titled, “Kids’ Late Night Texts, Games Could Lead to Attention, Mood Problems,” highlights another problem facing youth in this technological advanced age.

Texting, surfing the Web, and playing video games before bed could lead to attention and learning problems, anxiety, mood swings, and even depression.... The kids reported sending an average of 34 text messages or E-mails each night, and said they sent the texts between 10 minutes and four hours after parents said “lights out!” Texts or calls also awoke the kids an average of once a night. “These activities are not sleep-promoting.... They stimulate the brain and depress normal sleep cycles.” Roughly half of the children’s parents didn’t know their kids were cuddling up to their favorite media; others knew, but thought, “This is the world we live in, what can you do?” Polos said.

Rebecca Wyatt writes:

Teen-agers want their parents to be more involved in their lives.... “They want their parents’ guidance and need them to be a larger part of their world.”

The report continued:

Teens think that if their parents listened more and taught them morals, they could make better decisions. “Parents should be role models for their kids so their kids will know what to do,” one girl in the study said. One boy said he wanted more time with his father. “I almost never eat with my parents,” he said. “You know why? My dad is always working. Always. My dad is either at work or on the Internet.”

The study recommended that parents should instill values into their children through both word and action. It was also stated that setting limits worked best when “youth know this is being done because the adult loves them and cares about what is in their best interest.” Parents were encouraged to spend time doing activities with them, like eating together, biking, or hiking. Teens “wanted time with their parents in recreation rather than work, and time that involved conversation rather than lecture.”

The study failed to address the most important subject—the spiritual well-being of the youth. It is clear that the child is not going to receive spiritual guidance from the school, TV, or the motion picture industry. On the contrary, these things stand in opposition to God’s Word. The responsibility rests squarely on the parent’s shoulders (Eph. 6:1-4; cf. Deu. 4:10; 6:7). We must do a better job as parents and give our children the guidance they so desperately need (Pro. 22:6). A Biblical model of the kind of parent God approves of is found in Abraham.

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him (Gen 18:19).

Would God have the same confidence in us as parents?

The Moorings has some excellent lessons on the evils of TV on their web site. In assessing the blame for the moral decline, *The Moorings’* narrator is on target when he says that “the primary cause is our departure from a Biblical world view” (Rickard). We have stood by silently while the devil has been hard at work in reshaping our world view from aspiring to Biblical values to a carnal view. The article continues:

but there are also secondary causes. One of the most important is television. Its formative influence on children is profound, both because it is the main source of an alternative to the Biblical world view and because it has replaced traditional childhood experience with a radically new way of interacting with the world (Rickard).

The article lists some of the medical and psychological dangers in television: excessive violence, horror (the media desensitize them to

horror, making them more callous to evil and its consequences), the cult of beauty, and preoccupation with sex (“the average American adolescent will view nearly 14,000 sexual references per year” and “56% of all programs on American television were found to contain sexual content,” with “the number of sex scenes almost doubling since 1998”). It points out the claim by pediatricians that the media, especially television, is a prime cause of smoking, drinking, and drug use among adolescents. It puts the blame on TV and movies for the proliferation of “uncivil speech and conduct.” It goes to remind us that “a bad mouth dominates children’s programs.”

In the 1990s there was a report of an experiment with some high school students in the Miami Florida area. They were shown some early TV shows such as *Leave it To Beaver*, *My Three Sons*, and *The Ozzie and Harriet Show* and asked for their reaction to them. The students’ answers were surprising. They said they felt cheated in that their lifestyle was so much more difficult than that portrayed in the shows. They had to deal with guns, knives, drugs, and violence in their schools, whereas the “Beaver’s” problems were so much simpler, like getting caught talking or chewing gum in class. They resented the fact that their childhood was stolen away and that they had to grow up too fast. Kids need time to be kids. Instead, they are being exposed to things they are not mature enough to handle. It is too much of a burden on them to be expected to make the right decisions when they are too young to know how to handle this information overload. Too much too soon is a formula for disaster. We need to be better overseers and know what our children are seeing on television and at the movies.

Movies, from their beginnings, have had a profound effect upon society. From “peep shows” and nickelodeons in the late 1800s to the introduction of moving pictures around 1895, people flocked to see the latest movie.

By 1910 26 million Americans were attending the movies each week. That was one-fourth of the total population. By the 1920s it was the 5th largest business in the US. By 1924, 40% of Americans went to the movies every week. Almost every town in America that had a population of 5000 or more had a movie theater.

1920s' movies greatly influenced women, representing them in a very morally loose and "liberated" way. Clara Bow was the "it girl" a free spirited, good time girl. When Rudolf Valentino died, the crowds were larger at his funeral than for that of President Harding's funeral (Wilkman).

Movie star hero worship continues on today. Our youth will eagerly watch anything that pertains to the latest super-hero but care nothing to hear about a Bible hero. Billions of dollars are spent by our youth to buy movie paraphernalia and accessories to copy the look of their favorite idol. The Bible instructs us to model modesty, sobriety, and shamefastness not immodesty, braggadocio, and immorality (1 Tim. 2:9-10).

CONCLUSION

The battle rages on and far too few Christians have a clue as to what is destroying our world today. Maybe we will wake up and engage the enemy before it is too late—if it is not already. Whose side are you on? Can God count on you to fight for what is right?

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Jos. 24:15).

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Additional Information

Here is some additional information on the history of television and movies excerpted from the listed websites.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/History_of_television>

The beginnings of mechanical television can be traced back to the discovery of the photoconductivity of the element selenium by Willoughby Smith in 1873, the invention of a scanning disk by Paul Gottlieb Nipkow in 1884 and John Logie Baird's demonstration of televised moving images in 1926.... Constantin Perskyi had coined the word *television* in a paper read to the International Electricity Congress at the International World Fair in Paris on August 25, 1900.... On March 25, 1925, Scottish inventor John Logie Baird gave the first public demonstration of televised silhouette images in motion, at Selfridge's Department Store in London. On June 13 of that year, Charles Francis Jenkins transmitted the silhouette image of a toy windmill in motion, over a distance of five miles from a naval radio station in Maryland to his laboratory in Washington...he gave the world's first demonstration of a working television system to members of the Royal Institution and a newspaper reporter on January 26, 1926 at his laboratory in London.... Practically every country in the world now has at least one broadcast television station.... The first regularly scheduled television service in the United States began on July 2, 1928.... For at least the first eighteen months, 48-line silhouette images from a motion picture film were broadcast.... *The Queen's Messenger*, a one-act play broadcast on September 11, 1928, was the world's first live drama on television.... The first live national television broadcast in the U.S. took place on September 4, 1951 of President Harry Truman's speech at the Japanese Peace Treaty Conference in San Francisco, California.... The first live coast-to-coast commercial television broadcast in the U.S. took place on November 18, 1951 during the premiere of CBS's *See It Now*.... The development of cable and satellite television in the 1970s... enabled the rise of subscription television channels, such as Home Box Office (HBO) and Showtime in the U.S., and Sky Television in the U.K....commercially made television sets were sold from 1928 to 1934 in the United Kingdom, United States, and the Soviet Union. The earliest commercially made sets (1928) were radios with the addition of a television device consisting of a neon tube behind a mechanically spinning disk (the Nipkow disk) with a spiral of apertures that produced a red postage-stamp size image,

enlarged to twice that size by a magnifying glass... Television usage in the United States skyrocketed after World War II... While only 0.5% of U.S. households had a television set in 1946, 55.7% had one in 1954, and 90% by 1962.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Age_of_Television>

The Golden Age of Television is the period in the United States between the late 1940s and 1961, a time when many hour-long anthology drama series received critical acclaim. As a new medium, television introduced many innovative programming concepts, and prime time television drama showcased both original and classic productions, including the first telecasts of Walt Disney's programs, as well as the first telecasts of Mary Martin in *Peter Pan*, MGM's classic *The Wizard of Oz* and Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*... Television did not quite play the role in people's lives in the 1950s that it does now. However, by about 1958, it had become the dominant form of home entertainment, depleting audiences in movie theaters.

<<http://www.high-techproductions.com/historyoftelevision.htm>>

The History of Film, Television & Video

1872 – 1877—A series of photographs can be viewed by stroboscopic disc.

1884—George Eastman invents flexible photographic film.

1887—Thomas Edison patents motion picture camera.

1891 – 1895—Dickson shoots numerous 15 second motion pictures using Edison's kineograph, his motion picture camera.

1894—One of the earliest motion picture experiments took place at the Thomas Edison studio in West Orange, N.J., as Fred Ott was filmed taking a pinch of snuff and sneezing.

1895—First public demonstration of motion pictures displayed in France.

1927—Talking films begin with Al Jolson in "The Jazz Singer."

1945—There were fewer than 7,000 working TV sets in the country and only nine stations on the air.

1949—By January, the number of TV stations grows to 98.

1952—National Association of Radio & Television Broadcasters ratifies a new Television Code establishing guidelines for content and addressing the concerns of social critics... In response to protests about program content, a House subcommittee investigates "offensive" and "immoral" TV programs and touches on wide range of topics—from beer spots to dramas depicting suicide.

1961—FCC Chairman Newton Minow...denounces U.S. TV as a “vast wasteland,” calling for heightened federal regulation of the medium. The same day, future Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey calls U.S. TV “the greatest single achievement in communication that anybody or any area of the world has ever known.”

1966—A *New York Times Magazine* article reports: “TV is not an art form or a cultural channel; it is an advertising medium ... it seems a bit churlish and unAmerican of people who watch television to complain that their shows are lousy. They are not supposed to be any good. They are supposed to make money.”

1975—Family viewing time is incorporated into the NAB TV code. It was decided that the time before 9 p.m. was supposed to be devoted to all members of the household. This results in a marked drop in violence on the air in “family time” during the 1975-76 season. In November 1976, a federal court overturns the policy, deeming it a violation of free speech.

1977—A Mississippi minister, Donald Wildmon, and his grass-roots protest group, American Family Association, organize a national “Turn Off TV Week” in February.

1987—Playtex International makes history in May when networks begin airing its commercials showing women wearing bras.

1993—By the start of year, 98% of U.S. households own at least one TV set, 64% have two or more sets.... “NYPD Blue” is an instant ratings hit on ABC’s new fall prime-time line-up after attracting pre-debut attention for nudity and rough language.... In October, the deliberately tasteless “Beavis and Butt-head” MTV animated series, the top-rated show on the music network, is attacked for allegedly inspiring a 5-year-old to start a fatal fire. In response, MTV agrees to run the show in a later time slot and the writers agree not to use references to fires in the future.

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<<http://www.museum.tv/eotvsection.php?entrycode=standardsand>>

STANDARDS AND PRACTICES

Standards and Practices is the term most American networks refer to as the “network censors.” The broadcasters’ insistence on setting and maintaining their own standards goes back to the very begin-

ning of the medium in 1921, when engineers were instructed to use an emergency switch in the event that a performer or guest used language or brought up topics which were held to be unsuitable. More than 67% of all television stations subscribed to the NAB (National Association of Broadcasters) Code adopted in 1950 (a similar radio code had been in operation since 1935). In addition to provisions which addressed historic concerns respecting the “advancement of education and culture,” responsibility toward children, community responsibility, and general program standards. In 1982, in settlement of an anti-trust suit brought by the U.S. Department of Justice, the NAB and the federal government entered into a consent decree abolishing the time standards and the industry-wide limitations on the number and length of commercials they provided. The Code program standards had been suspended in 1976 after a federal judge in Los Angeles ruled that the Family Hour violated the First Amendment. After the demise of the Code, the networks, which had already developed their own written standards, took over the entire burden.

FORNICATION AND ADULTERY

Dub McClish

Dub McClish is a native Texan, the son of a Gospel preacher, grandson of an elder, father of a Gospel preacher, and son-in-law of a Gospel preacher. He attended Freed-Hardeman College and received a B.A. degree from Abilene Christian College.

He has done local work in Idaho, Texas, Alabama, Kentucky, and New Mexico. Dub is a well-known author, editor, debater, publisher, and speaker who has preached the Gospel in several states and foreign countries. He has delivered special lectures at various schools of preaching. He has contributed numerous articles to various brotherhood publications as well as hundreds of bulletin articles and chapters in almost 200 books. He has extensive radio preaching experience.

Dub was the director of the Annual Denton Lectures (1982-2002) and edited all 21 Annual Denton Lectureship books, along with editing the Annual Schertz Lectures (2003-2004). He is the Founding Editor of *The Gospel Journal* (2000-2005).

After 35 years of work as a local preacher in five states (the last 12 years of which were with the Pearl Street Congregation in Denton, Texas), Dub began devoting time to combined works of Gospel meetings, mission trips, lectureships, and to writing and editing sound biblical materials. He began helping with the establishment of North-point Church of Christ, Denton, Texas, in September 2005, for which he preaches (*gratis*) when he is not traveling.

Dub is married to Lavonne (James) and they have three children (Bronwen, Hal, and Andy), seven grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

In the beginning God created mankind, made them “male and female,” and commanded them to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Gen. 1:27-28). God further inspired Moses to state His intent in this regard: “Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (2:24). Moses recorded the beginning of their fulfillment of God’s first command to them in simple and straightforward terms: “And the man knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain” (4:1a; cf. 4:25). That Adam *knew* Eve is a reference to their sexual union, the means by which they began the perpetual process of fruitfulness and multiplication of humankind God had ordered.

The foregoing statements make it evident that God created us with sexual instinct and appetite and with the ability to fulfill it. It is no less evident that He **expected** us to fulfill it. In fact, Adam

and Eve could not have obeyed God's command to reproduce and populate the earth apart from their acting upon this instinct and appetite. God made this instinct extremely strong, surpassed only by that of self-preservation, involving satisfaction of the desire/need for food and drink. In His infinite wisdom, He knew that the sexual appetite must be regulated and controlled for it to be a blessing rather than a curse. God thus ordained the fulfillment of the sexual instinct, **but only within His own clearly stated benevolent limitations**. Not only is sexual fulfillment therefore not innately sinful, evil, or shameful; when engaged in within God's limitation for it, it is guiltless, pure, and honorable.

GOD'S BOUNDARY FOR SEXUAL FULFILLMENT

The terms, *fornication* and *adultery*, which we will later define more specifically, describe sexual activity **outside** the boundary God ordained for it. This boundary must therefore be included in any discussion of these terms. Were there no such limitation, there would be no such thing as fornication and adultery, for "where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. 4:15). God **has** issued a dictum on this matter, and, as will become clear, those who ignore, reject, and disobey it become thereby guilty of fornication and/or adultery and subject to the wrath of a holy and just God.

The only sphere of innocent sexual intercourse involves three elements:

1. It must be between a man and a woman (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:24; Mat. 19:6-9; 1 Cor. 7:2; et al.)
2. It must be between a man and a woman who are married to each other (1 Cor. 7:2)
3. The man and woman must be in a marriage that God authorizes (Mat. 19:6)

Jesus stated that these limitations were God's will in the first century, that they had been so "from the beginning" (Gen. 2:24), and, by implication, that they would always be so:

And he answered and said, Have ye not read, that he who made *them* from the beginning made them male and female, and said, For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall

cleave to his wife; and the two shall become one flesh? So that they are no more two, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder (Mat. 19:4-6).

Jesus employed *fornication* and *adultery*, in the same context:

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and he that marrieth her when she is put away committeth adultery (19:9).

In a companion statement, previously uttered in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus use these same two terms in discussing marriage and divorce:

but I say unto you, that every one that putteth away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, maketh her an adulteress: and whosoever shall marry her when she is put away committeth adultery (5:32).

The two dozen or so loopholes that men have devised in an effort to evade New Testament teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage are largely traceable to attempts to justify relationships that involve fornication and/or adultery. It is now time for us to explore the meaning of these terms.

DEFINING THE TERMS

Fornication

Our English word, *fornication*, derives from the Latin term, *fornix* or *fornicis*, meaning an archway or a “vaulted chamber.”¹ A building of such description in ancient Rome was a venue for prostitutes and became a euphemism for whoredom or a brothel (“Fornication”). The Greek word rendered “fornication” in the King James and American Standard versions (1901) is *porneia*. Closely allied with it are four other words sharing the same stem (i.e., *ekporneuo*, *porneuo*, *porne*, and *pornos*). Of the fifty-six times this word family appears in the New Testament, *porneia* occurs most frequently (twenty-six times).

Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich define *porneia* as “prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse” (699). Kittel describes the use of *porneia* in the New Testament

as “all extra-marital and unnatural intercourse” (6:590). Thayer’s definition of *porneia* is “illicit sexual intercourse in general” (532). Other versions variously render this term as “sexual immorality” (NKJV), “unchastity” (RSV, TCNT), and “marital unfaithfulness” (NIV). *Porneia* is obviously a comprehensive term that embraces every sort of sexual union besides that which God has ordained within Scriptural marriage (i.e., sodomy, lesbianism, incest, bestiality, prostitution, adultery).

Adultery

Adultery in the English language traces back to the A.D. fourteenth century, when it was brought over from the Latin term, *adulterare*, meaning to corrupt (“Word Origin”). “Adultery” translates the Greek noun, *moicheia*.² Kittel defines this word simply as “adultery, illicit intercourse” (4:730). While Thayer defines *moicheia* as “adultery,” he defines the cognate verb, *moichao* as “to have unlawful intercourse with another’s wife” (417). I find it interesting that Bauer, Arndt, and Gingrich do not define any of this family of terms except by the words *adultery*, *adulterer*, *adulteress*, *commit adultery*, and *adulterous* (527-28), entirely omitting any reference to any description of that which constitutes adultery. Their doing so implies their presumption that all English readers will be aware of the meaning of these terms as they relate to sexual infidelity regarding one’s spouse. W.E. Vine defines the noun, *Moichos*, as denoting one “who has unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another” (14).

The latter day postulation that *adultery* refers only to “breaking the covenant” of marriage rather than to any sexual activity is no more than a paltry, juvenile attempt to circumvent some of the most plain, literal, and explicit doctrines of the Son of God and His inspired writers regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. In spite of this fact, some (e.g., the late John Edwards, Olan Hicks, Truman Scott—instructor at Sunset International Bible Institute—et al.), with wicked zeal rivaling that of the ancient scribes and Pharisees, have traversed “sea and land to make one proselyte,” and when they have succeeded they “make him twofold more a son of hell” than themselves (Mat. 23:15). Such preposterous theorizing is born of

sheer convenience and flies in the face of history and scholarship, both ancient and modern. This heresy, if believed, will lead people to enter into and/or remain in adulterous relationships that will cause them to be lost eternally, and the false teachers who deceived them will fare no better on the Last Day.

By way of summary, *fornication* is a broad term that embraces every form of sexual prohibition and deviance, whatever one's marital status. *Adultery* relates particularly to sexual congress of a married person with another person besides one's own spouse, thus representing a betrayal of one's marriage vows, taken before God and men. While all adultery constitutes fornication, not all fornication is adultery. Fornication **may** be related to marriage, but adultery particularly does so. Both terms are also used sparingly in a metaphorical sense to describe unfaithfulness to the Christ (e.g., "fornication"—Rev. 2:14; 17:2; et al.; "adultery"—Mat. 12:39; Jam. 4:4).

THE CORINTHIANIZED AMERICAN CULTURE

When Paul walked into Corinth in about A.D. 51, he entered a city known throughout the civilized world for its moral corruption. A hint of the moral turpitude of this ancient city is evident in Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11:

Or 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 men... And such were some of you

This pagan metropolis was renowned for its temple to the goddess, Aphrodite, allegedly hosting a thousand or more temple prostitutes. From Paul's description, it was obviously a center of sodomy, as well. Even in an amoral pagan world, Corinth was so reputed for its debauchery and lewdness that men made a verb of its name. To *Corinthianize* meant to corrupt and debase.

Our great nation has to a great extent become *Corinthianized* over the past fifty years. What has brought about this momentous metamorphosis? To identify the principal source of this moral declension, we must go back to the 19th century English naturalist, Charles Darwin. His *On the Origin of Species* (1859) cut men loose

from belief in a Creator to Whom men must give account for their behavior, including their sexual conduct. Darwin's theories created a new religion whose devotees prostrate themselves before the trinity of nature, accident, and vast eons. It provided the excuse for men to replicate the *morals* of animals, since after all they are nothing more than mere animals—advanced apes, no less. The adoption of Darwin's God-dismissive theories by the immense majority of the scientific community in our nation meant that this God-denying doctrine would find its way into the university curricula and then into public school textbooks at every level. The influence of evolutionary theory on sexual mores has been undeniably powerful and widespread.

So numerous, drastic, and extensive have been the changes in attitudes toward sexual behavior that coalesced in the 1960s that the phenomenon has earned the moniker, "sexual revolution." Perhaps we may profit by noting some of the roots of this phenomenon.

The influence of Alfred Charles Kinsey on the breakdown of sexual morality in our nation can hardly be overemphasized. This biologist *researcher* is credited with being the "father of sexology" (i.e., the study of human sexual behavior). He published his first book on the subject, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*, in 1948, and followed it in 1953 with *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*. Both books soared to the top of the best-seller lists. Only years later was it revealed that he got some of his statistics relating to little boys from a pedophile, whose identity he shielded, allowing him to continue his wicked and criminal activity. He derived his data from more than mere interviews, however.

Kinsey's sex research went beyond theory and interview to include observation of and participation in sexual activity, including homosexual activity, with co-workers and others.... Kinsey filmed sexual acts which included co-workers in the attic of his home as part of his research...to ensure the film's secrecy, which would have caused a scandal had it become public knowledge ("Alfred Kinsey").

Kinsey has been unmasked in recent years as not only a fraud in his research, but an obsessive pervert who found an academic cover

for living out his own sexual fantasies. Nevertheless, the influence of his books was major in moving sexual behavior from the marital bed to the public market place. He gave millions of Americans an excuse to experiment with *guiltless* sex as mere recreation. Perhaps, more than any other one person, he paved the way for the sexual revolution of the 1960s.

Decades before Kinsey, theological modernism and liberalism began churning out an ever-increasing number of faithless graduates from the sectarian seminaries. By the middle part of the century (post-World War II years), the effects of these pulpiteers and professors began to take their toll on the moral fiber of a nation that, from its inception, had accepted the Bible as God's standard of moral behavior. As more and more churchgoers heard their *pastors* from Sunday to Sunday cast doubt on the Bible's inspiration and infallibility, God's Word became less and less influential on national behavior in general, and particularly on morality.

Every day of my public school experience through 1953 began with a homeroom devotional, including a Bible reading and prayer. These were outlawed by a Supreme Court ruling in 1962. Coincidentally (or perhaps, not), "values-neutral" "sexuality education" courses began finding their way into the public high schools in 1963, teaching the fundamentals of sexual performance, but allowing children to reach their own conclusions about sexual morals. The premise of these courses was that "teenagers are going to be sexually active anyway"; so the main concern of the curriculum was to instruct in "safe sex." Even a dummy really low on the dummy scale can figure out that plugging in classes on sexual performance and removing prayer and Bible reading would do little to improve moral standards in young people. The beginning of the moral decline of our nation can undeniably be dated from the time of these events, and I suspect they were a prime cause of the decline as well.

Millions of young post-World War II parents listened more to the radical leftist pediatrician, Dr. Benjamin Spock, and his anti-discipline, instant-gratification advice for the rearing of children than they did to inspired wisdom. The children of those permissive

parents reached their late teens in the mid-1960s. Many of these were ripe for the radical anti-establishment agenda of the likes of Jerry Rubin and Abbie Hoffman with their slogans of, “If it feels good, do it,” and “Kill your parents.” From such influences sprang the vortex of radical anti-war riots on dozens of college campuses and cities. (Bill Ayers, close associate of President Obama in Chicago, was a notorious leader in such revolutionary activities.) The general aim of these feckless punks was the fomenting of sufficient societal chaos and violence as to overthrow former standards of civilized conduct, especially moral standards. In this same time frame, Hugh Hefner with his “playboy philosophy” and magazine paved the way for public glorification of fornication and pornography. While these civil and moral upheavals were occurring, liberals were preaching their *gospel* of non-judgmentalism and tolerance regarding increasing sexual promiscuity.

The entertainment industry began to relax its former standards (which were not all that high) greatly by the 1960s. Scenes, words, and themes that had never been allowed even to be suggested on the big screen gradually began to appear, most of them involving sexual liberties. Lyrics in rock and roll songs picked up the same theme. Though they would seem mild compared with today’s offerings, they were risqué and shocking at the time. AM radio in those days still was mostly disc jockeys playing records between hourly news breaks. In the 1960s and 1970s I several times called radio stations and shamed them for playing songs with very suggestive lyrics.

Television was slower to relax its standards, but it was inevitable that it would do so to compete with Hollywood for the public’s dollar. With but few exceptions, its programming the past thirty years or so has been characterized by ever-increasing levels of indecency, much of which has been specifically aimed at sexual stimulation and titillation. The Internet has made pornography and even arranging rendezvous for purposes of fornication available at the mere click of a computer mouse. The relaxing of heterosexual moral standards has given opportunity for sodomites and lesbians to make

great headway in their campaign to earn general acceptance for their abominable practices.

Atheists, Humanists, and Secularists, believing that physical life is all there is, are all in favor of the *free-love* attitude and are reveling in its acceptance. The odious American Civil Liberties Union has been a major force in defending the grossest forms of moral turpitude and in seeking to repress Biblical influence on every hand. Doubtless, other factors have, to a greater or lesser degree, played a part in the *Corinthianizing* of America, but those we have surveyed are significant ones. The sexual permissiveness these factors have produced threatens to drown our nation in moral filth.

SOME CONSEQUENCES OF THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION

No one knows all of the consequences this decline of decency will yield in the future. It has the potential to bring our nation literally into bondage. The observable results it has already rendered are many and damaging.

Sex has been degraded, devalued, and dirtied. Ungodly and undisciplined folk of both sexes have dragged it out of the marital bedroom, the sphere of God's honorable limitation for it. The inspired writer spoke for God when he stated: "*Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled*" (Heb. 13:4). This statement implies that to employ *the bed* (a figure of speech for the sexual union) outside of marriage defiles it. Advocates of promiscuity have reduced sex to the level of barnyard and alley cat behavior. Rather than its being the God-ordained lovely and pure relationship between one woman and one man who become one flesh "as long as they both shall live," the sexual union has become merely another form of entertainment with no more shame, mystery, or privacy attached to it than a game of "Trivial Pursuit" or "Monopoly." It is something to make jokes about and laugh at. Fornication and adultery have been recast as "casual sex" or "recreational sex."

The degradation of sex and the corresponding promotion of adultery and fornication by its illicit practice have dealt extensive damage to the God-ordained institutions of marriage, home, and family. All of the foregoing elements of the sexual revolution have

made it much easier (if not encouraged) for wives and husbands to stray from their marital vows. The “no-fault” divorce laws (that down-played the seriousness of adultery) made it much easier for husbands and wives to go their separate ways when they found that certain other one they just must have. Although the divorce rate slightly declined between 1950 and 1960, we should not be surprised to learn that it jumped 159% from 1960 to 1970. By 1979 it had increased 241% over the 1960 rate and it continues at a rate more than twice what it was before the sexual revolution (“Divorce Statistics”). Every divorce affects not only the man and woman involved, but if there are children involved, they are affected even more adversely, leaving millions of them in single-parent situations. Every divorce weakens the moral fiber and stability of the nation as a whole.

The widespread sin of fornication has caused the cases of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) to reach alarming levels. According to one website: “One in five people in the United States has an STD. Two-thirds of all STDs occur in people 25 years of age or younger. One in four new STD infections occur in teenagers (“STD Information”). Given the United States population of 309,000,000, when we assign numbers to these percentages, they mean that almost 62,000,000 people in our nation are thus infected, of which, over 41,000,000 are 25 years old or younger. The rate is growing most rapidly among teenagers. STDs are preventable diseases and are all but non-existent among those who are faithful to their wedding vows made to and with one spouse.

By the early 1960s, the public’s change in attitude toward divorce and remarriage became more evident, as states began adopting “no-fault” divorce laws and moving away from divorce on the stated grounds of adultery. Divorce ceased to carry any of the shame that had been connected with it for so long. Non-marital and extra-marital sexual encounters have now become matters of little concern to the masses. It is common practice for a couple to “live together,” sometimes for years, and produce children before “going through the motions” of a marriage ceremony if they even bother.

Can there be any doubt about the role the sexual revolution played in the shameful *Roe v. Wade* Supreme Court decision in 1973 that made it *open season* on babies in the womb (and sometimes far more out of the womb than still in)? Abortion has developed into a cruel means of birth control—destroying the life that was conceived rather than preventing its beginning. Admittedly, more than one motivation exists among those who choose to end the life of their baby, but what are unmarried women and girls to do who engage in fornication and find themselves in an inconvenient pregnancy? What is an adulterous wife to do when she unexpectedly faces the embarrassment and inconvenience of carrying a baby not begotten by her husband? Abortion is their *safety net*, their *escape hatch* (though it is anything but these for the innocent life involved). The abortion advocates and the industry they have spawned are all too happy to help such mothers-in-prospect to dispose of that which to them is but an unwanted *it*. Were it not for the prevalence of the sins of adultery and fornication, the abortion mills would go out of business overnight. Undeniably, these two sins have been the motivation for millions of murders since 1973.

The increased *respectability* of fornication and adultery has encouraged the advertising industry to become more and more bold in its use of sex to sell its merchandise. Such is all but inescapable as it smacks us in the face from billboards, magazines, and especially from television. Advertisers often make use of the double entendre, but some of them go much further. The upscale clothing merchandiser, Abercrombie & Fitch, is notorious for its sexually suggestive ads and tee shirt messages, many of which hawk clothing for teenagers, including young teens. Its most recent offering is aimed squarely at *sexualizing* seven and eight-year-old girls. Victoria's Secret ads are little if any short of pornographic, as are the window displays in their retail stores. The same can be said for the annual "swimsuit edition" of *Sports Illustrated* magazine. The list of examples could be drawn out to considerable length. That Madison Avenue has come to use sex so boldly and blatantly to attract customers is a sure in-

indicator of just how much the American culture has come to view fornication and adultery as normal, harmless *fun*.

THE ULTIMATE CONSEQUENCE OF FORNICATION AND ADULTERY

I earlier quoted the first part of Hebrews 13:4, to which I now call attention again: “*Let marriage be had in honor among all, and let the bed be undefiled.*” Now let us notice the remainder of the verse: “for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” This verse draws an unmistakable line between the Divinely ordained licit and illicit fulfillment of the sexual appetite. It is licit and “undefiled” in marriages that meet with God’s approval (Mat. 19:6). We are to honor such marriages and count the marriage bed pure within them, even as God does. Just as clearly stated, fulfillment of the sexual instinct is illicit and “defiled,” constituting fornication and/or adultery, in all other circumstances, including marriages that are not approved of God. “Judge” translates the Greek word, *krino*. Thayer cites Hebrews 13:4 as one of many occurrences in which context indicates it is “used specifically of the act of condemning and decreeing (or inflicting) penalty on one” (361). Those who continue in these sins will receive God’s just condemnation and penalty on the Last Day for so doing.

Truth be told, there are few acts of which men are capable that more frequently fall under Divine censure and prohibition. As earlier indicted, in the Garden of Eden, Jehovah God joined the first couple in marriage and ordered them to reproduce, implying their sexual union (Gen. 1:27-28). Moses then added that these two, husband and wife, were to leave parents and cleave to each other in “one flesh” (2:24). Thus, even at this beginning point, God specified marriage as the exclusive confines of sexual behavior.

In the Old Testament, sexual unions outside the context of marriage or with one besides one’s spouse closely parallel the ideas conveyed by the counterpart words in the New Testament, as previously noted. The *umbrella* Hebrew word for sexual misconduct, *zanah*, refers to forbidden sexual unions of all kinds, involving both married and unmarried persons (Brown et al.). This word and its cognates

occur ninety-three times, only three of which appear in pre-Mosaical history (two other words are used eleven times to refer to male and/or female temple prostitutes). Unger and White define this word as “to go a whoring, commit fornication, be a harlot” (467). It is rarely translated “fornication” (three times) in the KJV, but most often by “harlot,” “harlotry,” “whoring,” and “whoredom.” The KJV never translated it “adultery.” Although Moses did not use *zanah* to describe the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah and their suburbs, he revealed God’s abiding attitude toward homosexual acts in record of His destruction of those cities (Gen. 13:13; 18:20; 19:4-7, 24-25).

The Hebrew word for adultery is *na’aph*, meaning to have sexual relations with the wife of another, marital infidelity, or to commit adultery (Gesenius 610). In its various forms it occurs only 31 times, all of them beginning with the giving of the law on Sinai (Exo. 20:14). Both terms are used of literal sexual misbehavior, but also figuratively in reference to Israel’s frequent unfaithfulness to God in “going a whoring” after the gods of the Canaanites (Jer. 3:6; Eze. 6:9; et al.). These terms are always used to indicate sinful behavior, whether literally or figuratively used.

Even in the *moonlight era* (regarding revelation) of the patriarchs, a married woman was recognized as *off-limits* to others (cf. the reactions of Pharaoh and Abimelech regarding Sarah and later of Abimelech regarding Rebekah—Gen. 12:14-19; 20:2-12; 26:6-11). Joseph refused the advances of Potiphar’s wife, labeling what she desired as “great wickedness” and “sin against God” (39:9). The first appearance of *zanah* is in the statement of Simeon and Levi in reference to Shechem’s rape of Dinah: “And they said, Should he deal with our sister as with a harlot?” (34:31). *Zanah* obviously described behavior outside the boundaries God had drawn, and of which those ancients were conscious.

With God’s election of Israel to be the nation of the promised, humanity-blessing Seed (12:2; 22:18; Gal. 3:16), He gave them a law/covenant to keep them apart from all other nations (Exo. 19:5-6). The law of Moses and the prophets are rife with prohibitions and condemnations of and warnings concerning both fornication and

adultery (explicitly forbidden as one of the Ten Commandments). These proscriptive statements appear not only by employment of *zanah* and *na'aph*, but in **phrases** clearly referring to unlawful sexual intimacy (e.g., to “lie with” [Exo. 22:16, et al.], to “uncover the nakedness” [Lev. 18:6, et al.]). These prohibitions include incest (18:6-18), homosexual behavior (18:22), and bestiality (18:23).

The Lord and the New Testament writers continue this theme of condemnation of both fornication and adultery. Besides the Lord's aforementioned injunctions concerning overt sexual misconduct as it relates to marriage, divorce, and remarriage, He fully expressed His attitude toward fornication in some of His letters to the churches, promising dire judgment upon them if they did not repent (Rev. 2:14, 20-21). Moreover, He struck at the true source of these sins—the lustful eye and heart (Mat. 5:28; 15:19). The Decalogue hinted at what these passages state in its final commandment: “Thou shalt not covet...thy neighbor's wife” (Exo. 20:17).

Paul refers to these sins more than any other New Testament writer. As earlier noted, Corinth was a hot bed of sexual perversion and liberty, and it found its way into the church. Paul ordered the Corinthian brethren to “have no company with” the fornicating brother in their midst lest the entire church be corrupted with his sin (1 Cor. 5:5-11). This action was also for the purpose of saving his spirit at the Last Day (5:5). Paul listed ten sinful behaviors that will bar one from the heavenly kingdom, half of which are sexual sins, including fornication and adultery (6:9-10; cf. his even longer list in Gal. 5:19-21, which also closes with the declaration that practitioners of such “shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven”). Later in the same context he labeled fornication as a sin from which the Christian must flee (1 Cor. 6:18). He continued in chapter 7 by urging that each man and woman should have his or her own spouse to avoid fornication (7:2). To the Ephesians he wrote plainly of God's judgment upon fornicators:

For this ye know of a surety, that no fornicator, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no man deceive you with

empty words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the sons of disobedience (5:5-6).

Several additional passages with a similar emphasis flowed from his inspired pen (e.g., 1 Cor. 10:8; 2 Cor. 12:21; Col. 3:5; 1 The. 4:3).

One having a “great voice out of the throne” informed John with “words [that] are faithful and true” that fornicators (among others reprobates) shall have their part “in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death” (Rev. 21:3-8). The One with the “great voice” further told him that shut outside the heavenly city would be the fornicators, along with assorted other impenitent sinners (22:14-15). Please bear in mind that adulterers will suffer the same fate, for their sin is included in *fornication*.

Unmistakably, the ultimate consequence of fornication and adultery, if unrepented of, is eternal Hell, the lake of fire, the second death, shut outside the splendor, glory, and joy of Heaven.

CONCLUSION

We live in an exceedingly wicked world, saturated with encouragement on every hand to fulfill ones sexual desires in ways and in settings that a righteous God cannot tolerate indefinitely. The destructive influence these constant stimuli have had and continue to have on young people is a special source of concern to all who value moral purity.

What can we do about it? Paul and his first century companions in the Gospel faced a sex-saturated world, though admittedly without the instant accessibility modern technology (print, film, TV, Internet) affords today. However, the way they responded to these corrupting influences was to preach the Word “in season, out of season” by every means at their disposal (2 Tim. 4:2). The Gospel is still God’s power to save (Rom. 1:16). The more we preach (whether by newspaper articles, websites, radio and television programs, correspondence courses, Internet schools (such as Truth Bible Institute), the more potential impact we may have as a purifying influence in a putrid world.

Another thing we can do is vote for candidates at every level who we know stand for moral decency and challenge, by means of phone

calls and letters, those who have been elected thus to stand. Many people still read letters to editors of local newspapers, in which we can voice the need for moral purity.

We need to continue to pray for our families that our children and grandchildren may remain pure, all the while doing our best to provide Biblical moral guidance and instruction for them. We need to pray for the church of the Lord, so many members of which have succumbed to the call of compromise relating to adultery and fornication. We need to pray that men and women in positions of authority may be awakened to the reality of the moral pigpen in which our nation now wallows and that they may exert leadership in reversing it. We need to pray God that His providence will allow us to withstand the tsunami of sexual immorality and undo the grave damage it has done the past fifty years. If we are not able to do so, given the inspired history of God's dealing with nations and their wickedness, I am made to wonder how much more longsuffering He has left for us.

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ENDNOTES

¹This family of words occurs forty-five times in the New Testament. The noun, *porneia*, rendered “fornication,” occurs twenty-six times (e.g., Mat. 5:31-32; 19:9; et al.). A handful of these occurrences are metaphorical, describing idolatry as “spiritual fornication” (Rev. 14:8; 17:2; et al.). The noun, *pornos*, variously rendered “fornicator” and “whoremonger,” occurs ten times, and is always used literally. The verb, *porneuo*, rendered “commit fornication,” occurs eight times (e.g., Mark 10:19; 1 Cor. 6:18; et al.). The verb, *ekporneuo*, occurs one time (Jude 7). It is an intensified usage of *porneuo*, referring to one who becomes the servant or slave of fornication.

²This word group is comprised of five forms that appear thirty-five times in the New Testament. The noun, *moicheia*, rendered “adultery,” occurs four times (e.g., Mat. 15:19). *Moichos*, another noun form, appears four times, also, and is rendered “adulterer” (e.g., 1 Cor. 6:9; et al.). *Moichalis*, yet another noun, occurs seven times, and is variously translated “adulteress,” “adulterous,” and “adultery” (e.g., 2 Pet. 2:14; et al.). Jesus also used it metaphorically in reference to apostate Judaism (e.g., Mat. 12:39; 16:4; et al.). The verb, *moichao*, is rendered “commit(teth) adultery,” and occurs six times (e.g., Mat. 5:32; 19:9; et al.). The most frequently appearing member of this word family is *moicheuo*, also translated “commit adultery,” occurring fourteen times (e.g., Mat. 19:18; Mark 10:19; et al.). One of these times it is used metaphorically (Rev. 2:22).

ALCOHOLISM

Jess Whitlock

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Jess has done radio work, debating, and worked 33 years in Christian camps. He has had several articles published in books, papers, and church bulletins. He speaks in lectureships and Gospel meetings each year and is presently working with the church of Christ in Evant, Texas.

Jess married the former Terry Tilley in 2002. They have three daughters and four grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

It is ironic that alcoholism is the only disease where it is considered irresponsible to annihilate the cause. To prevent germ disease, we kill the germ; to prevent malaria, we kill the mosquito; to eradicate rabies, we kill the rabid animal; however, to destroy alcoholism, we dare not do away with the beverage! If alcoholism is a disease, it is the only disease that we purchase by the case!

SOME FACTS/STATISTICS

Alcohol is the cause of much tragedy in our nation. Alcohol is a drug. Ethyl Alcohol is contained in beer, wine, and whiskey. It is a depressant drug that dulls one's inhibitions and decreases self-control. In 1995, there were a total of 41,817 highway fatalities. Of those fatal crashes alcohol was involved in 17,732 (or 42%) of those deaths. In 1996, the totals rose to 42,065 fatalities of which 17,749 were alcohol related ("2005 Drunk").

Some statistics I have collected from bulletins through the years shows the enormity of the problem. The United States currently spends in excess of \$60 billion per year on problems that are alcohol related. Someone is killed by a drunk driver in our land every 23 minutes. Alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes kill someone every 31 minutes. Every year, alcohol-related crashes in the United States

cost us around \$51 billion. In 2005, 16,885 people died in America in alcohol-related crashes. That same year more than half of the 414 child passengers (ages fourteen and younger who died in alcohol-related crashes) were riding with a drinking driver, and forty-eight children, fourteen years and younger were killed as pedestrians by impaired drivers.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

The Bible clearly condemns the evils of strong drink. We find it clearly condemned in the Patriarchal Age. Noah discovered the tragic consequences of drunkenness after leaving the ark (Gen. 9:20-27). We learn of Lot's debauchery with his own daughters (Gen. 19:30-38), which involved strong drink.

The Mosaical Age shows the sinfulness of strong drink. The Nazirite vow disallowed strong drink (Num. 6:3). King David used strong drink on Uriah in an attempt to have him go into his wife (2 Sam. 11:13). The king of Israel, Elah, was "drinking himself drunk." While he was in that state, one of his captains killed him (1 Kin. 16:8-10). King Ahasuerus tried to get queen Vashti to parade her body before the gaze of drunken men (Est. 1:5-22). Read these passages from Proverbs and consider well their words: 20:1; 23:29-35; 31:4-5. The author of Ecclesiastes warned that strong drink was only vanity (2:3, 11; 12:8). Isaiah pronounced a woe on all who give in to strong drink (5:11-12, 22). Drinking leads to the profaning of things that are sacred (Dan. 5:1-4, 25-28). Young women were sold for the price of a drink in Joel 3:3. It is sinful to cause another to drink (Hab. 2:15-16).

Christ our Lord warned against the sin of drink in Luke 21:34. Christians are admonished not to drink or to keep company with drunkards (Rom. 14:21; 1 Cor. 5:11; 6:10).

Friend, this is not an exhaustive list! The overwhelming weight of Bible authority is against the sin of consuming beverage alcohol. The drinking of strong drink is clearly exposed as sin in God's Word. Let us avoid it like the *plague*.

Alcohol is our deadly enemy. Statistics abound, as we have noted. Texas claims to be tough on drinking drivers. In all honesty, I

must say that Texans do not know the meaning of the word *tough*! Consider what happens in other countries if you are caught driving under the influence! In Malaysia the driver is jailed; if married, the wife is put in jail with him. In South Africa you receive a ten-year prison sentence, plus a \$10,000 dollar fine. In Russia your driver's license is revoked for life! In Bulgaria for a second conviction you are executed! If you drink and drive, do not go to El Salvador; your first offense is your last. You will stand before a firing squad!

For every one person killed by a mad dog, 10,000 Americans are killed by liquor. We shoot the mad dog and license the liquor industry. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Isa. 5:20)!

Many scoff at the days of prohibition and call the 18th Amendment the "scourge of American liberty"! However that amendment shut down 177,790 saloons and 1,775 breweries; crime decreased by 54%. The death rate, due to liquor, decreased by 42%. In 1933, that amendment was repealed and drunkenness increased by 350%. Yet, we shoot the rabid dog and license the liquor industry!

Alcohol is involved in 53% of all highway deaths, 38% of child abuse cases, 65% of all drowning deaths, and 54% of those in jail for violent crimes. We have in excess of eleven million alcoholics! President Abraham Lincoln once said, "Alcohol has many defenders, but no defense"!

Adolf Hitler was on target when he said, "How fortunate for governments that the people they administer **don't think**"! America, as a nation, has certainly shown the truthfulness of that statement in recent times!

A LOOK AT WINE

There are eleven Hebrew terms and two Greek terms that are rendered *wine* in our English translations. Unfortunately, the mindset of your average reader of the Bible is to see *wine* and automatically equate that with an intoxicating brew. *Wine* is found in numerous texts of the Scripture in a general sense. The context must determine the **nature** of the drink.

In the Old Testament let us notice three Hebrew terms: (1) *yayin*, (pronounced wine) is found 140 times. It simply means what is pressed or squeezed out of the grape (Exo. 29:40; Num. 6:3; Neh. 5:15; Isa. 5:11); (2) *tirosh*, is used 32 times. This usually refers to new wine (Num. 18:12; Deu. 28:51; Neh. 10:39); (3) *shekar*, occurs 42 times. This wine is fashioned from sources other than grapes. Most often it is connected with woes and sorrow (Lev. 10:9; Num. 6:3; Deu. 14:26; Jud. 13:4, 7, 14; Pro. 31:6; Isa. 24:9; 28:7; 56:12; Mic. 2:11). It is condemned and prohibited by God. Josephus has an interesting comment on fresh wine in *Antiquities of the Jews*, worth reading:

He therefore said, that in his sleep he saw three clusters of grapes hanging upon three branches of a vine, large already, and ripe for gathering; and that he squeezed them into a cup which the king held in his hand; and when he had strained the wine, he gave it to the king to drink, and that he received it from him with a pleasant countenance. This, he said, was what he saw; and he desired Joseph, that if he had any portion of understanding in such matters, he would tell him what this vision foretold. Who bid him be of good cheer, and expect to be loosed from his bonds in three days' time, because the king desired his service, and was about to restore him to it again; for he let him know that God bestows the fruit of the vine upon men for good; which wine is poured out to him, and is the pledge of fidelity and mutual confidence among men; and puts an end to their quarrels, takes away passion and grief out of the minds of them that use it, and makes them cheerful. "Thou sayest that thou didst squeeze this wine from three clusters of grapes with thine hands, and that the king received it: know, therefore, that this vision is for thy good, and foretells a release from thy present distress within the same number of days as the branches had whence thou gatheredst thy grapes in thy sleep. However, remember what prosperity I have foretold thee when thou hast found it true by experience; and when thou art in authority, do not overlook us in this prison, wherein thou wilt leave us when thou art gone to the place we have foretold; for we are not in prison for any crime; but for the sake of our virtue and sobriety are we condemned to suffer the penalty of malefactors, and because we are not willing to injure him that has thus distressed us, though it were for our own pleasure." The cupbearer, therefore, as was natural to do, rejoiced to hear such an interpretation of his

dream, and waited the completion of what had been thus shown him beforehand (2:5:2. 48).

In the New Testament we have only two Greek words to identify: (1) *gleukos*, which is found only once in the New Testament (Acts 2:13). It means the fresh squeezed juice of the grape. *Strong* and *Vine* say, “sweet wine...must...(fresh juice)...sweet, new wine.” However, Gary Summers has correctly noted:

Vine and Strong, after giving the proper definition of the word, then try to re-define it according to their interpretation of Acts 2:13, which is faulty. Wine that is sweet and new is **not** intoxicating (3).

The *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*, stating that *gleukos* means, “strictly *unfermented juice of grapes*; hence, *sweet new wine* (Acts 2:13)” (99). Numerous authorities believe that *gleukos* was unfermented (Connegan, Green, Robinson, Kitto, Arndt and Ginrich, and Thayer).

(2) *Oinos*, means grape juice or wine, and is found thirty-three times in the New Testament. In this study, we must be careful of reference tools as we look at *wine*. For example, *Eerdman’s Bible Dictionary* states:

There is no biblical evidence that wine ever consisted of unfermented grape juice...the Bible refers to “new wine”...but this too was fermented and could intoxicate...cf. the Cana wedding... (1058).

Many are the folks who have concluded that the ancients could not preserve grape juice, and therefore all the wine they drank must have been of the intoxicating level. Nothing could be further from the truth. The process of the distillation of wine was discovered circa A.D. 1500. The ancients knew four primary processes of preservation. Others can be listed, but these are sufficient: (1) Boiling, this would leave too much sugar, preventing fermentation; (2) Filtration, which would simply remove the yeast; (3) Subsidence, which would allow the yeast to settle to the bottom. Then, pure grape juice would be skimmed off the top. And, (4) Fumigation, they discovered that sulfur could absorb all the oxygen, which stopped fermentation. Ar-

istotle, Cato, Horace, Josephus, Herodotus, Pliny, and others were fully aware of these processes.

Leaven which causes fermentation was not accepted in sacrifices (Lev. 2:11; Exo. 34:25; et al.). Leaven was forbidden in the houses of the Hebrews during the sacred week prior to the Feast of the Tabernacles (Exo. 12:15-20; 13:6-7). This explains why the ancients considered the “best wines” to be those drinks that made the heart glad and the face to shine. They did not like wine that made the “head heavy.”

So, we must consider the context. That will usually give us the answer. Isaiah writes, “Thus saith Jehovah, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants’ sake, that I may not destroy them all” (65:8). Now, for those *authorities* who contend that all wine was fermented and intoxicating, I have a question for you: “How does that new wine, still in the grape hanging on the vine, get fermented so quickly?” I will be awaiting an answer to that question from the “Sipping Saints” crowd!

A FEW ARGUMENTS FROM THE SIPPING SAINTS

“Sipping Saints” can include elders. An eldership in the state of Texas was asked: “Do you believe that Christians may drink alcoholic beverages in moderation?” These are some of their recorded answers given to that question:

(1) “Yes, but don’t get drunk.” (2) “People drank in Jesus’ time.” (3) “What if you need to take it for medicine?” Every serious Bible student can surely see through these flimsy excuses for disobeying God’s Divine commandments! The ways in which some men have twisted and perverted the Scriptures unto their own destruction (2 Pet. 2:1; 3:16) is certainly novel and ingenious.

Sipping Saints: Argument # 1

“Deacons in like manner *must be* grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre” (1 Tim. 3:8). Since 1 Timothy 3:3 says the elder is not to be given to wine, and

1 Timothy 3:8 says the deacon is not to be given to **much** wine, then cannot the deacon drink a little wine?

Not at all. Some have concluded that the opposite of “much wine” would be a “little wine.” Dub McClish has well observed, “‘Not given to wine’...is from *paroinos* meaning ‘to be alongside of wine in the sense of lingering or tarrying with it’” (128). Hence, the elder is admonished to stay far away from the devil’s brew. Have you ever wondered how alcohol received that nickname? Dub McClish continues, “‘Not given to much wine’ in reference to deacons is a totally different expression...referring to the hold (addiction) which wine has” (128). Hence, elders and deacons are to stay far away from all alcoholic drinks. The Greek for *given to* can be rendered as “to be addicted to.” Will one argue that the elder is not to be addicted to wine, but the deacon can be a little bit addicted? That would indicate it would be okay to get a little bit drunk, a little bit sick, or a little bit dead!

Some brethren are rewriting the text which says, “not given to much wine” to read: “not given **too** much wine.” The word is *to* and not *too*. Peter has admonished “that ye run not with *them* into the same excess of riot” (1 Pet. 4:4). Would that mean a *little* riotous living is okay, just not to the point of excess??

Sipping Saints: Argument # 2

“Be no longer a drinker of water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities” (1 Tim. 5:23). So, obviously this verse means: “Anyone who wishes to drink socially should do so!” Sometimes the argument is heard that one takes it for “medicinal purposes”! Each time I hear that argument, I remember the old television series, *The Waltons*. Two elderly sisters were always passing out moonshine but apparently had been duped by their own father, as they referred to it as Daddy’s *recipe*. Sipping saints are still partaking of the *recipe* today!

Timothy was apparently a teetotaler (completely abstained), in that Paul admonished him to take a little wine (juice of the grape), to do him some good. I once heard the late brother J. T. Marlin comment on this passage. He read 1 Timothy 1:1-2, and then he

commented, “If your name is Timothy, and you have what Timothy had, then you can take what Timothy took!”

Paul was concerned with Timothy’s health. The water had apparently caused him to have severe pain. Paul encouraged a “little wine for thy stomach’s sake.” That was a medical remedy of the day. Many times today medical doctors will recommend grape juice for stomach and heart ailments.

Sipping Saints: Argument # 3

John 2:1-11 is the favored sugar-stick of the “sipping saints” crowd. They suggest that Christ Jesus made fermented wine at the wedding feast. They even mention that the ruler said it was the “good wine.” Let me reiterate that a large part of the problem in discussing the problems of alcohol is our English usage of *wine*. Webster says, “fermented juice of fresh grapes...fermented juice of a plant product (as a fruit)...something that invigorates or intoxicates.”

The Greek word *oinos* can refer to juice freshly squeezed out of the grape. Yes, it can refer to an intoxicant at times. The Lord God forbade even looking upon the intoxicating drink (Pro. 23:30-32). Christ made approximately 150 gallons of wine. It is termed as the best wine. However the ancients, i.e., Pliny, Plutarch, Horace, et al., preferred harmless grape juice to the *hard stuff*. Let us affirm plainly that Christ our Lord, in performing His first recorded miracle, did not sin in any way! Dub McClish asked me to deal with the question, “Was the wine Jesus instantly made from water intoxicating (John 2:1-10)?” This chapter was included in the 1999 *Annual Denton Lectures* (498-501). About two years later I was thankful that subject material had been assigned to me.

I was a visitor at a Wednesday night Bible class in North Texas. The class was discussing John 2. The teacher started off well. One of the class members pointed out that we ought not to leave the impression that it is wrong to imbibe alcoholic drinks “because we have friends and neighbors who drink!” I waited for the teacher or an elder or a member to correct this erroneous concept.

Nothing was forthcoming. I held up my hand and was recognized. I observed that Christ Jesus “hath been in all points tempted

like as *we are, yet without sin*" (Heb. 4:15). I briefly mentioned that Christ Jesus was the perfect sin-offering for our sins. I observed that "without sin" is a simple expression in the Greek meaning, "**without sin**"! Then, we discussed that He lived and died under the Old Testament economy. Some members of the class were nodding their heads and taking notes. Then, I requested we turn to Habakkuk 2:15 and read, "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, *to thee* that addest thy venom [fury], and makest him drunken." Next, I pointed out that if Christ created one drop of an intoxicating drink, and it was served to one wedding guest, then He sinned! If our Lord sinned, which I vehemently deny, then Jesus cannot be our Savior! The requirement for Him to be our sin-offering lies in the fact of His sinless life and sacrifice (Heb. 9:12-15; 10:7-17; Rom. 3:25). About twenty people came to me after the service was over and thanked me for my comments.

I wonder if the "sipping saints" crowd has really thought this new doctrine through to its conclusion? If they are right (?), then they stand without a Savior and are yet lost in sin. Therefore, they had better hope they are wrong. Of course, God's Word will help them to realize they are dead wrong. Proverbs 20:1 declares, "Wine is a mocker, strong drink a brawler; And whosoever erreth thereby is not wise." If he is not wise, then he must be **otherwise!**

Sipping Saints: Argument # 4

The way this argument was put to me was this: "The Bible doesn't say not to drink wine...beer...whiskey...et al."

This is a brilliant piece of logic borrowed from the denominational world; "The Bible doesn't say **not to**...use instruments of music, say the sinner's prayer, have women leaders, observe the Lord's Supper semi-annually or on a Thursday night, et al." Well, the Bible does not say not to drive your brand new Lexus off a 1,000-foot high cliff, either! So, what is stopping you? Instead of noticing what the Bible does not say, let us notice what the Bible does say.

Let your fingers do the walkin' and let the Bible do the talkin'. "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit" (Eph. 5:18). Paul condemns even the first drink of any

alcoholic beverage. *Drunk* (KJV), or *drunken* (ASV), comes from the Greek word *methusko*, which according to Vine is defined: “to make drunk or to grow drunk (an inceptive verb, marking the process or the state expressed in No. 1), to become intoxicated” (186). *Inceptive* expresses the beginning of an action. Getting drunk is a process; if it is never started, then it cannot be completed. This verse and this word condemn the first drink.

CONCLUSION

It is noteworthy that when Christ instituted the Lord’s Supper that He specified the “fruit of the vine” (Mat. 26:29; Mark 14:25; Luke 22:18). I was once told that Jesus began the Supper out of the Passover—and that in the Passover they used fermented drink! Exodus 12 does not mention any drink at all! There is a principle involved in the Passover that forbids anything having to do with **leaven** or **fermentation**! You may make liquor legal, but you can never, ever, make it right!

ADDENDUM

Read About A Nightmare

There was a wee little infant, his tender skin bruised and bloody, and one tiny jaw crushed to a pulp. A little hand just dangling limp, the bones protruding out of a tiny leg. That blonde curly hair now matted with dirt and blood. White robed ambulance attendants picked up that mangled body and gently placed him on a stretcher. A low moan came from those baby lips once so perfectly shaped, but now bruised and disfigured. That was his last sound before his death.

Again, they lifted a form from the ground, a sort of shapeless mass without real form. It was the baby’s mother, broken, mangled and bruised. No sign of life there. The card on her bosom simply read, “city morgue.”

Several yards away lay the father, still alive, and screaming with pain. His face had been cut with a thousand splinters of glass. His chest crushed from the impact, and legs a shapeless mass. Blood was gushing from his mouth. He stopped screaming to call out in his

agony, “My wife? My children? My wife?” He then fell back into merciful death.

In the crowd of people, held back by kind hands, a little four-year old boy sobbed out, “Daddy...Mama...Mama...” Two state troopers held on to a wobbly, drunken wretch, reeking with the stench of liquor. “Wha’ happened?” he incoherently blubbered. “I only had a couple ‘a drinks.”

Three graves, an orphan, and a light fine and even lighter jail sentence for another drinking driver. Who is to blame?

Oh, not the liquor industry who manufactures the stuff. Not the corner bar that sells it and sends the drunk out on the highways. Not the television, radio, and magazines who promote the vile brew through advertising, urging people to drink more and more. Not the people of the community who make it easily accessible by voting for liquor by the drink. And, surely not the Christian citizens whose voices are stilled from decrying the **sin** of drinking alcoholic beverages!

Or — are we?

Author unknown

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ILLEGAL AND LEGAL DRUGS

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INTRODUCTION

I heard yet another radio program where the host was arguing for the legalization of drugs. His main argument was one of many that I have heard: “We are losing the war on drugs!” The idea is that we cannot win; so let us stop the fight of a never-ending battle. The problem with this line of reasoning is that legislators do not determine morality. Morality is determined by the nature of God and thus is revealed for us in the Scriptures.

Most Christians oppose the use of drugs, but I think many of us would be hard pressed to produce the Scriptures to say why drug abuse (either legal or illegal) is immoral. In the remainder of the lesson, we will consider what the Scriptures reveal about the abuse of legal and illegal drugs.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

First, **we will define what we mean by the abuse of *legal* drugs.** When we use the term abuse of *legal* drugs, we are generally speaking of the misuse or abuse of any drug obtained legitimately by prescription or bought over-the-counter in a drug store. Unfortunately, there are many *prescription junkies* who are hooked on prescription drugs that they obtained legally. Such individuals usually got start-

ed innocently, but have let the problem grow out of proportion. Unfortunately, a lot of people believe that, just because the doctor writes a prescription and a drug is dispensed by the pharmacist, that it is safe to use. However, the fact that such drugs are regulated, must have a script from the doctor, and must be dispensed by a pharmacist indicates their dangerous nature. The fact is there is no *safe* drug. There are safe ways to use the chemicals that God and man have given us, but any drug in the wrong amount at the wrong time can be harmful.

Prescription drugs can be abused in several ways. Some may take the drug improperly by gradually increasing the dosage as tolerance of the drug develops. By increasing the dosage, the patient runs the risk of becoming intoxicated which leads to physical dependency. Others abuse prescription drugs by sharing their prescription with others. There are many risks associated with taking medications without diagnosis or supervision.

Prescription drugs are not the only *legal* drugs that are abused. There are thousands of over-the-counter drugs that are readily available to anyone. They can be just as harmful if abused, especially if mixed with other drugs such as alcohol. Tobacco and alcohol would fall under the category of non-prescription *legal* drugs. Although, legal, tobacco and alcohol are immoral because they are addictive and harmful to the body.

The types of drugs that are most subject to legal abuse are the barbiturates, sedatives, tranquilizers, stimulants, and narcotics. These drugs are misused or abused by all age groups to become *spaced out*, that is, separated from reality, intoxicated, less inhibited, or stimulated. Older patients seek more anxiety reduction, less unhappiness, and more sleep (Alls 1-3).

Abuse of any of these drugs, whether prescription or over-the-counter, may be the sign of or symptom of progressive developmental drug abuse. Such drugs are considered a *gateway* drug, the abuse of which is a symptom of a problem and sets the pattern of drug using behavior.

Second, **we will define what we mean by the abuse of *illegal drugs***. When we speak of the abuse of *illegal* drugs, we generally have reference to the abuse of drugs that are illegal to buy, sell, possess, or ingest. According to the Controlled Substances Act of 1971, there are five categories of drugs. They are: (1) stimulants, which speed up the nervous system (amphetamines, cocaine, nicotine, and caffeine); (2) depressants, which slow down the central nervous system (barbiturates, alcohol, and tranquilizers); (3) hallucinogens, which cause change in perception and consciousness (LSD, PCP, MDA, and mescaline); (4) narcotics, which lower the perception of pain (heroin, morphine, codeine); and (5) cannabis, which alters mood thinking and behavior (marijuana, hashish, hashish oil) (“Regulatory”). Any drug that is ingested for the purpose of producing a state of euphoria or intoxication for amusement or fun is described as the recreational use of drugs. Such use is not only immoral, but is illegal in most cases.

THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK OF THE MEDICINAL USE OF DRUGS

Medicinal drugs did exist in Biblical times. Oils were used for healing wounds (Isa. 1:6). In caring for the man who fell among thieves, the Good Samaritan used oil and wine for the wounds (Luke 10:33-34). Balm, an ointment similar to Vaseline, was used for medicinal purposes (Jer. 8:22). In speaking of the perfect land, Ezekiel talks of a place where healing herbs are always available (Eze. 47:12). Wine mixed with myrrh was administered as a painkiller to those suffering torturous deaths (Mark 15:23). Timothy was encouraged to use wine for his stomach ailment (1 Tim. 5:23). This is an interesting case, since it appears that Timothy drank only water and avoided alcohol. Even when ill, he had to be encouraged to use alcohol as a medicine by an apostle.

However, there is a large difference between medical usage and usage for entertainment purposes. Many want marijuana (and other illegal drugs) legalized because of some suspected medical uses. If marijuana has a legitimate medicinal use that a doctor prescribes, then fine, since we have many other regulated medicines. However,

the non-medicinal use of such would be immoral since the use of a drug for medicine is not authorization for casual, recreational use. We will deal with this in more detail later.

THE SCRIPTURES SPEAK OF THE NON-MEDICINAL USE OF DRUGS

Non-medicinal drugs were used in Biblical times as well. Drugs are sometimes used to lower a person's inhibitions so they will do things they normally would oppose, such as fornication. Alcohol is often used today and has the effect of lowering one's inhibitions. Some have found that adding Rohypnol (commonly called the date rape drug) to alcohol removes **all** inhibitions.

Similar mixtures are alluded to in the Scriptures. After drinking all their liquor, the Israelites committed fornication (Hos. 4:18). Alcohol was used to take advantage of one's neighbors to "look on their nakedness." "Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, That putteth thy bottle to *him*, and maketh *him* drunken also, That thou mayest look on their nakedness!" (Hab. 2:15). The NASB and ASV follow the Hebrew more closely. Where many versions talk of pressing the bottle, the Hebrew says mixing in wrath (or poison). Wines were often mixed with drugs to increase the intoxication (Pro. 23:29-35). It was even a focus of contests (Isa. 5:22).

The use of drugs is also included in the Greek word translated "sorcery" or "witchcraft." It comes from the Greek *pharmakeia*, which means "to administer drugs" (Thayer 649). This is the origin of *pharmacy*. In Biblical times, drugs were used to invoke highs and hallucinations. Without knowledge of what was involved, it appeared to be a special power much like voodoo-ism in West Indies.

Paul includes *sorcery/witchcraft* in the list of works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). By definition, this would include the abuse of legal and illegal drugs. Those who do such will not inherit the kingdom of God. Sorcerers (drug abusers) are listed as part of those sent to the lake of fire (Rev. 21:8). John speaks of those who were unrepentant and continued in their sorceries (drug abusers) (Rev. 9:20-21). Notice the things listed are often associated with drugs: idol worship, murders, immorality, and theft (Gal. 5:19-21; Rev. 21:8; 9:20-21).

Sorcery (drug abuse) is also associated with dogs (homosexuals), the sexually immoral, murderers, idolaters, and liars (22:15).

The Septuagint version of the Hebrew text also used this same word for many instances of sorcery in the Old Testament. Jezebel is accused of practicing harlotry and sorcery (drug use?) (2 Kin. 9:22). Nineveh is said to make merchandise of nations through her harlotry and makes merchandise of families through her sorcery (drug use?) (Nah. 3:4).

WHY DO PEOPLE TURN TO DRUGS?

Peer pressure (the influence of others) is a prime factor for many to begin abusing drugs (1 Cor. 15:33). People often begin abusing drugs (legal/illegal) because of anxiety. They desire a chemical fix to calm them (Phi. 4:6). Many *thrill seekers* abuse drugs for the excitement of the *high* they get (2 Tim. 3:4). Others lack courage and turn to drugs as a chemical way of avoiding problems (1 Cor. 16:13).

ARGUMENTS FOR THE LEGALIZATION OF DRUGS

Many often desire the legalization of drugs because they believe we are losing the war on drugs. By this they mean that after all the money spent on enforcing drug laws, drug abuse still continues. The fact is, no law *prevents* or *stops* crime! We might just as well stop pursuing thieves since the laws against stealing have not stopped it! This was Paul's argument on the weakness of the Law and the reason it cannot save (Rom. 7:7-11).

Whether or not drugs should be illegal must be based on the morality of using drugs, not its ability to be enforced. To *win* the war on drugs, society must continue to pursue, arrest, and convict those guilty of the crime. Furthermore, we must educate our children as to the ruinous nature of drug abuse. This must be done in the home. Parents of today are the key to a drug free tomorrow!

Some argue that drug abuse will happen anyway; so we ought to make it legal to make it safer. This is the argument behind various clean needle programs. Since druggies are going to inject themselves anyway, we should provide clean needles so they will not transmit

diseases (i.e., AIDS, hepatitis, etc.). Although this sounds noble, it sends the message that the government and society tolerates drug abuse. There is no wonder, then, that the war on drugs is losing ground when we send messages that its use is tolerated. This practice also promotes drug abuse by making its use cheaper and reducing the risk of taking drugs. We should not be surprised that the government does the same subtle encouragement in its sex education programs by handing out free condoms.

Some argue that if used responsibly, some drugs are harmless. Usually the drug in question is marijuana. The problem is marijuana (or any abused drug) is not harmless. It is a known carcinogen and more potent than tobacco, which is the popular drug to hate today for that very reason. It causes a distortion in the perception of sight, sound, time, and touch. It interferes with thinking and problem solving. It can cause a loss of coordination, paranoia, and anxiety attacks. Not to mention the fact that marijuana is considered an entry-level drug that leads to the abuse of harder drugs (“Marijuana”).

We rail against drunk drivers (and rightly so). What happens when marijuana use is legal? Marijuana is already the second leading cause of all traffic accidents (alcohol is number one). With alcohol, the effects wear off after a few hours, but the body stores marijuana in the fat cells. It takes up to three months for the effects of regular marijuana use to wear off! While the effect of marijuana reduces inhibitions against risky sex, the long-term use of marijuana inhibits one’s ability to have sex and children (“Marijuana”).

The reason drugs are illegal is that they are known to cause harm. It is just that some people will not admit the facts. The reason crime is associated with drugs is that they are **illegal**. The argument goes, if we legalize them, the price will drop, the drug cartels will go out of business, and crime will drop. This twisted reasoning is fascinating. If you legalize an action, which in the past was considered a crime, then of course *crime* will go down. However, it does not affect whether the action is right or wrong. At one time, sex outside of marriage was considered a crime. Has legalizing adultery reduced

the number of participants or increased them? Has legalizing adultery impacted related crimes such as prostitution or rape?

What will be the expected impact of making drugs legal? Will the number of drug users go up or down? When the price drops will more or less people buy a product? With an addictive product, would you expect the producers to go out of business or make a bundle? Since drugs generally reduce inhibitions, will risky and often criminal actions increase or decrease?

THE SCRIPTURES TEACH THAT WE MUST KEEP A CLEAR, SOBER MIND

The Scriptures teach that we must keep a clear, sober mind. Paul taught that young men and women were to be sober—sensible (Tit. 2:4-6). The word means “sound in mind, self-controlled, in the right mind, or sober.” Drugs produce artificial feelings and, often, imaginary thoughts (hallucinations). Drug users are reckless, yet the sensible man is careful in his actions (Pro. 14:15).

Christians are told to exercise self-restraint. Paul uses athletics to illustrate this point:

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: 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. 9:24-27).

Our bodies are to be our slaves, yet drugs create dependencies. Our bodies become slaves to a chemical high. This is contrary to Paul’s statement: “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). While the Christian is a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), he is also a **servant** (Rom. 6:17-18). The Scriptures plainly state that no man can serve two masters (Mat. 6:24). When one becomes addicted, enslaved, brought under the power of any chemical substance, legal or illegal, he is attempting to serve two masters and forfeits his relationship with God!

Though there may be legitimate uses for all drugs (legal/illegal), we must never allow their use to overpower us through their abuse. We are supposed to have control over ourselves (2 Pet. 1:6). Peter further states, that a man is enslaved by whatever he is overcome (2:18-19).

ADDITIONAL REASONS NOT TO ABUSE LEGAL OR ILLEGAL DRUGS

The Christian belongs to God by design (Psa. 100:3; 139:14), purchase (1 Cor. 6:19), and dedication (Rom. 12:1-2). As such, he is to be guided in life by the Word of God (Heb. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:2-21; Jam. 1:21; John 12:48).

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).

In addition to what was previously mentioned, we offer the following reasons for not abusing legal or illegal drugs.

First, our government is ordained of God (Dan. 4:25) and is to be obeyed. Consider Paul's instruction to the church at Rome:

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

The only exception to this would be when the laws of the land contradict the law of God (Acts 5:29). Thus, if the government rightly prohibits the use of illegal drugs (and it does), it would be illegal and therefore, unethical, immoral, and/or sinful to use them. Furthermore, since government regulates the use of legal drugs, to take them in a way that is contrary to their intended use would be illegal and therefore unethical, immoral, and/or sinful.

Second, the Christian is to "make not provision for the flesh, to *fulfil* the lusts *thereof*" (Rom. 13:14). The abuse of legal and illegal drugs is for the very purpose of *getting high*, which fulfills the lust

of the flesh. The goal of the Christian is to forsake the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) and live a life that glorifies God (Mat. 5:16).

Third, fathers are to bring their children up in the “nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This would necessarily include education regarding the use and abuse of legal and illegal drugs. Furthermore, children are to obey their parents in the Lord (Eph. 5:1). If these two principles were upheld in every household, we would see the end of drug abuse in one generation!

Fourth, there are health risks associated with the drug abuse. There is no denying the debilitating effect of drug abuse! Paul stated, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). In this passage there are four main concepts for consideration: (1) your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, (2) ye are not your own, (3) ye were bought with a price, and (4) glorify God therefore in your body. Those who engage in the recreational use of drugs use their bodies for carnal pleasures and as an instrument of vice. In so doing, they are destroying the health of the very instrument that they ought to be using to God’s glory.

ADDICTION CAN BE OVERCOME

Addiction can be overcome. Through obedience to God and His teachings, we can be freed from sin (Rom. 6:17-18). Sin can be avoided by treasuring God’s Word in our hearts (Psa. 119:11). We must have the attitude of Paul who stated, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” (Phi. 4:13).

Overcoming addiction (or any sin) requires keeping one’s thoughts pure (4:8). Persistent prayer is essential to overcoming addiction (1 The. 5:17). When one feels the urge to take the next drink, puff, chew, injection, snort, etc., stop and pray! It requires one to stop being a slave to drugs, giving his life over to Christ, and becoming His slave!

CONCLUSION

It is this writer's sincere hope and earnest prayer those who read this will be convinced of the immorality of the abuse of legal and illegal drugs. The answer to the growing problem of drug abuse in our country is a complex one. In fact, there is **no single answer!** One thing is certain, if the drug abuse problem is to be solved, it will take individual involvement.

A strong commitment to drug education, law enforcement, punishment for offenders, programs to rehabilitate, the teaching of proper self-evaluation, and spiritual values is sorely needed. We must keep in mind that the problem of legal and illegal drug abuse is a **moral** problem—it violates God's will for man!

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LYING

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“**N**o man has a good enough memory to be a successful liar” (Abraham Lincoln). One of the most dangerous attitudes one can espouse is that it is possible to relax truth, misinform, mislead, or lie, and get by with it. God hates lies. The wise man wrote:

These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren (Pro. 6:16-19).

Lying is referenced directly two times in the above passage and can be referenced indirectly through sowing discord and devising wicked plans. God has clearly spoken that all liars will be punished eternally in hell.

But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

Knowing the punishment for lying, why is it so prevalent among so many people in every generation?

God has given man the ability to speak and use words that bring encouragement and words of truth about the Savior of the world, Christ Jesus. There are multitudes who use their abilities that God has given in a way that is morally right, according to God's will.

Ethics is the field of study that deals with the social standard for that which is right and wrong. Christian ethics narrows the definition to what is clearly outlined in the Word of God. Therefore, in this study, Holy Writ will be the standard or authority for what is right or wrong.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

In the study of any subject the definition of the terms is extremely significant. To tell a lie is to be dishonest. The definition brings this out very clearly. The lie is defined as "a falsehood" (Vine). The purpose of a lie is to deceive people, take advantage of the innocent and inexperienced. A lie is "an untrue statement made with intent to deceive" (Webster).

A lie may be spoken or lived by a certain type of lifestyle. Therefore, people can lie with actions as well as words, creating a false impression through outward appearance. The manner of leading a hypocritical life is just as much a falsehood as speaking a lie.

Lies can be implied as well as directly stated. Liars work extremely hard to conceal their dishonesty in half-truths. Just because one part of a statement is true does not make a lie acceptable to God. It is extremely puzzling and challenging to understand why men spend so much energy to lie when the way of truth is always the best road to travel.

One can lie by withholding truth. In a court case, if a person has information that will release an innocent person from jail and refuses to come forward with that information, it is just as much a deception as speaking a lie.

SATAN IS THE FATHER OF LIARS

In a discourse with the Jews, Jesus said:

You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he

speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it (John 8:44).

Satan is the originator of all that is evil. He is the one who spoke the first lie. His lies convinced Eve to sin by disobeying God. Moses records:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (Gen. 3:1-6).

Eve believed the lie, and the consequences were immediate and devastating upon her and her husband, Adam. The events of Genesis 3 are a devastating portrait of human folly that caused the complete destruction of the home in paradise.

Satan introduced Eve to a lie and she believed it. She was willing to accept the lie because she wanted that which she could not have. God said:

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die (2:16-17).

However, Satan said to the woman, "You will not surely die" (3:4). In those few words Satan declared untrue the honesty and truthfulness of God. Eve, in believing the lie, boldly declares her selfishness. She wanted to be like God to know good and evil (3:5).

So when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make *one* wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate (3:6).

Her actions denied the truthfulness of God. Her rebellion from God implied that God was keeping from them that which they needed, making God deficient in the knowledge of humans. Today, the fleshly-minded of the world present arguments that God is too strict. They advance the idea that a loving God would not keep from them all the permissiveness of their desires.

Satan states clearly to mankind that it can have unlimited power and that men are gods with no responsibility to God. This was the attitude of Pharaoh when he said, “Who *is* the LORD, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I do not know the LORD, nor will I let Israel go” (Exo. 5:2). In contrast to Satan’s lies and the claims of Pharaoh, Solomon said, “The fear of the LORD *is* the beginning of knowledge, *But* fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Pro. 1:7). The streams of history are flowing abundantly with men and women who reject God, believing a lie, thinking they can be just as powerful as the Almighty God.

Satan is the father of lies. “When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). His goal is to rob man of his eternal home with God in Heaven. His lies arouse enmity and indifference in the heart of mankind from God. Satan’s lies bring hate and animosity where love and affection for God should reign.

LYING IS CONDEMNED IN THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

Throughout the Bible, God has spoken against lying, it must not be a part of His people. In the Psalms and Proverbs there are a number of statements and commands against lying.

Let the lying lips be put to silence, Which speak insolent things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous (Psa. 31:18)

You love evil more than good, Lying rather than speaking righteousness. Selah You love all devouring words, *You* deceitful tongue (52:3-4)

I hate and abhor lying, *But* I love Your law (119:163)

Whoever Whoever hides hatred *has* lying lips, And whoever spreads slander *is* a fool (Pro. 10:18)

Lying lips *are* an abomination to the LORD, But those who deal truthfully *are* His delight” (12:22)

A righteous *man* hates lying, But a wicked *man* is loathsome and comes to shame (13:5)

A lying tongue hates *those who are* crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin (26:28).

These are but a few of the passages in Psalms and Proverbs that speak against lying.

Perhaps the best known passage in the Old Testament condemning lying is the ninth commandment. “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exo. 20:16). This commandment guards the status, honor, and reputation of the innocent from evil men. It also prohibits all men from giving false testimony. The ninth commandment brings status, high esteem, and honor to all men. One must not lie against his neighbor. Jesus, from a positive standpoint, teaches the same moral ethic when He said, “And *the second is* like it: *‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’*” (Mat. 22:39). All who love their neighbor would never bear false witness against them.

In the New Testament, Paul, by inspiration, condemned lying. He said, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds” (Col. 3:9). The context of this verse is in his letter to the church at Colosse. Therefore, Paul is speaking directly to Christians that they must not lie to one another. Their teaching must be a “thus says the Lord.” This gives no room for falsehood from the elders and preachers to the teachers. Lying is fatal to any congregation. It will destroy the unity that the Lord demands (John 17:20-23). Lying will destroy love between brethren. Lying will destroy the very soul of the church and keep it from glorifying God. The “old man” is the one who once lived in sin, but now he is a “new man” living for the Lord daily in the Christian life. The new man’s actions and habits must be of truth.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus Paul speaks of the grievous characteristic of lying.

Therefore, putting away lying, “Let *each one* of you *speak truth with his neighbor*,” for we are members of one another. “*Be angry, and do not sin*”: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption (Eph. 4:25-30).

Lying, along with any sin, grieves God. Lying should never be a part of the Christian character.

THE FIRST MAJOR ISSUE FROM WITHIN THE CHURCH WAS LYING

In reading the history of the church of Christ, the unity they enjoyed is impressive. They worked daily in one accord with each other (Acts 2:46). The early Christians were willing to give of their prosperity to help other Christians grow and mature in the Lord (4:34-37). Yet, sin soon brought problems to the young church. It was lying that spoiled the Christian unity in the very beginning of the church. Ananias and Sapphira thought they could lie to God and have it go unnoticed. Luke writes:

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession. And he kept back *part* of the proceeds, his wife also being aware *of it*, and brought a certain part and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back *part* of the price of the land for yourself? While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God.” Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last. So great fear came upon all those who heard these things. And the young men arose and wrapped him up, carried *him* out, and buried *him*. Now it was about three hours later when his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. And Peter answered her, “Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?” She said, “Yes, for so much.” Then Peter said to her, “How is it that you have agreed together to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who have buried your husband *are* at the door, and they

will carry you out.” Then immediately she fell down at his feet and breathed her last. And the young men came in and found her dead, and carrying *her* out, buried *her* by her husband. So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things (5:1-11).

In this passage there are a number of sins committed by the *illustrious* couple. Their pride motivated them to sell land to receive admiration from the brethren. Their selfishness became the impetus to another sin, lying. No one commanded them to sell their land. It was their own property before they sold it, and the money belonged to them after the sale. Their material possessions were in their control.

The husband and wife team, Ananias and Sapphira, conspired to deceive the church and God. The punishment for their wickedness was death. Paul said, “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23). In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, death was immediate. God punished the husband and wife team without delay or hesitation. God is not striking people down immediately today. Perhaps, for that very reason, people believe they can sin and get away with it. Solomon said, “Because the 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). Holy Writ teaches that all liars will have a reward in eternal punishment, in a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:8). Sadly, the sin of lying is still causing problems in many churches today.

GOD IS OMNISCIENT

One of the most important lessons that man must come to understand is that God sees and hears everything. God is omniscient—that is, He is all knowing. The Scriptures record many times about the omniscient knowledge of God. God’s Word records:

How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel, which they murmur against me (Num. 14:27).

Would not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart (Psa. 44:21).

And in the New Testament Jesus said, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). God knows, and there are no hidden things we can keep from Him.

In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, they found out very quickly about the omniscient power of God. Luke said, “So great fear came upon all the church and upon all who heard these things” (Acts 5:11). Once man has a full understanding of God’s power to see, hear, and know all things, his conduct will change.

All who speak lies have forgotten or refuse to understand the full power of God. The lesson from Ananias and Sapphira are recorded for all to read and learn. Let us be wise and turn from all sins.

CONCLUSION

We live in some of the most trying periods in the history of humanity. Our technological advances have deceived many to turn their backs on God. People, generally, have everything they need and are becoming more pagan on a daily basis. They see no evil in creating or manufacturing a sinful attitude in their hearts. Today, as never before in the history of mankind, men need to have a sense of direction—to be able to define clearly the moral values that are basic to human life. The maze of confusion between good and evil has caused many to absorb themselves in the works of the flesh.

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told *you* in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

All who engage in sin are living under the delusion that they will not have to give an answer for their actions. They are self-deceived, closing their eyes and heart to the moral standard that God demands all live by.

God has set the standard for right and wrong, and every man and woman must choose to support those standards by maintaining godly living. Those who refuse to obey God are only lying to themselves, and perhaps that is the most difficult lie to overcome in seeking truth.

The truthful person exhibits character and sincerity in their conduct. He will accurately keep his word showing integrity, honesty, and moral fiber in his life. The value of truthfulness is powerful; it can preserve a society, while lies and wickedness can destroy a nation. The horrendous effects of untruth will destroy self-respect, causing fear and dread to all peoples. Dishonesty is the deliberate betrayal of another person. Its subversive activity only destroys. One lie will spread in more directions than the one telling the lie intended leaving in its wake a mountain of pain and misery.

Therefore, the virtue of truth must be the anchor to guide one through life. Jesus said, "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Truth will free one from sin. Lying is never justifiable in the eyes of God.

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PORNOGRAPHY

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Johnny has been preaching the Gospel exclusively at the Church of Christ—San Mateo for the last 15 years. He is married to the former Pamela Hackworth, daughter of Noah Hackworth. Johnny and Pamela have 2 children: Leslie who is a senior in college and Andrew who is in the College of San Mateo. Johnny has preached on lectureships in California, Nevada, Texas, and Great Britain. He is the co-director of the English Lectures in Cambridge and London, England.

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).

From the very beginning the thoughts, standards, and ideals of God have been not just different from those of man, but purer also. The quotation from Isaiah is just one example of how different man is from God. This is especially true when man pursues his own path (Jer. 10:23). This study will look at the prurient nature of man who has resisted the Word of God and developed an unwholesome, idolatrous, self-serving, licentious, perverse alternative to the holiness, righteousness, and spirituality that God desires that man possess—that alternative is pornography. People will often attempt to argue the definition of what is pornography, exactly, in an effort to allow a more pervasive, less pernicious distribution of its materials. They appeal to the first amendment and the freedom of speech. People do not always agree on the definition of terms, but define it one must.

According to the continually updated and accessible resource, the *Wikipedia The Free Encyclopedia*, *pornography* is the

portrayal of explicit sexual subject matter for the purpose of sexual excitement and erotic satisfaction. Pornography may use any of a variety of media ranging from books, magazines, postcards, photos, sculpture, drawing, painting, animation, sound recording, film, video, or video games.

This concise definition is only the tip of an iceberg that is *Titanic* in proportion to the enormous problems that are related to pornography both from the industry and consumer vantage points. The pornography industry (vast as it is) has become ubiquitous in our society to the extent that many cannot even recognize the psychological damage it has caused as it stares them in their faces (just as many passengers on that famous ship seemed oblivious to the mortal wound it incurred), and increasingly consumers are buying its products without even a hint that it is deteriorating the very moral fabric the country was built on. Pornography has ruptured what had already been a fragile societal psyche through a progressively friendly district court system and liberal bias toward media companies by enabling pornographers to operate underneath the general public radar for decades.

In such circumstances as these the Bible is rarely considered or consulted for determinations of morality, which is why Christians have an obligatory imperative to defend God's Word against an alienated generation of vipers. Community standards are of little value when the Scriptures are involved—and they are our guide to everything regarding life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3). Just because a community or society neglects to identify subject matter as offensive is no reason the Christian should not do so. We ought to be more willing to stand apart for those standards and expose them for what they are—invitations to licentiousness and idolatry. No human standard will reflect the high moral code of God, and we need not appropriate a community standard on face value because we already know that standard is not built on the Scriptures anyway.

DO WE KNOW IT WHEN WE SEE IT?

In 1964, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart tried to explain “hard-core” pornography, or what is obscene, by saying, “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced...[b]ut I know it when I see it” (qtd. in Silver). This statement, and many others that circled around an attempt at defining sin, has not given anyone a proper perspective on the enormity of this issue—and the effect it has blanketed on this

society. If there is one thing Christians should have learned by now, it is that we cannot (and should not) depend on the judgments, proclamations, laws, rulings, or declarations of men to establish codes of conduct that God has already spoken on and put in place through His Divine Word. Those definitions may not ever rise to the standards that the Lord has put in place, and since pornography is situated (by law) as a community-defined standard, it is hopeless to rely on any man-determined community to implement standards equal to God's own.

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phi. 4:8-9).

Too often we are allowing ourselves (members of the Lord's church) to assimilate into the larger society and to subsume the dictates of Satan over those of God. Regardless of the *rating* of a program or film, the Christian is to have higher standards than those of both the industry and the viewing public. We do not need to engage any entertainment that makes an excuse for itself by signifying the need to "spell it all out" for the consumer.

Not long ago one of the most popular and well-known radio commentators in San Francisco, Bernie Ward, was arrested for his involvement with Internet child pornography. This is a man whose primary celebrity came from a program called "God Talk" (of all things), where extreme liberal ideas about Biblical interpretation were tossed around in ways to support everything immoral, and to neuter any possibility that God could be remotely concerned with sin. Generally Ward's comments would be along this line: "Jesus ate with and accepted sinners," or "Let he who is without sin cast the first stone." That he was arrested was in many ways a tremendous embarrassment for the city (and the radio station KGO), as they could do nothing to prevent it—since it was a federal investigation (and no doubt city and station officials would have preferred to

overlook it, considering it a norm in San Francisco). Ward's claim (originally) was that he was "investigating child pornography," and therefore he had a "reason" for those files on his computer to be there. He is now in jail, having pleaded no contest to the charges.

WELL, IT SELLS...AND NOW COMING TO YOUR CELL PHONE

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell (Mat. 5:27-29).

In the music industry today the newfound *pornographers*, Lady Gaga, Britney Spears, and Christine Aguilera among others have replaced Madonna, Prince, and Marilyn Manson as proprietors of sex-laced entertainment videos. Everything they create is for the purpose of erotic sensation. Because of the popularity of music videos and their immediacy in reaching the public it is impossible to prevent distribution on a very large scale. Add to this the Hollywood film industry and its ability to bring the most revealing sexual encounters on the screen with little opposition (and much media hype) and you have an environment that is slowly but surely eating away its own entrails.

The passage from Matthew addresses a number of issues, but one thing it offers for this discussion is *lust*. The word means "to long for," and in its context it means "to long for unlawfully." This is precisely what pornography is intended to accomplish. Its ultimate purpose is to create an unhealthy and unlawful desire for that which is not one's own. It is a dirty, filthy industry, and to entice and satisfy its customers it appeals to hidden desires that people wish to remain hidden. The stories of magazines under the mattress or in shoeboxes, downloaded internet files, unlabeled DVDs, etc. are simple indicators of a prurience none are willing to admit. This type of psychological impairment is still sin of the basest sort—one

that experts say is nearly irremovable once its dark tentacles reach a human heart.

There would not be time for the number of movie stars and celebrity wannabes that are always in the news: from Madonna (in videos and movies), to David Duchovny of the X-Files (who actually had to go to therapy because he was *hooked* on pornography). More problematic and worrisome is the fact that when these stories become news, people are not so much disgusted by the behavior as they are fascinated and lured to the spectacle.

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 of the well-known reasons (or undeniable desires) for the rabid clamor for Flash technology in mobile units (cell phones and tablets) is for the viewing of pornographic content that you can take with you in your pocket or bag. Within the industry there was deep concern that the potentially lasting impact of Apple, Inc.'s decision not to use Flash in the iPhone or iPad would be debilitating for the spread of "porn" to mobile users. The popularity of Apple's iPhone, and the increasing number of users worldwide, along with its new product, the iPad, has stymied the growth of Flash in the mobile markets and would be responsible for hampering the ability of pornographers to extend their products into the most intimate of technologies. Apple has also gone so far as to remove such content from its App Store—and systematically monitors the content on the web site for removal. This is a rarity in a fast moving technological world where anything that will retrieve more customers from the opposition is generally welcome.

The lust of the eye and the flesh are the primary target for what I will call mobile porn. This new mobile porn is becoming a rage as it can be more easily digested after consumption and no one need fear it being found unless someone can unlock your cell phone or tablet

device. Since the iPad does not come with a browser that will allow Flash video to be seen, many are running toward those new browser products that will allow for such content. Windows 7 and Google's Chrome and Android operating systems are priding themselves for making Flash available as if they are unaware of such technology and how it is more commonly (or frequently) used.

PORNOGRAPHY HAS BECOME OUR CULTURAL SELF-PORTRAIT

In previously made comments (from other lecture series) we mentioned an incident in the San Francisco Bay Area that is a perfect example of how our society has become insensitive to the most heinous actions. The radio commentator who was caught with child pornography on his computer (and having sent it over the Internet) was doing what is more common than many want to admit to: involving themselves with pornography.

On October 8, 2009, there was a press release that stated American Airlines would begin to filter and block pornography on its Internet service during flights! Imagine having to sit next to someone on a flight only to be subjected to filth of this nature. Even worse is that a person would be so callous and unconcerned with your seeing that they are watching pornography, which escalates the example of insensitivity to an almost unimaginable level. The Internet website, Family Safe Media, has statistics that are not just frightening, but indicative of the staggering national and world-wide scope of this sinfulness. According to recent data (2006) of pornography on the Internet, every second there are 28,258 users viewing pornography on the Internet! Every 39 minutes a new pornographic video is uploaded ("Pornography Statistics").

The world-wide pornography industry is larger than the revenues of these top technology companies combined: Microsoft, Google, Amazon, eBay, Yahoo!, Apple, Netflix, and EarthLink. The pornography revenues in the United States exceed the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC. More than 12% of the total number of websites in the world are dedicated to pornography; over 25% of the search engine (Google, Yahoo!, etc.) requests are for pornographic

sites, and over 35% of all Internet downloads are pornography! This should give us an idea of the massive moral problem we have not only in this country (where 89% of the pornography web pages on the whole Internet are located), but the whole world! It is no longer an issue of dispute because of the free speech legalities that surround any attempts to constrain this on a large (world-wide) scale.

These numbers also tell of the addictive nature of sin in a way that had been largely dismissed before. Viewing pornography has been likened to crack cocaine usage. The psychological signs of dependence are very similar, and the treatments utilize similar methods. It has been described as a problem that does not “just go away,” and the only sector of pornographic indulgence that is slightly without tolerance is child pornography.

Child pornography would be that which includes under age children in any form. This area of the *industry* is generally unacceptable to all but the most prurient and salacious adults, and many countries have laws that will go to lengths to prosecute those engaged in those activities on any level.

We have no way of gauging how large a problem this (pornography in general) could be in the church, but as Paul warned the Corinthian brethren, we should be so warned to know that this activity will indeed prevent one from entering the kingdom of heaven. To many this is just another form of entertainment. Viewing pornography is thought of by most people as a “private matter” that does not involve or *hurt* anyone else and should not be regulated on the internet or by government. In the eyes of those who are obsessed with this form of sin, any scrutiny is seen as an invasion of privacy. The effect that such may have on families has not been fully digested as studies have not comprehensively studied the longer lasting effects pornography may have on the parental relationships with their children, nor the time frames in which marriages begin to weaken once the onset of pornographic viewing (and its frequency) begins.

The major concern surrounding Internet searches (on the job or in homes) is not whether someone has been looking at the *New York Times* or the *Wall Street Journal* on the web, but usually reflects

an effort to cover the tracks that lead back to Internet porn sites. Browsers are increasingly able to provide a “private browsing” option that prevents anyone from tracing your steps. Now, really, why would anyone want this feature if they did not have something to hide? Fortunately businesses are cracking down on what employees may or may not view on their business computers. Still, the interest and availability of pornography is growing faster than any other business on the World Wide Web.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes (Psa. 101:3).

One thing we want to point out as we close so there is not any missing of the primary point: **pornography is sin**. It is sinful to produce it, to participate in it, to send it, receive it, view it, and condone it, or to in any way approach it as less than sin—pure and simple. It violates the Scriptures in numerous places, as already demonstrated.

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IMPURE SPEECH

Ken Chumbley

Ken Chumbley is a native of England. He began preaching in Australia in 1966, and returned to England in 1968. In 1969, he made his first trip to the United States to raise funds for his work. While in Texas, he met and married Orinda (Linda) on June 20, 1970. They have three children (Stephen, Thomas, and Ellen) and seven grandchildren.

Ken has preached in a number of states as well as having done mission work in England (1968-1972 and 1985-1992) and Canada (1974-1977). He has preached in Gospel meetings and spoken on numerous brotherhood lectureships. He served as a part-time instructor at the "West Virginia School of Preaching," edited *Old Paths* magazine (primarily distributed in Great Britain), and has had articles published in various brotherhood publications. He is on the staff of Truth Bible Institute. Since returning from England in 1992, each year he has made mission trips to England along with a mission trip to India. Since the beginning of 2000, he has served as evangelist with the Belvedere Church of Christ in South Carolina.

INTRODUCTION

Profanity. We hear it all the time, it pervades our society. We are exposed to it in the workplace, at the supermarket, over the back fence, and at ball games. Many defend it; others see nothing wrong with it. Some claim that it is a first amendment right (especially on radio or television)!

We hear about those who "cuss like a sailor," but they have never been to sea. We often hear *pardon my French*, but it is not a Frenchman speaking and most likely the one saying it does not know a word of French but is trying to excuse his foul mouth. Years ago, a gentleman would never utter a profanity in the presence of a woman; indeed, deep down he knew he should not use it anywhere. Now, women can swear with the best (actually with the worst). It seems that with some young children their first words are of the "four-letter" variety, and they can spew forth a torrent of profanities before they have ever been to school. The hallways of our schools echo profanity from the students, and sometimes even the teachers! Many modern novels are filled with it. It is found in so many movies, indeed the rating of a movie tells when it contains inappropriate language. There are movies that are rated PG and PG13 that would

be G but for its offensive language. The use of impure speech is profuse on television. In fact, it is a pervading evil influence in today's society. Some of our politicians are known for their foul mouths.

It used to be that all profanity was *bleeped* out of television broadcasts of all kinds. Going back farther, it was banned in movies. Now, as we have noted, it is common place.

What reaction do you have when you hear profanity on television or in movies? Do you just ignore it, or does it make you cringe? Some time ago, a ten-year-old young man made news when he was accepted into college. He was interviewed on the CBS program, *60 Minutes*. During that interview this young man spoke about his television viewing habits. He indicated that he had a rule that after three bad words, three curse words, it is turned off. Many might have brushed him off as some kind of "religious nut." Following his rule would mean that much of what is on the television would not be watched. In a study, conducted by the Parents Television Council, it was found that the use of profanity on television between 2005 and 2010 increased by 69.3% with the largest increase occurring during the so-called "family hour" (8:00 to 9:00 p.m., Eastern Time). It was found that the nature of the language (e.g., sexual explicitness) was getting qualitatively worse ("Habitat").

Today, we have experts and scholars on every subject imaginable—from global warming to cotton farming. Timothy Jay is expert on cursing. He has made quite a study of it, has written two books about it, and talks about it often to his students at the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts where he is a professor of psychology. Mr. Jay recently reported that swearing among adolescents and pre-teens in America is on the rise. He estimates that the average adolescent uses roughly 80 to 90 swear words a day. Substituting in middle school, as I do, I can easily see how this could be. Mr. Jay has further observed that swearing is something that is often learned at home starting at an early age.

Experts also tell us that the casual use of profanity (cuss words) is often used as *fillers* when the person speaking is having trouble expressing him or herself. As fillers these profanities take the place

of a more sophisticated way of speaking. It has often been said that when people need to use profanity or cuss words, they are simply showing their ignorance.

Have you become so immune that it now no longer affects you? Do you now use language that would have had your parents washing out your mouth with soap?

A part of keeping our bodies in subjection and controlling our thoughts is keeping our mouths clean and pure. Thus swearing is clearly forbidden. Note what James penned by inspiration: “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (Jam. 5:12). *Above all*, we should focus our attention on what James writes. Thus we should take great care about the words that proceeds out of our mouths.

WHAT IS PROFANITY?

The *Oxford Dictionaries* defines profanity as: “blasphemous or obscene language: *an outburst of profanity*, a swear word; an oath, irreligious or irreverent behavior.” Profanity is therefore speech containing that which is profane and vain. *Swearing* or *profanity* is speech that invokes the name of God to confirm something as truth. It is an oath. Under the Old Testament such speech is prohibited. The third of the Ten Commandments given by God through Moses to the children of Israel was for the purpose of avoiding profanity: “Thou shalt not take the name of Jehovah thy God in vain; for Jehovah will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exo. 20:7—ASV). Note also: “He hath sent redemption unto his people; He hath commanded his covenant for ever: Holy and reverend is his name” (Psa. 111:9—ASV).

Taking His, God’s name, in vain addresses the flippant and frivolous use of the sacred. *Vain* means worthless or empty, thus, speech that has no value or is worthless. When we use God’s name in a worthless or empty way, we are taking His name in vain. Jesus gave the example when He taught His disciples: “Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name” (Mat. 6:9).

Many times Jews resorted to various technicalities or illogical reason in an effort to justify their oaths as long as they did not invoke the name of God. Some rabbis held that an individual was bound by his oath, pledge, or promise only when one of the names of God was used. If one did not use one of the names of God, they taught that the speaker was not obligated to tell the truth.

There are two things that are required to call speech *profanity*. The first is the utilizing of profane and vain speech which we have already noted. God has always regarded with great displeasure the description of Himself or His creation in a flippant, frivolous, or irreverent manner. The second concerns the sacred things that belong to God. To profane implies derision against anything that is holy or worthy of honor. These sacred things would include the Tabernacle/Temple, the Ark of the Covenant, a prophet, the Bible, the church, etc. Also it would include God, Jesus Christ, or the Holy Spirit.

Today, God's name is often used irreverently. The name of God, Jesus, Christ, or Lord is attached to just about anything and everything. Many attach the name of these holy names to that which is common or profane. Many of these have become part of everyday speech for many. In the age of Facebook, Twitter, and texting, abbreviations are used regularly. One that is used very freely is "OMG" (O, My God). Many, including Christians, will use such without thought and sometimes not even knowing what it means.

What can we learn of the Jews during the first century? The Jews often used trickery and evasion to keep them from fulfilling the obligations that they had made in the oaths that they had taken. They avoided using God's name in their oaths by swearing by His handiwork, the heavens, the earth, the sun, the moon, the stars, etc. The inspired writer stated: "But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and *your* nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation" (Jam. 5:12).

A parallel passage is found in Jesus' words in what we call the Sermon on the Mount:

Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil (Mat. 5:33-37).

We always must be certain that when we say "yes," that "yes" is the correct and true answer and that when we say "no," that such an answer is true and correct. Both the Lord and the inspired James are reinforcing the fact that we must be truthful in everything that we say so there would be no need to strengthen what we say with an oath. Our speech must always be pure, and it will always be true.

OATHS AND CURSE WORDS IN THE BIBLE

What About Oaths and Curse Words That Are Found in the Bible?

The Bible does not forbid all oath taking. We find that our Lord testified under oath to Caiaphas:

But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven (26:63-64).

The apostle Paul often asserted things that he wrote in the form of an oath:

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers (Rom. 1:9).

Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth (2 Cor. 1:23).

Now the things which I write unto you, behold, before God, I lie not (Gal. 1:20).

For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ (Phi. 1:8).

The Scripture also records that God swore by Himself: “For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he sware by himself” (Heb. 6:13). Even the prophets invoked the name of God in their affirmations:

That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in the God of truth; And he that sweareth in the earth shall swear by the God of truth; Because the former troubles are forgotten, And because they are hid from mine eyes (Isa. 65:16).

Cursing Can Be Properly Used, As Is Shown in the Scripture.

A curse can be used, in a proper manner, to pronounce Divine judgment:

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. 1:8-9).

Jesus called more than one person “a child of the devil.” “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Mat. 23:15). He also condemns those who will not obey the Gospel. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). However, God’s Word prohibits such usage as, *damn you*, and *you go to hell*. James wrote, “Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be” (Jam. 3:10).

Fool can be used in a legitimate sense (Psa. 14:1; 53:1; Pro. 10:18; 1 Cor. 15:36) where it is used as a statement of fact. However, it can be used illegitimately:

But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Mat. 5:22).

The term is used illegitimately when it is used as a statement of anger or vindictiveness.

There is a great difference between swearing with an oath, as Peter did (Mat. 26:69-75), and Jesus taking an oath in a court or legal setting (26:59-64). The apostle Paul clearly condemns false swearing when writing to Timothy: “For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine” (1 Tim. 1:10). *Perjury* is defined in the *Oxford Dictionaries* as: “the offense of willfully telling an untruth in a court after having taken an oath or affirmation.” Thus it is clear that the types of oaths condemned by Scripture are those that are taken lightly and frivolously whereby they become profane.

EUPHEMISMS

Euphemism is defined in the *Oxford Dictionaries* as: “a mild or indirect word or expression substituted for one considered to be too harsh or blunt when referring to something unpleasant or embarrassing.” Some euphemisms are good. Indeed, the Bible uses some (for example, “knowing his wife,” or one’s “laying with another” to describe the sexual act). Also, we use them legitimately in everyday life; for instance, in referring to one who died as having “passed away.”

However, when speaking to express surprise, disgust, dismay, or some other emotion that is ejaculatory in nature, the use of euphemisms is strictly forbidden. Such situations would involve hitting your thumb with a hammer, expressing surprise at an accomplishment, sadness over an unexpected event, or being scared. The reason why they are condemned is because they express a mild oath, invoking of the holy to confirm the truth of what is being stated. Essentially, folks utter a mild oath when they intend to call upon something above their own honest statement. The implication being that the truthfulness of their character is not enough and something greater is needed.

We will briefly note some of the common euphemisms with their meanings:

Golly—God

Gosh—God

Gad, Egad—God
 Gee—Jesus
 Gee Whiz—Jesus and something excellent
 Jiminy Cricket—Jesus Christ
 My Lord—Jesus as Lord
 Lordy—Jesus as Lord
 By Jove—by the power of Jehovah or Jesus
 Heck—hell
 Dickens—hell
 Darn—damn or damned
 Gracious, Goodness gracious—Goodness of God
 Good Grief—Goodness of God
 My Goodness—Goodness of God
 For goodness sake—for God’s sake
 Good heavens—work of God
 For heaven’s sake—work of God

Any combination of these and others is condemned. Any combination of words can signify the same thing. Many years ago, a nephew, as a very young child, stated: “Baby, baby bumble bee.” The circumstances in which he used the words and the emphatic way he used them made it clear that he was using a euphemism. We need to erase the use of the vulgar and profane needs to be expunged from our vocabulary. Sadly, I have often heard Christians engage in the sinful use of euphemisms.

WHAT IS THE CURE?

What is the cure for this epidemic of profane and impure speech? The Bible offers a number of suggestions as to how we might remedy the situation.

The first suggestion is to keep your mouth shut. If you are unable to express yourself without uttering a curse word, then do not express yourself. The Proverbs writer states:

A fool uttereth all his mind: But a wise *man* keepeth it in till afterwards (29:11)

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue Keepeth his soul from troubles (21:23).

A second suggestion is that when you talk, talk less. The more words you speak, the more likely you are to say something you should not say, like using a curse word or a euphemism as *filler*. Again, the Proverbs writer states: “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin: But he that refraineth his lips *is* wise” (10:19).

Third, think about how you want others to perceive you. It is a fact that the use of profanity makes a person seem to be less intelligent and to be worldlier. Again, note the words of the inspired writer of Proverbs: “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: *And* he that shutteth his lips *is esteemed* a man of understanding” (17:28).

A fourth piece of advice is to think about the example you are setting for others. People learn the use of language by hearing what others say. Children learn from their parents and/or from other children at school. They pattern their speech after what they learn. Do we want our children and grandchildren to pattern their speech after the profanities or euphemisms that we utter? Do we want others to use us as an example of how Christians speak? Thus, we see the essentiality of setting the right example. Paul wrote to Titus, “Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Tit. 2:8).

A further piece of good advice is to stay away from people or situations that make you angry and tempt you to lose control and then spout profanities. Again, the Proverbs writer states, “But the wicked shall be cut off from the earth, And the transgressors shall be rooted out of it” (2:24-25).

Finally, we should follow the example of our Savior. Jesus Christ did not curse. It was not because He did not have the opportunity to curse or that people never provoked Him. He had many opportunities and provocations. However, He

Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed *himself* to him that judgeth righteously (1 Pet. 2:22-23).

Jesus left us an example that we should follow.

Can the plague of profanity and the use of euphemisms be reversed? It can, but for such to happen, it will take each individual Christian being determined to set the right example. Paul writes, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29).

We have spent a lot of time dealing with profanity. However, there are some other aspects of impure speech that I would like to briefly touch on.

CONCLUSION

There are other forms of impure and corrupt speech that we have not been able to cover in this manuscript: lying, gossip and slander, angry words, and boasting. Michael Hatcher has an excellent outline on the Bellview church web site that covers these: “Profanity And Other Abuses Of The Tongue” (Hatcher).

Writing to the Colossian brethren, Paul states, “Let your speech *be* always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (4:6). Our speech should always consist of wholesome, pure, kind, and beneficial words. Words that encourage and build up rather than words that tear down. The Proverbs writer reminds us: “A word fitly spoken *is like* apples of gold in pictures of silver” (25:11).

James reminds us of the fact that the tongue can be deadly:

Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (3:5-8).

James calls our attention to the dangers not only of the blatantly profane but to the euphemisms which are profane as well. Swearing is forbidden. If one is guilty of using profanity, euphemisms, or any corrupt speech, he must repent.

A final word comes from the lips of the Savior Himself: “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” (Mat. 12:36-37).

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GOSSIP

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INTRODUCTION

During the 2010 election our nation was plunged into a series of bitter personal attacks by politicians on each other. Middle Tennessee, where I live, was no exception. One female candidate for state office, the Christian wife of a preacher and mother of three preachers, was attacked incessantly in commercials and mailers as guilty of not paying income taxes on a corporation she and her husband had set up. Her opponent was also a Christian and a Bible class teacher. His accusation would have been a serious charge if it had been true. The truth was that this sister in Christ and her husband had set up a corporation over twenty years before but had ended up not using it, which meant that they owed no taxes. The registration for the corporate name had lapsed and it had been removed from the rolls, all legally. In the meantime someone had set up a corporation by the same name in Arizona and the owner had been charged with not paying state income taxes. Apparently this brother-in-Christ in Tennessee had not done his homework. Even after this error was brought to his attention, his campaign continued to use this falsehood in mailers and literature to the very end. To my knowledge he has never apologized. This epitomizes for me the destructive nature of what is called *gossip*.

WHAT IS GOSSIP?

Webster's defines a *gossip* as “a person who chatters or repeats idle talk and rumors about others” (788). In the Bible there are several terms dealing with gossip and gossiping:

Talebearer or talebearing—“A person who officiously tells tales; one who impertinently communicates intelligence or anecdotes, and makes mischief in society by his officiousness” (*KJV Dictionary*).

Busybody—Vine defines it as, “to be working round about, instead of at one’s own business; a meddler” (85).

Slanderer—Vine defines it as “those who are given to finding fault with the demeanor and conduct of others, and spreading their innuendos and criticism in the church” (580).

Other terms or phrases for *gossip* or the *gossiper* found in the Bible are *backbiter*, *tattlers*, and *evil speaking or speaking evil*.

Yet, why does the Bible spend so much time on this sin? Isn’t it just a harmless pastime among friends? In our country, gossip is a major form of entertainment over the airwaves, on the Internet, and in print. Yet gossip has ruined reputations, destroyed lives, and even disrupted the spiritual life of many congregations of God’s people.

GOSSIP REVEALS A CORRUPT HEART

Who was the first gossip? The Bible reveals the true nature of the gossiper by revealing the first being who engaged in it.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? 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).

What was Satan doing in this infamous conversation? By adding one word (*not*) to what God had commanded Adam, Satan attacked the truthfulness of the very originator of truth (John 17:17). This is what false teachers today do when they insinuate that Jesus did

not mean it when He said that fornication was the only grounds for divorce, with the innocent party only having the right to remarry (Mat. 19:9), for example.

Satan sowed seeds of discord in the hearts of Adam and Eve when he ascribed to God ulterior motives in verse 5. Satan maintained the reason God forbade eating this fruit was that He did not want them to be like Himself—“ye shall be as gods.” He made the Creator out to be a jealous, petty tyrant. Thus, this murderer and father of lies (John 8:44) caused others to stumble. Tragically our forbearers believed the lie and fell from grace—a very long fall! They were cast out the Garden of Eden because they listened to and believed gossip.

Likewise gossip reveals corrupt hearts when people spread lies and half-truths about others. Many do it to dominate another or to assassinate the character of an opponent. God hates such things (Pro. 6:19; 16:28). The enemies of Jesus did this.

The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners (Mat. 11:19).

But when the Pharisees heard *it*, they said, This *fellow* doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils (12:24).

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess (23:25).

GOSSIP IS A BETRAYAL OF TRUST

When is a conversation gossip and when is it just the relaying of vital information? One criterion for this would be the betrayal of trust. If the information we relay to another is not confidential and is given out of a sense of concern for the well-being of the one being discussed, it would not qualify as gossip. “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men” (Rom. 12:17). When we betray that trust and impart entrusted information, we commit sin. “And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31).

Every Christian, not just a preacher or elder, should be trusted to keep a matter in confidence; as long as it is not in violation of law (Christ's law or man's law). A brother or sister comes to one of us and pours out his or her heart, seeking counsel. The gossip uses this meeting as an opportunity to find out things they can use against others. They quickly go to another and divulge this secret on the pretext, "Please don't repeat this." Solomon declared, "A talebearer revealeth secrets: But he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter" (Pro. 11:13). The trust of one Christian to another is violated; the bond of brotherly love is breached. We should "walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2).

Sometimes the gossip approaches another in a spirit of flattery and subterfuge. He will go to the weak and wounded on a fishing expedition. In Psalm 41 David tells how his enemies:

 speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see *me*, he speaketh vanity: His heart gathereth iniquity to itself; *When* he goeth abroad, he telleth *it*. All that hate me whisper together against me: Against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him: And *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more (41:5-8).

According to John Gill, Delaney believed that these verses refer to a visit by Absalom to his father David while he lay sick of small pox. Pretending concern, he was only trying to find some pretext to bring down David and gain the throne. Whether this speculation is true or not, the Bible does not say. However, David does show us the corrupt heart which is not concerned about the welfare of others—only their own nefarious schemes and unrighteous ambition.

 The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings (Jer. 17:9-10).

“IDLE HANDS ARE THE DEVIL’S WORKSHOP”

“And withal they learn *to be* idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not” (1 Tim. 5:13).

Paul and the Holy Spirit are describing the abuse of an important authorized benevolent work of the early church—the support of “a widow indeed” (5:5). These were widows who had no family to support them (5:16) and depended upon the church to aid them. Apparently the younger widows had abused this benevolence and were engaging in immorality (5:6, 11) and gossip. Their very spiritual health was in danger (5:12). Albert Barnes commenting on verse 13 wrote:

Revealing the concerns of their neighbors; disclosing secrets; magnifying trifles, so as to exalt themselves into importance, as if they were entrusted with the secrets of others; inventing stories and tales of gossip, that they may magnify and maintain their own consequence in the community. No persons are commonly more dangerous to the peace of a neighborhood, than those who have nothing to do (180).

We are fast becoming a nation of the idle. Our technology has left us with a lot of time on our hands. Our ancestors were actively involved in agriculture, commerce, industry, and homemaking; had little spare time. However, many today have a surplus of time. This creates an inordinate craving for entertainment and novelty. Whole industries have been formed around this ungodly desire. “For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21). Into this vacuum Satan rushes in, tempting us to be a gossip to relieve the boredom and to hear some new tidbit.

The twenty-first-century church of Christ is not immune to idleness. Because of the lack of Biblical preaching (and lax shepherding) on the work of the church and the responsibilities of individual Christian, gossiping is rampant. The precious time the Lord has given us on this earth should not be spent as *tattlers* and *busybodies*. Yet, many members (including preachers) busy themselves in

undermining the authority of the elders and the work of the bride of Christ.

There is only one cure for idleness—activity. “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (Eph. 5:15-16). Instead of the leadership diverting the congregation to busywork programs such as “Senior Saints visiting the Mall,” why not exhort the brethren to a daily study of the Word, memorization of Bible passages and mediation upon them. Instead of idle chatter with one’s neighbor, why not inquire about his soul and be a soul winner (Pro. 11:30). Fathers, instead of using your time planning the demise of the preacher or elders, use it to train your children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Mothers, instead of being a *busybody*, use your time away from homemaking to “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (Jam. 1:27). Preachers, instead of perusing the Internet, find challenging ways to fulfill the Great Commission (Mat. 28:18-20). Singles and retirees, what about the many opportunities you have in your life to “add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness” (2 Pet. 1:5-7)—to prepare for eternity and seek to bring glory to God?

GOSSIP IS A SYMPTOM OF SPIRITUAL SICKNESS

The Christian knows that they live in a sin-sick world headed for judgment. American society in particular is bounding down the same path ancient Rome took. Gossip was all pervasive during the first-century A.D. Roman world, and most of the ancient histories from that period sound more like records of gossip than objective facts. Paul and the Holy Spirit testify to this when they bore witness to the “reprobate mind” of that period:

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, . . . whippersnappers, Backbiters. . . 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).

Dear reader, doesn't this sound like present day America? Over the last 50 years a communications revolution has taken place. We can be in instant contact with one another over vast distances. News that took weeks or months of travel to be relayed now takes less than a second. Yet these marvels of technology have not improved the human tongue. The ether today is filled with techno-savvy whisperers and backbiters. Yes, I know that the Gospel can be spread by this same technology. But often it is pushed aside by "evil speaking." What the Holy Spirit and James wrote so long ago is still true:

And the tongue *is* a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; *it is* an unruly evil, full of deadly poison (3:6-8).

The Internet, Facebook, Twitter, etc., has become a hotbed of gossip and backbiting. Reputations have been ruined beyond repair by someone venting his hatred and anger. Like a hammer, the electronic media can be used constructively or destructively. Let the Christian not be guilty of using this wonder to tear down others. "Out of the same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not so to be" (3:10).

The return of our nation to righteousness of speech cannot be accomplished by economic or political means. Millions of dollars could be spent on "anti-gossiping" campaigns with little bang for the buck. Only the Gospel of Jesus Christ can transform that destructive instrument, the tongue, into a vehicle of praise and devotion; an edifier of others rather than a destroyer of men. "Let the words of my mouth, And the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer" (Psa. 19:14). The new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) is careful that his speech does not harm others or cause others to stumble.

HOW TO AVOID BEING A GOSSIP

1. Know the Word of God. How few of us actually know the Scriptures so we may apply them to any situation in life! "Thy word

have I hid in mine heart, That I might not sin against thee” (Psa. 119:11). Of course, this requires time for memorization and meditation, but the reward is that “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) is always sharp and handy for use in time of temptation.

2. Realize the eternal consequences of sin. Few gossipers realize that their actions are a sin, punishable by the second death.

But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned (Mat. 12:36-37).

These haunting words should propel us to avoid speaking evil of those made in the image of God.

3. Don't be a gossip. Avoid the temptation to speak evil of another. The Christian should understand what the command of the Lord to “love thy neighbor” encompasses (Mark 12:30-31). Do we truly love the one Jesus died for?

Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another... Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers (Eph. 4:25, 29).

4. Avoid the gossip. Everyone appreciates news about the welfare of another Christian. Yet, there is often a fine line between genuine concern and malicious gossip. If that conversation turns in the direction of gossip, stop it! If need be, rebuke the gossip (Luke 17:3). Brother Leroy Brownlow wrote, “Remember: if there were no gossip ears, there would soon be no gossip tongues” (127).

5. Practice temperance. Twenty-first-century Christians are in dire need of self control. As Christians we must learn to control our tongues—and our minds. Jesus did not die on the cross for my sins so I could continue being a gossip. “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Pet. 3:10).

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MEDICAL ETHICS

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INTRODUCTION

Should I try *in vitro* fertilization? Should someone act as a surrogate parent? Should I try to clone myself? How should we view sex change surgery? How should we view various types of medical engineering (i.e., genetic engineering, gene splicing, genetic screening, genetic mapping, et al.)? What should we think about various types of brain control (electrical stimulation, chemical control, psychosurgery, et al.)?

These are just some of the questions people are faced with today. How is it possible for a book that was completed around 2000 years ago to deal with medical questions that we face today? When the Bible was completed, there was absolutely no way for the writers to envision the advances of medical technology that would take place today. There is no way for us to look into the future, if God allows this world to stand, and see what advances will come.

Brethren have long said, and correctly so, that the Bible gives us answers for our every need. The Bible answers every moral and religious need and question we might face. Peter writes:

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).

God did not simply give man what he needed to be saved or to worship properly. God also gave man what he needed regarding anything and everything that might come along in our life. As such, these medical questions, while not dealt with specifically, are answered for us in the principles God established. There are three principles that if properly applied, I believe, will answer all the questions regarding medical ethics that we presently face or will face in the future.

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

If man simply evolved from lifeless matter or lower life forms, then human life is no different than animal life. However, man is the creation of God. Notice what Moses writes by inspiration of God: “And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). In speaking to the Athenians, Paul would tell them concerning God: “Neither is worshipped with men’s hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). It is Jehovah God that gives life to all things; thus it is a gift from God. As such, human life needs to be respected.

Since life is a gift of God and man is expected by God to respect that life, God has always considered the unjust taking of life to be wrong. When Cain murdered his brother, Abel, God said to him:

What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother’s blood crieth unto me from the ground. And now *art* thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother’s blood from thy hand (Gen. 4:10-11).

God made Cain realize the great evil he had done, thus Cain responded saying that, “it shall come to pass, *that* every one that findeth me shall slay me” (4:14). Cain realized the penalty for mur-

der would be death for the murderer (himself). So others would not “slay” him, God “set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him” (4:15).

Later God would instruct man: “Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (9:6). Under the Mosaic Law, God saw fit to make this one of the Ten Commandments: “Thou shalt not kill” (Exo. 20:13). Many of the later translations use *murder* instead of *kill* (NKJV, NAS, ESV, NET), which is probably a better translation.

We would also note that God views human life from the moment of conception. The sweet singer of Israel would write:

For thou hast possessed my reins [formed my inward parts—NKJV]: thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance [frame—NKJV] was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, *and* curiously [skillfully—NKJV] wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect [unformed—NKJV]; and in thy book all *my members* were written, *which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them (Psa. 139:13-16).

David considered himself a human life while he was still in the womb, and God knew him while he was still being formed in the womb.

Jeremiah also stated that God knew him while still in the womb when he wrote: “Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jer. 1:5).

HONOR OF MAN

Closely associated with the previous is the dignity, honor, or respect of man. Man did not evolve from the apes and is thus simply an animal, as the evolutionist teaches. God created man in His image. Moses recorded:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over

every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

Being made in the image of God, we are the offspring of God. Paul said to the Athenians:

For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device (Acts 17:28-29).

In writing about the tongue and its evil, James shows that we should not curse man because man is the offspring of God. He writes, "Therewith bless we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men, which are made after the similitude of God" (Jam. 3:9). This certainly demands a respect or dignity for mankind.

When God created man and placed him in the Garden, Moses records, "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). During this time, God would come to man and fellowship him. It was a custom for God to come "walking in the garden in the cool of the day" (3:8). At this time, man had not been spoiled by sin. However, since man is made in the image of God, man has the right to choose right from wrong—man was created as a free moral agent. With the ability to choose, when Satan came tempting Eve, she chose to disobey God (3:1-6). Sin came into the world and sin brought a multitude of evils with it. God pronounced certain consequences to Adam and Eve's disobedience (3:16-19).

Sin continued to abound in the world. This resulted in sorrow on God's part with man: "And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart" (6:6). Thus, God said, "My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also *is* flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (6:3). Because of the evil that God saw man doing, He determined to destroy the world:

And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing,

and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them (6:7).

To destroy man from the face of the earth, God sent a global flood, yet sparing righteous Noah and his family in the ark. The flood destroyed the water vapor canopy above the earth, resulting in the harmful effects of the sun reaching man. (This is the reason the ages of the patriarchs were in the 900 year range prior to the flood, but after the flood it settles to about 70 to 80 years Psa. 90:10). Those harmful effects of the sun have brought additional ills, afflictions, and sufferings into our world.

God does authorize us to do what we can to improve our health. Paul speaks of bodily exercise when he writes, “For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). While it is of little profit compared with godliness, it is still profitable for the human body. Jesus authorized the principle of going to a doctor to regain one’s health when He said, “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Mat. 9:12), and Luke did not have to stop being a physician when he became a Christian (Col. 4:14). Thus, those things that are necessary to improve one’s health would certainly be authorized by God: i.e., blood transfusions, medications, surgeries, organ transplants, et al.

However, because we have the right and opportunity to take advantage of many of the medical procedures available today, does not mean that we are like an animal to be experimented on. God made man as He so desired. The sweet singer of Israel, David, would state: “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well” (Psa. 139:14). To alter or try to change God’s design is to go beyond what is right and moral.

SACREDNESS OF THE FAMILY UNIT

On the sixth day of creation, God created man. In seeing His crowning of creation, God said, “*It is* not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him” (Gen. 2:18). God makes all the animals pass before Adam so he could name them,

“but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him” (2:20). Therefore, God made for man the woman.

And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man (2:21-22).

In bringing the woman to the man, God was sanctioning the marriage relationship. God still joins together an eligible man and woman in the bonds of holy matrimony:

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. 19:5-6).

Almost no serious thinking person denies the importance of the home. There is an old adage that says, “As the home goes, so goes the nation.” One changed it to say: “As the family goes, so goes the nation and so goes the world in which we live.” Throughout the Bible, God was concerned with the home and continually gave instructions for the home. After making the valid point that the “ultimate thrust of the home is spiritual” (220), Wayne Jackson gave five benefits of the family unit:

- (1) It provides an atmosphere of companionship (Genesis 2:18).
- (2) It is that sphere wherein the sexual appetites of the body can be morally satisfied (1 Corinthians 7:2).
- (3) It stabilizes social relationships and enhances international solidarity.
- (4) It is the divinely planned method of introducing children into the world (Genesis 4:1; 1 Timothy 5:14).
- (5) The family unit was planned to provide a warm atmosphere of love and trust—an ideal environment for spiritual growth (221).

The importance of the home is the reason marriage is to be for life. Man is not to put it asunder. Divorce is contrary to God’s Will. Jesus states:

Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery (Mark 10:11-12).

The general rule is that if a man divorces his mate and marries someone else, he continues to commit adultery. The same holds true for a woman. God did allow one and only one exception to this law and this is if the marriage partner commits fornication, then the non-fornicator (innocent party) can divorce the fornicator (guilty party) and marry again without committing adultery.

And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except *it be* for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery (Mat. 19:9).

Thus, we see that God views the home and family unit as something that is sacred. Anything that attempts to circumvent the home and family is morally wrong and must be opposed.

INTENT

Intent is vital in so many areas. Our legal system recognizes the principle of intent. When one takes the life of another, intent is always considered. If one intends to take another's life, then the law deals very differently than with the person who accidentally takes the life of another. In the medical ethics realm, some of the procedures will be deemed moral or immoral based upon one's intent. Some medical procedures, however, would never be right under any circumstances or intent of those involved. (Ethics are not situational, and they are not autonomous, as Humanism teaches.) However, there are some medical procedures that might not be wrong of itself, but if the intent of the person doing it violates the principles previously noted, then the procedure is wrong.

APPLICATION

While we certainly cannot cover every medical situation that might arise, we can show some applications of the previous principles and thus help us to understand how we relate these principles to what might come about.

Sanctity of Human Life

Abortion is morally wrong. As noted previously, life is sacred from the moment of conception, and God views the life in the

womb as He does outside the womb—there is no difference. Abortion is the taking of innocent human life and is thus murder.

In vitro fertilization is a process where human eggs are fertilized in a test tube (glass dishes) and then transferred to the female and babies brought to term. However, in the process, numerous additional fertilized eggs are sacrificially destroyed—aborted. Thus this process, in spite of its good intent to help a couple that has not been able to conceive to have a baby, is wrong and must be avoided. However, even if scientists were able to achieve this process without sacrificially destroying any fertilized eggs, it would not immediately mean they should do so. God has designed a method for the conception of babies. Man must be careful of by-passing God's design.

Since euthanasia is discussed in another chapter, we will not spend time on it but to say simply that there is nothing wrong with allowing the death process to take place (often called passive euthanasia), but it is wrong to actively do something to cause the death to happen (called active euthanasia).

Honor of Man

We have previously noted that our Lord endorsed the principle of going to a physician and taking medication for the body. With this endorsement we would find that inoculations, surgery, artificial organs, and organ transplants are all morally acceptable. Some have objected to blood transfusions based upon the prohibition of not eating blood in Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 7:26, and Acts 15:28-29. However, a blood transfusion is not eating blood, and there is no prohibition against a transfusion.

However, modern technology has gone far beyond these types of actions. First there is the category of Genetic Engineering that is taking place. In 1953, two British scientists (James Watson and Francis Crick) discovered DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid). Located along the chromosomes of the living cell, DNA is composed of four chemicals that are arranged in an infinite variety of patterns that form the genes. Depending on the particular code the development of this material produced a worm, mouse, cow, et al. Each human cell contains 46 chromosomes that are tiny packages of DNA. The

order of arrangement forms the *blueprint* that regulates the production of all living things. Each one of the billions of cells in the human body contains all of the genetic information for the production of the entire person.

Scientists have been able to “map” genes (gene or genome mapping) and thus determine, in part, what their specific functions are. The Human Genome Project (an international scientific research project) has done an amazing amount of work in this area, having been able to map approximately 20,000-25,000 genes from both a physical and functional standpoint. Mapping might be profitable for plants and animals yet might present some problems regarding humans. We must all remember that God has designed man, and man must not try to *play God*.

Genetic testing or screening (some, like the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment, distinguishes between the two) can possibly detect hereditary problems before birth. This can be valuable in treating diseases and problems before they can cause problems. However, it can also be used to identify problems in an unborn child to allow the parents to abort the baby (especially if there is a disease for which there is no known cure), which is morally evil.

Genetic testing or screening leads to genetic engineering. Genetic engineering is an attempt to manipulate the code of the hereditary pattern by the introduction of new genetic information into the cells. There are two types of engineering: germline gene therapy that would alter the traits a child is born with and make them inheritable, and somatic cell gene therapy that swaps our bad genes for good ones. Engineering can very possibly have great beneficial results. It might be able to eliminate many diseases such as Cystic fibrosis, sickle-cell anemia, dwarfism, cardiomyopathy, diabetes, et al. However, we do not know what dangers might be involved in trying to accomplish these things. Additionally, it becomes very easy to go from repairing something that is wrong to attempting to *play God* (i.e., curing dwarfism to creating a race of giants).

There is also the attempt being made to control the mind. There are various ways in which they desire to accomplish this control:

genetic bank, electrical stimulation of the brain (some call it transistorized humans), chemical control, and psychosurgery. Human conduct should not be controlled by these types of things but by moral persuasion and reason leading to the person making moral decisions to change and practice self-control under the will of God.

To view man as a mere animal to be experimented on (a kind of Dr. Frankenstein-like scientist) to create or redesign the human being crosses the bounds of morality—it violates the dignity of man and usurps the creative prerogatives of God.

Sacredness of the Family Unit

There are likewise several areas of medical ethics that encroach into the family unit. Cloning has garnered a great deal of attention the past few years. When Dolly, a female sheep, was first cloned (she was born July 5, 1996), she garnered a lot of attention since she was the first mammal to be cloned from an adult somatic cell (they used the process of nuclear transfer). Cloning is a process of reproduction apart from the normal mating (there are three different types of cloning: recombinant DNA technology or DNA cloning, reproductive cloning, and therapeutic or embryo cloning). Reproductive cloning is to create a genetic duplicate of an individual organism, animal or human, through asexual reproduction, as by stimulating a single cell. Some claim that great historic figures could be reproduced (cloned) by a preservation of their cells. Others say that, if a loved one died an untimely death, then he could be cloned by use of some of his cells. Some, no doubt, would arrogantly decide to clone themselves. However, all such attempts at cloning strike at the heart of God's design for human reproduction within the family unit. Another basic problem in producing humans (even in embryonic form) for experimental purposes, is that it is wrong (a violation of basic human rights and the dignity of man). Then the process would involve creating several human embryos and destroying all but the *fittest* (aborting them) which would violate the sanctity of human life.

Within the last few decades there has been an overt attempt to blur the lines of distinction between male and female. It was seen in

the unisex movement and is seen in the homosexual movement. A growing practice has also been surgically altering one's sex. (We are not discussing when a person is born with a sexual abnormality: i.e., intersex—formerly known as a hermaphrodite.) While surgeries of this type go by various names (sex reassignment, gender reassignment, genital reconstruction, sex affirmation, sex realignment), it is most commonly called sex change surgery. Most who seek this type of surgery are referred to as *transsexual*. Altering oneself from one sex to the other flies in the face of God's creation. The psalmist correctly records: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: marvellous *are* thy works; and *that* my soul knoweth right well" (Psa. 139:14). Those who seek this change basically state that God got it all wrong, and they need to correct it. Any attempt to alter the design of the human body for the purpose of an arbitrary gender change is a perversion of God's design of the distinction of the sexes.

When a woman finds herself sterile, she will sometimes opt for a surrogacy. There are two types: traditional surrogacy where it is the child's genetic mother, or gestational surrogacy where no genetic relationship occurs. In surrogacy a fertilized egg will be implanted in a woman's womb who then carries the child to term, or a woman may allow a herself to be artificially inseminated so she can have a child naturally as opposed to adoption. The concept of womb for hire is contrary to the sacredness of the family unit. Parental responsibility begins at conception (and in many ways before conception) and does not end till that child reaches a stage of maturity that allows him to be independent and in many ways does not end. There is the training and restraining of children by their parents (Pro. 22:6; Eph. 6:1-4) in rearing children. To surrender one's reproductive powers to another person would end up being a neglecting and abdicating of the parental responsibility God has given. Also having a child for the purpose of selling or giving it away would be a violation of the family unit God established. Any situation that violates that family unit God established is not moral.

CONCLUSION

In the Charles Dickens novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*, Dickens begins by saying: “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” In many respects this is true of today in regards to medical advances. We can do things today that were not even dreamed of in times past. However, with the advances in technology come moral issues that were never faced in prior times. The only way to determine what is ethical in any situation is to have our feet firmly planted on the Word of God. It has everything we need to know pertaining to making moral decisions. If we keep those principles of the sanctity of human life, the honor of man, and the sacredness of the family unit in mind, then whatever medical issues might arise in the future, we will be able to determine what is right and what is wrong.

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ABORTION AND BIRTH CONTROL

Ken Chumbley

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Ken has preached in a number of states as well as having done mission work in England (1968-1972 and 1985-1992) and Canada (1974-1977). He has preached in Gospel meetings and spoken on numerous brotherhood lectureships. He served as a part-time instructor at the "West Virginia School of Preaching," edited *Old Paths* magazine (primarily distributed in Great Britain), and has had articles published in various brotherhood publications. He is on the staff of Truth Bible Institute. Since returning from England in 1992, each year he has made mission trips to England along with a mission trip to India. Since the beginning of 2000, he has served as evangelist with the Belvedere Church of Christ in South Carolina.

INTRODUCTION

When my eldest son was old enough to understand, I told him that if he had been conceived a few months later, knowing what my wife and I knew about the circumstances, he probably would not be alive. (Stephen was born in 1972. We adopted him early in 1973.) He has never forgotten this. In the mid eighties, when he was in high school in England, there was a discussion in class on abortion. He came home at lunchtime (we lived close to the school) for my file on abortion and particularly pictures that I had in my possession that showed the development of a baby in the womb. These pictures by Swedish photographer Lennart Nilsson were published in *Life* magazine on April 30, 1965 (Wade). Later that afternoon, some of his friends came by the house. They told me that they had no problem with abortion until Stephen presented his case along with the pictures. They said they had no idea that the baby was identifiable as such so soon after conception. They had never seen the evidence before. Abortion proponents, like evolutionists, want people to be ignorant of the facts. They want people to think that the fetus is not a baby, but just some kind of *blob*. Even the woman behind the infamous Roe versus Wade Supreme Court

decision of January 22, 1973, is now opposed to abortion since she has learned the truth (the Jane Roe of the case was actually Norma L. McCorvey).

Most abortionists are opposed, often violently opposed, to any who would take the life of an animal or bird, even the unborn. They, along with others, have persuaded enough legislators to back them. In Florida a man was convicted in 1989 for poaching 1,088 sea turtle eggs and was fined \$100.00 per egg. This was not an isolated case (Barton). The man's public defender argued that a turtle is not a turtle until it hatches. However, the prosecutor argued that though they had not hatched, they were still turtles. The Judge agreed with the prosecutor. It is too bad that babies do not hatch! One can poach 1,088 sea turtle eggs and be fined \$100.00 (the fine was later rescinded as being too harsh). However, an abortionist can kill 1000 babies and be rewarded with tax money for doing so and, additionally, be lauded as a champion of "reproductive freedom"!

Abortion is one of the most controversial issues of our day. It has, and continues to affect millions in the United States and millions more worldwide. It has been estimated by social scientists that abortion is the most frequently performed surgical procedure in the United States. Reports show that, since 1973, the year of the Supreme Court decision that legalized abortion on demand, that around 50 million babies have been aborted in the United States and that now one out of every three babies conceived in the country is deliberately aborted. During the Presidential election just over two years ago, it was reported that the Republican Vice-Presidential candidate, Sarah Palin, knowingly had a child having Down's syndrome. Some of the liberals, at the time, suggested that Palin should have "terminated the pregnancy" which was a *polite* way of saying she should have aborted her child. Also, the news broke that her unmarried daughter was pregnant and had chosen to keep the baby. However, some liberals were saying that she should have had an abortion. While we believe that pre-marital sex is sinful, we believe that Palin's daughter made the right decision in giving birth to the baby. Two wrongs do not make a right!

However, the question that should concern us most about the issue is whether or not abortion is morally defensible. Does God approve of abortion, or does He disapprove? Is having an abortion or facilitating and participating in an abortion sinful?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ABORTION

Contrary to what many believe, the debate over abortion is not a recent phenomenon. Many ancient cultures, including the Assyrian, Babylonian, Sumerian, and Hittite considered abortion to be a serious crime.

The ancient Hippocratic Oath, the basis of the modern Hippocratic Oath that medical doctors take, has a part that states, according to the original translation: "I will not give a woman a pessary to produce abortion." The classic translation of the passage reads: "Similarly I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy."

Plato and Aristotle thought that deformed children should be exposed and left to die.

Closer to the time of Christ, Josephus wrote:

The law, moreover, enjoins us to bring up all our offspring, and forbids women to cause abortion of what is begotten, or to destroy it afterward; and if any woman appears to have so done, she will be a murderer of her child (2:25).

The Didache, an early Christian writing, states: "thou shalt not murder a child by abortion nor kill them when born" (2.2).

Athenagoras, a 2nd century Christian, wrote to the emperor, Marcus Aurelius, saying:

And when we say that those women who use drugs to bring on abortion commit murder, and will have to give an account to God s [sic] for the abortion, on what principle should we commit murder? For it does not belong to the same person to regard the very foetus [sic] in the womb as a created being, and therefore an object of God's care, and when it has passed into life, to kill it; and not to expose an infant, because those who expose them are chargeable with child-murder, and on the other hand, when it has been reared to destroy it (XXXV).

Augustine, a fourth century "Church Father," criticized husbands and wives for "preferring that their offspring die before it

lives, or if it was already alive in the womb, to kill it before it was born” (qtd. in Noonan 136).

Scripture teaches:

And he that smiteth his father, or his mother, shall be surely put to death. And he that stealeth a man, and selleth him, or if he be found in his hand, he shall surely be put to death. And he that curseth his father, or his mother, shall surely be put to death. And if men strive together, and one smite another with a stone, or with *his* fist, and he die not, but keepeth *his* bed: If he rise again, and walk abroad upon his staff, then shall he that smote *him* be quit: only he shall pay *for* the loss of his time, and shall cause *him* to be thoroughly healed. And if a man smite his servant, or his maid, with a rod, and he die under his hand; he shall be surely punished. Notwithstanding, if he continue a day or two, he shall not be punished: for he *is* his money. If men strive, and hurt a woman with child, so that her fruit depart *from her*, and yet no mischief follow: he shall be surely punished, according as the woman’s husband will lay upon him; and he shall pay as the judges *determine* (Exo. 21:15-22).

In the United States, laws against abortion were in effect until 1967 when a few states began to liberalize their laws. By 1970 eighteen states had passed laws that allowed abortion in “exceptional circumstances.” On January 22, 1973, the Supreme Court of the United States, by a 7 to 2 decision legalized abortion on demand. The Roe versus Wade decision held that a woman, with her doctor, could choose abortion in the earlier months of pregnancy without restriction, and with restrictions in later months, based on the right to privacy. However, since then, the time in which an abortion can be legally performed has been extended to almost the whole period of pregnancy. There are those who would like to legalize what is referred to as “Partial Birth Abortion.” This, as its name implies, is bringing the child to birth but killing the child during the birth process.

ABORTION METHODS

We will list here the methods used by doctors to perform abortions. We will not spend the time to discuss them but present them to be sure we better understand what is involved in an abortion.

- Dilation and Curettage or “D&C”
- Suction Aspiration (used in 80% of abortions)
- Saline Injection or salt poisoning
- Prostaglandin Chemical Abortion
- Dilation and Evacuation or “D&E”
- Hysterotomy
- Dilation and Extraction or “Partial-Birth Abortion”

There are some, including President Barrack Hussein Obama, who are in favor of allowing the mother to let the child die when an abortion fails and the child is born alive! [This is based upon Obama’s opposition to Illinios SB1082 in 2003 that sought to define *born-alive infant* as any infant, even one born as the result of an unsuccessful abortion, that shows vital signs separate from its mother. The bill would have given infants thus defined as humans with legal rights—editor.] Such are the depths of the depravity that some will go to take the life of the unborn.

WHAT DOES THE WORD OF GOD SAY ABOUT ABORTION?

The Bible, in principle addresses all our needs and answer of our moral questions.

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

The first thing we need to note is that the Bible teaches that life is valuable:

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing

seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat. And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so. 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. 1:26-31).

Thou shalt not kill [literal translation—murder] (Exo. 20:13).

Jesus repeats this commandment when He states:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Mat. 5:21-22).

Most now agree that life begins at conception—although President Obama has said that he thinks it is “above his pay grade” to give an answer! There are doctors who have testified to this fact, and not all are sympathetic to the “pro-life” cause.

Ashley Montague, professor at Harvard and Rutgers, for example stated, “The basic fact is simple: life begins not at birth, but conception” (vi).

Dr. Bernard Nathanson, is an internationally known obstetrician and gynecologist, who was a co-founder of what is now the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL) and who owned and operated what was, at the time, the largest abortion clinic in the western hemisphere. While owning that clinic, he was directly involved in over sixty thousand abortions. It was Dr. Nathanson’s study of developments in the science of fetology and his use of ultrasound to observe the unborn child in the womb that led him to the conclusion he had made a horrible mistake. He quit his very lucrative practice and wrote in the *New England Journal of Medicine* that he was deeply troubled by his “increasing certainty that I had in fact presided over 60,000 deaths” (1189-90).

In his film, *The Silent Scream*, Nathanson later stated, “Modern technologies have convinced us that *beyond question the unborn*

child is simply another human being, another member of the human community, indistinguishable in every way from any of us.” Dr. Nathanson wrote *Aborting America* so the public could be informed of the realities behind the abortion rights movement of which he had been a primary leader.

At the time Dr. Nathanson was an atheist and his conclusions were based squarely on the biological facts and were not, even remotely, on religious beliefs.

Dr. Landrum Shettles for twenty-seven years served as attending obstetrician-gynecologist at Columbia-Presbyterian Medical Center in New York. He was a pioneer in sperm biology, fertility, and sterility. His intrauterine photographs of preborn children appear in over fifty medical textbooks. Dr. Shettles stated:

I oppose abortion. I do so, first, because I accept what is biologically manifest—*that human life commences at the time of conception*—and, second, because I believe it is wrong to take innocent human life under any circumstances. My position is scientific, pragmatic, and humanitarian (103).

That life begins at conception is clearly testified by Scripture:

Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, *and* I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations (Jer. 1:5).

For thou hast possessed my reins: Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: Marvellous *are* thy works; And *that* my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, When I was made in secret, *And* curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; And in thy book all *my members* were written, *Which* in continuance were fashioned, when *as yet there was* none of them (Psa. 139:13-16).

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost (Luke 1:41).

Why died I not from the womb? *Why* did I *not* give up the ghost when I came out of the belly? (Job 3:11).

PRO-ABORTION RHETORIC

Proponents of abortion like to consider themselves to be “pro-choice”—that is they believe in the woman’s right to choose whether or not to carry the unborn baby to birth or abort the baby. In reality, they are in favor of the woman’s right to kill. Let us look at some of the favorite statements of those who believe in the so-called “right to choose.”

One such statement is: “Every woman has a right to control her own body.” Let us examine this. “Every woman”—about half of the unborn babies aborted are women; what about their right to choose life? Such is not even considered by the pro-abortion people. “Has a right”—the reality is that society does not, even in the most liberal of circles, recognize that women have an absolute right over their own bodies. This is, for example, seen by laws that oppose public nudity, drunkenness, and prostitution (in most places). “To control”—if women seeking an abortion had been in control, there would have been no pregnancy. (We recognize that in the case of rape the woman is not in control; however, that alone does not give the right to take another life, that of the unborn, in abortion). “Her own body”—when a woman conceives, it is no longer just her body as there is another body (or bodies) in her womb. What about the rights of those unborn, but living bodies she is bearing?

Another well-worn statement is: “Abortion is every woman’s legal right.” It might be legal, but such does not mean that it is morally or biblically a *right*. Legal and moral or Biblical rights are not always the same. The legal system cannot grant a right or take away a right that it either not God-given or is God-given. That was the response of Peter and the apostles when the legal authorities sought to take away their God-given right to preach the Gospel: “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29).

Again, it is argued: “The fetus is mere tissue and not a person.” Yet, scientists have proved that the fetus is indeed a distinct and separate person that even has its own DNA! It amazes me that so many who claim to uphold science reject proven scientific fact when it does not agree with their preconceived ideas. Also some argue: “Abortion

is the best solution to a crisis pregnancy”—that is an unwanted and unplanned pregnancy. One might ask: “What if Mary—mother of Jesus, had embraced such a view?” This is brought forward specifically in pregnancies involving rape and incest. However, such abortions only account for about 1% of all abortions performed. We do not want to minimize the trauma of such situations. However, denying the right to life to the unborn, who is completely innocent, is not a proper response. Why should the unborn be denied the basic chance of life because of the sin of the father or mother?

WHAT CAN WE DO ABOUT THE MORAL PROBLEM OF ABORTION?

First, we need to show compassion. Remember, it is not a sin to have a baby outside of marriage; the sin was in having sex outside of marriage. We must condemn sin, but, also, lovingly help and support those who have committed sin and help them as they deal with the consequences of sin. Sin is compounded when one conceives outside of marriage and seeks an abortion.

However, although many abortions are performed on unmarried women, often young teenage girls, many are also performed on married women. Sometimes this is as a result of sexual activity outside of marriage; it is simply the fact that the wife, and sometimes the husband, do not want to have the child and therefore seek an abortion.

We also need to speak out by preaching and teaching the Word of God concerning the sin of abortion. Just because the courts of men have upheld the so-called woman’s right to have an abortion, it is not a God-given right but is sin. God’s Word must be taught so both Christians and non-Christians can know the truth regarding abortion. Christian young people need to be taught not only the sinfulness of abortion but also the sin of premarital sex. Also, the Bible’s teaching regarding fornication and adultery must be taught. We cannot expect people to live godly lives when they do not know what godliness is.

In addition to teaching the truth on these matters, Christians need to be socially involved. They can, and should, make their voice

heard in support of the pro-life position. Abortion on demand may be the law of the land, but the Supreme Court decision can (and indeed, should) be overturned. For that to happen it will take upholding candidates for public office that are pro-life and voting for such candidates. We need to make people aware of the fact that abortion is the taking of human life. When people see the truth, they will often change their position.

Above all, we need to pray. We need to pray that the Supreme Court ruling (*Roe versus Wade*) be overturned. We should pray that our tax dollars not be used to carry out abortions. We should pray that the truth about abortion be made known. We should pray for young Christians that they not be deceived by the world and engage in sexual activity outside of marriage. We should pray that those who do sin will not compound that sin by aborting the child that has been conceived. We should pray that the truth may be taught in such a way that Christians will not engage in unlawful sexual relations so there would be no need to consider committing further sin by aborting an unborn child. Remember: “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).

BIRTH CONTROL

Before we conclude this study, we have a second topic that needs to be considered—that of birth control. Is practicing birth control sinful? Simply, the answer is yes and no, as we shall see.

There are many that would advocate that abortion is simply a “form of birth control.” While, in a sense, that is true, in that it does make it possible to prevent an “unwanted child” (unwanted by the woman who conceived it) coming into the world, it is not birth control but a means of destroying a life, the life of the unborn. Abortion, as we have seen, is contrary to God’s will as it is the taking of innocent human life.

The “morning after” pill is promoted as a method of birth control. It is promoted as the answer for women who have “unprotected sex” and fear they may become pregnant as a result and thus for an

“emergency.” Why would such a pill be necessary unless one is engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage that is contrary to Scripture? A number of years ago, a woman from Michigan, speaking on television, crudely stated that the women should make the decision to prevent an unwanted pregnancy before “opening her legs”! In other words, before engaging in sexual activity and deciding not to engage in such activity.

A specific pill that remains controversial is RU-486. Note the following regarding this pill from the web site of *The Center for Bio-Ethical Reform*:

When a woman is given RU-486 (also called Mifepristone), it kills her baby by interfering with progesterone, the hormone which keeps the baby implanted in the wall of the mother’s uterus. Two days later, the woman returns to the clinic to receive a prostaglandin drug which induces labor and expels the dead embryo (RU-486 is used until 7 weeks after the first day of her last menstrual period). If the baby hasn’t been expelled by the time the woman makes her third visit to the doctor, she will require a surgical abortion procedure (5-8% likelihood). Raymond, Klein & Dumble, the pro-abortion authors of *RU486 Misconceptions, Myths and Morals*, (IWT Pub, 1991) stress that RU-486 is not safe for women and list the following contraindications (reasons a person should not take RU-486): under age 18 or over 35; menstrual irregularities; history of fibroids, abnormal menstrual bleeding or endometriosis cervical incompetence, previous abortion, or abnormal pregnancies; pelvic inflammatory disease; recent use of IUD or the pill 3 months.

Clearly, this is not birth control but abortion!

Does this mean that all birth control is sinful? No. A married couple can decide to wait to have children and thus use the available means of contraception that will prevent impregnation. However, the decision to use such methods of birth control should be made by the couple based upon the principles outlined in God’s Word.

CONCLUSION

Men will continue to argue about the matter of abortion. However, God declared His position centuries ago. God has shown that

life is precious and He is highly offended when we harm His little ones:

Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me (Mat. 18:3-5).

And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold *water* only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward (10:42).

Christians, if they are to be faithful to God, **must** defend the rights of the innocent, helpless unborn. We have no choice. In preaching and teaching, we must continue to teach the truth regarding abortion as well as fornication and adultery that often are the catalyst that brings about the aborting of the unborn child that is conceived as a result of such sinful activity. Fornication and adultery are sin and those who commit such sin should not compound it by destroying the life of the unborn that is conceived as a result of the earlier sin. Additionally, Christians should make their voice heard in the political realm to bring about the overturning of the infamous decision of the United States Supreme Court on January 22, 1973.

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EUTHANASIA

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INTRODUCTION

The topic at hand is on euthanasia and its sinful consequences. Euthanasia is being practiced more and more throughout the world, and, yes, not to be left behind, it is beginning to have a foothold here in America. Fifty years ago it would have been unthinkable for the average American to agree with something as ungodly as euthanasia, but as the song goes, “The times they are a-changing.” Unfortunately, those winds of change are not for the better but for the worse. The unthinkable has happened: abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia are either common place (abortion) or they are becoming common place (assisted suicide and euthanasia). Hopefully, this chapter will help all to understand the dangers of euthanasia, how to address them, and hopefully turn back the tide of it being practiced. Especially in these difficult times it is good to remember the words of the apostle Paul: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phi. 2:15).

EUTHANASIA DEFINED

The American Heritage Dictionary defines *euthanasia* as “the act of painlessly ending the life of a person for reasons of mercy” (292).

The word euthanasia comes straight out of the Greek—“eu”, goodly or well + “thanatos”, death = the good death—and for 18th-century writers in England that was what euthanasia meant,

a “good” death, a welcome way to depart quietly and well from life (“Definition of Euthanasia”).

However, the old word definition has changed with time, especially when one understands the different categories of euthanasia. *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia*, defines the categories as:

1. Voluntary euthanasia. This term is used when the patient consents to die. “Voluntary euthanasia is legal in Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland, and the U.S. states of Oregon and Washington.”

2. Non-Voluntary euthanasia is conducted without the consent or will of the patient. “Examples include child euthanasia, which is illegal worldwide but decriminalized under certain specific circumstances in the Netherlands under the Groningen Protocol.”

3. Involuntary euthanasia is “conducted against the will of the patient” (“Euthanasia”).

Along with different categories of euthanasia, there are also different variations of euthanasia. They are generally known as passive and active euthanasia. Passive would allow the patient to die by no longer receiving medicine or treatments or to be removed from life support. Active euthanasia is where the use of lethal force or substances is used to kill the patient, as in giving the patient an overdose of pain killers or sleeping pills. According to the website “Pregnant Pause,” the basic difference between active and passive euthanasia “is that in active euthanasia, something is *done* to end the patient’s life; in passive euthanasia, something is *not done* that would have preserved the patient’s life” (“Euthanasia: Types of Euthanasia”). Former Surgeon General C. Edward Koop stated:

The whole thing about euthanasia comes down to one word: motive. If your motive is to alleviate suffering while a person is going through the throes of dying, and you are using medication that alleviates suffering, even though it might shorten his life by a few hours, that is not euthanasia. But if you are giving him a drug intended to shorten his life, then your motivation is for euthanasia (qtd. by Hackworth 6).

In recalling the definitions of euthanasia a number of things should stand out in the mind of the child of God. First, who has

given man authority to take a God-given life to be begin with? God who created man did not give the authority, “The Spirit of God hath made me, And the breath of the Almighty hath given me life” (Job 33:4). “Thou shalt not kill, ” commanded God (Exo. 20:13), which is an eternal principle or law of God.

Second, is there really a reason for taking a life as they propose, as in relieving pain? In almost all cases pain can be relieved by medication, even those who are in the throes of dying.

Third, they speak of euthanasia as dying a good death, while the Scriptures define a good death as dying in the Lord, as Paul wrote:

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. 4:7-8).

Anyone who chooses to kill (murder) themselves for any reason (excuse) is jumping from the proverbial frying pan into the literal fire, for eternity in the fires of hell is what awaits them. Remember what happened to Judas after he hung himself and the apostles went to select another? Peter stated, “That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place” (Acts 1:25). Judas’ own place was not paradise, but torment.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF EUTHANASIA

There are numerous books, magazine articles, and web sites that give plenty of information of the history of euthanasia and how widespread it is becoming that one can read and become better informed. With that in mind this writer will not belabor the point in this part of the chapter but will encourage all Christians to become more knowledgeable on this serious subject. Euthanasia has been discussed, debated over, and sadly, practiced for thousands of years. One could go all the way back to King Saul asking his armor bearer to slay him before the Philistines caught up with him, but the man would not; so Saul took his own life (1 Sam. 31:4). Most of the ancient cultures, like the Greeks and the Romans, practiced

euthanasia or some form of suicide and thought it a highly respectable way to die. However, with the spread of Christianity and the fall of Rome, euthanasia and other forms of suicide dwindled. The teachings of Jesus would help in this area, especially with the message: “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Mat. 5:44). His teachings and the practice of Christianity led people to change their views toward their fellow man and themselves, thereby realizing the sanctity of life. Michael Manning, has written:

The ascendancy of Christianity, with its view that human life is a trust from God, reinforced the views of the Hippocratic school [which forbid euthanasia]. By the twelfth through fifteenth centuries, it culminated in the near unanimity of medical opinion in opposing euthanasia (“Historical Timeline”).

However, the push to legalize euthanasia never went away. The court system in America over the centuries has dealt with the legality of euthanasia, and still does, but the first country to actually legalize euthanasia was Nazi Germany in 1939. Known as Action T4, this practice started in October 1939 and continued until August 1941, but it continued unofficially until the demise of the Nazi regime in 1945 and even beyond, during which physicians killed thousands of people specified in Hitler’s secret memo of September 1, 1939, as suffering patients “judged incurably sick, by critical medical examination” (Action T4). More than 200,000 were reported to die of Nazi Germany’s use of euthanasia, but more were to follow as they expanded their agenda of racial purity to include the Jewish people (six million), Gypsies, Poles, Socialists, and others they conceived as being undesirable.

The Netherlands was the first modern country to legalize euthanasia in 2001. Holland is finding out firsthand the difficulty of regulating this law, and because of that it has seen a dramatic change in the practice of euthanasia over the years. The website “Abortion-Facts.com” states:

What began as a few extraordinary cases, has now become routine. One hundred and thirty thousand people die each year in Holland, and more than 20,000 are killed, directly or indirectly, by doctors. As many as half did not ask to be killed. These now include newborn infants judged to have too poorly a quality of life. A judge has kayed [sic] direct euthanasia for a depressed person who was physically well. Killing has also been allowed for depressed teenagers. Hospitalized seniors are routinely visited by an organization that offers to oversee their case to prevent their doctor from killing them. When asked whether they approved of euthanasia, senior citizens, healthy and living in the economy, agreed by 50%. When the same question was asked of residents of nursing homes, only 3% approved. Judges have set up qualifications that must be honored before a doctor can kill a patient. These include repeated requests to die, uncontrollable pain, “Force majeure” (doctor has no other choice), witnesses and two doctors who agree (Willke).

The states of Oregon, Washington, and Montana have already passed a bill legalizing assisted suicide (a stepping stone to outright euthanasia), and they are now heading down the same slippery slope as the Netherlands. Even more states in the United States are considering legalizing assisted suicides, which should not surprise the Christian, for as the Scriptures teach, “a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6). The problem with regulating this sinful practice in Holland will also become a problem here if euthanasia becomes law. Robert Bork wrote:

The Dutch practice is virtually unregulated despite the guidelines laid down by the courts. The cause of death is often misleading, reported as something other than euthanasia—cardiac arrest, for example. We will probably never know the number of persons killed by doctors in the Netherlands or the number killed without their consent. The same ignorance will surely prevail if euthanasia comes to the United States (190).

If this nation continues to head down the road to euthanasia, could the extremes of what is already taking place in the Netherlands take place in America? Many believe so and it would be even worse, and once a nation heads down that road it is hard to turn back. “Righteousness exalteth a nation: But sin *is* a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34). Could the extremes of euthanasia practiced

by the Nazi's be practiced in America? Not right away, but do not be too quick to say, "No, never, it could never happen in the United States; doctors would never allow it." Remember Adolf Hitler signed into law permission to give **medical doctors** the right to kill patients deemed incurably sick. There were plenty of German citizens who believed it could never have happened in their country, but it did! It was George Santayana who wrote, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it" (284).

There is one constant that weaves its way throughout the history of euthanasia, and it is Biblical. When a people, a nation, or society turns from the truth of God's Word, the sanctity of human life is jeopardized. God gives meaning and value to life, and without the belief in God, life becomes less valuable and much more meaningless.

THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

Contrary to what PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals) professes, human life is more important than animal life. Their doctrine states that, when it comes to feelings, "a rat is a pig is a dog is a boy" is so far-fetched that no rational person could believe it. However, so called, rational thinking human beings have enacted laws that make abortion, assisted suicide, and euthanasia legal and by so doing devalue the importance of human life. That is what is at the heart of this issue of euthanasia, devaluing human life or placing a price tag on human life. Who can forget Richard Lamm, who in 1984 as then governor of Colorado, proclaimed: "Elderly people who are terminally ill have a duty to die and get out of the way"? He went on to elaborate: "Let the other society, our kids, build a reasonable life" ("Gov. Lamm"). This concept is nothing new and with the high cost of health care the thinking is that a great financial burden would be lifted from the families involved and the country as a whole if the sick and afflicted elderly would die and get out of the way. Is this rational thinking? This was the rational thinking of Nazi Germany in the 1930s that motivated them to enact Action T4. Getting rid of the mentally handicapped, insane, and incurably

sick through a physician assisted suicide (euthanasia) would alleviate the financial burden upon Germany.

It is thought by many Americans that a National Healthcare System may accomplish what Richard Lamm proposed back in 1984 by rationing services, medicine, and even life sustaining surgery to the elderly and to those with a terminal illness. In other words, they have a duty to die for the greater good. Rational thinking? Only if you devalue the worth of a human life by placing a price tag on it.

Does human life really come down to money and convenience? Yes, with many in the world today. Take abortion for an example. No matter the arguments the Pro-Choice activists spout, the killing of the babe in the womb is all about convenience, as is euthanasia. When *Roe v. Wade* was passed, legalizing abortion, a great moral line had been crossed in the United States, and this nation stared into the abyss of godlessness and many of its citizens did not blink. “Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush” (Jer. 6:15). As it was with Judah, so it is with America. Abortion basically opened up the flood gates to assisted suicide and euthanasia. Tim Smith wrote:

To advocate the ending of a life before birth is no different from advocating the ending of a life before natural death. It comes down to a **respect for human life** or the lack thereof. If it can be shown that it is proper and acceptable, justified and reasonable, to allow the taking of life in the case of an unwanted pregnancy, it is equally proper to take the life of one who has no more to offer (of a productive nature) to society (266-67).

The thought that euthanasia could be practiced upon a willing patient is a sickening and ungodly precedent, but the thought that euthanasia could be practiced on an unwilling patient is frightening, to say the least. Unfortunately, if euthanasia becomes legal, this nation has brought this upon itself. Robert Bork wrote:

Modern liberalism’s obsession with the autonomy of the individual is taking us to a culture of death. Ironically, the freedom of the individual to choose death has made it far easier for others to choose his death. The autonomy is often theirs, not his (186).

The sanctity of a human life, the value of a human life is high because of the one who created it.

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his *own* image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them (Gen. 1:26-27).

And the LORD God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul (2:7).

David wrote, “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made: Marvellous *are* thy works; And *that* my soul knoweth right well” (Psa. 139:14). Man did not create himself; God created man, and God gave life to man. Luke records Paul saying, “seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things” (Acts 17:25). Man does not have the authority to take his own life, and when death does come to the individual: “Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7).

Who has the right to say one life is more important than another? The generation that this writer’s father is a part of has been called the “greatest generation.” Can a younger generation euthanize, cast off, get rid of, the “greatest generation,” and if it does, how will it be remembered? We are to respect and care for our elderly. “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD” (Lev. 19:32). We are not to kill them because they are an inconvenience.

“Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise)” (Eph. 6:2). Why? For all they have done for us, the sacrifices they made, for all they have taught us, and because it is a command of God. Jesus condemned the teachings of the Pharisees which allowed children to forsake their elderly parents in time of need (Mat. 15:4-6).

Even while Jesus was on the cross, He was looking after His mother’s welfare by providing her a home with John (John 19:26-27). What would Jesus think of children who allowed their parents

to be euthanized? What does God think of a nation that calls these laws legal? “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; That put darkness for light, and light for darkness; That put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” (Isa. 5:20-21). Misery and destruction will be their lot.

CONCLUSION

It is conceded that this topic was not exhausted in any stretch of the imagination, but hopefully some things were written to provoke us to thought in trying to stem the evil tide of euthanasia. Although not a law in this country yet, it will be if Christians do nothing and Satan’s servants continue to get their way. Euthanasia is a sin, because it is nothing less than murder. Whether one calls it “right to die,” “mercy killing,” or a “good death,” it is still murder, and murderers “shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death” (Rev. 21:8).

This nation was known for its greatness and goodness due to its belief in the one true God. Without that belief, we have lost our moral compass, for the Word of God gave man morality. Christians have much to do in trying to save this nation from the wrath of God. It is time for soldiers of Christ to arise and put our armor on!

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STEM CELL RESEARCH

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Jimmie graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1971 and has taken college classes at Thomas Nelson Community College and Southern Christian University, in Alabama. He began preaching in 1968 at Hillsdale, Michigan, and has done local work with congregations in Tennessee, Michigan, Missouri, and Virginia. Jimmie started working with the church of Christ in Newport News, Virginia, in 1983 and is presently working with the Portsmouth Church of Christ since 1993. He has done mission work in the United States and in Bermuda. He has conducted Gospel meetings in the States and in Canada, speaks on lectureships as well as writing for various publications. Since 1993, Jimmie has been hosting the "Good News Broadcast," a weekly "live" radio program.

The three areas of genetic engineering, stem cell research, and cloning are often confused, and there are in fact overlapping areas between the three, but the primary goals of these methods are different. *Genetic engineering* consists in altering/manipulating a person's DNA, either during his or her lifetime or before birth, to avoid certain congenital problems or to enhance a certain biological trait. As we have seen, *stem cell research* allows for stem cells to be used in organ repair. *Cloning* involves creating more individuals, identical to the first one. The overlapping comes into the picture with the stem cells: To create more stem cells, the cells have to be cloned. That means that they are chemically manipulated so that they create duplicates of themselves—in other words, twins. The question is, what are these duplicates used for? That depends on whether we're talking about *therapeutic* or *reproductive cloning*. Therapeutic cloning involves duplicating stem cells to insert them into an organ, or re-grow the organ, to improve a person's health or to save his or her life. It is a form of medical *therapy*, in other words (Rosenstand 325).

My assigned area is not designed to cover all three areas: genetic engineering, stem cell research, and cloning; rather, we will deal specifically with stem cell research.

Although still controversial to many, stem cell research holds great promise as a means of repairing and replacing damaged organs.

Stem cells are general cells, not yet specialized, and they apparently have the capacity to become any organ in the body, with the intervention of medical science; these cells can then be used to repair or replace sick organs in a person. The controversy arises from the practice of harvesting and cloning stem cells from *embryos*, which involves taking the life of the embryo.... However, contrary to what some people think, stem cells have to be harvested from aborted fetuses (yet) because they are too old; the stem cells have to be harvested within the first two weeks of fetal development at the zygote stage.... The question of what weighs heavier—existing humans whose lives are in peril, and who could be saved with stem cell research, or the lives of unborn fetuses—is something that divides entire intellectual and political communities today” (Rosenstand 323-24).

Stem cells have the remarkable potential to develop into many different cell types in the body during early life and growth. In addition, in many tissues they serve as a sort of internal repair system, dividing essentially without limit to replenish other cells as long as the person or animal is still alive. When a stem cell divides, each new cell has the potential either to remain a stem cell or become another type of cell with a more specialized function, such as a muscle cell, a red blood cell, or a brain cell (“Introduction”).

The history of stem cell research dates back to the mid to late 1800s. It was discovered that some cells could give rise to other cells and then to tissue. The advent of the microscope brought about this line of research. The

history of stem cell research started in the late 1800’s when scientists tried to fertilize mammalian eggs in vitro but only slight success were [sic] achieved for want of advanced research tools (“What is the”).

The history of stem cell research includes work with both animal and human stem cells. Stem cells can be classified into three broad categories, based on their ability to differentiate. Totipotent stem cells are found only in early embryos. Each cell can form a complete organism (e.g., identical twins). Pluripotent stem cells exist in the undifferentiated inner cell mass of the blastocyst and can form any of the over 200 different cell types found in the body. Multipotent stem cells are derived from fetal tissue, cord blood, and adult stem cells. Although their ability to differentiate is more

limited than pluripotent stem cells, they already have a track record of success in cell-based therapies (“History of Stem”).

In the mid 1980s scientists did research on human parts and on human blastocysts or blastocyst. A blastocyst is “an embryo at the stage of development in which it consists of usually one layer of cells around a central cavity, forming a hollow sphere” (*Webster’s*). Research progressed to where scientists were studying stem cells obtained from monkeys. Then, in 1995/96, “scientists at the University of Wisconsin isolated human embryo cells from a human blastocyst” (“What is the”). These cells are taken from the center of the blastocyst and cultured in a dish resulting in stem cells growing from these cells. Another source states:

In 1998, James Thompson (University of Wisconsin - Madison) isolated cells from the inner cell mass of early embryos, and developed the first embryonic stem cell lines. In the same year, John Gearhart (Johns Hopkins University) derived germ cells from cells in fetal gonadal tissue (primordial germ cells). Pluripotent stem cell “lines” were developed from both sources. The blastocysts used for human stem cell research typically come from in vitro fertilization (IVF) procedures (“History of Stem”).

Stem cells are what might be termed the body’s master cells. These cells can be directed, transformed, or developed into different cell types throughout the body. For instance, a stem cell can be transformed into pancreatic cells that are needed to treat Type 1 Diabetes. They can also be turned into complex layers of intestinal tissue. One long-time application of stem cell research has been bone marrow transplants, especially using adult stem cells. The use of adult stem cells is very important in our discussion on the subject of stem cell research.

“Stem” cells can be contrasted with “differentiated” cells. They offer much hope for medical advancement because of their ability to grow into almost any kind of cell. For instance, neural cells in the brain and spinal cord that have been damaged can be replaced by stem cells. In the treatment of cancer, cells destroyed by radiation or chemotherapy can be replaced with new healthy stem cells that adapt to the affected area, whether it be part of the brain, heart, liver, lungs, or wherever. Dead cells of almost any kind, no matter

the type of injury or disease, can be replaced with new healthy cells thanks to the amazing flexibility of stem cells. As a result, billions of dollars are being poured into this new field (“Pros And Cons”).

Stem cells come from three main sources: embryonic cells, umbilical cord cells, and adult cells. Embryonic stem cells are taken directly from an embryo before the cells start to “differentiate.” Before the cells start to differentiate, the embryo is referred to as a blastocyst (noted earlier). The blastocyst contains about 100 cells, many of which are stem cells. The umbilical cord is a rich source of stem cells. These cells are extracted during pregnancy and stored at very low temperatures until needed.

The donation and storage process is similar to blood banking. Donation of umbilical cells is highly encouraged. Compared to adult cells and embryonic cells, the umbilical cord is by far the richest source of stem cells, and cells can be stored up in advance so they are available when needed. Further, even where there is not an exact DNA match between donor and recipient, scientists have developed methods to increase transferability and reduce risks (“Pros And Cons”).

An estimated 100,000 cord blood units are stored in “cord blood banks” worldwide. Three types of cord blood banks are: Public, Private, and Directed. The third main source for obtaining stem cells is adult cells. These cells can be obtained from bone marrow or from outside the body. Since they are taken from the adult, there is no rejection.

What is the controversy regarding stem cell research all about? Politicians have gotten involved in this discussion. Presidents have issued different opinions. Courts have been involved in many court cases concerning stem cell research. People are divided for or against stem cell research. With all the benefits that can be gained from stem cell research, why is there a controversy?

One of the writers of the New Testament was a physician: his name is Luke. Paul wrote, “Luke, the beloved physician, and Demas, greet you” (Col. 4:14). Being a physician, one would believe that he would have had patients that he saw and to which he gave

medical attention. If the Holy Spirit would choose a physician to write part of the Bible (Luke and Acts), should we not support physicians that see us and give us medical attention? As medical knowledge increases, should we not avail ourselves of that knowledge? In our time, we have different kinds of transplants, blood transfusions, surgeries, et al., and this writer has not heard of any objections to these—except from the Jehovah Witnesses. The words of Jesus should not be overlooked: “But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Mat. 9:12). One might wonder if the woman in Mark 5 were alive today, that instead of suffering at the hands of the physicians, she might have been made well. Mark wrote:

And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years,
And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent
all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse,
When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and
touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes,
I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was
dried up; and she felt in *her* body that she was healed of that
plague (5:25-29).

This is not to diminish the miracle, because no matter how much knowledge mankind gains, healing a person simply by that person touching someone’s garment will never be accomplished again. This is, however, just to indicate that medical knowledge and procedures are a lot different today than they were in the first century. Should not we take advantage of the knowledge that we have today? So, why does all the controversy on this subject exist?

This writer, in reading for this topic, has not seen any rejection of all stem cell research per se. Two sources that have articles dealing with stem cell research are Apologetic Press and *Christian Courier* (sadly we cannot endorse these organizations—editor). Not quoting from them but reading some of their material, there was no condemnation of all stem cell research. This writer is sure that some faithful brethren have written on this subject, but those articles must have been buried in the multitude of sources on stem cell research available online.

Let us see if we can find the source of all this controversy. Considering *adult* stem cells, which is one of the main sources of stem cells, there should be no controversy, for many of us have *banked* our own blood (containing cells) in preparation for surgery. Many of us have *donated* blood to the American Red Cross or *banked* blood to replace what friends or family members might need during surgery. My wife, in surgery many years ago, needed platelets before and during surgery, to which this writer saw nothing wrong. You may have had a transplant of some kind and are alive today because of it. Or, perhaps, someone close to you or your family is alive today because of a transplant. Since no harm is done to anyone in using adult stem cells, there should be no controversy whatsoever.

Another main source of obtaining stem cells is in the umbilical cord. Since these cells can be taken without harm to the mother or child, and since they can be stored until needed or be used for other purposes or people, there should be no controversy whatsoever.

The third main source of obtaining stem cells (and the one that is the recipient of the most controversy and coin) is embryonic cells.

Embryonic stem cells, as their name suggests, are derived from embryos. Most embryonic stem cells are derived from embryos that develop from eggs that have been fertilized *in vitro*—in an *in vitro* fertilization clinic—and then donated for research purposes with informed consent of the donors. They are not derived from eggs fertilized in a woman's body (“What are embryonic”).

Herein is the controversy:

Those who value human life from the point of conception, oppose embryonic stem cell research because the extraction of stem cells from this type of an embryo requires its destruction. In other words, it requires that a human life be killed (“Pros And Cons”).

Since there are several other lessons that will deal with when life begins, we will not proceed with this aspect of the discussion. However, some Bible verses would be beneficial for your study of when life begins:

But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, 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 (Mat. 1:20).

And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also **conceived a son** in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren (Luke 1:36).

For this *is* the word of promise, At this time will I come, and Sara shall have a son. And not only *this*; but when Rebecca also **had conceived** by one, *even* by our father Isaac; (**For the children being not yet born**, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger (Rom. 9:9-12).

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the **babe** leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:...For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the **babe** leaped in my womb for joy (Luke 1:41, 44).

Thayer writes of the meaning of this word translated *babe*: “a. an unborn child, embryo, fetus: Luke 1:41,44... b. a new born child, an infant, a babe...: Luke 2:12, 16; 18:15; Acts 7:19; 1 Peter 2:2; ἀπὸ βρέφους [*apo brephous*] from infancy, 2 Tim 3:15” (105).

Since most of the research money is going into embryonic stem cell research, research on ways of obtaining stem cells without killing human life has not been as aggressive as it could be.

Research on adult stem cells has generated a great deal of excitement. Scientists have found adult stem cells in many more tissues than they once thought possible. This finding has led researchers and clinicians to ask whether adult stem cells could be used for transplants. In fact, adult hematopoietic, or blood-forming, stem cells from bone marrow have been used in transplants for 40 years. Scientists now have evidence that stem cells exist in the brain and the heart. If the differentiation of adult stem cells can be controlled in the laboratory, these cells may become the basis of transplantation-based therapies.

Adult stem cells have been identified in many organs and tissues, including brain, bone marrow, peripheral blood, blood vessels, skeletal muscle, skin, teeth, heart, gut, liver, ovarian epithelium, and testis. They are thought to reside in a specific area of each tissue (called a “stem cell niche”). In many tissues, current evidence

suggests that some types of stem cells are pericytes, cells that compose the outermost layer of small blood vessels. Stem cells may remain quiescent (non-dividing) for long periods of time until they are activated by a normal need for more cells to maintain tissues, or by disease or tissue injury (“What are adult”).

There is great expectation that embryonic stem cells will be able to do tremendous things. However, one was asked, “Have any diseases been cured with embryonic stem cells so far?” Juan Domingues-Bendala, Ph.D., responded by saying, “No.” He told WebMD:

We still don't have any cure, but if you think that it's only since 1998 and we're already talking about clinical trials, I cannot think of any other field of medicine that has been so fast (“Stem Cell FAQ”).

What do we have from embryonic stem cells?

Mice treated with Parkinson's with embryonic stem cells have died from brain tumors in as much as 20% of cases. Embryonic stem cells stored over time have been shown to create the type of chromosomal anomalies that create cancer cells. Looking at it from a more pragmatic standpoint, funds devoted to embryonic stem cell research are funds being taken away from the other two more promising and less controversial types of stem cell research mentioned above [adult cells, cord cells—JZG] (“Pros And Cons”).

An online website asked, “Have you, or a member of your immediate family, benefited from a clinical trial or treatment using adult or cord blood stem cells?” For adult stem cells, there is a list of 73 responses, and under embryonic stem cells, the response has been and is “NONE” (“Fact Sheet”).

The University of Michigan has a webpage on Stem Cell Research. The page is dedicated to frequently asked questions. Two of those questions have bearing on this part of our study. One question asks, “What has stem cell research accomplished?”

Bone marrow transplants have been performed for decades and involve the infusion of adult stem cells. Research based on embryonic and adult stem cells has yielded promising results for the treatment of Parkinson's disease and diabetes. Stem cell research also has generated new knowledge about basic cell mechanisms that is critical to understanding the causes of disease, such as cancer.

Some have criticized embryonic stem cell research by arguing that adult stem cells have delivered more treatments, but that observation is misleading. While adult stem cells have been studied for decades, human embryonic stem cells were first isolated in 1998. There has not yet been time to develop new therapies using embryonic stem cells (“Benefits”).

Another question asks, “How long will it take for human embryonic cell research to yield medical treatments?”

We can't say how long it will take to find new treatments for any specific disease using embryonic stem cells. Biomedical research typically has a time frame of 10, 20, even 30 years. Fourteen years elapsed between the first unsuccessful clinical trial of bone marrow transplantation and the first successful transplant among unrelated patients. Now bone marrow transplants are widely touted as the best example of a successful stem cell therapy.

Biomedical research takes a long time, but the sooner the research starts, the sooner it will yield new insights and new treatments. If research were stopped by uncertainty, we never would have developed blood transfusions, cardiac bypass surgery, insulin therapy for diabetes, kidney dialysis, antibiotics, organ transplants and many other treatments we now take for granted (“Stem Cell Research”).

Research has indicated that adult stem cells are producing results now; they can be reprogrammed “to become like embryonic stem cells...through the introduction of embryonic genes” (“What are adult”); there is no opposition to adult stem cell research; then why continue to do that which destroys, kills human life?

Scientists have been:

able to get stem cells from a mouse embryo without destroying it. In fact, the mouse pup was born healthy and happy. How did they do it?

The scientists used just one cell out of a mouse embryo at the 8-cell stage to create a stem cell line. The other 7 cells were put back into the mom and allowed to grow into a mouse pup.

The single cell they took out was then allowed to grow and divide many times over creating an embryonic stem cell line. The scientists showed that the stem cells could become nerve, heart and other tissues. In other words, they created a stem cell line without destroying the embryo.

The technique they used is similar to one used in people called preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD). With PGD, a single cell is removed from a number of human embryos. Each single cell is tested for a variety of genetic diseases and only the embryos that do not have the genetic disease(s) are put back into the mother.

What if instead of testing the cell, the doctor gave it to a scientist to grow into an embryonic stem cell line? A human embryonic stem cell line would be created without destroying the embryo. No one knows if it will work in people but we'll probably know soon (Starr).

Christians can enthusiastically support most forms of stem cell research (those that use adult stem cells or those from umbilical cords). However, we must continue to object to and oppose any research that takes the life of a child. The Scriptures are clear that human life is to be respected (Gen. 9:5-6).

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STEALING

Paul Vaughn

Paul Vaughn was born in Maysville, Kentucky, and attended Maysville Community College and Lexington Technical Institute. He graduated from East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, Tennessee, in 1986.

Paul edited *Triumph and Tragedy*, which is on the history of the church in central and eastern Kentucky (currently out of print). He has written lesson commentaries on Hebrews, Daniel, and Luke, along with numerous articles on Restoration History for *Contending For The Faith*. Paul is a regular speaker on the television broadcast, "What Does the Bible Say," sponsored by the Southwest Church of Christ in Jackson, Mississippi. He speaks in a number of lectureships and Gospel meetings each year.

He married Ricki Jett in 1973. Paul and Ricki have worked in the mission fields in Ohio and Kentucky for eighteen years, helping to establishing congregations in Brown County, Ohio, and Jackson, Kentucky; they are presently working at the Hawesville Church of Christ, Hawesville, Kentucky, which was established in February 2000.

The fundamental standard for truth, moral fiber, doctrine, and the motivating force to do good is God and His Word, given to mankind in the Scriptures. His Word is the constitution for the soul of every individual for all mankind to respect and honor. The principles of life are the rules of right conduct and the standard for what is good and proper behavior in the sight of God. We begin to develop principles as a child. As we grow, principles are sown deeply into our character. It is an educational process that begins in the home and transcends into society.

Our priorities, values, and judgments will depend upon the principles we have been taught as a child. It is written, "And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). A home that is taught to love God will have children with godly character, who will be adults with moral principles to guide them through life. Sadly, most of the homes today allow television and the music industry to develop the principles of our youth. The entertainment industry teaches that there is no correct, moral standard of principles for behavior. Because of this drought of moral teaching, our society has entered a decaying process that will make future genera-

tions inferior in morals. God will not bless us, as in the past, if we do not stop this deficiency of moral teaching. It is written, “Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, you righteous; And shout for joy, all *you* upright in heart” (Psa. 32:12). For God to bless us as a people we must turn wholeheartedly to Him. For God to choose us as His people, we must chose Him first by following His teaching in the Scriptures. Let us all make the right choice.

DEFINITION

In this study the theme is *stealing*. What do the Scriptures teach about stealing? There are thieves who prey upon the inexperienced person, always looking for innocent victims. The thief is void of moral principles, viewing his neighbor as a potential victim. The thief takes what he wants and never is concerned about others. His priorities, values, and judgments will depend upon his excessive desire to acquire and possess more material wealth. His insatiable desire for wealth leads him to sin against mankind and leads to the destruction of his soul. The thief is never concerned about making right choices and dwells only on what he can steal.

A concise definition of *stealing* will explain in clarity the wickedness of the thievery. Webster defines *stealing* as “to take or appropriate (another’s property, ideas, etc.) without permission, dishonestly, or unlawfully, esp. in a secret or surreptitious manner.” It then defines *thief* as “a person who steals, esp. secretly; one guilty of theft, or larceny.” Everyone who steals takes something that does not belong to him. There is a vast range of things that people steal. Most of the stealing is of material property, but there is another item that people steal without ever blinking an eye. Thieves can also steal one’s reputation as well as thoughts.

WHY IS IT WRONG TO STEAL?

The question itself indicates by inference that stealing is wrong and sinful. There are two authorities that govern the right conduct of all people—God and government. God is the supreme authority in matters relating to mankind. God teaches all that is right and also what is wrong. Government is the second authority as to what is

right and wrong. God designed government to look to His standard and follow His rule of right conduct. Paul wrote:

Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to *execute* wrath on him who practices evil. Therefore *you* must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake (Rom. 13:1-5).

He establishes governments to protect the innocent and punish the guilty. It is true that most governments leave God out of their decision-making process when it comes to the establishment of laws. Governments do institute laws that are contrary to the law of God. (It is not within the scope of this chapter to deal with the all the wicked laws set up by governments.) Therefore, it is required of all men to follow God's law over man's law. Yet, most government forbids the stealing of another's property, ideas, and (in some cases) reputation.

Stealing is wrong because God said it is wrong! God condemns stealing directly and indirectly in the Scriptures. It is imperative for all mankind to understand God's standard of morality so one can make sound moral judgments.

God condemns stealing directly in the Old and New Testament. God instructed Israel, "You shall not steal" (Exo. 20:15). "Jesus said, '*You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness*'" (Mat. 19:18). "The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have *it* more abundantly" (John 10:10). Paul wrote, "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with *his* hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Eph. 4:28).

God condemns stealing indirectly, by implication, in the Scriptures. It is written in Proverbs that the gaining of riches by lying is sin. “Getting treasures by a lying tongue *Is* the fleeting fantasy of those who seek death” (Pro. 21:6). This verse is plainly teaching that it is a sin to lie and that lying is vanity. But, it is also implied that the getting of treasures by lying is stealing. The lying tongue is an abomination to God. Those who lie to gain material wealth are just as guilty of stealing as the robber who breaks into a house. The damage inflicted upon the innocent is the same. In gaining riches by a lying tongue and stealing will bring eternal death upon all who practice such things. God will not allow the dishonest person to be permitted into Heaven.

THE STEALING OF TIME

It is done every day without any wounding or bruising of the conscience—the stealing of time. The stealing of time is as common as two co-workers taking too much time at the water cooler about their plans for the weekend. It is seen in the worker who extends his fifteen-minute break into twenty or thirty minutes. It can also be seen in the employee who uses company time to browse or search the internet.

Time is a valuable commodity and must be used wisely. Companies pay great amounts of money to purchase an employee’s time. When a person seeks employment he is marketing his talents and time. Yet, often as soon as he is employed he steals time from his employer. It is done every day without any remorse.

Christian ethics demand that an employee must give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s pay. “He who is slothful in his work *Is* a brother to him who is a great destroyer” (18:9). Slothfulness or laziness is a dangerous attitude that leads to spiritual death. A worker cannot be lazy and please God or man. “As vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, *So is* the lazy *man* to those who send him” (10:26). “The soul of a lazy *man* desires, and *has* nothing; But the soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (13:4). One cannot be slothful at work, at home, or serving the Lord and expect the reward of the diligent. Paul said, “For even when we were with you, we

commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat” (2 The. 3:10). “*Be* kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:10-11—KJV). *Work* is not a dirty word. It can bring great rewards for those who are diligent and not lazy.

STEALING OF A REPUTATION

Perhaps, the greatest thief is the one who goes about to steal another’s good name. God hates the lying tongue. Solomon by inspiration writes:

These six *things* the LORD hates, Yes, seven *are* an abomination to Him: A proud look, A lying tongue, Hands that shed innocent blood, A heart that devises wicked plans, Feet that are swift in running to evil, A false witness *who* speaks lies, And one who sows discord among brethren (Pro. 6:16-19).

Again he writes: “A lying tongue hates *those who are* crushed by it, And a flattering mouth works ruin” (26:28). A lying tongue carries the same punishment as murder. Yet, there are multitudes who seek to destroy a good person’s reputation because of jealousy and envy. Their goal is to steal not material treasures or wealth but a good name. The robbers of reputations take something of greater value than money.

The destroyers of reputations unleash a terrible plague that eats away at the respect and honor of another who is innocent. This wicked influence can reach into the hearts of many wise and good people who turn their ears to those who ruin reputations. The thieves of reputations break every moral rule of conduct set forth in the Scriptures. Jesus said, “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (Mat. 7:12). This moral code established by the Lord will never change nor grow out of date. Therefore, everyone should make sound moral judgments and never seek to steal anyone’s good name.

STEALING FROM GOD

Giving is very basic to Christianity because God is the Greatest Giver. He gives all mankind the air to breathe, land to walk on, and

showers on mankind blessing beyond description. The greatest gift is His Son, Jesus the Christ. It is written, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Again Scripture records:

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Rom. 5:8-9).

These three verses speak loudly and clearly of God’s love for man in the gift of Jesus for the salvation from sins.

Because God is the Greatest Giver, He demands that all humanity give their best to Him. He will judge all who refuse to give their best, through His Son, Christ Jesus. A day is coming “when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel” (2:16). How do men steal from God?

It is commanded in the New Testament to give of material blessings. Paul wrote:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first *day* of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The pattern for giving to God is established in these two verses. It must be on the first day of the week and according to how one has prospered. This is not tithing because tithing is in the shadows of the Old Testament. When men refuse to give as they have prospered, they in effect steal from God who gives all blessings. Another requirement in the giving to God is that it must be done after planning, and it must come from a cheerful heart. “So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Giving that is authorized by God is the only giving that He will accept. When men refuse to give as they have prospered they are robbers of all that is good, stealing from the sovereign Ruler of the universe.

Another way men can steal from God is to not give our best in His service. Every Christian has some type of talent or ability that can be used in the service of God. When we refuse to give the best religious service to God, it is stealing. Christians steal from God by not being faithful in the worship service. It is a command to worship God (John 4:24; Heb. 10:24-26). To turn one's back on the worship of God is to rob Him of our adoration. Christians steal from God by not using the talents that God has blessed them with (Mat. 25:14-30).

Why do Christians steal from God? It comes from a loveless heart. They do not love God enough to give as one should. Giving God the best means putting Him first. Sadly, there are multitudes who openly flaunt their affection for God before men, but their heart is void of true love for Him. Stealing from God is extremely dangerous: It will cost one his soul.

IDENTITY THEFT

In the electronic age stealing has gone high-tech. Thieves are no longer satisfied with stealing personal property; they desire to steal a person's identity. Once they get it, they began to steal from merchants, using that name. It is estimated that fifteen million Americans have their identity stolen each year, causing financial losses between forty and fifty billion dollars.

The ability of professional identity thieves is growing on a yearly basis, as with their number. No one is completely safe from their wickedness. Millions of dollars are spent every year to keep them from stealing identities. The collective aspect of this work is seen in e-mail scams, hacking into personal computers, the accounting departments of businesses, and government databases. The identity thief is not only looking into people's computer, but also their trash cans seeking mail that has been thrown out. The identity thief wants credit card numbers, checking account numbers, gas, electric, and water bills.

Everyone is vulnerable to attack from the identity thief—no one is safe. Therefore, we must be wise to keep all our personal data in a very safe place, away from the identity thief.

CONSEQUENCES OF STEALING

The thief believes the advantages of stealing are exceptionally good. He never considers the pain he causes or the emotional beating he dishes out. He never thinks about the consequences of his deeds. There are multitudes of destructive results from his stealing. If he gets captured, his life is in a state of devastation. It could lead to years of imprisonment and in some cases revenge from those from whom he had stolen. His loss of respect in the community is a burden that will follow him for years. Once a person is found guilty of stealing, no will trust him. He could be isolated from good jobs and good friendships.

There are religious consequences of stealing—punishment from God. In the Old Testament the thief was killed. “If the thief is found breaking in, and he is struck so that he dies, *there shall be* no guilt for his bloodshed” (Exo. 22:2). In the New Testament, Paul clearly states that thieves will not go to Heaven:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-10).

God views stealing, in whatever form it may take, as sin. Sin has its consequences. “For the wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23).

CONCLUSION

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life (Gal. 6:7-8).

The thief will try to cover his sins and, perhaps for a time, will get away with it. However, God knows and will repay.

Stealing, like all sins, can be forgiven. The blood of Christ washes away sins. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7). Baptism washes away all sins (Acts 22:16)! Thank God! Those who

seek cover of their sins will not prosper. “He who covers his sins will not prosper, But whoever confesses and forsakes *them* will have mercy” (Pro. 28:13). Those who steal want expensive things that do not belong to them. Yet, the most valuable things come from God, and none has to steal to attain them. Just obey God!

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DANCING

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INTRODUCTION

The modern dance, whether performed on a stage, engaged in at a prom, dance club, or a local bar, is basically the same in movement and purpose, with each style sharing many things in common, one of which is the excuse—“it’s just for fun.” Implied in this excuse is that the actions taking place are harmless and innocent. If the modern dance could be considered “harmless and innocent,” there would be no need for such a lecture as this. The Bible teaches that God wants man to enjoy themselves and “have fun” while here on earth, but God has given guidelines and boundaries which governs all that man does—including entertainment. God says, “Rejoice in the Lord alway: *and* again I say, Rejoice” (Phi. 4:4). He also commands: “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). Notice that all we say and do (even forms of entertainment) are to be done in accordance with God’s Word. Therefore, God has authorized man to have fun, but nothing man does for the sake of or “in the name of” fun can break any of God’s laws. Anything which transgresses one of God’s laws is not fun; it is sin (1 John 3:4). As will be evinced in detail, that which is referred to as *dancing* today is far from “harmless and innocent,” and the modern dance is nothing like the dance we read about in the Bible.

DANCING AND LASCIVIOUSNESS

The New Testament contains a great deal of information about the modern dance; however, it is referred to by another term—lasciviousness. *Lasciviousness* is listed among the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19) and is considered to be in the class of “uncleanness and fornication” which, the inspired apostle Paul informs, needs to be “repented of” (2 Cor. 12:21). Lasciviousness is also referred to as *wantonness* (Rom. 13:13), “meaning wanton manner, filthy words, unchaste movements of the body” (Rafferty 1839). That which takes place on the dance floor today can easily be described as “unchaste movements of the body.” Though parents and children may ignore or refute this fact, professional dancers, choreographers, and instructors do not. “Dance is one of the most natural and harmonious mediums for the expression of sexual energy because of its ingredients of spontaneous movement and creative expression” (1) says Rebecca K. Bennett, an expert in dance therapy. She further explains that

as a result of **moving, touching, holding, and stroking** other people on stage or in a class, we tend to neutralize and numb our awareness of the sexual implications involved in these experiences. Consequently we become dissociated from the meaning and **sexuality inherent in dance** (2, emphasis added).

I doubt seriously that those engaged in “touching, holding, and stroking” become “numb” to such an experience, even if it is simply “an act” or a “performance.” However, this is an apt description of what takes place on the dance floor. If more mothers and fathers would accept the fact that they are not sending their daughters off to have some harmless and innocent fun at a *dance*, but rather are sending them off to be touched, held, and stroked (i.e., groped), there would hardly be a school which would associate with such an event. Rather than ignoring what really takes place, parents should acknowledge the “sexuality inherent in dance” and teach their children to abstain from such activities until they are scripturally married. Rayner Heppenstall observes:

to dance, to move flauntingly and with potent rhythmical compulsion, is to project a state of organic excitement which, by the nature of the organism, is necessarily sexual or sexually charged (274).

Lasciviousness is also defined as “unbridled lust” (Rafferty) and is a means by which evil men “entice in the lusts of the flesh” (2 Pet. 2:18—ASV). In regards to directing dance performers, Senta Driver states:

the analogies are often very strong between moving together, or moving at all, and various types of sexual activity...on a purely technical level, I am consulting the new how-to sex manuals for information about the levator plate muscles of the pelvis (10).

In essence, those dancing are imitating or simulating sexual acts—so much so that Ms. Driver admits that her directions for dance performers could be equally used as a “how-to” sex manual.

No honest, moral individual would claim that “sexual or sexually charged” movements are appropriate in public, whether between teenagers at a school dance or adults at a local club. God confines sexual activity to a scripturally married man and woman (Gen. 1:27-28; 2:24) and to a place of privacy—“Marriage *is* honourable in all, and the bed undefiled” (Heb. 13:4). It is absurd to conclude that young boys and girls (as well as adults) can embrace each other closely, and grind and sway their hips and torsos together without becoming excited and aroused. How parents could be “shocked and surprised” a few months after a dance to discover that their child will soon be a parent him or herself is beyond prudent understanding. After examining passages like Mark 7:22, 2 Corinthians 12:21, Ephesians 4:18-19, and 1 Peter 4:3, Harrell Davidson (faithful Gospel preacher) writes, “again and again we notice that lasciviousness is inseparable from lust. The affair or action starts with lust and grows into something greater” (415). Parents who do not want their child to engage in sexual activity before marriage should properly define the modern dance rather than shun the obvious and reason that such an activity is “harmless and innocent.”

DANCING AND IMMODESTY

It seems that the only difference between the dance which takes place today at schools or local clubs and that which takes place “around a pole” is only a degree of nudity. Though many have deceived themselves into thinking that dancing, as practiced today, is nothing more than “good, clean fun,” their claims are betrayed by what they actually do on the dance floor. Bars and dance clubs are filled with people “looking for a good time.” School dances are filled with adolescents excited to perform movements with a boyfriend or girlfriend which they would not otherwise be allowed. In fact, many parents would severely punish the child who performed such lewd motions upon another person in public, and most school administrators would suspend any student who tried the same *dance* moves on a fellow student in the middle of Math class. The truth is that the modern dance is incited by lust. Boys and girls and men and women who desire to use the dance to get *close* to a person of the opposite sex (in most cases), will also dress *appropriately* (i.e., a person will dress according to the purpose for which they attend an event). Bars, clubs, and school dances are engrossed with tight jeans that accentuate every curve from the waist down, short skirts and shorts which expose more than they cover, dresses with slits, and shirts containing less fabric than brassieres which reveal the mid-section of the torso. Dance director Senta Driver recalls:

Edwin Denby [an influential dance critic—BG] once observed that dance is an art form in which the audience is *expected* to ogle the performers’ bodies and to take pleasure in their revealing display (9).

Though many parents convince themselves that their child is “having fun,” their children are ogling the bodies of other participants and are taking “pleasure in their revealing display.” At any other time, mothers and fathers would be outraged to know that their little princess is being ogled and mentally undressed, but somehow this is not considered when granting permission to attend the school dance. In an interview, dance teacher and choreographer Sheldon Ossosky explains why people may attend a dance performance:

in the final analysis it could be our own conscious desire for sensuality or sexuality in dance that causes us to come **see** it or perhaps the subconscious part of us is **stimulated** through the dance both sexually or sensually (qtd. in Kleinman 7, emphasis added).

Dancing, therefore, is not just an activity; it is a public presentation of the body and movements which cause stimulation (i.e., evokes or entices lust). For this reason, while teaching dance, Ososky uses “a lot of sexual images basically to get my students to use their sensuality in my movement” (5).

Though many parents and others concerned about modesty would contend that there is a big difference between the school dance and the local night club, the common movements which comprise each are similar. The modern dance consists primarily of swaying or thrusting the hips and grinding (what would respectfully be referred to as private areas) upon another person. God forbids that men act in such a way. The inspired apostle Paul states:

Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal. 5:16-17).

An individual cannot claim to “walk in the Spirit” (i.e., live a holy and godly lifestyle which is in accordance with God’s Word revealed to us by His Holy Spirit) and then participate in actions which entice lusts (cf. 2 Pet. 3:4). Regarding “the works of the flesh,” which Paul mentions in Galatians 5:19: “adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,” brother Davidson comments:

these four sins...are inseparably connected. These fleshly lusts are opposed to the spiritual life that Christians are instructed to live. Thus, there is a war going on between fleshly things and spiritual things. Men and women ought to dress and conduct themselves in such a way that do [sic] not incite one another to commit these horrible sins (412).

The combination of immodest apparel and sexually enticing movements is a recipe for disaster. The inspired James writes, “every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin,

when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jam. 1:14-15). Jesus says that “whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat. 5:28).

If lust draws one away and leads to spiritual death, and the way an individual dresses and moves on a dance floor can cause a person to commit “adultery...in his heart,” why would any Christian attend or allow their children to participate in any such activity?! God says that “women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman... men with men working that which is unseemly” because they “**burned in their lust one toward another**” (Rom. 1:26-27).

The modern dance and the attire that usually accompanies is not just a danger to one’s sexual purity, but to the most important part of any human—the soul. Jesus says:

if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast *it* from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not *that* thy whole body should be cast into hell (Mat. 5:29-30).

That which should be cut off and cast away is anything that is able to separate man from God (Isa. 59:1-2)—among which must be included the sexual sins (lusts evoked by the eye and the touch) associated with the modern dance. Jesus asks, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mat. 16:26). Many have and will continue to exchange their souls “to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11:25). The eternal price is too high, the earthly pleasure is fleeting, and the eternal net profit is “everlasting fire” (Mat. 25:41) and “everlasting punishment” (25:46) where there will be “wailing and gnashing of teeth” (13:42).

DANCING AND THE BIBLE

There are many popular verses in the Bible. Sadly, the popularity of many is simply due to an attempt to excuse or scripturally authorize sinful behavior. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is one such example. The

wise, inspired preacher writes: “To every *thing there is* a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven... A time to weep, and a time to laugh; A time to mourn, and **a time to dance**” (3:1, 4). Obviously, this verse is used to teach that dancing is authorized by God. Here is a perfect instance in which the importance of honestly and accurately defining of terms is so greatly needed. Proponents of dancing choose to *assume* that the “dance” referred to in the Bible and the modern dance (mixed gender, immodest dress, sensual movements, etc.) are identical. A cursory study of dancing as it appears in the Bible will resolve that there are monumental differences and that any attempt to obscure or confuse these distinctions is both dishonest and of no spiritual benefit.

The purpose and acts associated with the dance mentioned in the Bible bears no similarities to what is considered dancing today. There is no mention in Biblical or secular history that the Jews ever held a dance for the purpose of meeting, or getting close to, a person of the opposite sex. There is also no history of any Hebrew dance that could be described as “unchaste” or “sexually charged.” According to *Nelson’s Bible Dictionary*, “dancing for sensual entertainment was unheard of among the Hebrews.” In fact, among the Jews, and as is referenced in the Old Testament, every instance of dance approved by God was done by each of the sexes separately.

The Jewish dance was performed by the sexes separately. There is no evidence from sacred history that the diversion was promiscuously enjoyed.... In the sacred dances, although both sexes seem to have frequently borne a part in the procession or chorus, they remained in distinct and separate companies (Psa. 68:25; Jer. 31:13).... It must not be supposed that the “religious dances” had any similarity to modern dance. They were rather processions, in which all who took part marched in time with the hymns that were sung. The custom was early laid aside, probably because it might have led to the adoption of such objectionable dances as were employed in honor of the pagan deities. Prohibitions of dancing as an amusement abound in the church Fathers and in the decrees of the councils (Unger).

Perhaps the only exception could be found at the foot of Mount Sinai. The dancing which accompanied the making of the golden

calf seems to have been lascivious in nature and their actions were severely punished (Exo. 32). Also condemned in the Scripture is the Greek manner of dancing, which is more analogous to the modern dance. “Such dancing as that of Herodias’s daughter before men at a voluptuous banquet (Mat. 14:6; Mark 6:22) was first introduced among the Jews through the influence of corrupt Greek customs” (Unger’s). Among ancient Romans, dance of any sort, public or private, was considered to be barbaric.

The Romans...were far from considering dance worthy of a man of rank or of a sensible person. Cicero says: “No man who is sober dances, unless he is out of his mind, either when alone or in any decent society, for dancing is the companion of wanton conviviality, dissoluteness, and luxury (Unger).

The only other times we read about dancing among the Jews is in celebration of a military victory (1 Sam. 18:6), at which women celebrated the fact that their husbands and sons had returned unharmed, in honor of David in whom they trusted to keep them safe from enemies, and as a description of children playing (Job 21:11). When the Ark of the Covenant was returned to Jerusalem, it is recorded that David “danced before the LORD with all *his* might” (2 Sam. 6:14). It is also recorded that David danced by himself, and was wearing a long, “linen ephod,” or robe similar to that worn by the priests (1 Chr. 15:27). Needless to say, none of these examples can serve to soothe the consciences of those who seek a “thus saith the Lord” in regards to the modern dance. Conversely, the fact that the dance, as described in the Bible and approved by God is sweet, honorable, and discreet stands as a condemnation to the modern dance, which is the exact opposite—lustful, disrespectful, and immodest.

CONCLUSION

God desires that man enjoy himself, but only within the boundaries and limitations which govern all that is decent and modest. The modern dance, defined by its inherent sexual motions and indecent, public conduct, goes far beyond such limits and is therefore sinful. We would do the world much good to abstain from any such

activities (1 The. 5:22) and to teach our children to love and respect their own bodies enough so as to protect themselves from the lasciviousness and immodesty that is the modern dance.

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GAMBLING AND THE LOTTERY

Jess Whitlock

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Jess married the former Terry Tilley in 2002. They have three daughters and four grandchildren.

“I’ll bet you that gambling is wrong!” The late brother W. S. Boyett began his lesson on gambling with those words. I was associate minister to brother Boyett in Southwest Oklahoma. It made an impression on this “boy preacher” that has lasted for forty years.

Gambling is a great plague on America. Gambling is a great moral evil that has destroyed individuals, homes, communities, and nations. Gambling has swept across our land—i.e., horse racing, dog racing, casino operations, slot machines, riverboat gambling, poker, et al., and now state-sponsored lotteries!

Someone invariably shouts: “You can’t find gambling in the Bible. I looked and it is not there!” I would respond by asking if you thought to look at the foot of the cross? Four Roman soldiers desired to have His seamless garment, and said, “Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it” (John 19:24; cf. Mat. 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34).

Recall the words of Jeremiah: “As the partridge that sitteth on eggs which she hath not laid, so is he that getteth riches, and not by right; in the midst of his days they shall leave him, and at his end he shall be a fool” (17:11). Herein we have an apt description of all who gamble. The top three addictions in our nation are alcohol,

drugs, and gambling. Gambling is a \$50-billion dollar problem in America, and that figure is climbing with each passing year. The Christian must abstain from all forms of gambling because it is sinful. Whether it is the lottery or some other form of gambling, let us hasten to warn: “Don’t bet on it!”

According to my college notes in economics, *gambling* is defined as “the deliberate creation of risks of a kind not inherent in or necessary to the functioning of economic society, i.e., betting on the result of a game, like the Super Bowl.” Webster defines *gamble* as “to play a game for money or property; to bet on an uncertain outcome, to stake something on a contingency: to take a chance” (504). The world’s view of *gambling*: “getting something for nothing without rendering service or exchange of goods.” Whitlock’s definition of the *lottery* is a “tax on people who are very bad at math!”

Some suggest that the casting of lots in the Bible is a form of modern-day gambling. We know that lots were used to determine the lands of the tribes (Num. 26:55), to identify offenders of the Law (Jon. 1:7), and to select one to replace Judas (Acts 1:26). However, no money was wagered and no chance was involved. Solomon wrote, “The lot is cast into the lap; But the whole disposing thereof is of Jehovah” (Pro. 16:33).

A Christian once said to me, “The Bible doesn’t say, ‘Thou shalt not play the lottery!’” Let us approach this lesson as an acrostic lesson on the LOTTERY and we shall see that the lottery and all forms of gambling are Bible-condemned!

THE LOTTERY PROMOTES LAZINESS

Ephesians 4:28 reads: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need.” Gambling promotes laziness and does away with the desire to give an honest day’s work for an honest day’s wage.

Paul penned again, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, If any will not work, neither let him eat” (2 The. 3:10). The gambler seeks to obtain that for which someone else has worked. He fancies himself as a victim of hard luck and avoids hon-

est work in the hopes that “lady luck” will look kindly upon him. Think about this: even if you win, you are simply thriving on the loss of others. If others did not lose, then you could not win! “All things therefore whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, even so do ye also unto them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Mat. 7:12; cf. Luke 6:31). How can any fail to see that all forms of gambling violate the “golden rule”?

There is not a single solitary gambler on earth today who can say what the apostle Paul said in Acts 20:33: “I coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel.” Gambling is rooted in covetousness and greed which leads to laziness. God’s Word condemns all forms of covetousness (Luke 12:15; Rom. 1:29; 7:7; 13:9; 1 Cor. 5:10-11; Eph. 5:3-5; Col. 3:5; 2 Tim. 3:2; Heb. 13:5; 2 Pet. 2:3; et al.).

1 Timothy 6:10 warns every gambler, “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Gambling often causes financial woes in the home. Gamblers have been known to wager the family car, jewelry, stocks and bonds, and sometimes the house! Earlier Paul had penned, “But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever” (5:8). “A little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as a robber” (Pro. 6:10-11).

THE LOTTERY IS AN INVITATION TO ORGANIZED CRIME

The “Commission on Alcohol and Drug Abuse” in the state of Texas has announced that the introduction of a state lottery increased the number of adults who gamble by 40%. California introduced their state lottery in 1985, gambling by adolescents increased by 40%. The average cost to our citizens for one problem gambler is \$13,200 annually. Those who make less than \$25,000 a year will spend three times as much on the lottery as people who make more than \$75,000 a year, as a proportion of income. In states that have both lotteries and casinos, the lottery was introduced first in almost 80% of those states! Forty-three states already have a state-spon-

sored lottery. Prior to 1980 legal casino gambling existed only in Nevada and Atlantic City. Today, 28 states have casinos!

Educated guesses place the estimate of gambling in our nation anywhere from \$50,000,000,000 to \$80,000,000,000 annually. If you think the crime bosses are going to miss out on that kind of revenue, you need to think again. “Be not deceived: Evil companionships corrupt good morals” (1 Cor. 15:33).

In 1990, *Fort Worth Magazine*, reported on the Texas state lottery:

Estimates of the number of gambling addicts run as high as twelve million—a four-fold increase in fifteen years. The main reason for this explosive growth in gambling is the proliferation of state-sponsored lotteries.... Lotteries have made gamblers of millions of Americans who have never gambled before.

Notice, please, that was over twenty years ago!!

In Reno, Nevada, the police department estimates that more than 75% of all embezzlement cases are directly related to organized crime! When the first casino opened in Atlantic City, then Governor Byrne stood on the Boardwalk and said, “Organized crime is not welcome. I warn them, keep your filthy hands out of Atlantic City.” However, in 1984 one of the governor’s political aides announced, “We were naïve to think we could keep organized crime out!” (*The Washington Post* 2). Former Florida Governor, Reuben Askew, said in 1978, “Casinos will attract the mob like blood attracts sharks.”

Whether it be pari-mutuel horse racing, liquor by the drink, a state lottery, or casinos, they all promise that bringing gambling to our state will cause taxes to go down and our children will have the best education ever. However, taxes always rise, and the schools do not benefit as promised. I was living in Oklahoma when those empty promises were made concerning pari-mutuel horse racing. Just two years after being passed, the race tracks admitted their promises were not coming to pass and asked for more money for bigger purses! The politicians took that money from allocated funds for education! It reminds me of 2 Peter 2:19—“promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage.”

Gambling takes in much more than it has ever given. Like sin, it will take you farther than you wanted to go, it will keep you longer than you wanted to stay, and it will cost you more than you wanted to pay.

THE LOTTERY FAILS THE *TREE TEST*

Our Lord said, “By their fruits ye shall know them” (Mat. 7:16). What does gambling breed? Wherever gambling goes, an atmosphere of drug abuse, loan sharking, prostitution, embezzlement (to pay off gambling debts), and increased need of law enforcement will soon be found. Christians are to “abstain from every form of evil” (1 The. 5:22). Our Lord warned, “Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but the corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit” (Mat. 7:17-18).

Gambling results in dishonesty and deceit! Odds are always in favor of the *house*! Your odds of being devoured by flesh-eating piranha are better than that of winning the super lotto. If you buy one hundred tickets a week, from age 18 to age 75, you would then have a 1% chance of winning the big one!

A bulletin article from Ohio (author unknown) related that Ohio had a state lottery of six games that brought in ticket revenue in excess of two billion dollars. Ohio has a population of 11.4 million people. That would amount to every person in the state buying \$189 worth of tickets. Suppose only one in three citizens participates in the lottery, that's \$567 worth of tickets per person. That is a lot of money to simply throw in the garbage. The state lottery feeds on the public's greed. Remember, the prize payout is never equal to even half of the ticket revenue. Much of our society today is out to get something for nothing, or as much money as possible with as little effort (investment) as possible. Senior citizens with gambling problems, spend on average \$1,160 annually on lotteries.

Those who are in Christ must be faithful and wise stewards. “And the Lord said, Who then is the faithful and wise steward” (Luke 12:42)? The teachings of Christ and His apostles demand faithful stewardship (cf. Mat. 16: 24-26; Luke 16:1-13; 1 Cor. 4:2;

1 Pet. 4:10-11). The Christian who wastes money on lottery tickets violates faithful stewardship.

THE LOTTERY IS ASSOCIATED WITH *EVIL*

“Take thought for things honorable in the sight of all men” (Rom. 12:17b). Gambling is an evil example. Gambling, regardless of the form it takes, falls under the heading of “every form of evil” (1 The. 5:22). The KJV reads “appearance of evil.” Gambling is motivated by greed and the love of money (1 Tim. 6:10). The lottery has taught our people to trust in luck—not God. We are to “give no occasion to the adversary for reviling” (5:14). The apostle Paul affirmed, “but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12).

One time a Christian argued with me that there was nothing wrong with a Christian buying a lottery ticket, saying, “Well, it is going for a good cause.” His argument reminded me of Romans 3:8—“and why not (as we are slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil that good may come?” If it is a good cause, then we ought to support it simply because it is right. The end does not justify the means in this instance. Sometimes I am asked to buy a “chance” to help a legitimate cause. Frequently, in such circumstances, I will make a modest donation because it is a good work. Our Lord commended the five-talent and the two-talent men for using their talents wisely (Mat. 25:14-30).

Gambling violates every principle of righteousness and honesty with our fellow-man (Mat. 7:12). Sooner or later, the gambler is haunted with fear and frustration.

THE LOTTERY IS A *ROBBER*

Historians tell us that gambling was originated by a court jester to please an insane king. All forms of gambling (games) were practiced in Egypt. Gambling is a \$50 billion dollar (probably more) a year plague to our nation. Brother Dalton Key has observed, “This is enough money to build a hospital, a high school, a junior college, and a library costing \$600,000 in each of the 3,000 counties of the United States.”

A survey was conducted asking why *honest* people steal. The two top reasons given were: (1) to keep up extravagant living, and (2) to cover gambling losses! Gambling is another way in which to steal from others *honestly!*

Gambling robs us **emotionally**. Gambling often leads to families in need. Many times homes are destroyed. This explains why the suicide rate is so high among compulsive gamblers. Gambling robs a person of good mental health. I picked up (from the sidewalk) a \$5.00 lottery ticket. It states: "Deal Me In...16 ways to win...win up to \$50,000." It was trash on the sidewalk. Not a winner!! Like most lotto tickets it has a message inscribed on the back: "If you or someone you know has a gambling problem, call: 1-800-742-0443 (**not a results line**)." It also states: "Overall odds of winning any prize are 1 in 3.86 including break-even prizes." Your prize may be one dollar; although you may have paid ten, twenty, or more dollars for your tickets.

Gambling robs you and your family **financially**. I was having lunch with a friend in a local café where lottery tickets are sold at the counter. While we were eating, a lady came in three times and bought \$50.00 worth of lottery tickets. She sat outside scratching away on those tickets. After thirty minutes, she came in and claimed her cash prize: a whopping \$7.00. Do the math folks. Which had you rather have, a fifty-dollar bill or seven ones? I have never claimed to be a rocket scientist, but if you can see through a ladder, you can certainly see that truth.

Gambling robs the home of paid bills, food on the table, clothes to wear, and a roof over your head. Families are robbed in the name of legalized gambling (including the lottery). The revenue generated by gambling is never equal to one-half the added cost of law enforcement, welfare to support families of compulsive gamblers, and other losses. In the state of Texas we are now treating over 1,000 gambling addicts annually. There are those who buy lottery tickets every day of every week. Some Texans will spend their entire paycheck on lottery tickets.

Gambling will rob you **spiritually**. How can a Christian gamble away his/her money and then not rob God? “The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith Jehovah of hosts” (Hag. 2:8). All that we possess belongs to the Lord. We are to give to Him as He has blessed us (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

When we gamble we set a bad example before others, even our own children/grandchildren. If we can justify the lottery, then have we not justified poker, horse racing, riverboat gambling, and casinos? If not, why not?

THE LOTTERY IS AN UNEQUAL YOKE

Paul wrote, “Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness?” (2 Cor. 6:14). Paul did not have gambling, per se, in mind when he wrote those words; but gambling to the Christian is just that, an unequal yoke. Jesus said, “Even so let your light shine before men; that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 5:16). We have seen that gambling and the Christian are not compatible.

Gambling is a plague on our nation. Gambling has never contributed to the betterment of any nation; rather it leads to more and more evil influences. Paul writes, “Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good” (Rom. 12:9). *Abhor* is from the Greek *apostugeo* of which Robertson states: “Old verb with intensive (ἀπο [apo]) dislike, only here in N.T. The present active participle is here employed” (404). Christians are to detest and despise to the utmost that which is evil. As children of God let us never be half-hearted in opposing all that is evil and supporting that which is good. *Cleave* is from the Greek *kollao*, which Vine says is “to join fast together, to glue, cement.... In the N.T. it is used only in the passive voice...in the sense of ‘cleaving unto,’ as of cleaving to one’s wife” (104). Let us oppose every form of evil!

You may make gambling legal, which we have most assuredly done in this nation, but **you can never, ever, make it right!**

CONCLUSION

The crux of the matter is that the believer in Jesus Christ does not have to regard life as a *gamble*. We have a heavenly Father, Who, as Jesus taught, knows when a sparrow dies. “Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father” (Mat. 10:29). Therefore, God knows and provides for the needs of His children. The New Testament Christian understands that luck and faith have nothing in common.

“I’ll bet you that gambling is wrong!”

ADDENDUM

HOW TO SPELL CASINO

MATTHEW 7:12

Proposition: One cannot correctly spell casino without spelling *sin*. This sin violates faithful stewardship (1 Pet. 4:10), is an evil example (Rom. 12:17), ruins families (1 Tim. 5:8), and we as Christians must resist, refuse, and renounce all.

Covetous—Luke 12:15 warns of the dangers of the sin of covetousness.

Appearance of evil—(Mat. 7:17-18; 1 The. 5:22). Casinos create an atmosphere for drug abuse, prostitution, loan sharks, and street crime.

Stakes are too high—Matthew 16:26 states that our soul is our most valuable possession. Remember the house always wins, always!

Influence—Ephesians 5:27 and Romans 8:10 demonstrate we must resist carnal things. *Carnal* from *sarkikos*, is defined as “sensual, controlled by animal appetites” (Vine 89). Where are we laying up treasure (Mat. 6:19-20)?

Never delivers—2 Peter 2:19 demonstrates empty promises of gambling. Casinos make glittering promises of what they will do for your community/state, but they never ever deliver the goods!

Organized crime—2 Corinthians 6:14 shows the Christian and casinos are **not** compatible. Legitimate casinos in our nation are bringing in around thirty billion dollars annually. Only a fool

would think that organized crime is going to walk away from that kind of revenue.

CONCLUSION: We can make gambling legal; but we can never make it **right!**

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MURDER

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Murder is as old as the story of mankind. When asked who committed the first murder, most people would answer that of Cain slaying his brother Abel. That answer would be true only if qualified by the statement of a person murdering a fellow human being.

Before Cain and Abel there was a murder that affected all of mankind. We were all killed by Satan when his lie caused Adam and Eve to sin. That first sin brought death to all of mankind. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

G. Venables in his commentary on Genesis 9:6 wrote: “It is the thing which brought destruction upon man; it is the defiler of that which was the temple of the Holy Ghost; it is the murderer of man, both body and soul.” Adam Clarke, in his comments regarding the devil being “a murder from the beginning” in John 8:44 wrote, “It was through him that Adam transgressed; in consequence of which death entered into the world, and slew him and all his posterity” (5:581).

To look at the television and movie fare offered today it would seem that those in charge of programing must think that the world is obsessed with murder, mystery, and medical themes. Even a significant number of video games are filled with killing and violence. Can all of this exposure to killing and violence not have a negative influence or at least a numbing effect on society, young and old

alike? It is obvious that we live in violent times. The tragedy in Tucson, Arizona, in January of 2011 is a prime example of murder and violence in America.

WHAT IS MURDER?

The FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program defines murder and non-negligent manslaughter as the willful (non-negligent) killing of one human being by another. According to the FBI there were an estimated 15,241 persons murdered in the USA in 2009. That figures out to 5.0 murders per 100,000 inhabitants in 2009. That number is bad enough, but there are many nations that have a far higher rate of murder. Only God knows how many persons have been murdered in the short history of humanity. It is an evil that has caused the destruction of many nations and may ultimately be the demise of America.

LEGAL ANALYSIS OF MURDER

The elements of common law murder are:

1. the killing
2. of a human being
3. by another human being
4. with malice aforethought.

The killing—At common law life ended with cardiopulmonary arrest—the total and permanent cessation of blood circulation and respiration. With advances in medical technology courts have adopted irreversible cessation of all brain function as marking the end of life.

of a human being—This element presents the issue of when life begins. At common law a fetus was not a human being. Life began when the fetus passed through the birth canal and took its first breath [this of course is contrary to the Bible—DAH].

by another human being—at early common law suicide was considered murder. The requirement that the person killed be someone other than the perpetrator excluded suicide from the definition of murder [The subjects suicide and abortion have been assigned to other speakers in this lectureship—DAH].

with malice aforethought—originally “malice aforethought” carried its everyday meaning—a deliberate and premeditated killing of another motivated by ill will. Murder necessarily required that an appreciable time pass between the formation and execution of

the intent to kill. All that was required for malice aforethought to exist is that the perpetrator act with one of the four states of mind that constitutes “malice.”

The four states of mind recognized as constituting “malice” are:

- i. Intent to kill,
- ii. Intent to inflict grievous bodily harm short of death,
- iii. Reckless indifference to an unjustifiably high risk to human life (sometimes described as an “abandoned and malignant heart”), or
- iv. Intent to commit a dangerous felony (the “felony-murder” doctrine).

Under state of mind (i), intent to kill, the *deadly weapon rule* applies. Thus, if the defendant intentionally uses a deadly weapon or instrument against the victim, such use authorizes a permissive inference of intent to kill. Examples of deadly weapons and instruments can include but are not limited to guns, knives, deadly toxins or chemicals or gases and even vehicles when intentionally used to strike a victim.

Under state of mind (iii), an “abandoned and malignant heart,” the killing must result from defendant’s conduct involving a reckless indifference to human life and a conscious disregard of an unreasonable risk of death or serious bodily injury...

Under state of mind (iv), the felony-murder doctrine, the felony committed must be an inherently dangerous felony, such as burglary, arson, rape, robbery, or kidnapping...

Many jurisdictions divide murder by degrees. The most common divisions are between first and second degree murder. Generally second degree murder is common law murder with first degree being an aggravated form. The aggravating factors that distinguish first degree murder from second degree are first degree murder requires a specific intent to kill and premeditation and deliberation. In addition murder committed by acts such as strangulation, poisoning, or lying in wait are treated as first degree murder (“Murder”).

According to Frank E. Hirsch, murder is defined thus:

MURDER 1. Terms: (mur'-der) (*haragh*, “to smite,” “destroy,” “kill,” “slay” (Ps 10:8; Hos 9:13 AV), *ratsach*, “to dash to pieces,” “kill,” especially with premeditation (Num 35:16 and frequently; Job 24:14; Ps 94:6; Jer 7:9; Hos 6:9); *phoneus*, “criminal homicide,” from *phoneuo*, “to kill,” “slay”; *anthropoktonos*, “manslayer,” “murderer,” is used to designate Satan (John 8:44) and him that

hates his brother (1 John 3:15); a matricide is designated as *metraloas* (1 Tim 1:9); The plural of *phonos*, “murders,” occurs in Matt 15:19; Mark 7:21; Gal 5:21 the King James Version; Rev 9:21):

2. The Hebrew Law: The Hebrew law recognized the distinction between willful murder and accidental or justifiable homicide (Num 35:16); but in legal language no verbal distinction is made. Murder was always subject to capital punishment (Lev 24:17; compare Gen 9:6). Even if the criminal sought the protection of the sanctuary, he was to be arrested before the altar, and to be punished (Ex 21:12,14; Lev 24:17,21; Num 35:16,18,21,31). The Mishna says that a mortal blow intended for another than the victim is punishable with death; but such a provision is not found in the Law. No special mention is made of (a) child murder; (b) parricide; or (c) taking life by poison; but the intention of the law is clear with reference to all these cases (Ex 21:15,17; 1 Tim 1:9; Matt 15:4). No punishment is mentioned for attempted suicide (compare 1 Sam 31:4 f; 1 Kings 16:18; Matt 27:5); yet Josephus says (BJ, III, viii , 5) that suicide was held criminal by the Jews (see also Ex 21:23). An animal known to be vicious must be confined, and if it caused the death of anyone, the animal was destroyed and the owner held guilty of murder (Ex 21:29,31). The executioner, according to the terms of the Law, was the “revenger of blood”; but the guilt must be previously determined by the Levitical tribunal. Strong protection was given by the requirement that at least two witnesses must concur in any capital question (Num 35:19-30; Deut 17:6-12; 19:12,17) (2094).

Murder comes in many classifications and with varying motivations such as: assassination, child murder, consensual homicide, contract killing, honor killing, human sacrifice, lust murder, lynching, mass murder, murder-suicide, proxy murder, lonely hearts killer, serial killer, spree killer, torture murder, feticide, double murder, misdemeanor murder, crime of passion, and Internet homicide.

A new twist on murder was that of Thomas Montgomery, a 47-year-old married man who was convicted in 2007 of murdering a workmate in a case called the “Internet Chat room Murder.” He posed as “Tommy,” a 21-year-old marine, and began an online relationship with a 17-year-old called Jessi. A workmate of his, 22-year-old Brian Barrett, subsequently began an online relationship with

the same girl after Montgomery's deception was revealed, and Montgomery shot him in their work car park. "Jessi" was actually a middle-aged woman who had been using pictures of her daughter. A police officer said of Montgomery that "he became a completely different person online." Another commented: "It's very odd that someone would take another's life over jealousy of a person you've never laid your eyes on." A documentary about this case titled *Talhotblond* (Jessi's screen name) was released in 2009.

The criminal law of the Israelites recognized the distinction between willful murder and accidental or justifiable homicide (Num. 35:15-25). The penalty for murder was capital punishment (Lev. 24:17). Homicide on the other hand was to be treated according to a strict set of rules. Even death caused by an animal had its penalty. The Law of Moses prohibited a murderer to be set free for a price nor could he claim sanctuary in the Temple or one of the six cities of refuge after being found guilty. Joab's attempt to save himself in the Temple did not work (1 Kin. 2:28-34). Striking a pregnant woman so as to cause premature birth was punished by a fine, but if it caused her death or the death of the child it was punishable with death (Exo. 21:22-23). If an animal known to be vicious caused the death of any one, not only was the animal destroyed, but the owner as well. If he had taken no steps to restrain it, he was held guilty of murder (21:28-29). It was lawful to kill a burglar taken at night in the act, but unlawful to do so after sunrise (22:2-3).

Murder is a sin against the brotherhood of mankind. Murder, in its essence, is a striking at God in the person of him who was made in the image of God. Whoever murders a man, unless unwittingly, as the Scriptures express it, is worthy of the death penalty. Taking away the life of another is the highest offence that can be committed against the individual, and against society; and the highest punishment that a man can suffer for such a crime is the loss of his own life. God is the giver of life. When one murders someone, he is, in a sense, "playing god." God is also the taker of life; no human being has the right to do anything but try to preserve it.

Here are some sins which may lead to murder: (1) Anger (Gen. 49:6; cf. Eph. 4:26, 31), (2) Envy (Mat. 27:18; cf. Pro. 14:30; Rom. 1:29), and (3) Hatred (1 John 3:15; cf. Deu. 19:11-12; Mat. 5:43-44; Gal. 5:20).

In the Bible we find many ways in which murder was committed. The following list shows some of those diverse ways:

1. With the hand: as Joab killed Abner and Amasa: "he smote him therewith in the fifth *rib*, and shed out his bowels" (2 Sam 20:10).
2. Murder is committed with the mind: "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer" (1 John 3:15).
3. Murder is committed with the tongue, by speaking to the prejudice of another and causing him to be put to death (Acts 2:23).
4. Murder is committed with the pen: David murdered Uriah with a letter (2 Sam 11:14-15).
5. By consenting to another's death: Saul consented to the death of Christians (Acts 8:1, 3).
6. By not hindering the death of another when in our power: Pilate yielded to the mob.
7. By withholding mercy.
8. By taking away that which sustains life.
9. By not helping him when he is ready to perish.

One may be guilty of self-murder if he puts himself into danger which he might prevent. He may be in some sense guilty of his own death, by neglecting the use of means to heal such as the medical community affords. One may literally grieve himself to death over the loss of a loved one or even a material loss. One may also fail to use restraint in the use of things that are not intrinsically wrong. Many dig their grave with their teeth.

We must not injure another's soul. We can be guilty of this by setting a bad example, enticing others to sin, and withholding or corrupting the Gospel. We can be just as guilty of murder to our own soul by doing the same to ourselves.

AM I MY BROTHER'S KEEPER? (GENESIS 4:9)

Cain is a prime example of failure in this regard. John writes:

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, *who* was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous (1 John 3:10-12).

Cain's despicable act was prompted by envy. He was dissatisfied that his own offering was not accepted, and that his brother's was approved. Abel was not attempting to "show up his brother" (Mat. 23:35; Heb. 11:4), but Cain, in his twisted thinking, focused on him as the problem. One could surmise that Cain would have killed God if he could. Cain certainly lacked brotherly love. A large part of the crimes committed today happen for that same reason.

W. Perkins observed a seven step progression in Cain's rebellion against God:

"The way of Cain," (Jude 11) consisted of following the lusts of his own heart against the will of God. It is described in Gen 4, of which way there be seven steps or degrees, but every one out of the right way.

1. The first step was hypocrisy: he worshipped God by offering sacrifice as Abel did, but his heart was not a believing heart as Abel's was; his worship was outward and ceremonious, but not in spirit and truth, for his heart was an evil heart of unbelief.
2. The second his hatred of his own and natural brother, prosecuting him with his wrath and indignation.
3. The third his murder, whereby he slew his righteous brother.
4. The fourth his lying unto God, saying he knew not where his brother was.
5. The fifth his desperation, after that God had convicted him and pronounced sentence against him.
6. The sixth his security and carelessness; he regarded not his sin nor the conscience of it, but busied himself in building a city.
7. The seventh and last, which was the highest step of his way, was his profaneness; for from thenceforth he cast off and contemned all the care and practice of God's worship (Gen 4:26).

From the crime of Cain to this present day society has suffered in many ways because of murder. Murder destroys the rights of life and property. It brings disgrace to the family of the murderer. It disrupts the family ties of the murdered one. It disturbs the peace of society, and even threatens the stability of good government. Many times the financial burden of a trial is borne by the community. Some communities have been bankrupted by high profile cases. In Orlando, Florida, the murder trial of Casey Anthony is costing tax payers hundreds of thousands of dollars. Crime carries a great expense; it costs more to keep a prisoner in jail than it does to send a student to an Ivy League college. Murder cuts short the contribution one may give to society. It kills the hopes and dreams of the victim and the possibility of repenting of or correcting any wrongs in his life. Murder deprives children of parents, husbands and wives of their mates, parents of children—the list is endless and the loss inestimable.

Consider the toll murder takes upon the loved ones of the victim of murder. A case in point is the recent trial and conviction of Steven Hayes in Connecticut.

After being sentenced to death for the slaying of Hayley and Michaela Petit and the rape and murder of their mother, Jennifer, Hayes apologized to the husband, William who was beaten with a baseball bat during the break-in, attack and arson at his home. “I am tormented and have nightmares about what happened in that house. I oftentimes looked at Dr. Petit and became sick to my stomach knowing what he has been through and what he continues to go through to this day. There’s not a moment that goes by that this does not weigh on my mind, especially since he suffered due to my actions. My suffering is meaningless compared to that of Dr. Petit. Death for me will be a welcome relief, and I hope it will bring some peace and comfort to those who I have hurt so much.”

Earlier Dr. Petit spoke of his suffering. He said that he has a hard time now trusting people and he rarely thinks beyond the hope and dreams of honoring his family. “As many of you may suspect, I seriously considered suicide many times—no wife, no children, no home and no interest in life in general,” Petit said. He has stopped practicing medicine. The beating left him with vision problems,

vertigo, and trouble with his balance while walking. He needs medicine to sleep, and he struggles through nightmares. “I miss my entire family, our home, everything we had together as a group, they cannot be replaced” (Griffin 4).

GOD’S VERDICT FOR MURDER

“Whoso sheddeth man’s blood, by man shall his blood be shed: for in the image of God made he man” (Gen. 9:6). The Divine justice of God commands the carrying out of a grave, judicial sentence. When men fail to respect and obey His judgments, trouble will follow. Is capital punishment a deterrent? If it is practiced, it is certain that the executed criminal will never kill again.

Executioners fulfill the requirements of the law when a person has been lawfully condemned. He is no guiltier of murder than a soldier or police officer lawfully doing his job. Notice the proviso: “lawfully.” The executioner, the soldier, or the police officer would be guilty of murder if he indiscriminately killed someone. He must operate within the law just as every other citizen must also do. Their jobs have nothing to do with revenge. Revenge is the gratification of a personal feeling, a desire to inflict upon another the suffering which he has inflicted on you. God has instituted certain offices to maintain order and justice and we are obligated to respect them (see Rom. 13:1-5).

HOW NOT TO BECOME A MURDERER

To guard against committing murder we must guard against anger which can lead to murder. We should promote brotherly kindness, true Christian love and respect for human life—that of others, and our own also. We should keep the heart free from hatred and malice. We should cultivate a kind disposition and guard against temper and passion. We should avoid everything that would lead to violence. We must never let envy get a hold on us as it did on Cain. Most importantly, we must always heed God’s counsel. If Cain would have listened to God, he would have never committed murder.

And the LORD said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee *shall be* his desire, and thou shalt rule over him (Gen. 4:6-7).

Adam Clark wrote:

That is, Thou shalt ever have the right of primogeniture, and in all things shall thy brother be subject unto thee. These words are not spoken of *sin*, as many have understood them but of *Abel's* submission to Cain as his superior, and the words are spoken to remove Cain's envy (1:59).

Unlike Cain, we should do all the good we can to ourselves and others. We have a duty to preserve the life of others and aid them as we have the opportunity. "Charge them that are rich in this world... That they do good, that they be rich in good works" (1 Tim. 6:17-18). God requires that we share our blessings with those less fortunate. We should endeavor to preserve the souls of others, counsel them about their souls, set life and death before them, and help them to heaven. Let us all cultivate the fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22-26), grow in the Christian graces (2 Pet. 1:5-7), and not be found guilty of doing any of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

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IDOLATRY

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Jimmie Gribble was born in Kennett, Missouri, in 1944. He is married to the former Donna Brandon: they have one daughter and two grandchildren.

Jimmie graduated from the Memphis School of Preaching in 1971 and has taken college classes at Thomas Nelson Community College and Southern Christian University, in Alabama. He began preaching in 1968 at Hillsdale, Michigan and has done local work with congregations in Tennessee, Michigan, Missouri, and Virginia. Jimmie started working with the church of Christ in Newport News, Virginia in 1983 and is presently working with the Portsmouth Church of Christ since 1993. He has done mission work in the United States and in Bermuda. He has conducted Gospel meetings in the States and in Canada, speaks on lectureships as well as writing for various publications. Since 1993, Jimmie has been hosting the “Good News Broadcast,” a weekly “live” radio program.

Idolatry brings to the mind the worship of an image that is made in the likeness of a god, person, place, or thing. The definition of idolatry bears out this thought. *Idolatry* is defined as “worship of idols; 2 excessive devotion to or reverence for some person or thing” (Webster). Webster defines *idol* as “an image of a god, used as an object or instrument of worship...3 an object of ardent or excessive devotion or admiration.” However, our lesson will set forth that idolatry is much more than an image of a god that one can see and handle.

The English word *idolatry* is used five times in the King James Version of the Bible—once in the Old Testament and four times in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, *idolatry* is used by Samuel as he reproves Saul for his failure to live up to God’s command to destroy Amalek and the Amalekites. Samuel said:

Hath the LORD *as great* delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey *is* better than sacrifice, *And* to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion *is as* the sin of witchcraft, *And* stubbornness *is as* iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, He hath also rejected thee from *being* king (1 Sam. 15:22-23).

This word is defined as “a family idol” (Strong). Further, it is “a kind of idol, object of reverence, and means of divination” (Brown, Driver, Briggs 1076). The Hebrew word is used 14 other times and is translated into four other words. It is translated *image* in Hosea 3:4 or *images* in Ezekiel 21:21. It is translated five times as *teraphim* in Judges 17:5; 18:14ff, and it is translated once as *idols* in Zechariah 10:2.

Idolatry is used four times in the New Testament and is translated from two Greek words. The first use of *idolatry* is used by Luke describing what Paul saw as he went through the city of Athens. Luke writes, “Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry” (Acts 17:16). The Greek word is *kateidolos*. This word means “full of idols” (Thayer 338). The next three times idolatry is used is from one Greek word, *eidololatreia*, and means “image-worship (literally or figuratively)” (Strong). In addition, it refers to “the worship of false gods, idolatry: Gal. 5:20; used of the formal sacrificial feasts held in honor of false gods, 1 Cor. 10:14; of avarice, as a worship of Mammon (which see), Col. 3:5” (Thayer). This word is also used in 1 Peter 4:3 where it is translated “idolatries.”

These words do not exhaust a study of idolatry, for there are other words such as idols, abominations, graven images, and high places, which should also be studied.

One has written:

When people make gods in their own image, they dishonor the Creator. He alone is worthy of homage and praise. Idols are non-existent gods, merely images that people make to please themselves. When stripped of its trappings, idolatry is human self-worship (“The Kingdom” 71).

If this be correct, the first instance of idolatry is in Genesis 3. When the serpent tempted Eve, he said, “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” (3:5). Eve decided to do what she wanted to do, rather than what God wanted her to do. This is exactly the same situation as Saul’s refusal to destroy the Amalekites.

We have God's call of Abraham in Genesis 12. God called upon Abraham: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee" (12:1). While God promised blessings upon Abraham, there was, perhaps, another reason for Abraham to leave his father's house. Joshua, toward the end of his life, called Israel together to rehearse Israel's history. Joshua began with these words:

Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Your fathers dwelt on the other side of the flood in old time, *even* Terah, the father of Abraham, and the father of Nachor: and they served other gods. And I took your father Abraham from the other side of the flood, and led him throughout all the land of Canaan, and multiplied his seed, and gave him Isaac (Jos. 24:2-3).

Joshua, after rehearsing their history, told Israel to put away their idols and serve God. Joshua said:

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that *were* on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods.... And the people said unto Joshua, The LORD our God will we serve, and his voice will we obey (24:14-16, 24).

Though Israel made such a promise, it was short-lived. After Joshua died, a generation came about that did not know what God had done for Israel. Thus, "And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim" (Jud. 2:11). From this time forward, much of Israel's problems and punishments were because of their sin of idolatry. Though the Law stated that God was to be first and that they were not to make any images (Exo. 20:3-5), Israel failed to keep the Law.

While each king of the United Kingdom—Saul, David, and Solomon—sinned, one involved himself in this sin of idolatry. When David was old, preparations were made by Adonijah, David's son,

to make himself king. Bathsheba and Nathan, the prophet, told David of Adonijah's plan. David told Bathsheba:

Even as I swear unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day (1 Kin. 1:30).

Solomon became king, and God asked him what he wanted. Solomon responded, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (3:9). God gave him wisdom; He also gave him riches and honor. Too bad that Solomon did not exercise the wisdom God gave to him. Solomon married Pharaoh's daughter (1 Kin. 3:1) and he *loved* and went in to many women, which violated God's Law (Deu. 7:1-4; Exo. 34:12-16). Because of Solomon's idolatry, the kingdom would be divided (1 Kin. 11:31ff).

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, received two tribes: Judah and Benjamin; Jeroboam took the ten tribes. Jeroboam is known for his idolatry (1 Kin. 12), which carried throughout Israel's history. Over and over again, the phrase is repeated: "Nevertheless he cleaved unto the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin; he departed not therefrom" (2 Kin. 3:3).

We now turn our attention to the New Testament teaching on idolatry. While idolatry suggests an image that is worshiped, it is not always the case. As stated earlier by Samuel to Saul: "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, And stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry" (1 Sam. 15:23). In addition, Paul's use of the word in Colossians 3:5, stating that covetousness is idolatry, proves that a physical image is not always inherent in the word. It has been said, "Whatever your heart clings to and relies upon; that is properly your god" (Brown). Jesus said it this way: "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Mat. 6:24). Another has written, "Anything that lures us away from our heavenly Father functions as an idol.

Whatever supplants Jehovah and obedience to His will as being of first importance in our lives is an idol” (Brown). Another wrote, “Idolatry is not limited to the worship of false images, but is placing anything or anyone before God as the object of allegiance and devotion” (Mounce 351). According to G. L. Carey, Martin Luther said, “Man always has either God or idol” (196). In addition, Luther wrote, “That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself, is your God” (qtd. in Carey 196).

With this in mind, let us look at some modern-day idols. One such modern-day idol might be our family. Certainly, in the time in which we live, a great need that we have is having strong families. God placed great emphasis upon the family, instructing each member of the family on their responsibilities. Loving God and each family member will enable the family to be what it ought to be. Husbands are to love their wives; wives are to be submission to their husband; children are to obey their parents; fathers are to bring up their children properly. However, remember what Jesus said, “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). Applying this to the family Jesus said, “He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (10:37). Yet, how often do Christians put their family before the Lord? One family member may have a cold, and the whole family stays home. Guests come to visit, whether expected or unexpected, and the family stays home—is this putting the Lord first?

Another modern-day idol might be the world. Many things in the world are innocent and right in and of themselves. Many people are interested in sports, from youth up to professional sports. While there is nothing wrong with sports, people can become addictive to them, taking time to memorize everything about the players, and then state, “I don’t have time to memorize passages from the Bible, and besides, I can’t memorize.” The time of the games and practice also may interfere with worship or Bible study, and parents say, “Well, if they miss, they won’t be able to play.” There are things of

the world that are not innocent and right in and of themselves, such as the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), and these can become idols to individuals.

The Bible is very plain in teaching us what our relationship with the world should be. James wrote, “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). The apostle John penned:

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).

Jesus, in His temptation, demonstrated that even good things of this world are not to be first in one’s life. Jesus was tempted with food after His forty-day fast, yet He said, “It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). To the temptation of gaining all the kingdoms of the world, Jesus said, “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (4:10). Later our Lord taught, “For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (16:26). Again, Christ said, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (6:24).

Another modern-day idol might be self. Mankind is fed a steady diet of “if it feels good, looks good, etc., do it.” Rather than Biblical principles, man is told that he is the one who determines what is right or wrong in any situation: which is known as situation ethics. This is probably best understood with the “I” complex. Jesus emphasized this when He taught:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I

bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry (Luke 12:17-19).

Yes, Jesus taught that self was to be denied. He said, “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” (14:26). Again the Master said, “If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat. 16:24).

Jesus is the Great Example. He taught us that while family is important, family cannot come first. Matthew records one coming to Jesus and saying:

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 (12:47-50).

Jesus created the world and the things of the world, and He taught us concerning the proper use and enjoyment of the world He made. Jesus also taught us and showed us about self-denial, even to giving up His life. Paul wrote of this Example:

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross (Phi. 2:5-8).

In reference to the Old Testament teaching on idols, one would rightly ask, “Why serve them?” First, they should not have been idolaters because it was a violation of God’s Law. Further, they should not have worshiped or served idols because of what they were. The prophets spoke of what idols were. One of those prophets was Isaiah when he wrote:

And the residue thereof he maketh a god, *even* his graven image: He falleth down unto it, and worshippeth *it*, and prayeth unto it,

And saith, Deliver me; for thou *art* my god. They have not known nor understood: For he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; *And* their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, Neither *is there* knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; Yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten *it*: And shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? Shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? (Isa. 44:17-19).

In the New Testament we are told that idols were man-made, they were dumb, and they could not see, hear, or walk (Acts 7:41; 1 Cor. 12:2; Rev. 9:20 respectively). The question naturally comes, “Why serve idols?”

As a Christian, we are to have nothing to do with idols. The apostle Paul penned:

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you (2 Cor. 6:16-17).

Christians are to keep themselves from idols (1 John 5:21). We are to flee idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14). We cannot always avoid idolaters in the world, but we are charged to avoid idolaters in the church. Paul wrote:

I wrote unto you in an epistle not to company with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then must ye needs go out of the world. But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat (5:9-11).

The eternal fate of those that remain in the path of idolatry is firmly established. In the Old Testament 24,000 fell, or were killed, (Num. 25:9) because of idolatry (23,000 of them in one day, 1 Cor. 10:8). In the New Testament, Paul wrote:

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 man-

kind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:9-11; cf. Eph. 5:5).

The apostle John wrote:

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

And, further he penned:

Blessed *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without *are* dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie (22:14-15).

If you are following in the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, or Solomon, we call upon you to do as the saints at Thessalonica did, “For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God” (1 The. 1:9). Even in such an idolatrous city like Corinth, the Gospel message can cause you to repent and become a past idolater. Paul wrote concerning the idolaters in Corinth that obeyed the Gospel: “And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor. 6:11).

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HATE CRIMES LAWS

Lynn Parker

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When Elaine Huguenin of Albuquerque, N.M., declined in September 2006 an e-mail request from a lesbian couple to photograph their ceremony, one of the lesbians responded by lodging a human rights complaint with the New Mexico Human Rights Division, the state agency charged with enforcing state anti-discrimination laws and sending cases to the commission to be adjudicated.... “The bureau accepts and investigates claims of discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion, ancestry, sex, age, physical and mental handicap, serious medical condition, disability, spousal affiliation, sexual orientation and gender identity in the areas of employment, housing, credit or public accommodation,” she said (“Artist hit”).

Let no one misrepresent our position. We believe in government (Rom. 13:1ff). We believe that evil-doers should be punished. We believe that innocent, law-abiding citizens should be protected. Where we have a problem is when the government ignores God's will and tries to force us to do evil or at least tolerate it. When governments, anywhere, make laws and rulings contrary to the Bible, we must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). One of the tools being used against Christians by some groups is that of hate crimes legislation. Occasionally you will hear that some of these groups prefer to couch their positions under “human rights” or “tolerance,” but that is just not true in many instances. These factions believe in tolerance only up to a point; then they become quite intolerant, and their fangs begin to show. Speak out against certain doctrines or behavior and you will see that these groups demanding toler-

ance and group hugs morph into attack squads, not unlike what one might have expected in Nazi Germany. They tolerate everyone except those who will not tolerate everything.

OVERVIEW OF HATE CRIMES LAWS IN AMERICA

A hate crime is usually defined by state law as one that involves threats, harassment, or physical harm and is motivated by prejudice against someone's race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability ("Hate Crime").

Florida and Tennessee have some version of hate crimes laws, both of which list "sexual orientation" as a protected class. In Texas, the law provides for punishment enhancement if the court finds that the crime was committed because of "bias or prejudice" ("Penalty"). Some jurisdictions have more aggressive hate crime laws than Texas. In 2009, the United States government passed a law which added "sexual orientation" to its classes protected by federal hate crime statutes. Proponents of such laws say they could never be used to stifle free speech or religious exercise. The same "Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Protection Act," signed into law by President Barack Obama, offers the following protections to people such as Christians, who will preach and teach against homosexuality:

Nothing in this division shall be construed to allow a court, in any criminal trial for an offense described under this division, or an amendment made by this division, in the absence of a stipulation by the parties, to admit evidence of speech, beliefs, association, group membership, or expressive conduct unless that evidence is relevant and admissible under the Federal Rules of Evidence. Nothing in this division is intended to affect the existing rules of evidence (§4710:1).

While the threat of persecution in the near future from this particular law does not appear great, we must remember that laws can be interpreted in different ways as the moral climate continues its decline. Laws can be altered, and this law might well be the springboard for more dramatic, draconian laws that will usher in a new era of anti-Christian persecution. The problem with the religious

protection guaranteed by this statute is that there may be times that evidence of “speech, beliefs, association, group membership, or expressive conduct” might be relevant to a prosecutor’s case in court. The mental culpability of a defendant must be proven in court for most crimes. Might the State seek to admit a person’s church membership and beliefs? It could be germane to a case.

This section seemingly protects against a prosecutor seeking to introduce evidence of a person’s church attendance or association with a religious group as evidence of bias against a particular victim. However, the evidence exclusion only works if the evidence is already impermissible under the Federal Rules of Evidence. Put simply, it is possible, even with this evidence exemption, for a prosecutor to use evidence of a person’s speech, sermons the person may have heard, a person’s church attendance, or other similar evidence, as a means of proving that a crime was committed “because of” a person’s protected status under the law. There is no other way of proving that a crime was committed, for example, “because of” a person’s “sexual orientation” without introducing evidence of what the perpetrator of the crime was thinking when the crime was committed. Thus, evidence of the perpetrator’s speech or associations may be offered in court, even with this evidence exemption (“Religious Speech”).

Here is the second “religious protection” provision:

Nothing in this division, or an amendment made by this division, shall be construed or applied in a manner that infringes any rights under the first amendment to the Constitution of the United States (§4710:3).

Again, the problem with this is the interpretation of government commissions and courts.

This section purports to protect First Amendment rights in any “hate crimes” prosecution, though it does not do anything beyond what the First Amendment already does. No law can violate the First Amendment regardless of whether Congress says that in the law or not. Therefore, while this exemption is good evidence of Congress’ sensitivity to First Amendment rights, in the end the exemption does not accomplish anything (“Religious Speech”).

You cannot depend on these government entities to respect God’s Word or the Constitution, and unfortunately, no law man-

dates good reasoning skills as a prerequisite for appointment to government positions!

The philosophy behind hate crime laws, ostensibly passed to protect certain groups, has evolved. Hate crime laws and their close cousins—anti-discrimination statutes—are being used to hush Biblical sermons and teaching. Further, this same philosophy seeks to attack and censure those who will not condone and tolerate homosexual practices and every false religion. Acceptance, tolerance, and ecumenism are politically popular.

The case of photographer Elaine Huguenin is a prime and alarming example of the government ignoring Biblical principles and even the United States Constitution. The former clearly defines homosexuality as sin (Rom. 1:26-27). The latter guarantees religious freedom:

Amendment I

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances (“Bill of Rights”).

The New Mexico Human Rights Commission (NMHRC) rejected the constitutional argument raised by Huguenin on the grounds that the New Mexico anti-discrimination law was “neutral and of general applicability,” and such was needed “when a legislature has reason to believe that a given group is the target of discrimination was evidence of discrimination.” (“Before the Human” 17). “Neutral?” Really? Of course we wonder how any commission, court, or legislature, could view protection of the homosexual lifestyle in the same vein as protection of a group based on a skin color. It is the class that is out of place with other protected classes. Why not add drug addicts, compulsive gamblers, or alcoholics to a list of classes protected by statute from anti-discrimination? The NMHRC basically said this: “You will photograph this homosexual ceremony even if you believe that marriage is between a man and a woman. Your religious convictions don’t matter, and the State is

the Supreme law.” It was not enough for the homosexual couple to find another photographer. Nope, Huguenin must be rebuked and forced to assist with such an *abomination ceremony* or face punishment. Regarding Huguenin, her attorney with the Alliance Defense Fund, gave a fair assessment:

“Christians in the marketplace should not be penalized for abiding by their beliefs anymore than anyone else should,” said ADF Senior Counsel Jordan Lorence. “The Constitution prohibits the state from forcing unwilling people to promote a message they disagree with and thereby violate their conscience. The commission’s decision demonstrated stunning disregard for our client’s First Amendment rights.”

“The government cannot make people choose between their faith and their livelihood,” said Lorence. “Could the government force a vegetarian videographer to create a commercial for the new butcher shop in town? American business owners do not surrender their constitutional rights at the marketplace gate” (“ADF”).

We cannot help but wonder if the photographer was a lesbian, if she would be forced to photograph the local lectureship series entitled, “The Abomination of Homosexuality.” Would a conservative Muslim photographer be forced to photograph a bikini contest or the Dallas Cowboys Cheerleaders in their suggestive dance routines?

In New Jersey, a lesbian couple demanded the use of a pavilion which was owned by the Ocean Grove Camp Meeting Association, for a civil union ceremony. The association is affiliated with a local Methodist church. The Church refused to allow the ceremony. The homosexuals filed a complaint with New Jersey’s Division of Civil Rights.

The Methodist organization responded that it was their property, and the First Amendment protects their right to practice their faith without government intrusion. But Lustberg [Attorney for the lesbians—LP] countered that the pavilion is open to everyone—and therefore the group could no more refuse to accommodate the lesbians than a restaurant owner could refuse to serve a black man. That argument carried the day. The state revoked the organization’s tax exemption for the pavilion area. Hoffman figures they will lose \$20,000 (Hagarty).

An appeal has been filed in the case.

HATRED TOWARD CHRISTIANITY

Our neighbors to the north, the Canadians, are going through a cultural overhaul in favor of unrighteousness and in opposition to everything holy and godly. Canada has enacted widespread and sweeping hate crime laws that would muzzle opposition to sinful practices, but even more, this serves as a chilling prophecy of what might be next for the United States.

Canada is a model of what could happen in America if the so-called hate crimes legislation becomes the law of the land, and the Democrats will doubtless make this a priority if they win the presidency. Barak Obama has said that he will use the “bully pulpit” to promote homosexual rights and will make this one of his highest priorities. Such laws are used by homosexuals and Muslims and other enemies of the Christian faith to exact vengeance upon and shut the mouths of Christians. Since Canada enacted “hate crimes” legislation at the provincial and national level, gave special protected status to homosexuals, and set up human rights commissions and tribunals, the persecution against Christians has grown steadily (“Hate Crimes’ Laws”).

Universities and colleges have crafted “hate speech codes” which govern what can, and cannot be said on campuses. Emory University, a private school, defines “Discriminatory harassment” and prohibits

conduct (oral, written, graphic or physical) directed against any person or group of persons because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, age, disability, or veteran’s status and that has the purpose or reasonably foreseeable effect of creating an offensive, demeaning, intimidating, or hostile environment for that person or group of persons (Uelmen).

The University of Michigan published its “hate speech code,” which forbade displaying a Confederate flag on dorm doors. It went further and illustrated harassing conduct as commenting “in a derogatory way about a particular person or group’s physical appearance or sexual orientation, or their cultural origins, or religious beliefs” (Hudson). Let us emphasize again that we believe in punishing those guilty of crimes and defending innocent victims. We do not assault homosexuals, but then we do not assault heterosexuals, ei-

ther. Christians treat others as Christ commands, even our enemies: “Ye have heard that it was said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy: but I say unto you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you” (Mat. 5:43-44). However, homosexuality is still wrong. Islam is a false religion. Abortion is killing innocent unborn children. While we oppose the sins, we do indeed love the souls of those perpetrating them. We are to do good to all men (Gal. 6:10). Make no mistake about it: we do good to men when we warn them of sin’s consequences and the certainty of a coming judgment. Thus, Paul preached to a wicked ruler of “righteousness, and self-control, and the judgment to come” (Acts 24:25).

Space will not allow the citation of the many examples of hate crime laws being used to persecute people who are trying to do right, but here is a sampling:

In 1997 the Ontario Human Rights Commission fined the City of London and its mayor, **DIANE HASKETT**, \$10,000 for refusing to proclaim Gay Pride Day. It also ordered Haskett to make a public statement praising the “valuable contributions of gays and lesbians to her community,” which she refused to do (“‘Hate Crimes’ Laws”).

Though eventually overturned on appeal, the following case demonstrates the real agenda of hate crime law supporters:

the *StarPhoenix* newspaper of Saskatoon and **HUGH OWENS** were ordered to pay \$1,500 to three homosexual activists for publishing an ad in the newspaper in 1997 quoting Bible verses regarding homosexuality. The advertisement displayed references to four Bible passages (Romans 1, Leviticus 18:22, Leviticus 20:13 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10) on the left side (“‘Hate Crimes’ Laws”).

What about employment? Surely a church would never be forced to hire a homosexual staff member, right?

In July 2007 a homosexual man won a job discrimination claim against the Church of England. After John Reaney was turned down for a youth worker’s post in Cardiff, Wales, he complained to the government that he was being unlawfully discriminated against on the basis of his sexual orientation. The employment tribunal agreed. Homosexual activists rejoiced at the ruling. One said that the “church must learn that denying people jobs on the

ground of their sexuality is no longer acceptable” (“Gay Christian Wins Job Tribunal against Church of England,” *Daily Mail*, July 18, 2007) (“‘Hate Crimes’ Laws”).

CONCLUSION

It may be later than we think. The handwriting on the wall tells us that homosexual groups will continue to push their agenda. Islam is also militant and is, in many cases, intolerant of opposition. Shall we hush? Not if we are serious about truth and salvation. But understand that persecution is not only on the way—it is here. We close with this sage observation:

It is only a small step from the philosophical basis underlying “hate crimes” laws to the enactment of a “hate speech” regulation. “Hate speech” regulations have followed the enactment of “hate crimes” laws in places like Canada, Europe, and Australia, and those “hate speech” laws have been used to try to silence Christians and others who speak out against same-sex “marriage,” homosexual behavior, and other things that conflict with deeply-held religious beliefs. Additionally, many university campuses in the United States have enacted “hate speech” regulations. Any attempt to justify the enactment of a “hate speech” regulation by citing the previous enactment of a “hate crimes” law should be vigorously opposed (“Religious Speech”).

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RACISM

Johnny Oxendine

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The first statement on this subject ought to be enough: the only race is the human race, and Almighty God is the God of the whole human race; however, the subject of racism in our society is one that usually creates an often-uncomfortable chasm between people across various racial backgrounds, ethnic groups, social strata, education levels, and religious beliefs. Racism is not unique to our society (the United States of America); it has been a disease of mankind for almost as long as man has existed. It continues to reveal itself in the familiar and far corners of the world: in India, in China, England, France, Italy, and certainly in the Middle East. It has been the root cause of civil wars in other countries: Bosnia, Russia, and numerous parts of Africa.

I have been asked to address the subject as it relates to the moral issues we face in this country. The “we” would not only be members of the church of Christ, but the larger society as a whole. The effects of which (racism) resonates in the lives of those whom we would hope to convert as well as those already converted. It would be a gross understatement to presume that this is no longer an important ongoing problem and concern, though strides are being made as we speak, but we do ask that in the reading of this material the points be considered carefully and seriously as they are intended to cast an impartial light on one of the gravest matters affecting today’s entire world.

The following definitions of *racism* are from *Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia* online primarily because of the ease of access rather than pointing readers to the specific sources referenced.

Although the term racism usually denotes race-based prejudice, violence, dislike, discrimination, or oppression, the term can also have varying and contested definitions. *Racialism* is a related term, sometimes intended to avoid these negative meanings. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, racism is a belief or ideology that all members of each racial group possess characteristics or abilities specific to that race, especially to distinguish it as being either superior or inferior to another racial group or racial groups.

The *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* defines racism as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority or inferiority of a particular racial group, and that it is also the prejudice based on such a belief. The *Macquarie Dictionary* defines racism as: "the belief that human races have distinctive characteristics which determine their respective cultures, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule or dominate others."

The definitions above all point out a very obvious characteristic of racism or a discriminatory attitude. One must accept that the primary attribute of racism being that of advancing the ideology of a racial superiority with an inherent privilege to impose this presumptive supremacy to the material, psychological, and, often, physical detriment of others. Whether one recognizes that this is being done need not be the point as it would be vehemently argued by southern farmers (landowners) prior to the Civil War that their slaves were quite happy fellows just as the Nazis put forth the explanation that the Jews did not mind relocation. Obviously not all southern slave owners were brutal and cruel, nor was every German desirous of total and complete Jewish extinction, but the pervasive attitude toward those repressed groups is what became of the unsaid permissiveness that sustained those institutions.

The residual effects of this can be described from numerous perspectives; however, the very fact of its continual existence is what we need to acknowledge, understand, and overcome to edify each

other and those we are hoping to convert to Christ. Some honestly may not even be aware of the *pervasiveness* of racism or the possibility that their own ideologies have been formed, informed, or influenced by racial bias.

This ignorance could result in unexpected reactions from others who have unintentionally been adversely offended. In other words, not every racist statement may have been *intended* as such, but some may have been the result of a deeper and oft-times unconscious racial stereotypical assumptive ingrained by external experiences from one's youth, family, neighborhood, public officials, associates, or even school teachers.

There is neither the time nor the inclination to right every racial wrong, but to inspect this moral problem as the canker continues to contaminate our national fabric. This, as has been stated earlier, is not specific to the United States or any other culture; rather, it is a problem that mankind has yet to see the sense (or resolve) of solving by itself. Before proceeding toward a view of how this affects us directly, we would like to begin with the Scriptures, where all manner of truth "pertaining to life and godliness" (cf. 2 Peter 1:3) can be located.

RACISM IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

"For the LORD your God *is* God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward" (Deu. 10:17).

Though there are many examples one could point to in illustrating racism's ugly head rearing itself throughout history, one is sufficient for the guidance the Scriptures provide toward our understanding of this moral dilemma. In reading many commentaries that have allowed scholars to address this issue, there is one text in particular that illustrates the problem for these men to face the situation head on.

And Miriam and Aaron spake against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married: for he had married an Ethiopian woman. And they said, Hath the LORD indeed spoken only by Moses? hath he not spoken also by us? And the LORD heard

it. (Now the man Moses *was* very meek, above all the men which *were* upon the face of the earth.) And the LORD spake suddenly unto Moses, and unto Aaron, and unto Miriam, Come out ye three unto the tabernacle of the congregation. And they three came out. And the LORD came down in the pillar of the cloud, and stood *in* the door of the tabernacle, and called Aaron and Miriam: and they both came forth. And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, *I* the LORD will make myself known unto him in a vision, *and* will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses *is* not so, who *is* faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the LORD shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses? (Num. 12:1-8).

The open sedition led by Miriam against her brother Moses in Numbers 12 is an intense occasion that gives the reader an opportunity to see how racial comments, not actually pertaining to the primary (or actual) complaint, anticipate a superiority and opalescence an otherwise hidden arrogance and disappointment. What this reveals is quite remarkable because within the Scriptures, we are allowed to observe a familial conversation where language can be used effectively (and efficiently) as a deadly (hurtful) weapon between or among siblings. Miriam knew that by attacking her brother's wife he would be caught flat-footed by the missile she had prepared and launched—she hit him exactly where the lasting effect would be not only subliminal, but also artfully transcendent. Moses, no doubt wounded, is speechless, and therefore God intervenes.

Miriam was not an insignificant figure among God's people. Not only is she Moses' sister, but she had played a major role as a prophetess, elevated above all the women in Israel. Her contemptuous epithet was calculated also in conjunction with the (*mis*) understanding of her perceived role among the leadership of Israel along with what is conveyed in verse three, that "Moses was very meek." Her taking advantage of his patient and humble attitude is perhaps what brings God's wrath upon her so quickly.

In Numbers 11 there was the continued complaining by God's people about food and the consequent naming of the seventy elders

(at God's command) to alleviate the burdens on Moses (11:1-17). Miriam apparently does not appreciate her assumed displacement and lashes out at what she determined a perfectly tangential target—the race of her brother's wife. Though the explanations among scholars as to who this woman was (either she was Zipporah or she was not, I lean toward the latter) often are attempts to obfuscate their own ingrained bias (how could Moses have married an Ethiopian/Cushite woman is the incredulity), it is without question she had a physical difference obvious to Miriam, and probably many others.

The punishment enacted by God allows for curiosity. Is the onset of leprosy a commentary of contrast? One wonders if God did not show Miriam that *whiteness* does not always retain benefits under some circumstances. What she had perhaps deemed her acceptance by the community (her similarity to others) now (as a result of her punishment) is replaced by an announcement that she is a pariah. If physical appearance (race, or ethnicity) is so important to Miriam, then much more so now as it clearly distinguishes her as the outcast.

RACISM IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

There cometh a woman of Samaria to draw water: Jesus saith unto her, Give me to drink. (For his disciples were gone away unto the city to buy meat.) Then saith the woman of Samaria unto him, How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans (John 4:7-9).

The instances of discrimination in the New Testament are both plentiful and instructive. One could point to the overall racial views that the Jews have toward the Gentiles (4:9). There is the occasion of Peter's enlightenment in Acts at the home of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-35) and, of course, the open rebuke of Peter by Paul described in the Galatians epistle (Gal. 2:10-14). All of these unmistakably point out that when the Scriptures say, "all men everywhere," there is no one to be refused an entry into the eternal kingdom of God, as He is no respecter of persons.

The text quoted above is one of the more well known for casting light on the relations (or lack thereof) between the Jews and the Samaritans. These verses are often considered a starting point for ethnic definitions, or differences, between these two groups as the phrase, “the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans,” cannot be disregarded as insignificant by even a casual reader. The obvious question is, “Why do the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?” John wants the readers outside the land of Palestine (and certainly readers today) to understand that Samaritans were considered by many Jews to be in a continual state of uncleanness; thus they would have thought that drinking water from this woman’s water jar would make a person ceremonially unclean. The verb in the phrase rendered “have no dealings” can also have a more specific meaning of sharing the use of things.

Samaria at this time was the central part of Palestine. Palestine was a small country, stretching only 120 miles north to south. The country was divided into three sections: Judaea, the southern section; Galilee, the northern section; and Samaria, the central section, lying right between the two. There was an unmitigated and bitter hatred between the Jews and Samaritans. Two things in particular caused this hatred.

The Samaritans were considered mongrel or half-Jews, a mixed breed by birth. What brought this about was that centuries before (about 720 B.C.), the King of Assyria had captured the ten tribes of Israel and deported a large number of the people, scattering them all throughout the empire of the Medes (2 Kin. 17:6-41). He then took people from all over the Assyrian empire and transplanted them into Samaria to repopulate the land. The result was only natural. Intermarriage took place and the people became a mixed breed, a breed including the transplanted people, the weak of the land, who had been left behind, and the outcast and irreligious who had intermarried with the original Samaritans. The fact of a mixed breed, of course, infuriated the strict Jews who held to the concept of a pure race.

The Samaritans were literally mongrel or half-Jews, and also a mixed breed by religion. The transplanted heathen, of course, brought their gods with them. Eventually the God of Israel won out, but the Samaritan religion never became pure Judaism. The Samaritans (as people will) twisted both the Scripture and history to favor their own people and nation.

The Samaritans twisted Scripture in that they accepted only the five books of the Pentateuch. (In other words, they missed all the richness and depth of the Psalms and prophets.) They twisted history in that they claimed three great events took place on Mt. Gerizim that set it apart as a place of worship. It was the place where Abraham offered Isaac, where Melchizedek met Abraham, and where Moses built his first altar after leading Israel out from Egyptian bondage.

The Lord completely dismisses the claims of the woman at the well by bypassing her attempts to draw Him into a racial discussion and turning the conversation into one of spiritual dimensions (John 4:14, 22-23).

RACISM TODAY

But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for *the LORD seeth* not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart (1 Sam. 16:7).

Notwithstanding the fact that her brother's Ethiopian, or Cushite, wife is not the primary purpose for Miriam's rebellion, it is as informative here (as it is in the case of the U.S. Civil War) that in actuality it can become hostage to imagination, deniability, or wishful thinking. The pronouncements that the Civil War was a battle for states' rights are all too hollow when matched against just a few of the statements of those who were the leading figures in that conflict. In the famous "Cornerstone Speech" on March 21, 1861, in Savannah, Georgia, by Alexander H. Stephens, the Confederacy's vice president it was said that the "proper status of the Negro in our form of civilization" was "the immediate cause of the late rupture." He also stated that Thomas Jefferson was wrong to believe "that the enslavement of the African was in violation of the laws of na-

ture.” Even the causes of secession in a declaration unfurled earlier in December 1860 by the state of South Carolina (knowingly and boldly titled the *Declaration of the Immediate Causes Which Induce and Justify the Secession of South Carolina from the Federal Union* for the initial and obvious dedication of a newly formed and increasingly rebellious confederacy) unapologetically and ostentatiously mentions slaves, slavery, or slaveholding eighteen times, but yet there is that continued and sometimes exasperated gasp that it was not about slavery at all—but just states’ rights that brought about the war between the states. Here is a telling excerpt:

But an increasing hostility on the part of the non-slaveholding States to the institution of slavery, has led to a disregard of their obligations, and the laws of the General Government have ceased to effect the objects of the Constitution. The States of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New York, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Wisconsin and Iowa, have enacted laws which either nullify the Acts of Congress or render useless any attempt to execute them. In many of these States the fugitive is discharged from service or labor claimed, and in none of them has the State Government complied with the stipulation made in the Constitution. The State of New Jersey, at an early day, passed a law in conformity with her constitutional obligation; but the current of anti-slavery feeling has led her more recently to enact laws which render inoperative the remedies provided by her own law and by the laws of Congress. In the State of New York even the right of transit for a slave has been denied by her tribunals; and the States of Ohio and Iowa have refused to surrender to justice fugitives charged with murder, and with inciting servile insurrection in the State of Virginia. Thus the constituted compact has been deliberately broken and disregarded by the non-slaveholding States, and the consequence follows that South Carolina is released from her obligation (Memmingers).

WHAT SAITH THE SCRIPTURES?

My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Lord of glory*, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here

under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? (Jam. 2:1-4).

In addition to the Scriptures we have discussed earlier, what other examples do we have of the Lord's guidance in this area of discussion? Reading James 2:1-13 we find one of the strongest statements against racism (or partiality) in the entire New Testament. Even though James is not dealing directly with discrimination based on *ethnic* difference or *skin color*, the kind of discrimination James exposes is parallel to racism in many ways.

The approach that is used is instructive: James paints the reader a picture, and then explains to us what is wrong with that picture. The inspired picture reveals two different types of people having come into the assembly. One is noticeably poorer than the other. Preference, honor, and esteem are shown to the wealthy visitor, while second-class status is assigned to the poor man. In the New International Version, this is called "favoritism" (2:9); they had "discriminated" (2:4).

What is the problem, exactly? James clarifies: (1) You have turned into judges with evil thoughts, (2) You have insulted a man on the basis of nothing but his apparent economic status, (3) You have failed to love your neighbor, (4) You have sinned, and (5) You have failed to show mercy. The principle here has numerous applications beyond (that transcend) the obvious economic status. When people (especially Christians) discriminate against a person on the basis of any non-character trait, we are wrong! A person's level of education, genealogical background, economic category, or skin color—these are non-character traits, and when we make judgments about people based on things like this, we have sinned.

God is primarily interested in our salvation. He does not desire that any of mankind perish, but that all men, everywhere, repent (2 Pet. 3:9). Peter tells us that God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). Paul reiterates this in Romans 2:10 and Ephesians 6:9. It is evident that any who may determine themselves superior to others do not understand salient points of Scripture beginning in Genesis 1:26-27 where we are told of our being made in the image of

God. Neither is there the apparent clarity or knowledge concerning the fact that God made from “one blood” every nation Acts 17:26, nor the fact that the same God made both Jew and Greek (Rom. 10:12). God does not condone or support racism anywhere in the Scriptures; rather, every example unbraids and rebukes those who attempt to employ it. Let this be a lesson not only for those whom we teach, but for members of the church of our Lord as well.

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MATERIALISM

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INTRODUCTION

*M*aterialism is defined in *Webster's Dictionary* as “a doctrine that the only or the highest values or objectives lie in material well-being and in the furtherance of material progress.” Another definition it gave was “a preoccupation with or stress upon material rather than intellectual or spiritual things.” Both are good definitions of materialism that is so prevalent in our world today. It is interesting that the world can correctly define a word but will not always see its impact on the individual. It is also interesting and infinitely sadder that many brethren cannot or will not see the impact of materialism on them. Although *materialism* is not found in the Bible, its doctrine (as Webster defines it) is found throughout the Old and New Testament.

For example, covetousness would be a Biblical definition of *materialism*. Depending on how the word is used in the construction of a verse, *Vine's Bible Dictionary* defines “covetousness” from the Greek word *pleonexia* as “‘a desire to have more’ (*pleon*, ‘more,’ *echo*, ‘to have’), always in a bad sense” (136). Jesus warned of this sin, when He said, “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). One of the qualifications of a bishop is that he is not to be covetous (1 Tim. 3:3). This is taken from the Greek word *aphilarguros* and is defined by Henry Thayer as “not loving money, not avaricious” (89).

There is nothing inherently wrong with having material possessions or money for that matter. If that was true, all would be guilty. No, it is the love of money Paul warned against (6:10). For most Americans and sadly not a few Christians, material possessions are even more important than God Himself. Whatever comes between us and our God becomes our god. Jesus taught, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Mat. 6:24). That is an individual choice that all must make in life. The end of chapter six closes with an eternal principle by the Son of God: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (6:33). If one puts God first in his life, he will not be materialistic in nature.

In reality, materialism is nothing more than idolatry. Worshiping at the altar of materialism is truly a time honored tradition among millions and millions of human beings since the dawn of time. No wonder that God in His infinite wisdom saw fit to warn us of this great danger so many times throughout the Scriptures.

FALSE PROMISES OF MATERIALISM

A promise that is false is not a promise at all, yet so many continue to believe and work toward the false promise of materialism. Some believe that one's self-worth is based upon one's bank account. Likewise, the possessions one has accumulated, and the size of his retirement portfolio defines one as a success or failure in life. This writer remembers overhearing a conversation in a café one day where one man was telling his friend that, if a person was not making a certain amount of money by the time he was thirty, that individual was a failure. This man did not believe “a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). Solomon, who knew something about riches, wrote, “How much better *is it* to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!” (Pro. 16:16). A popular bumper sticker a number of years ago stated, “He who dies with the most toys wins,” and, though it may sound humorous, it is the

mindset of many. The rich man that God blessed with a bountiful harvest had the same mindset:

And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry. But God said unto him, *Thou* fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So *is* he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God (Luke 12:16-22).

The one who dies with the most toys is still dead, and then he will have to face the Lord: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

John D. Rockefeller was one of those individuals who died with the most toys. According to the Wikipedia website, the billionaire oil magnate and philanthropist who died in 1937 was estimated to be worth 1.4 billion dollars, which by 2007 money standards that figure would be worth approximately 663.4 billion dollars. And yet, the story goes that at his funeral a bystander asked one of his accountants how much did Rockefeller leave behind and the accountant answered, “He left it all. He didn’t take a thing with him.” True are the words of the apostle Paul: “For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:7-8).

Peter wrote that everything will one day be destroyed: “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10). Everything man possesses will be left behind, and it will eventually be destroyed. Peter followed up that point with another important point: “*Seeing* then *that* all these things shall be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought ye to be in *all* holy conversation and godliness” (3:11). The manner of person that one should be in this life is one that puts God first and not his possessions. The only thing man will take with him from this life is his soul and then his soul will be judged—not by monetary, but by spiritual wealth. “Better

is little with the fear of the LORD Than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Pro. 15:16).

Another false promise of materialism is that riches and an abundance of material things will bring great happiness. Americans are bombarded with advertisements from the cradle to the grave on what they must have or what is a must purchase: from A to Z and everything in between. A new car will make you feel better about yourself, a new suit or new dress is just the ticket, and an expensive upgrade in the kitchen will impress the neighbors. The reality of it all is that the newness of the car will fade and will become just a vehicle to get one from point A to point B. The new suit or dress will fade and remain in the closet more often than not, and the new kitchen will be an expensive place to warm up the microwave pizza. If anyone knew about riches and abundance, it was Solomon. He had a few words about both in the book of Ecclesiastes:

He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this *is* also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good *is there* to the owners thereof, saving the beholding *of them* with their eyes? The sleep of a labouring man *is* sweet, whether he eat little or much: but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep. There is a sore evil *which* I have seen under the sun, *namely*, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt (Ecc. 5:10-13).

To some there will never be enough wealth to satisfy. They will agonize at night over how much more they actually need or want. However, this condition does not apply only to the rich or affluent, but to the poor or less affluent. One who is poor can covet what little they do have and be consumed with the thought of always needing more instead of trusting in Him and giving thanks to God for what He has given them. That was the object lesson Jesus taught His disciples from the example of the poor widow who cast into the treasury all she had:

Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all *they* did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, *even* all her living (Mark 12:43-44).

She trusted in God to provide. It can be a fine line between trusting in our abilities and our finances and not putting enough trust or faith in our God. As Paul rightly stated, “Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). The one who trusts in riches and possessions is doomed to fall: “He that trusteth in his riches shall fall: But the righteous shall flourish as a branch” (Pro. 11:28).

Everyone has a right and an obligation to work, make money, and provide for themselves and their families (1 Tim. 5:8). The sin is trusting in material things and not God who is the one who gave man those things. God is the one who “maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Mat. 5: 45). “But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Phi. 4:19). Remember, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (Jam. 1:17). Everything belongs to God: “The earth *is* the LORD’s, and the fulness thereof; The world, and they that dwell therein” (Psa. 24:1), man is just a steward of those blessings. Only obedience to God will bring true happiness in this life, as Solomon came to understand: “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). As brother Teddlie wrote in his psalm: “Earth holds no treasures but perish with using, However precious they be; Yet there’s a country to which I am going: Heaven holds all to me” (95).

CONSEQUENCES OF MATERIALISM

One’s actions in this life will always have consequences, good or bad, depending on the individual.

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).

One who sows to the materialistic side of life and not the spiritual will only reap heartache and destruction. On the website, “All About Philosophy,” it mentioned a number of consequences of materialism:

- Acquisition of material goods (lust, envy, false comfort, idolatry)
- Self interests, (selfishness, no compassion, greed, denies eternal soul and the Creator)
- Accumulation, equivalent to success (no morals, no sense of right or wrong, preoccupation to money, jealousy, thievery)
- Voiding all faith and spiritual deity (hopelessness, unrepentant sin, despair, eternal death).

Although this is not a Christian website, the consequences they mention are very true.

A student of the Bible does not have to read very far in the Scriptures before they come to the first consequence of materialism. Eve was materialistic with her want of the forbidden fruit that led to the first sin and the downfall of man.

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

Even though she knew the penalty, “Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die” (3:3), she wanted it, she had to have it, and she lusted after it for her own purposes. It came before her obedience to God, which is the outcome of materialism. Materialism comes between people and their obedience to God and putting Him first in their lives; it therefore becomes their god. The consequence of that situation is sin that leads to spiritual death: “But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death” (Jam. 1:14-15). There is a host of examples of people who were materialistic.

Lot

When Abraham allowed Lot to choose the direction in which he would go with his herds, Lot's decision was based on the materialistic side.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it *was* well watered every where, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, *even* as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other (Gen. 13:10-11).

All Lot could see was that land would make him rich through his herds benefitting from the abundance of watered plains. The consequence of that decision was that his soul was “vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* unlawful deeds)” (2 Pet. 2:7-8). If that was not bad enough there was the loss of family members, including his wife, with the destruction of the cities of the plains.

Achan

When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them; and, behold, they *are* hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it (Jos. 7:21).

This was his excuse for breaking God's commandment not to take anything from Jericho when it was destroyed. As James warned, Achan was drawn away of his own lust and enticed (Jam. 1:14). He had to have it and did not count the cost of ownership. His lust for what was not proper for him to have cost the lives of many along with his own. The danger of materialism is seen not only in the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, but also in the pride of life that John warns about (1 John 2:16). Fish are caught by shiny lures they see and believe it is good to eat. Man is basically like a fish, we see something shiny, lust to have it, and nothing will stop us from having it, not even the warnings of our Father in heaven.

Gehazi

The account of Elisha curing Naaman of his leprosy is found in 2 Kings 5. Although Elisha would not receive anything from the Syrian general for the miracle wrought, his servant Gehazi had other ideas for those material possessions. His lust to have more led to his decision to lie to Naaman to receive the *things* Elisha turned down. For sowing to materialism, what did Gehazi reap? Elisha proclaimed: “The leprosy therefore of Naaman shall cleave unto thee, and unto thy seed for ever. And he went out from his presence a leper *as white as snow*” (5:27). Keil and Delitzsch comment:

It was not too harsh a punishment that the leprosy taken from Naaman on account of his faith in the living God, should pass to Gehazi on account of his departure from the true God. For it was not his avarice only that was to be punished, but the abuse of the prophet’s name for the purpose of carrying out his selfish purpose, and his misrepresentation of the prophet (228).

Rich Young Ruler

This account teaches us of the dangers of being wealthy or having great possessions and trusting in them. In Luke’s account (Luke 18:18-25) is the lesson of the young ruler who came to Jesus wanting to know, “what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (18:18). In essence, Jesus answers that he was to keep the commandments of the Law of Moses. The young man states he had done this from his youth up. Jesus realized this young man had a love for his riches; so He told him he needed to “sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me” (18:22). The young man’s response is recorded in verse 23: “And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich.” Matthew’s account refers to him as having great possessions (Mat. 19:22). He had come to love and trust in his wealth, much more than the Christ, and he simply could not give them up. In Mark’s account he has the young man running up to Jesus and kneeling before Him to ask the question of obtaining eternal life (Mark 10:17). The zeal and urgency he displayed is commendable; his response to the answer Jesus gave him was not. How true are the

words of the apostle Paul, “But they that **will** be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9). Among the definitions Thayer gives *will* is “to desire” or “be minded” (105). It is not money or possessions that is evil, but the “love of money is the root of all evil” (6:10).

These examples are just a few of the many, but they demonstrate the high price one will pay for worshiping at the feet of materialism. The god of materialism is a hard taskmaster and the consequences are too high a price to pay and the wages are spiritual death (Rom. 6:23).

HOW SHOULD ONE LIVE HIS LIFE?

The question is asked in relation to riches and material possessions for even Christians have been guilty of materialism. Christians are not immune to the sin of being materialistic or in putting too much trust in their own wealth and not relying on God as we should. Christians, if not careful, can get caught up in the age-old game of “keeping up with the Joneses.” Bigger houses, bigger cars, the best that life has to offer are their goals, and before they know it, they are starting to leave God out of the picture. The contribution will have to be less to pay for all of those things. How many will give less to the Lord in the month of January, and dare one say February, following the Christmas buying spree? The words of Christ soberly remind us: “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Mat. 6:33). Again, there is nothing wrong with possessions and it is not a sin to be wealthy. Both Abraham and Job were wealthy, but it did not come between them and God. It is how we handle those *things* and hopefully keep those *things* in the right perspective.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content (1 Tim. 6:6-8).

CONCLUSION

What is materialism? It is: “A doctrine that the only or the highest values or objectives lie in material well-being and in the furtherance of material progress” (Webster). Like all false doctrines, materialism leads to misery and eventually the loss of one’s soul. One’s well-being or contentedness is only found in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul wrote:

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, *therewith* to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phi. 4:11-13).

Christians should be the most contented people in all of the world, for they have the risen Savior as their King and the hope of eternal life!

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CONTEMPORARY MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION

Music is a major component in the lives of almost everyone. It is hard to imagine going through a day without hearing some form of music. No matter where a person may be, the sounds emanating from a radio are usually nearby—at home, in the car, at work, in a store—there is hardly anywhere one can go without hearing some form of music. It is for this reason that we should be aware of how music affects the mind, both intellectually and emotionally.

“TEACHING AND ADMONISHING... IN PSALMS AND HYMNS”

Music is a beautiful thing. God loves music—so much so that He incorporated music into New Testament worship. “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). The music God commands and authorizes in worship to Him today is “**singing.**” The human voice is the most beautiful instrument ever designed and constructed. Truly the human voice is a testament to the power and magnificence of God, for it is He who created all. Many singers, with differing tones and qualities, can unite (almost as if using just one voice) to produce the most beautiful sound. In authorizing music in worship, God explains the purpose for which He chose singing: (1) to worship and praise Him (Psa. 95; 96), and (2) to teach and admonish one another (Col. 3:16). God instructs us that

music is a powerful tool by which we can teach and admonish (i.e., reprove, exhort, encourage, correct, et al.). We have taken advantage of this fact in teaching children about God and the Bible. At the earliest of ages, children are taught about Jesus and His love by singing the song, “Jesus Loves Me.” Many learn the names of the apostles and the sixty-six books of the Bible by means of a song. Even in the secular world, we understand the powerful teaching tool of music—children are taught the alphabet by singing the ABCs. The power of music in teaching lies with its uniqueness of blending a melody with words and thus multiple senses are exercised and stimulated. Not only is one hearing words with which he is taught, he is also hearing the melody and harmony which accompanies, making the words more memorable.

With this understanding, it is important that we be careful about what we are teaching and learning by means of music. Sadly, when it comes to contemporary music, the aforementioned facts about the power of music as a teaching tool are dismissed. It is very true that an individual could listen to several songs on the way to work and not remember one of them. However, “I just listen because I like the music and not because of the words,” can become a dangerous excuse with terrible consequences. Dr. Steven J. Kirsh, professor of psychology, writes:

Many researchers believe that given the high level of consumption by adolescents, music is the most significant medium to which adolescents are exposed. However, it is not just the total amount of time spent listening to music that accounts for its significance. Instead, the importance of music may lie in the messages relayed to youth through the song’s lyrical content (Kirsh 183).

To ignore or minimize the effect of song lyrics, therefore, is an enormous mistake. One of the most powerful aspects of music is repetition. It has been stated many times that the three keys to learning are: (1) repetition, (2) repetition, and (3) repetition. This being the case, we must be careful about that which our minds and ears are absorbing over and over. Today’s music is filled with references to sex (fornication and adultery), drugs, beer, violence, rebel-

lion against authority, murder, rape, suicide, misogyny (i.e., violence and hatred towards women), and an entire *laundry list* of all “ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). What many refer to as “the latest hits” or today’s “Top 40” sounds more like

the works of the flesh are manifest, which are *these*; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told *you* in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

The Bible teaches that we should flee these things; not listen to them repeatedly.

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority (Tit. 2:11-15).

We are often reminded that “you are what you eat.” God encourages us to “hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat. 5:6). If we fill our minds with that which is good and pure, then that which proceeds from our mouths will also be good and pure. On the contrary, if we feast upon filth and trash, our spiritual heart (the mind) will be polluted. Jesus says:

those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: These are *the things* which defile a man (15:18-20).

Young people today are being taught about sex and societal responsibility, not by their parents (as should be the case—Eph. 6:1-4), but rather by their favorite musician.

Rock ‘n’ roll music has been associated with sex and violence for nearly half a century. In fact, many of the controversies surrounding musical offerings center on their lascivious lyrics and the sexually explicit imagery that accompany them (Kirsh 183).

During the half-time show of the 2004 Super Bowl, the now infamous “wardrobe malfunction” occurred on live television during a performance by Justin Timberlake and Janet Jackson. Timberlake’s song, *Rock Your Body*, “contains the lyrics ‘Cause I gotta have you naked by the end of this song,’ ” (Kirsh 183), and apparently Ms. Jackson obliged. According to Timberlake’s webpage, the album containing this song “has sold over eight million copies worldwide.” Young, unmarried girls are being taught that getting “naked” for a boy is just fine. Young, unmarried boys are being taught that they should encourage, if not demand, a young girl to disrobe. Sex is no longer implied in songs by use of innuendo, it is explicitly taught and encouraged. Rock ‘n’ roll music, however, is by no means the only genre associated with sex and alcohol. Rap, Country, Pop, Hip Hop, Goth, Heavy Metal, Punk, and a large assortment of sub-genres all focus on these themes.

Additionally, today’s music encourages more and more defiance, rebellion, and violence. In their music, rappers boast about being in gangs, stealing, killing police officers, and beating or raping women. Author Steven Kirsh states that “currently, Heavy Metal and Rap lyrics repeatedly communicate themes of misogyny, racism, murder, drug use, violence, and Satanism” (184). In 1985, a group of concerned parents formed the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) in an attempt to guard against the sexually explicit and violent nature of music lyrics. That same year, the United States Senate held hearings and, though no legislation was recommended or enacted, the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) “agreed to institute a self-regulated practice of labeling albums containing explicit content” (Kirsh 305). The label states, “Parental Advisory Explicit Content.” Unfortunately, researchers “have determined that warning labels tend to attract the attention and purchasing dollars of adolescents and children over the age of 8” (Kirsh 305-306), and apparently parents are ignoring the advisory since it is most likely they who are supplying the money to purchase the material.

INFLUENCE

Though many laugh and scorn the idea that music influences behavior, the facts are overwhelming. A mere cursory observation demands the logical conclusion—music, lyrics and tone, affects a person's mood and behavior. Advertisers use musical jingles to help the audience remember their product as well as to associate a positive feeling or attitude toward that product. Department stores play music while shoppers peruse their merchandise. They want customers to be at ease, comfortable, and not agitated so they utilize music with soft, soothing, and happy sounds. A visit to the dentist would be disappointing without the comfort of an upbeat sound in the background (to take one's mind off the sound of a drill). Most scary movies would be just plain silly without the soundtrack—many times it is the music which sets the *spooky* mood and causes the suspense.

Regarding the influence of music, Dr. Kirsh writes that

research has consistently shown that in comparison to youth who listen to other forms of music, youth who prefer to listen to Heavy Metal have higher rates of suicidal risk factors, such as substance use, delinquency, reckless behavior, depression, family conflict, and school-related problems (192).

Though the music itself may not be the primary motivator in such behaviors, it can be the means by which the seed for an individual's actions is sown, incubated, and encouraged.

In 1999 in Littleton, Colorado, parents of the Columbine shooting victims linked gothic punk rocker Marilyn Manson to the killings at Columbine High School. They argued that Manson's (1996) *AntiChrist Superstar* album, along with other forms of violent media, inspired Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris to walk into their school heavily armed and shoot their classmates (Wilson 179).

Though it may be irresponsible to blame Manson himself for the Columbine tragedy, it would be equally reckless to disregard the messages which Klebold and Harris learned by way of his (and any other dark and graphic) music. The pre-teen and teenage years are especially volatile—a time of change and vulnerability. Therefore it

is a time that parents should be diligently by their children's side: teaching, training, explaining, and giving mature, Scriptural answers to what may be uncomfortable questions. If parents do not provide this much-needed direction, the instruction will come from another source—perhaps in the music they hear. Dr. Barbara J. Wilson, professor of speech communication, adds that

during this time, music is a form of communication that plays a central role in the lives of young people. Particular songs and even genres of music are often a source of comfort and a way to connect to the peer group, which takes on increasing importance during this time (182).

Dr. Steven Kirsh writes extensively about the potential effects of music lyrics, which applies not just to children, but to adults alike.

Anderson, Carnagey, and Eubanks (2003) posit several different routes through which lyrical content can promote aggressive behavior. First, lyrics are simply a string of words. And the words in many Heavy Metal and Rap songs have aggressive, violent, and hateful meanings. Research on priming has consistently shown that words related to aggression can prime aggression-related constructs such as thoughts and perceptions. Thus, in response to aggression-laden lyrics, a whole host of aggression-related thoughts, feelings, and so on are cognitively activated. Second, given that music is listened to repeatedly over time, the short-term priming effects mentioned above have the potential to become chronically activated.... Thus, aggression-laden thoughts, feelings, perceptions, and so on could become the norm. Finally, similar to comic books, music has the potential to engage the adolescent's imagination. However, unlike comic books, music has no visual imagery whatsoever. As such, when reading or singing lyrics, youth may become fully engaged in the music and create their own pictorial representation of the content. Thus, hearing violent lyrics can lead to an imagined reality in which the adolescent visualizes those violent acts being carried out (184).

In many cases, music videos have added the visual representation to accompany the lyrics. With almost certainty, any reference to violence or sexual activity in a song is not just reinforced by the video, it is infinitely more pervasive. These behaviors influence the listener because (1) the theme has been introduced or planted in the

mind, and (2) since words have meaning, the mind visualizes the concept presented. Therefore, listening to a song promoting fornication and/or adultery promotes the visualizing of that act in one's mind resulting in the listener committing adultery "in his heart" (Mat. 5:28). Once the idea of adultery and fornication (or any other sin) is planted in the heart (i.e., the mind), then the temptation to realize that which has been heard and visualized is also planted: "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies" (15:19).

"THINK ON THESE THINGS"

The best way to guard against evil and temptation is to "flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness" (1 Tim. 6:11). The apostle Paul encourages:

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you (Phi. 4:8-9).

It is important to listen to things that are true, honest, and pure. In much of today's music, there is no virtue. That is, the lyrics do not extol moral excellence or encourage virtuous thoughts, feelings, or actions. Let us fill ourselves with that which is right in accordance with God's Word (Mat. 5:6; Col. 3:17) "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:7).

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LASCIVIOUSNESS

Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr.

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INTRODUCTION

And [God] delivered righteous Lot, sore distressed by the lascivious life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed *his* righteous soul from day to day with *their* lawless deeds) (2 Pet. 2:7-8—ASV).

We can only imagine the agonies the patriarch Lot endured as he and his family clung to righteousness and decency in the midst of a depraved, deviant people—the Sodomites. The citizens of the “cities of the plain” (Gen. 19:29) were a lascivious people who would pay for their sinful lifestyle with fire and brimstone. Their punishment was meant to be a warning to the ages of the danger of flaunting one’s disobedience of God (2 Pet. 2:6; Jude 7). In the 8th Century B.C. the Holy Spirit through the prophet Isaiah wrote, “Except the LORD of hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, We should have been as Sodom, *and* we should have been like unto Gomorrah” (Isa. 1:9).

Our great nation was once considered a virtuous nation by most. Perhaps this is a *stretch* in the Scriptural sense, but at least immoral excess was frowned upon. But now as you look out upon the moral wasteland of America, one Biblical word screams out to the observer—**lasciviousness**. Our culture has become one of excesses,

whether it is rampant materialism or unbridled lust. We live in a promiscuous age. Even a casual observer can note that illicit sexual innuendo has permeated every aspect of the media from children's television cartoons to magazine ads geared to the homosexual community. The world recognizes America as a lascivious nation, or to use the curt refrain, "In your face!"

The sad result of almost two generations of concentrated lasciviousness is a spiritually starved culture—a world that would be familiar to Lot. It is a nation that is headed towards judgment (Pro. 5:22-23). How have the vast majority of congregations in the body of Christ dealt with this? The answer is: they have not dealt with it! Many congregations now deal with social drinking, premarital sex, immodest dress, sexual promiscuity, and adulterous marriages by "observing the Passover." They have tried to delete what was once called "Christian living" or morality from the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Someday, if they do not repent, they will hear the Judge of all who have ever lived say, "Depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Mat. 7:23).

WHAT IS LASCIVIOUSNESS?

The Greek word for lascivious, *aselgeia*, is found nine times in the New Testament. It is also translated as "wantonness" which Vine defines as "insolent luxury" (665). In all cases it has ties to sexual immorality and depravity.

Other definitions include the following:

1. The ISBE defines it as "conduct and character that is unbecoming, indecent, unrestrained, and shameless."
2. Vine defines it as the "absence of restraint" (353).
3. William Barclay comments on a lascivious person as one "who is so far gone in lust and desire" that he ceases "to care what people say or think" (52).
4. Wayne Jackson writes that "the word can connote several attitudes or actions. With reference to sexual matters it embraces the concepts of excess, unbridled lust, debauchery, and sensuality. It suggests a disregard for public decency."

In the modern vernacular the following terms come to mind: partying, the modern dance, lewdness, orgies, and debaucheries. *Lasciviousness* denotes an attitude of sexual and sensual excess. This is not just the accidental lapse in moral judgment but a determined course of sin in which lust supersedes any sense of decency or self-control. Moral character and restraint is replaced by animal passion.

And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play. And the LORD said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted *themselves* (Exo. 32:6-7).

And they have cast lots for my people; And have given a boy for an harlot, And sold a girl for wine, that they might drink (Joel 3:3).

WHERE DOES IT COME FROM?

When examining this “work of the flesh,” one does not have to look far to see the glaring examples of lasciviousness in our society. The vice-ridden cesspool of Hollywood, the moral wasteland of television, and the multi-billion dollar pornography *industry* come readily to mind. We could mention several other purveyors of lasciviousness, but they are not the real source of this sin. They are only symptoms of a deeper spiritual corruption—the human heart.

The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked: who can know it? I the LORD search the heart, *I* try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings (Jer. 17:9-10).

The Great Physician, while He was on this earth, recognized this spiritual truth. When the Pharisees railed against Him over their man-made religious tradition of washing hands before eating, the Lord focused His disciples on the real defilement of humanity. “For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts...lasciviousness... All these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21, 23). The heart is the fountain from which all impure streams flow.

How does one go from an innocent mind, which has had some Biblical influence upon it, to a lascivious personality like Hugh Hefner (a direct descendant of Plymouth Colony governor William

Bradford, who was raised in a strict Methodist home)? Only God knows his heart, but we can assume it started with sin (Rom. 3:23). Perhaps Hefner's sin, coupled with his rejection of his religious upbringing, inflamed "all manner of concupiscence" (7:8) or strong lust. "Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jam. 1:15).

Sin begets further sin in the lascivious heart. Eventually you end up with the "reprobate mind" or "a mind destitute of judgment" (Coffman). A young man bent on rejecting Biblical morality becomes the editor of *Playboy*. This process is nothing new. Describing the antediluvian world, Moses wrote, "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).

Describing the Greco-Roman world of the first century A.D., in which immorality was as common as breathing, Paul observed, "And even as they refused to have God in *their* knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting" (Rom. 1:28—ASV).

"God gave them up" is an interesting phrase. This does not mean that God did not continue to love them, as evidenced by God's gift of His son (John 3:16). Roy C. Deaver, commenting on this phrase wrote:

They first gave up on God—then God gave them up. Giving them up means simply that they were left to themselves, to follow their own passions. They were left without the governing and guiding and protecting and restraining influence of God. When men deny God, leave God out of their thinking, they reach the low, corrupt condition characteristic of these Gentiles (47-48).

In the thinking of this writer, this phrase perfectly describes the spiritual state of lasciviousness as God sees it. This is the state that Hugh Hefner and much of our nation find themselves in. Many citizens are now "children of disobedience...children of wrath" (Eph. 2:2-3)—souls destined for the fires of Hell unless they repent and obey the Gospel. Like the ancient unbelieving Gentiles, they are in

a spiritual state of “having no hope, and without God in the world” (2:12). What a horrible spiritual condition to be in to face eternity!

THE TRAGIC OUTCOME

In the Greco-Roman world excess reached its zenith in the practice of *banqueting* (a drinking feast with carousing) (Thayer 533). Large quantities of wine were consumed, sometimes laced with hallucinogens, causing any sexual inhibition to be lost. Usually these feasts were associated with the cult of Dionysus or Bacchus. Many toasts were made to the gods. Paul describes it well when he warns: “Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying” (Rom. 13:13). Peter wrote, “For the time past of *our* life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries” (1 Pet. 4:3).

This may have been a problem within the New Testament church which had many Gentile converts. It was part of “the will of the Gentiles” (4:3). These feasts with their lasciviousness were woven into the fabric of Gentile society. This may be one reason why Paul commanded that one of the qualifications for an elder in the church was that he be “not given to wine” (1 Tim. 3:3; Tit. 1:7)—a teetotaler.

Our own age seems like a flashback to those pagan times. Millions have fallen for the mantra of the so-called Sexual Revolution—“Anything goes.” Raves, sex parties, drug abuse, and binge drinking are becoming increasingly popular—especially among the younger generation. The faithful Christian longs for the *good ole days* when pulpits (even denominational ones) all over the land boomed with warnings against “drinking, dancing, and fornicating.” Those days have waned and pulpits now chirp “feel-goodism” and “non-judgmentalism” while the national culture goes to Hell.

With amazing insight that only inspiration can give, the Holy Spirit, through the apostle Paul, shows us how sin begets further sin and deadens the mind to spiritual reality. Speaking of the “vanity of their minds” or minds enslaved by lasciviousness, Paul writes:

Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness (Eph. 4:18-19).

These words correctly describe the spiritual truth that “sin is the soul killer,” and it is also a mind and conscience killer. This is the neo-pagan condition described in one devoid of not only God but also rationality. Albert Barnes correctly commented on these verses when he wrote:

He speaks of a simple and well-known fact—a fact that is seen now as well as then—that the understanding becomes darkened by indulgence in sin. A man who is intemperate has no just views of the government of the appetites. A man who is unchaste has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous has no just views of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices will weaken his mental powers, and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion. Nothing is more obvious than that indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort (85).

Dear reader, increasingly we find ourselves in a neo-pagan world—a world without knowledge of the Word of God and so a stunted view of morality. *Hedonism*, or the pursuit of pleasure, is now the prevailing view of many in American society. This cult of lasciviousness not only leads to moral, spiritual, and intellectual bankruptcy but also to a rent in our social fabric evident by the increasingly vicious tone of society and even political discourse. Without God and the Bible a man is a hollow, self-serving creature. “In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes” (Jud. 21:25).

WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT

How do we, as children of God, avoid the sin of lasciviousness? First, we must realize that lasciviousness is a sin, a deeply addic-

tive sin. Jesus warned against the mire of lust. “But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Mat. 5:28). Any sin is “bondage” (John 8:34), but the “works of the flesh” (Gal. 5:19) are especially so. There will always be that God-given proper sexual desire (that is fulfilled in the marriage relationship) on the one hand or sin on the other. “For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (5:17). The realization of our struggle goes a long way in avoiding this sin.

Second, we must understand that God is on our side. He has provided the outlet for human sexuality through Scriptural marriage (Gen. 2; 24; 1 Cor. 7:9; Heb. 13:4). The institution of marriage has increasingly grown unpopular in our society. The sexual desires of many seek fulfillment outside the bonds of matrimony. Fleshly desires soon dominate, culminating in excess or lasciviousness, a worse state than even animals experience.

Third, we have God’s Word to guide us away from lasciviousness. In Satan’s attack upon our souls we must use the “shield of faith” and “the sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:16-17). We must fill our minds with God’s Word (Psa. 119:9, 11). Too many Christians become seriously wounded by sin because they know little of what the Bible says about defeating temptations of the flesh.

Fourth, we must avoid Satan’s devices to draw us into sexual sin. In our hedonistic culture this is not an easy task, but it can be done. We must practice temperance or self-control. It is putting our fleshly desires in proper perspective. “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). It is the realization that we want heaven above all things in our lives. “And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they *do it* to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible” (1 Cor. 9:25). Joseph did this when tempted by Potiphar’s wife. He refused to lie with her and quickly removed himself from Satan’s trap (Gen. 39:7-20). Job controlled his desires and “made a covenant” with his eyes (Job 31:1). Righteous Paul, realizing his

own vulnerability, wrote, “but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” (1 Cor. 9:27—ASV).

Finally, brethren we must demand of our elders and preachers that they preach and teach against lasciviousness and promote temperance. Many preachers dance around the topic and many elder-ships will not touch it with the proverbial ten-foot pole. They know that many in the assembly are living in sin, especially lasciviousness. The brethren desperately need to hear these words: “Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth” (Col. 3:5). For some preachers such negative preaching may be a *moving* sermon as regards the termination of employment.

We should take example from the courageous Paul who, because he loved the souls of men, preached such a sermon before the Roman Procurator Antonius Claudius Felix and his wife Drusilla. Felix was an ex-slave who had clawed his way to the top of the Roman bureaucracy, yet he was still a slave to lasciviousness. He had seduced Drusilla, the great granddaughter of Herod the Great, away from her first husband King Aziz when she was 16 years old. Before this audience Paul did not flinch to proclaim “the faith in Christ” (Acts 24:24). What was the reaction of this lascivious man?

And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee (Acts 24:25).

How desperately all generations need to hear and obey the Gospel and be free!

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THE ECOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION

*I*s the Bible really so ecologically negative? “Nature, the world, has no value, no interest for Christians. The Christian thinks only of himself and the salvation of his soul (qtd. in Bouma-Prediger 67).

Thomas Berry...advocates putting the Bible on the shelf for a decade or two. He believes it is of no good use, so why not scrap it and find insight and inspiration in other places? (qtd. in Bouma-Prediger 87).

Viewing Christianity as a monument to irrationality, the popular Sierra Club affirms that it legitimates ecological degradation, assaults our world, and as a sky-god religion amounts to one of the most corrosive forces on this planet (Bouma-Prediger 67-68). Pantheist Ian McHarg claims:

“the Biblical creation story of the first chapter of Genesis...not only fails to correspond to reality as we observe it, but its insistence upon dominion and subjugation of nature, encourages the most exploitive and destructive instincts in man, rather than those that are deferential and creative” (qtd. in Geisler 298-299).

Historian Arnold Toynbee “argues that the Genesis 1:28 command to have dominion and subdue the earth has not only permitted but directed humankind to dominate and exploit creation” (qtd. in Bouma-Prediger 70). Are these critics correct?

ECOLOGY DEFINED

“The German biologist Haeckel in 1855 coined the word *okologie* from the Greek *oikos* (home) to refer to the habitats of plants and animals” (Harrison 124). *Ecology* is therefore the study of relationships among organisms and between organisms and their environment (Martin 124); it truthfully describes our temporal *home* of which David said: “O Jehovah, thou preservest man and beast” (Psa. 36:6). Everything is connected to everything else, and mankind must take his place among these relationships (Martin 124). Jehovah’s creation mandate to man did not change after the Flood.

And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth. And the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth, and upon every bird of the heavens; With all wherewith the ground teemeth, and all the fishes of the sea, into your hand are they delivered. Every moving thing that liveth shall be food for you; As the green herb have I given you all (Gen. 9:1-3).

Though *steward* and *stewardship* are not explicitly found in Scripture, the concepts are certainly there. Despite much publicized criticisms of the teachings of the Bible regarding our natural environment, Anderson properly explains the Biblical view of man as God’s steward:

Some have asked whether man is to be viewed as *in* nature or *over* nature, but a reasonable answer is *both*. Man is a part of God’s creative work, but God has given him a unique role toward the rest of nature. It is important to realize, however, that dominion does not mean exploitation. The command to subdue and have dominion (Gen. 1) is balanced by instruction to dress and keep the land (Gen. 2). C. F. D. Moule...holds that responsible authority is God-like. God “is not responsible to another; but he cares for his creation in the sense that he makes it his concern and responsibility.” Man is responsible in the sense that he must render an account before God (211).

Many of those involved in the *green* movement operate as do skeptics who attack the Bible by way of assuming or alleging that the false doctrines and crimes by those purporting to be representatives of Christianity (e.g., Catholicism’s power-hungry popes, cru-

sades, inquisitions, etc.) are **true examples** of the Christian faith. While I would not attempt to defend the actions of any alleged followers of Christ in their misinterpretation and misapplication concerning Biblical stewardship of the environment, I will defend the truth of the **Bible** on this crucial subject.

IS THE ECOLOGICAL CRISIS CAUSED BY THE BIBLE?

And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.... God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and **subdue** it; and have **dominion** over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the heavens, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for food: and to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the heavens, and to everything that creepeth upon the earth, wherein there is life, *I have given* every green herb for food: and it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good (Gen. 1:26, 28-31).

Dominion How?

Does dominion, as is often assumed, necessarily mean domination? A larger canonical perspective sheds light on this important question. For example, Psalm 72 speaks most clearly of the ideal king—one who rules and exercises dominion properly. The psalm unequivocally states that such a ruler executes justice for the oppressed, delivers the needy, helps the poor, and embodies righteousness in all he does (Bouma-Prediger 75).

Certainly we all know that for the greater and lesser lights to be said to *rule* the day and the night (Gen. 1:16), that this does not mean the sun or the moon were to harm the planet! From the total context of the Bible, it is clear (for example) that though Eve is told that her husband would *rule* over her (3:16), this is a far cry from harmful domination which some one-verse (i.e. Eph. 5:22!) men envision. Deity never meant this rulership towards the weaker sex to be in an abusive, dictatorial style, but rather one exhibiting proper love, knowledge, and honor toward her (cf. 5:22-29; 1 Pet.

3:7). There is to be the notion of sacrificial love, a nourishing and cherishing attitude of care and respect (Eph. 5:25, 29), not ungodly exploitation. Right ladies? Unfortunately many of our ladies have to remind some of us of this theme of godly *headship* and loving servanthood toward them. Genesis 2:15 says: “And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it,” and this language is used later in the Old Testament to describe the priests’ and Levites’ service in the tabernacle (Num. 3:7-8; 18:7). So we are to be both *kingly* and *priestly* in our placement by Deity within creation.

Does God Care for His Entire Creation?

Despite certain crucial differences (e.g. non-ownership, being made in the image of God, and possessing/being an eternal soul) between humanity and the natural world, this beneficent philosophy of *rulership* definitely extends to *non-human* animals. Joseph was told regarding his family’s arrival to dwell in the land of Goshen: “and if thou knowest any able men among them, then make them **rulers** over my **cattle**” (Gen. 47:6).

It should be clear that the type of “dominion and subduing” that God desires involves humans *servng* the earth and not causing its destruction and decay (2:5, 15). We are to serve and protect the garden that is creation—to be a keeper of the earth for its own good, as well as for our own benefit. This definitely includes not only animate things, but also non-animate things for the Israelites were told to go into the Promised Land over which God’s providential care ruled, knowing that it was “a land which Jehovah thy God careth for: the eyes of Jehovah thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deu. 11:12). Like us, God seemed to appreciate this land flowing with milk and honey more than He did Egypt (11:9-11). However, because this is so on our part or His, it does not mean Egypt did not have its value including the fact that this land included the great Nile river (Gen. 15:18), saved Joseph’s family from famine (41:57; 42:1-3), and even protected the Savior (Mat. 2:13-15). Different eco-systems can support various purposes of God and man.

Is Our World Not Made With Human Hands?

As an upright and God-fearing man with complex questions about pain and suffering, Job is strangely answered (Job 38-41) at first with a recitation by Jehovah “about cosmology and meteorology and hydrology and animal husbandry and ornithology” (Bouma-Prediger 100). Though he had declared that he would approach God like a prince (31:35-37), when the Lord demands that he answer His recitation of facts and hard questions, Job meekly states: “Behold, I am of small account; What shall I answer thee? I lay my hand upon my mouth” (40:4). He now realizes his place and that he is not the ultimate measure of all things nor the sole judge of the worth of anything—including creation! Only God is! This act of self-humiliation is required of all of us, and our ignorant, parochial pretensions as egotistical masters of our earth are shattered in our learning that there is One greater even than the Behemoth and Leviathan! All creatures (even untamed ferocious ones!) have a designated part in the whole order of creation alongside ourselves as designed by Jehovah. Further, one cannot read Job 38-41 without becoming aware of the great aesthetic appreciation and enjoyment God receives from His own physical creation, both non-sentient and sentient (cf. Mat. 6:28-29)!

We are therefore not surprised to see God scold Jonah (and us by implication—Rom. 15:4) for his lack of concern over Nineveh by asking:

and should not I have regard for Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; **and also much cattle?** (Jon. 4:11).

Since the New Testament stands in continuity with the Old in affirming the continuing importance of the natural world in God’s plan, why be amazed about the fact that God attends the funerals of lowly sparrows in informing us that not one shall fall on the ground without the Father knowing about it (Mat. 10:29)? If He can do that, why should we be anxious or fretful about His regard and

concern for ourselves or even doubt that He knows how many hairs remain on Jess Whitlock's head (10:30)?

Is Not Jesus Our Example and Teacher?

Though sovereign over the entire world, King Jesus epitomized this charitable philosophy (Phi. 2:5-8), championing a godly, benevolent dominion:

Ye know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Not so shall it be among you: but whosoever would become great among you shall be your minister; and whosoever would be first among you shall be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (Mat. 20:25-28).

Similarly, through the Holy Spirit sent by Christ, church elders are commanded to “rule over” fellow Christians (Heb. 13:7). They do so not as overlords, but rather as under-shepherds. They are required to tend “the flock of God...exercising the oversight, not of constraint, but willingly, according to *the will of God*...neither as lording it over the charge allotted to you, but making yourselves ensamples to the flock” (1 Pet. 5:2-3). This understanding of dominion disallows us from being domineering or Diotrephes-like (3 John 9-10; cf. Eze. 34:1-4; Jer. 5:31; Pro. 29:2) in the realm of exercising our God-given oversight of the Earth's natural resources. The earth is God's garden, and man is God's gardener. The earth is the Lord's (Psa. 24:1), and we are His earth keepers. As Geisler affirms, “there is no contradiction between dominion and service, between having authority over and responsibility in God's creation” (306). This explains why we as Christians uphold the right of Animal Control units of our civil governments to justly fine or arrest those who mistreat their animals stemming from: (1) an improper view of godly dominion per God's instruction to subdue the earth, (2) from sheer secular materialism, or (3) on any other basis. This is not because animals have *rights* like humans, but because only humans have moral obligations—**from God**.

BY DIVINE DECREE

A Proper View of Environmentalism Must Be and Is Objective!

After reiterating the original creation mandate which included man's ultimate overall superiority and value above the animal kingdom (Gen. 9:1-7), God then spoke to Noah and his sons with him and said:

And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the cattle, and every beast of the earth with you. Of all that go out of the ark, even every beast of the earth (9:9-10).

It should be seen that this covenant not to destroy all flesh by flood is not only made between God and mankind, but is also between God and *every living creature* “of all flesh” (9:15; cf. Hos. 2:18-19) and was “for perpetual generations” (Gen. 9:12) of both (9:15-17; cf. 8:22). Here is the moral *grounding* in the reality of God which truly and actually makes ethical sense of the mere subjectivism of the modern secular Green Movement in their claim that we should conserve and protect Earth for “future generations.” What if we *do not* preserve the planet for future generations—then what? Those individuals (like Carl Sagan) who claim that the physical cosmos is all that is, all that ever was, or all that will ever be are proved by the evidence dead wrong (cf. Hightower “Atheism” 70-114)! God exists and we will one day give account to Him if we willfully deprive yet-to-come successors (animal and human) of an unpolluted and ship-shape ecosystem.

Do you not see? There are no “crimes against creation” as alleged by secularists unless the absolute standard, God, exists: “where there is no law, neither is there transgression” (Rom. 4:15) and whosoever “committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law” (1 John 3:4—KJV). *Greenies* of the materialist stripe must try to (subjectively!) obligate humans by alleging “the sacredness of the soil” or through some sort of human utilitarian claim, but only Christianity has true ethical *teeth* rooted in the objective fact of a Creator who is our Judge. They are as at a loss to defend their view of ecology as the late Antony Flew was at a loss to

defend his view of Nazi Germany in WWII in the Warren-Flew Debate! As Van Dyke said: “sacredness can be ascribed ultimately only to God. The ground on which Moses stood was holy because God was present in the burning bush on it, not because of any inherent sacredness of soil” (179). As former (but now enlightened penitent) critic of the Bible J. Baird Callicott wrote:

The Judeo-Christian Stewardship Environmental Ethic is especially elegant and powerful. It also exquisitely matches the ethical requirements of conservation biology. The Judeo-Christian Stewardship Environmental Ethic confers objective value on nature in the clearest and most unambiguous of ways: *by divine decree* (qtd in Van Dyke 181).

The core of Christianity has always been relevant precisely because of its commitment to unchanging values and its indifference to the philosophical fads of the day. (With everything you read about spray cans and the ozone layer, it is enough to *scareosol* to death! But let not your heart be troubled—believe and trust in God! See also conservative websites for information and landmark documents available such as www.cornwallalliance.org and www.acton.org; see also Gene Hill’s “Ethics and Ecology”).

RESPONSES TO SECULAR ENVIRONMENTALISTS

I cannot endorse their contents entirely, but many excellent volumes on ecology have been produced in “Christendom” in recent years which handily refute the many critical and false views of Scripture upheld by the Green secularists. Written by believers in the Bible, these books set out

an ethic that emphasizes a positive vision of the natural world and a conscientious commitment to pro-environment action on the part of individual believers and religious organizations. Humans, animals, fields, forests, jungles, rivers, lakes, seas, and ecosystems are all deemed—in varying ways and to varying degrees—worthy of moral consideration and respect (Smith, Pamela 77).

These volumes would surely be commended by theologians like the late Francis Schaeffer who wrote the ground-breaking book on the Christian view of ecology titled *Pollution and the Death of Man* in 1970. Schaeffer refuted the 1967 infamous article by the his-

torian Lynn White, Jr., titled, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” in which he argued that the Bible taught a very exploitative exercise of *dominion*. Smith correctly summarizes White’s viewpoint.

The thesis he proposed was that the Judaeo-Christian tradition, with its emphasis on God’s transcendence, the other-worldly destiny of the human, its orientation toward “progress,” and its biblical notion of human “dominion” over the Earth, bore much of the blame for environmental devastation and degradation (72).

Now, as we have shown, it is actually the improper inferences about the meaning of “dominion” and “subdue” by some who are *allegedly* following the Bible that has led to ecological abuses. In spite of this, White still erroneously declares in his conclusion: “Hence we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason to existence save to serve man” (Schaeffer 114). Arguing that nature has value in itself because God made it, the apologist Schaeffer called for believers to demonstrate that man can exercise dominion without being destructive. After all, what sense does it make for man to obey God in tilling (i.e., cultivating) the earth (Gen. 3:23; cf. 3:17-19) while at the same time he is viciously destroying it! Sustain, restore, improve the conditions of our damaged creation—this is surely the Biblical viewpoint! Anderson agrees and makes an important further point.

The view of God as Creator will prevent the nature worship that could otherwise characterize the environmental movement. The understanding that the earth is the Lord’s (Ps. 24:1) encourages respect for nature without the temptation to worship it.... It is unfortunate that interest in the doctrine of creation too often has been limited to the problem of origins, thus obscuring the view of God as both Creator and Sustainer (211).

Worship God, Not Nature

We must remember whom we worship. As MacArthur tells us:

There is no doubt that the glories of nature reveal the glory of God (Psalm 19:1-6). He created the world in such magnificent splendor that His creative hand is seen at every turn. The vastness of the ocean (Job 38:16), the beauty of the stars (Psalm 8:1-4), the majesty of the mountains (Psalm 65:5-9), the wonder of the rain

(Psalm 147:7-8)—these and so much more point to the awesome handiwork of the Creator.... The problem comes when fallen man rejects the Creator, and instead worships the creation (150-51).

The apostle Paul warned of this in Romans 1:20-25, and as MacArthur declares:

in many ways, these verses describe those in the secular environmentalist movement today. Instead of worshipping Father God, they worship “Mother Nature.” They exchange praise for the Creator with praise for His creation (cf. Deuteronomy 4:16-18).... Nature can be inadvertently idolized when conserving it is given a higher priority than obeying the clear commands of the New Testament—starting with the greatest commandment, which is to love the Lord God wholeheartedly (Mark 12:29-30) (151).

Based upon God’s *sole proprietorship*, the prophet Isaiah reminds us of His divine jealousy:

Thus saith God Jehovah, he that created the heavens, and stretched them forth; he that spread abroad the earth and that which cometh out of it; he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein.... I am Jehovah, that is my name; and my glory will I not give to another (Isa. 42:5, 8; cf. 40:12-31; Job 38-41).

We must recognize “the importance of being good stewards of God’s creation, not because it is politically correct, but because God calls us to that kind of management of his creation” (MacArthur 146). In view of recent climate talks and “earth summits” starting with calls to worship nature (or gods and goddesses representing nature), Anderson’s warning is timely:

At the U.N. Earth Summit in Rio De Janeiro in 1992, the opening ceremony featured a ship called Gaia, named for the Greek goddess of the earth. The conference was preceded by an all-night ceremony to worship Mother Earth. At dawn a Brazilian tribal high priestess led the worshipers to the edge of the ocean where they offered flowers and fruit to a sea goddess identified as the “mother of the powers, queen of the seas.” The Rio Declaration, which contains a radical environmentalist agenda, was referred to as “a sacred text” (UN Climate).

No Room for Pantheism

Earth is **not** the body of God as in pantheism! On the contrary, only God is God! The creation is what God has **made**, not God itself, but it is appropriate for us to love the world as something that God esteems (Mat. 6:26-34; 10:29-31; 7:28-30). Everything that God has made has value, even common birds, but make no mistake here—humans are of “much more value than they” according to the Jesus (6:26; 10:31). Peter Singer’s “speciesism,” according to Christ, is pure bunk (cf. Hightower, “Morality” 146-158)! Yet, such unbridled irrationality has allowed ludicrous claims by radical animal activists who complained about rescue efforts stemming from Hurricane Katrina in 2005 that **animals** were discriminated against in favor of the **human** species!

Secular *greenists* (along with some eco-spiritualists) must not be allowed to misuse Scripture by improper definitions and “selective proof-texting” in a way that people are led away from God’s inspired Word, regarding our clearly prescribed duty to **use**, but not to **mis-use** *spaceship earth*. This particularly involves their failure to take the Bible in its entirety and is parallel to our teaching the truth about the New Testament church while showing denominationalism to be false and thus unrepresentative of true Christianity. We must force critics of Scripture pertaining to man’s relationship to nature to recognize the total context principle of Psalm 119:160 as did our Lord (Mat. 4:7) so they, in fairness, recognize the true comprehensive Bible doctrine on ecology. This includes the fundamental and critical truth that Pa, Ma, and the kids in New Orleans ought to be saved first, before polecats, puppies, and pelicans! While we can appreciate the motive of bringing about greater awareness of the environment, the new Green Bible (NRSV) is not necessary for us to correctly appreciate and use the Bible on this subject. In fact, it is subject to the same criticisms raised concerning a red-letter edition whereby some might place greater weight to the color-highlighted verses than those in black (1 Tim. 3:16-17). This version illustrates its bias and unfortunately sets up a false hermeneutical notion in alleging that there are over 1000 references to the earth in the Bi-

ble compared to 490 references to “heaven” and 530 references to “love”! While our treatment of the earth may indeed end up having something to do with our failure to go to heaven, ought we to think that God loves beets and buffaloes so much that He is as concerned for them as He is for those whom He sent His Son to die for? I may embrace the feel-goodism of a green Bible printed on recycled paper with soy ink, sincerely drive a Prius Hybrid, and faithfully recycle all my garbage, but until and unless I obey God’s plan of salvation from the heart (Rom. 6:17), I am failing in true love for God (John 14:15) and will **not** go to heaven (Mark 16:15-16)! Though certainly involved with the Gospel, alleviating poverty, healing nature, and preserving the stability of the biosphere are **not** the central tasks for those who would follow in the footsteps of Jesus (Mat. 16:26; John 6:26-29; Mark 16:15-16).

Contrary to its critics, the Bible view does not center on dominion **power**, but rather upon dominion **responsibility**. Surely no Christian would defend the damage done (however ignorantly) by the 2010 BP Gulf Oil spill, the widespread use of asbestos in causing mesothelioma cancer in humans, toxic chemicals in children’s products, or any reckless destruction of land, plants, or wildlife! As a 4-H’er in the late 60s, I competed in public speaking contests in Florida by promoting principles of conservation to save our natural heritage—including the near extinction of the alligator. Such conservation efforts pragmatically *worked* (and gators came back in great numbers). But since you cannot get an **ought** from an **is** (i.e., the famous naturalistic fallacy wherein *description* equals *prescription*), the **moral** question remains: Did I do wrong or right by such environmental promotion? Ought human poachers be given “dominion” to wipe out a species or should such things as alligator harvesting be restricted until such time as their numbers increased to make this feasible again? Once they are taken off the endangered species list, can we make shoes and purses out of their hides and serve their meat in restaurants? Who decides these matters? Is it really true that each person can conjure (Isa. 48:17; Jer. 10:23) up their own set of ethical norms?

No Room for Subjectivism

Secular environmentalists must not be allowed to assume that “anything which harms nature is wrong,” but must be shown that there is no real morality without God as an ultimate, objective standard (see Kreeft 362-83; Brown 115-31; Hightower “Atheism” 103-11). From whence comes the asserted value of “harming the environment is wrong”? Even if Scripture taught (**it does not!**) the horrendous exploitative viewpoint that secularists envision, without an objective standard to *judge* between view “A” and view “B,” how is it that they know so certainly that such exploitation is wrong? Secularists like White have argued that Christianity is destructive to the natural world partially because of its emphasis upon the destiny of humans in another world to come when Christ’s returns. However the fact is, without God’s existence there is no *teeth* behind their own secularist “dead-all-over-like-Rover” viewpoint, since all that really matters with such a view is the “here and now”—with no ultimate Judgment of mankind! If you can get by with it in this life, you have gotten by with it!

Fauna

The animal rights/liberation (ARL) movement is best understood as an ungodly attempt to undo Genesis. Without the Bible one may end up in the La-La-Land of Deep Ecology as exhibited by such philosophers as Peter Singer and Paola Cavalieri (cf. the 1994 Great Ape Project—GAP) upholding the notion that primates are “persons” equal to humans. This international group wants the United Nations to confer basic legal rights on chimpanzees, bonobos, gorillas, and orangutans. Their fanatically sought-after UN declaration states that members of their (alleged) “community of equals,” which includes *humans*, have a right to life and may not be killed except in certain strictly defined circumstances (i.e., like humans) such as self-defense and abortion! GAP would demand the release of great apes in captivity, including 1,280 in biomedical research. Ingrid Newkirk of PETA fame has said that even if animal research resulted in a cure for AIDS that she would be against it. This view has been rightly opposed and protested by some sane

prominent researchers who argue for the necessity of their use in ways which benefit humankind. When scientists discovered the virus that causes SARS (sudden acute respiratory syndrome), most of the world cheered, but not animal rights/liberation (ARL) activists, since it required using **monkeys** in the research. They have actually compared the slaughter of chickens with the Holocaust! The more extreme among these people will continue to invade laboratories to steal research animals, and to harass scientists in other ways who use them in their compassionate work of alleviating human suffering. Instead of merely laughing at the loony antics of ARL persons, you must remember that there is a very dark side to their movement—they are not merely pro-animal—they are **anti-human**. Mohler informs us that in 2008, Switzerland

granted new rights to all “social animals.” Prospective dog owners must take a four-hour course on pet care before they can buy a canine companion [equal?—TMH], while anglers must learn to catch fish humanely. Fish can’t be kept in aquariums that are transparent on all sides. The fish need some shelter. Nor can goldfish be flushed down a toilet to an inglorious end; they must first be anesthetized with special chemicals, and then killed (“When”).

While we grant that we are to treat such creatures with respect and thankfulness, we are not to confuse animals with humans. This is why Wesley J. Smith urges us to wake up and to fight the many recent efforts of groups like In Defense of Animals who are attempting to change people’s perception of their companion animals with the hope that this change will extend to other species as well. They know this ethical transformation is aided by requiring legal language changes from “owner” to guardian, “pet” to friend, and “it” to he/she. Many American cities have already enacted such subtle alterations to civil laws, and we ignore such at our own peril (Jude 3).

Flora

In the past, when natural entities have been included in legal cases in the courts, their *right* to remain unmolested is in primary reference to men who are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26-27; 9:6). Most of us enjoy the fact that certain areas of the nation have

been set aside for our enjoyment and recreation, but with Deep Ecologists, even **land** has intrinsic rights as in Christopher Stone's *Should Trees Have Standing?: Toward Legal Rights for Natural Objects*. John Holdren is the dogmatic, ideological environmentalist who is a member of President Obama's "Green Dream Team" and head of the White House Office of Science and Technical Policy. He co-authored a book which said: "I'm seriously considering proposing legal rights for trees, rivers, lakes, forests, oceans and other natural objects." This is Obama's climate and energy policymaker who has also promoted the notion of abortion and forced sterilization as means of population control!

To further prove how absurd this can get, one need only to read an article titled, "Plant Rights, Screaming Vegetation, and a 'Biocentric' Worldview" by Albert Mohler. He describes a woman opponent on a national network program discussing capital punishment who indicated that she had recently seen a combine going through a wheat field! She was *horrified* because the wheat was being cut down by the thousands of stalks a second, and she felt grief for the wheat! Schaeffer spoke to this madness when he said: "When you drive an axe into the tree when you need firewood, you are not cutting down a person; you are cutting down a tree" (54-5).

Mohler further reports that a Swiss ethics panel has decided that "the arbitrary killing of flora is morally wrong" ("Plant") due to the clear majority of panelists adopting a "biocentric" worldview conferring moral rights to **plants!** Good arguments can be Biblically made for responsible agricultural practices that honor God by showing care for creation, but the Swiss report is titled, "The Dignity of Living Beings with Regard to Plants," and extends the previous false idea of equality between animals and humans all the way out to **vegetation!** Ought we to extend this craziness to microbes and viruses? Albert Mohler tells of the reporter Gautam Naik asking the question: "For a carrot, is there a more mortifying fate than being peeled, chopped and dropped into boiling water?" ("When"). Wesley Smith gets it just right:

Why is this happening? Our accelerating rejection of the Judeo-Christian worldview, which upholds the unique dignity and moral worth of human beings, is driving us crazy. Once we knocked our species off its pedestal, it was only logical that we would come to see fauna and flora as entitled to rights (qtd. in Mohler “Plant”).

Mohler then adds:

The most tragic dimension of all this is that a culture increasingly ready to euthanize the old, infanticize the young, and adamant about a “right” to abort unborn human beings, will now contend for the inherent dignity of *plants*. Can any culture recover from this? (“Plant”).

The answer, of course, is, “**No!**” Not unless we are willing to go back to and contend for Biblical Theocentrism!

God Cares for Non-Human Animals, Too

David wrote in reference to the fact of God’s providential care of both men and animals by saying: “O Jehovah, thou preservest man and beast” (Psa. 36:6). According to God’s instruction, the Israelites were even to *play fair* with beasts of burden: “Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out *the grain*” (Deu. 25:4). In other words, this command demands of humans that they reward their animals for using them in common toil. Using the words of the Christ (Luke 10:7), Paul (by means of the infinite Spirit) explained the principle as meaning, “The laborer is worthy of his hire” (1 Tim. 5:18), with specific application to humans. It is plain to see that Paul recognized a hierarchy between animals and humans in his inspired reasoning about them (1 Cor. 9:8-10). He pointed out that Deuteronomy 25:4 was not merely spoken out of God’s concern (i.e., care) for the oxen, though it certainly included them, but rather that God first and foremost said it “assuredly for *our* [mankind’s] sake” (1 Cor. 9:10). The ethicist/environmentalist, Peter Singer, completely twists verses like these to mean that God does not care anything at all about oxen—**only men!** (Cole 99). Like many animal rights activists who try to attack the Bible, the good Dr. Singer fails to see that it is not that God’s Word ascribes no value to animals, just **more** value to humanity. So did Jesus (cf. Hightower “Morality” 153-55). When God commanded the Sabbath rest for humans to not do any

work, it is clear that humans (as always) are the focal point, but He included the statement: “nor thy cattle” (Exo. 20:10). I have written elsewhere:

Lest anyone begin to think that the Bible teaches that man can treat animals abusively, many believers have cited another verse from Solomon’s pen that is a great summary statement as to Deity’s outlook and requirement of stewardship on our part toward such creatures: “A righteous man regardeth the life of his beast, But the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel” (Pro. 12:10) (Hightower “Morality” 154).

The prophet Nathan uses the normal and proper feelings of affection and concern for non-human creatures to show King David his sinful condition (2 Sam. 12:1-6) by means of a little pet lamb. While other verses allow the eating of sheep for food, including religious services (in which our Lord Jesus participated—e.g., Exo. 12:5-11; Luke 22:13-15; Mark 14:12-18), this incident draws off of a common, normal love and interest which the followers of God can have toward all creatures great and small in choosing to make some our pets.

Land, Vegetation, and Animals

The Scriptures teach that man’s evil disobedience of God can affect the whole creation, including plants, animals, and birds:

How long shall the land mourn, and the herbs of the whole country wither? for the wickedness of them that dwell therein, the beasts are consumed, and the birds; because they said, He [God] shall not see our latter end (Jer. 12:4).

Foolish men bring hurt to the ecology even to the point of totally destroying whole species of flora and fauna, especially when they start thinking that Jehovah is not eternal, nor omniscient. Do you not see? He (not ourselves!) will be around to judge us at our final exit! Once again I would point out that pure secularism actually promotes maltreatment of the environment as is implied here, whereas the Bible in total context denies it. It is disharmony with God that leads to environmental neglect and exploitation. I affirm from such verses as Jerermiah 12:4 that we have an obligation to care for every natural resource, including our refusal to let “the land

mourn” in our greed for material goods. When God put the Israelites in the Promised Land, He commanded the people to let the soil rest every seventh year:

And six years thou shalt sow thy land, and shalt gather in the increase thereof: but the seventh year thou shalt let it rest and lie fallow; that the poor of thy people may eat: and what they leave the beast of the field shall eat. In like manner thou shalt deal with thy vineyard, *and* with thy oliveyard (Exo. 23:10-11).

Leviticus 25:1-7 elaborates upon this command. Such verses imply that Jehovah did not want humans to exploit the land and to extract all of its life. MacArthur explains:

Allowing the land to rest every seven years ensured that it was replenished and would continue to provide [for both humans and animals—TMH] in the future.... When the Lord gave the Israelites the Mosaic law, He warned them that if they apostatized, He would remove them from the land (Deuteronomy 28).... In fact, God designated the Babylonian captivity as a 70-year captivity so the land could rest and make up for all the Sabbath years that Israel violated (cf. Leviticus 26:33-35; 2 Chronicles 36:17-21) (147).

In refusing to heed Yahweh’s commandments, the Israelites not only sinned in this matter against God, but also against poor humans and the beasts of the field! The New Testament reiterates this concern exhibited in the Old for the poor in its description of one not merely working for self, but “rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing that is good, that he may have whereof to give to him that hath need” (Eph. 4:28; cf. Jam. 1:27; 2:15-16; Gal. 6:10). Thus, God demands that we show love and care to **people** around us (Phi. 2:1-5), which will naturally affect how we interact with our environment. To rape and pillage our ecological surroundings is, in effect, stealing from our current neighbors whom we are to demonstrate true godly love (Mat. 22:39). Since none of us know when the Lord is coming back (24:36), we also must not *steal* from our posterity (i.e., future generations) by making havoc of the environment they will inherit from us (Pro. 13:22a; Ezra 9:12b). We must realize that all of this, in fact, has very little to do with today’s ecological movement or the global warming craze that goes with it. The secu-

lar “green” movement is obsessed with trying to preserve the planet forever as if this life is all there is, but we know as Christians that this is **not** in God’s plan (2 Pet. 3:7-13; Rev. 21:1). In her Boniva commercial, actress Sally Fields represents the majority of mankind when she quite ignorantly says: “I’ve got this **one** body and this **one** life.” No, Sally! For the trumpet shall sound and there will be a life after this life and even a body which is incorruptible and immortal (1 Cor. 15:35-54) with no worry about osteoporosis!

By Right of Ownership

Though contrary to the teachings of macro-evolutionists, available evidence shows that the earth was created less than ten or twelve thousand years ago and was never intended to be a permanent planet. So while we ought to be concerned with the earth for our descendants who may also live here (cf. the principle in 2 Cor. 12:14b), by knowing the earth is not eternal, we realize that we have every right to uphold our freedom to use and responsibly care for the earth in a balanced way (MacArthur 148) despite religious or irreligious Eco-Freaks like PETA. This particular group accepts Singer’s “speciesism” and says that it is wrong for humans to use dogs as guard dogs, seeing-eye pet helpers for the blind, or even for the purpose of sniffing out bombs or drugs! Scripture declares: “For every beast of the forest is mine, And the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the mountains; And the wild beasts of the field are mine” (Psa. 50:10-11). Do you suppose the Almighty would include German shepherds and chocolate Labs in His personal possessions? The fact is, our God alone, through His written Word, determines ecological rights and wrongs because the earth belongs to Him by right of ownership as Designer:

For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, that formed it to be inhabited: I am Jehovah; and there is none else (Isa. 45:18).

Along with others, this passage completely explains the marvelous fine-tuning of the universe, including Earth, as Intelligent Design devotees have established in intricate detail in the last few

years—even to the point that former atheist Antony Flew accepted this as proof that God exists (Hightower “Atheism” 83-90). Now note the move from the right of ownership to the delegated authority to man to subdue and cultivate the earth by using its natural resources for his own preservation and advancement: “Blessed are ye of Jehovah, Who made heaven and earth. The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; But the earth hath he given to the children of men” (Psa. 115:15-16).

Vegans will find no comfort from the Bible since man is authorized to use both plant and animal resources for food (Gen. 1:29; 9:1-3). (I have always wondered—is a vegetarian permitted to eat animal crackers?) PETA began a novel campaign called the Fish Empathy Project which argues the sensitivity of **fish**. They say that no one would ever put a hook through a dog’s or cat’s mouth. I would agree that people around the world who **eat** cats and dogs, do not use hooks to catch them! Despite PETA’s false view and misleading billboards claiming that the Messiah was a vegan, Christ plainly recommended using a hook to catch a fish (Mat. 17:27)! Jesus also repeatedly helped the apostles to (horror-of-horrors!) net fish (Luke 5:4-11), and upon at least one occasion He cooked fish for the disciples to eat (John 21:6-13). Even after He was resurrected and no longer even needed to eat, Scripture records that He ate broiled fish to prove Himself to the disciples (Luke 24:41-42). Why should we be shocked at these actions when we know that God miraculously provided the Israelite thousands with quail flesh in the wilderness (Exo. 16:13; Num. 11:31-32; Psa. 105:40). I suppose PETA supporters would have also fainted to see Paul shake the adorable Malta viper into a fire instead of releasing it unharmed after it bit him (Acts 28:3-5). (**Note:** Although this bite was no doubt unpleasant for Paul, this creature did not pose a mortal danger to him (Mark 16:18). Paul’s inspiration would have been just as confirmed if he had let it go back to find its ecological niche on Malta. Would you not pay good money to see a PETA spokesperson transplanted back in time to watch either the divinely-ordained plagues of Egypt or

God having Moses' rod turn into a snake to eat up all the snakes the magicians produced (Exo. 7:9-13)?)

CONCLUSION

When the Christian worldview is abandoned, there is no adequate replacement—nothing that can ground human dignity in anything other than philosophical quicksand. When plants are said to have rights, human rights are automatically undermined. A biocentric worldview is a recipe for disaster, but it is a logical alternative once the Christian worldview is rejected (Mohler “When”).

Neither animals, plants, or land have *personhood* in the human sense, but on the other hand, this does not imply the allowance of unrestrained, gratuitous mistreatment of any of these. Having no independent value in and of itself, the created order has meaning and value because of its glorious creation by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Paul declared that one could eat whatever is sold in the marketplace because we know that “the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (1 Cor. 10:26), unless it would cause someone to stumble in violating his own conscience (10:28-29). Thus, we are to be controlled ultimately by Deity and not mere “green cultism” deriving from the false theories of finite men (Col. 2:8; Jer. 10:23). The temptation is to write off the whole ecology movement, but this is wrong! The answer to radical environmentalists is not for us to ignore nature, but to study the duties which our God has placed upon us in reference to it. We are unique. We are special. We are the *responsible species*! Our responsible rulership allows us to properly relate to our physical environment to bring about harvest, bounty, energy, and beauty. This is to be done in “godly” manipulation in the planting of crops, herding of animals, harnessing the waterways, and in constructing shelter for ourselves and other beings—with priority always going to those made in His image (Gen. 9:6). Thus, the Cosmos is not *mere nature* nor is it *our world*, but it is really and truly God’s creation (Deu. 10:14) on loan to us until He decides to bring things—including the whole creation—to their ultimate consummation (Rom. 8:18-25; Rev. 21:1). Christians ought to be the most sensible, effective, and active environmentalists in the world.

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THE CONSEQUENCES OF AMORALITY AND IMMORALITY

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INTRODUCTION

No one has ever accused the current President of the United States of being a great theologian, or for that matter, even a mediocre Bible student. It comes as no surprise then when his view of morals reflects serious defects. “I do not agree with General Pace that homosexuality is immoral,” said Barack Obama while he was campaigning for office (“Obama Echoes”). In 2006, Obama stated:

In fact, because I do not believe that religious people have a monopoly on morality, I would rather have someone who is grounded in morality and ethics, and who is also secular, affirm their morality and ethics and values without pretending that they're something they're not. They don't need to do that. None of us need to do that (Cline).

Previous chapters dealt with the absolute standard for morals and principles for making moral decisions. We shall, in this chapter, concern ourselves with amorality and immorality, and especially the consequences when God's standard of morality is ignored.

AMORALITY AND IMMORALITY

We know that if morals are determined by subjective *standards*, there really is no *standard* at all. As serious Bible students, we understand that there can only be one standard of morality. God alone determines right from wrong, good from evil, moral from immoral.

So we are all on the same page in our study, we give pertinent dictionary definitions:

Amoral - 1 a : being neither moral nor immoral; *specifically* : lying outside the sphere to which moral judgments apply <science as such is completely *amoral* — W. S. Thompson> b : lacking moral sensibility <infants are *amoral*>

2 : being outside or beyond the moral order or a particular code of morals <*amoral* customs>.

Immorality is defined as:

- 1 the quality or state of being immoral; especially : UNCHASTITY
- 2 an immoral act or practice.

MORALS IN AMERICA

“Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people” (Pro. 14:34). That is, sin brings the nation down. A lack of morality brings shame to “any people.” If amorality is defined as “lacking moral sensibility,” then America (and most every world society) has a Ph.D. in amorality. What is sinful—what is immoral—is not of great concern to a large portion of the nation. There may be several factors that have contributed to a decline in the nation’s morals. Television influences America, as do movies and music.

A new cultural values survey of 2,000 American adults, given by the Culture and Media Institute, finds that 74 percent of all Americans believe that our nation is in a moral decline. Interestingly enough, 64 percent of those surveyed felt that news and entertainment media are a major influence in that decline (“Values”).

Hugh Hefner is an infamous representative of the immoral society. He wants to be free of absolutes and hang his hat on “situation ethics.”

We were raised in a time in which what was called moral in the sexual arena was simply a set of thou shall nots, taboos that were not necessarily good for the people, and in a [sic] all other areas of human activity, what is called moral is what benefits people and is good for people, and I hope that we can begin to, and what I called back in the sixties, a new morality, that we begin to find a form of situation ethics that would define sexual values not as a set of absolutes but a [sic] things that really were good for people and

would permit a more human humanizing and loving interconnection between people (“Interview”).

America has created its own sordid bed in which to lie. Entire generations are being reared to think that there are no absolute standards of right and wrong and that everything is relative and situational. Subjective feelings and emotions rule the day and they ruin the country. We have bartered money for morals. We sold our birthright for an expensive bowl of pottage. We pitched our tents toward Sodom like Lot of old (Gen. 13:10-13). One conservative psychotherapist (does such a creature exist?) contrasted the difference between families in the first and last halves of the previous century:

This approach to raising children had tremendous appeal for many adults who wanted a more affluent lifestyle. It promised parents, especially mothers, that “quantity time” was not necessary to raise healthy children. This meant parents did not have to feel guilty for missing long segments of a child’s waking hours, as long as they spent “quality time” with their child. This translated into taking the child to events and giving him material goodies and allowing the child to do pretty much anything he wanted any time he wanted. The major task of these liberated parents was and is to make enough money to provide the child with many expensive experiences....

Parents had a better formula, going back in time, when simpler and more clearly defined moral values made raising children easier. They did not have Spock’s “Baby and Child Care” to pick up and find the expert’s advice on a certain page before doing anything at all. These moral value parents were not handicapped by psychobabble that makes any reasonable and natural consequence a possibly traumatizing event. Children raised with strong moral values know and do the right thing, making it harder to lead them astray.

Pre-Spock parents were not paralyzed with fear of not following the advice of experts, but instead trusted their own intuitive response learned from their ancestors. The so-called “science of raising children” had not already geared up to transform children from compliant and self-reliant to negotiators and self-absorbed. This traditional American childrearing was not based on pseudo scientific research but time-tested truth.

This straightforward parenting was based on spiritual and natural law principles of right and wrong, the Golden Rule, and “what goes around, comes around.” Many moral lessons were taught. The violation of any of the Ten Commandments was dealt with severely. Obedience was demanded. Defaming God’s name, lying, stealing and coveting other’s goods were transgressions that resulted in strong consequences. The reactions of parents were guided by equipping their children with moral values. These parents were not naïve and understood that evil did exist in the world. Moral lessons spelled out the right behavior to do to guide them from going down the path of temptation, even when their parents were not looking over their shoulder.

Childrearing based on the Bible was the cornerstone of American exceptionalism. It worked then and still does. Hard work and overcoming one’s shortcomings is a winning formula for establishing a strong national character. The strength of character helps a child persevere to overcome challenges that citizens have and will continue to face.

The right/wrong approach to disciplining a child is swift with commands and actions that teach a child boundaries. It gives the child time and safety to define himself by his actions and thoughts. These children know it is not their possessions that define them—but the choices they make. The more Americans realize the real cost of the permissive-materialistic childrearing and the benefits of a traditional upbringing, the quicker the USA will be revitalized. The truth is traditional childrearing has produced persevering and productive adults, while permissive-materialism has weakened the fabric of America (Maglio).

IMMORALITY BRINGS TWO KINDS OF POVERTY

You cannot escape the fact: immorality brings about bitter fruit. “He that hath an evil eye hasteth after riches, And knoweth not that want [poverty—NKJV] shall come upon him” (Pro. 28:22). Our nation is currently experiencing a severe economic recession. Homes are being repossessed at staggering rates, jobs have been lost, businesses have gone under, and the American people are feeling the weight of a staggering national debt that threatens even the security of the nation. Increasingly we are a culture of perceived entitlement and handouts. We want someone else to pay for us. “Why should I

get a job? Let the government pay me to be useless.” So while politicians debate, the nation suffers.

Recessions mean more homelessness. NAEH estimates that, based on estimates of the depth likely to be reached by the current recession, **1.5 million additional Americans are likely to experience homelessness over the next two years** (that’s in addition to the number who usually become homeless in a given year). (Moriarity).

I am no economist, but it is not at all difficult to see that when you forsake God’s standards of behavior and substitute man’s subjective “I think...,” then there will be spiritual as well as earthly consequences. Vice President Dan Quayle was scorned and derided for stating that the sitcom *Murphy Brown* was harmful when it glorified the single-parent family. Here is part of the Vice-President’s speech:

Right now the failure of our families is hurting America deeply. When families fall, society falls. The anarchy and lack of structure in our inner cities are testament to how quickly civilization falls apart when the family foundation cracks. Children need love and discipline. A welfare check is not a husband. The state is not a father. It is from parents that children come to understand values and themselves as men and women, mothers and fathers.

And for those concerned about children growing up in poverty, we should know this: marriage is probably the best anti-poverty program of them all. Among families headed by married couples today, there is a poverty rate of 5.7 percent. But 33.4 percent of families headed by a single mother are in poverty today.

Nature abhors a vacuum. Where there are no mature, responsible men around to teach boys how to become good men, gangs serve in their place. In fact, gangs have become a surrogate family for much of a generation of inner-city boys. I recently visited with some former gang members in Albuquerque, New Mexico. In a private meeting they told me why they had joined gangs. These teenage boys said that gangs gave them a sense of security. They made them feel wanted, and useful. They got support from their friends. And, they said, “It was like having a family.” “Like family”—unfortunately, that says it all.

The system perpetuates itself as these young men father children whom they have no intention of caring for, by women whose welfare checks support them. Teenage girls, mired in the same hopelessness, lack sufficient motive to say no to this trap.

Answers to our problems won't be easy. We can start by dismantling a welfare system that encourages dependency and subsidizes broken families. We can attach conditions—such as school attendance, or work—to welfare. We can limit the time a recipient gets benefits. We can stop penalizing marriage for welfare mothers. We can enforce child support payment.

Ultimately, however, marriage is a moral issue that requires cultural consensus, and the use of social sanctions. Bearing babies irresponsibly is, simply, wrong. Failure to support children one has fathered is wrong. We must be unequivocal about this.

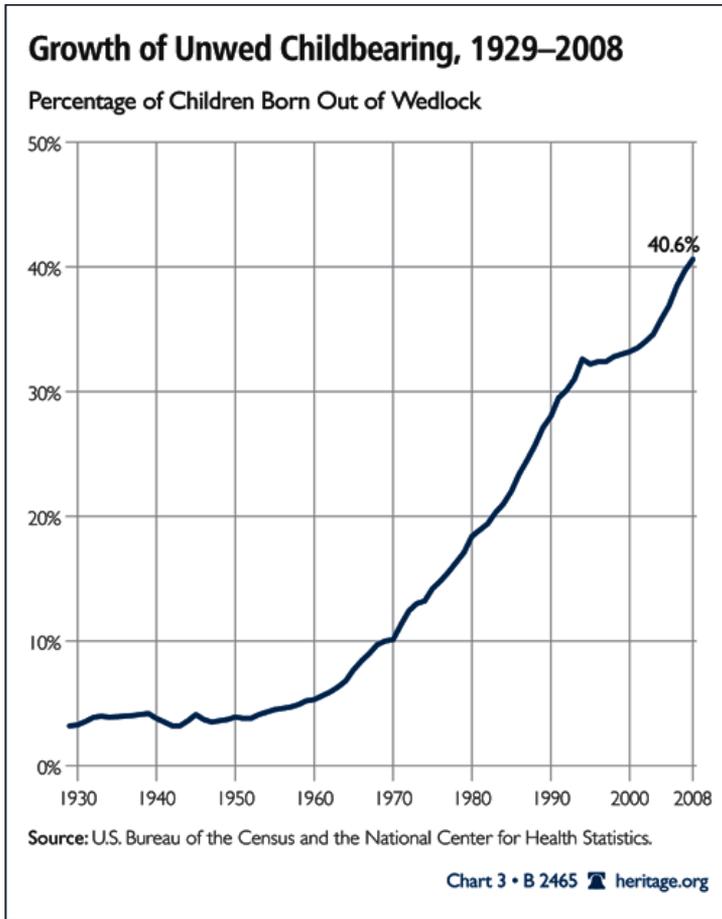
It doesn't help matters when prime time TV has Murphy Brown—a character who supposedly epitomizes today's intelligent, highly paid, professional woman—mocking the importance of a father, by bearing a child alone, and calling it just another “lifestyle choice.”

I know it is not fashionable to talk about moral values, but we need to do it. Even though our cultural leaders in Hollywood, network TV, the national newspapers routinely jeer at them, I think that most of us in this room know that some things are good, and other things are wrong. Now it's time to make the discussion public.

It's time to talk again about family, hard work, integrity and personal responsibility. We cannot be embarrassed out of our belief that two parents, married to each other, are better in most cases for children than one. That honest work is better than hand-outs—or crime. That we are our brother's keepers. That it's worth making an effort, even when rewards aren't immediate (“Vice President”).

At this writing it is has been almost two decades since Quayle delivered the much maligned speech (May 19, 1992). History shows that Quayle was dead-on right in his assessment. As we study statistics from the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Center for Health Statistics as reported by the Heritage Foundation, in 2008 more than 40% of American children were born to unwed mothers (Rector “Marriage”). Note the chart on the next page (Rector “Marriage”).

The moral climate in America has obviously changed from the 1950s when not even 10% of children were born out of wedlock to our modern times when almost half are born outside of marriage. Does this hurt the nation? We know it hurts the moral fiber of any



people when sin is prevalent. Additionally it adds to poverty and the nation's debt as we struggle to care for those who do not support themselves.

The positive effects of married fathers are not limited to income alone. Children raised by married parents have substantially better life outcomes compared to similar children raised in single-parent homes. When compared to children in intact married homes, children raised by single parents are more likely to have emotional and behavioral problems; be physically abused; smoke, drink, and use drugs; be aggressive; engage in violent, delinquent, and criminal behavior; have poor school performance; be expelled from school;

and drop out of high school. Many of these negative outcomes are associated with the higher poverty rates of single mothers. But, in many cases, the improvements in child well-being associated with marriage persist even after adjusting for differences in family income. This indicates that the father brings more to his home than just a paycheck (Rector “Married Fathers”).

Yet all of this illustrates just a small facet of the many consequences of amorality/immorality. The nation sinks to lower depths, and society’s answer is another government program. It is not just sexual immorality that pervades American culture. In 2008, the Josephson Institute studied ethics among American high school students and concluded:

30% stole from a store in the past year; 23% stole from a parent or other relative; 20% stole something from a friend.

42% lie regularly to save money; 83% lied to a parent about something significant.

64% cheated on a test in the last year; 38% cheated 2 or more times; 36% used the internet to plagiarize an assignment. (Shiver).

Should this surprise us? The nation’s President in 1998 was impeached for perjury. During the impeachment hearing, the Chief Prosecutor noted:

A failure to convict will make the statement that lying under oath, while unpleasant and to be avoided, is not all that serious.... We have reduced lying under oath to a breach of etiquette, but only if you are the President.... And now let us all take our place in history on the side of honor, and, oh, yes, let right be done (“Feb 8”).

Although he was acquitted by the Senate, his lying testimony to a Grand Jury resulted in a Judge holding William Clinton in contempt for perjury. The Judge in the contempt case wrote:

Simply put, the president’s deposition testimony regarding whether he had ever been alone with Ms. [Monica] Lewinsky was intentionally false, and his statements regarding whether he had ever engaged in sexual relations with Ms. Lewinsky likewise were intentionally false (“Excerpts”).

When corruption and low-morals, at the nation’s highest levels, are given a wink, then you realize that immorality is widespread.

Should America really be shocked that honesty is a forgotten virtue when the President does it and escapes real punishment?

IMMORALITY IN HOMES

“U.S. porn revenue exceeds the combined revenues of ABC, CBS, and NBC” (“National”).

Research shows that “77 percent of those who molested boys and 87 percent of those who molested girls admitted to the habitual use of pornography in the commission of their crimes” (Hughes).

One source estimates that “more than one-third of men and about one-quarter of women admit to having had at least one extramarital sexual act” (Lewis).

A once-faithful child of God leaves his wife and young children for another woman. A preacher’s wife met a man on the internet and packs her bags to leave.

A senator fathers a son with a campaign aide and conspires with a friend to cover it up. The senator’s wife dies soon after with cancer. The nation recoiled at the politician’s selfishness and deception, but America still glorifies immorality.

Homes fail because of immorality. Children are left without a father, a mother, or both, because of immorality. Spouses lie to one another—that is immorality, too. A husband murders his wife in her sleep because they are financially hurting.

People go to jail because of immorality.

THE SOLUTION TO IMMORALITY

The moral cesspool is now an ocean, and cleanup will take more effort than British Petroleum will expend in the United States Gulf region. However, we must take it one person, one family, one congregation, and one community at a time. Because the task is daunting will not excuse our inactivity, laziness, and fear. When our iniquity is full, we will see God’s wrath as did the Amorites (Gen. 15:16). The Gospel can still change lives—it has lost no potency.

CONCLUSION

There is a principle in effect here, and it will not be altered by sophistry, philosophy, or the passing of time. You will reap what you

sow (Gal. 6:7). It has always been this way. “Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, And be filled with their own devices” (Pro. 1:31). “According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, And sow trouble, reap the same” (Job 4:8). Disregard God’s law for human behavior at your leisure but understand this: the cloud of dust on the horizon is heartache and sorrow, and it is coming nearer all the time. Immorality has consequences.

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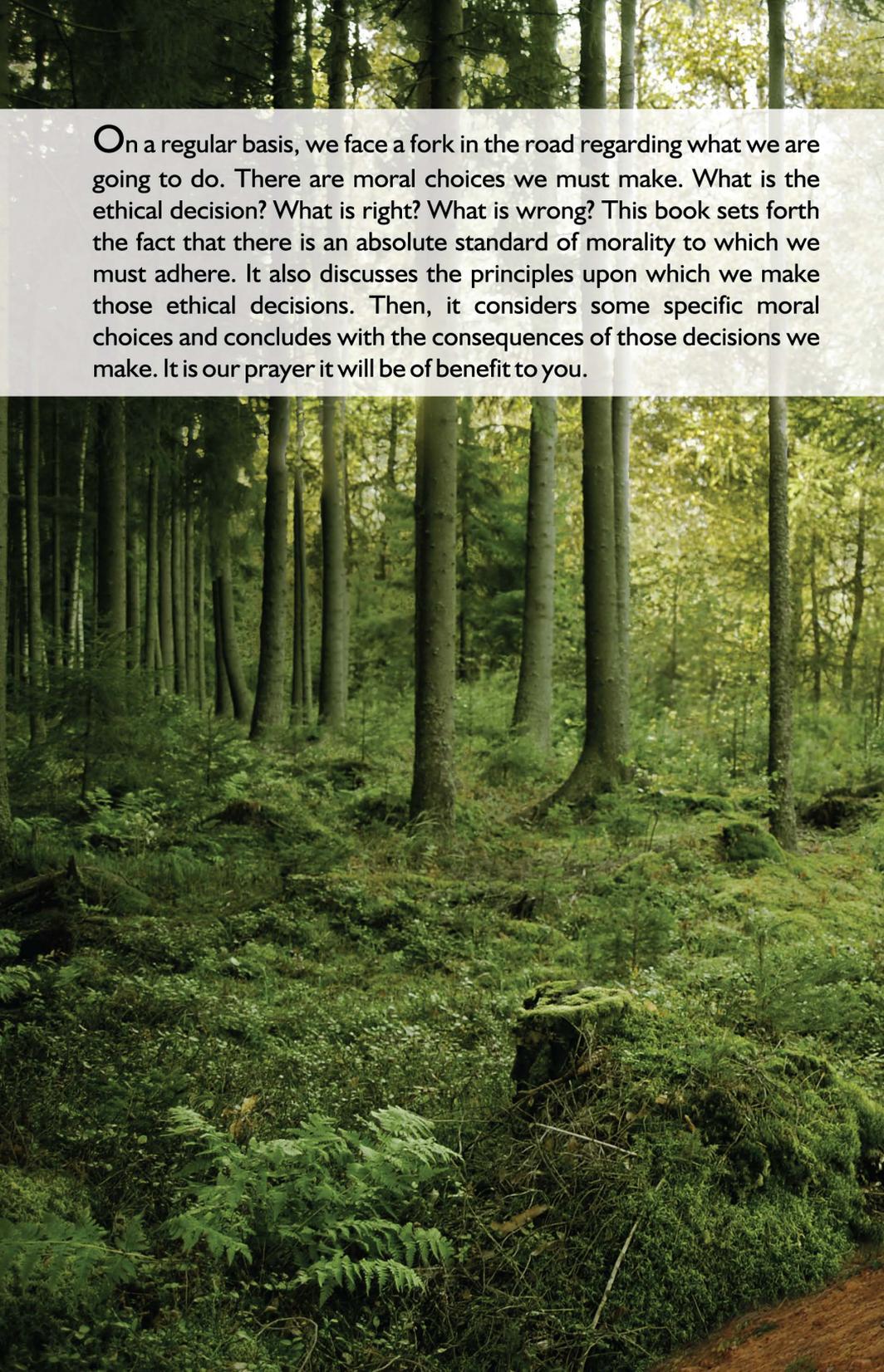
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A photograph of a forest. The top half shows a close-up of tree trunks and foliage, while the bottom half shows a wider view of a forest floor covered in ferns and moss, with many tall, straight tree trunks in the background.

On a regular basis, we face a fork in the road regarding what we are going to do. There are moral choices we must make. What is the ethical decision? What is right? What is wrong? This book sets forth the fact that there is an absolute standard of morality to which we must adhere. It also discusses the principles upon which we make those ethical decisions. Then, it considers some specific moral choices and concludes with the consequences of those decisions we make. It is our prayer it will be of benefit to you.