

innocent [in'ò-sent] adj.

free from guilt or wrong-doing;

Innovations

innocuous [in-nok'ú-us] adj.

harmless; Not harmful or offensive.

innovate [in'ò-vät] v.

to make alterations or changes in something already established;

introduce new things

in.no.va.tion [in-uh-vey-shuh'n] n.

1. something new or different introduced; such as a new method or device: *numerous innovations in the church of our Lord.*

2. the act of innovating

innovator [in'ò-va-ter] n.

one who introduces or seeks to introduce new things.

innuendo [in-u-en'dò] n

an oblique hint or insinuation.

innumerability [in-nu-mer-a-bil'i-ti] n.

the state of being innumerable.

innumerable [in-nu-mer-a-bl] adj.

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that cannot be counted; very numerous

innutrition [in-nu-trish'úsh] n.

the condition of having no capacity for digesting and assimilating food

innutritious [in-nu-trish'úsh] n.

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BIBLE AUTHORITY

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“**T**o the law and to the testimony: If they speak not according to this word, *It is because there is no light in them*” (Isa. 8:20). These are the words of the great Messianic prophet, Isaiah in the days of King Ahaz of Judah. Isaiah was calling the Southern Kingdom of Judah and the house of David back to the Word of God given unto them through “the law, the prophets, and the psalms.” Isaiah knew well that God’s Word always is the only way to real peace and prosperity in life. He knew that it contained both light and life for its adherents. His appeal then was to the authority of the Scriptures and the primacy of that authority. This principle of the obligation of adhering to this authority runs throughout the Scriptures.

The matter of Bible authority is one of the central issues of any age in religion and morals. It lies at the heart of every dispute producing division in the religious world. It lies at the heart of the conflict between the ungodly dominant culture of our time and the godly ethos given by Jesus Christ. It lies at the heart of the current issues troubling our Brotherhood. The lack of respect for Bible authority so prevalent among people in general and among certain of our brethren in particular has brought us to the brink of a new Dark Ages in both the church and society. The surrender of the absolutes of God for the fickle feelings of humanity by brethren in sundry places have silenced so many of our voices against sin and compromised our alle-

giance to Christ. Bible authority is again the crucial issue of our day upon which virtually every other issue depends among our people!

In this study, we wish to consider three basic truths pertinent to the subject of Bible authority that we must not only acknowledge as so, but also act accordingly, if we are to receive God's blessings and especially have and help others to have eternal life. After all, that is especially what it is all about!

BIBLE AUTHORITY INHERES IN THE SUPERNATURAL ORIGIN OF THE BIBLE

That the Bible is authoritative in its very nature is inherent in the fact that the Bible came into being by the inspiration of God. It was given by God to man to reveal both God's nature and God's will to man.

It serves to reveal the nature of God by showing God's interaction with humanity from the Creation throughout the period of time the Bible covers. This is fundamental to establishing a basis for faith. As faith entails confidence in the goodness and trustworthiness of God (Heb. 11:6), it necessitates sufficient information to show that these things are indeed so. The Word of God thus is the means by which faith is inculcated in the heart of the one who reads it with an open and receptive mind that weighs the evidence and draws the conclusions that such evidence demands (Rom. 10:17; 1 The. 5:21-22; 1 Pet. 3:15).

Further, the Bible reveals the will of God for man. It provides the information needed for human beings to know what God desires them to do—how both to think and how to act in life. Solomon writes:

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).

Duty in the King James Version stands in italics, because it is supplied by the translators. The original text actually reads, "this is the whole of man." In other words, this is what man's purpose is all about. This is the summation of his life from God's perspective. God

is the Creator (Gen. 1:1; Ecc. 12:1; Acts 17:24-31). He therefore has the right as to what He expects out of His moral creation relative to this gift of life itself, and also the right to hold humans accountable for their use of this gift. This is why thinking on the right things and then acting accordingly are involved in the promise that “the God of peace” will be with us (Phi. 4:8-9). Man was created for God’s good pleasure (Rev. 4:11). That pleasure includes, but is not limited to, the fellowship that God desires to have with man. God is a social Being. He desires fellowship with moral beings, like men and angels. Sin gets in the way of that fellowship (Isa. 59:1-2; Hab. 1:13). Man must be godly and holy to have fellowship with the living God (cf. 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 1 John 1:4-10). This requires, then, revelation from God—the needed information to identify what is sin and how we must deal with it.

For us to “walk in the light” ultimately means walking according to the Word of God which provides that light (Psa. 119:105, 130). God’s Word is the very expression of His nature. He Himself is the ultimate Good, and thus His Word must be good innately as well. God did not give His laws to man because they were good independently from His own Being. Neither did they become good simply by some arbitrary fiat. They flow from His very nature, and thus cannot be anything but good in the ultimate sense of the word. This simple truth has escaped philosophers for ages.

What do we mean when we say the Scriptures are “inspired of God”? Many people have faulty ideas on the matter. What do the Scriptures themselves have to say about their own origin? Over 3000 times the Scriptures claim to come from God. Such expressions as “the Word of the Lord came unto me, saying,” “thus saith the Lord,” “And the Lord said,” “The Spirit speaketh expressly,” and a myriad of others adorn the pages of the Bible. Among the most common in the Gospel accounts are Jesus’ solemn, “Verily, verily, I say unto you” and sundry equivalents. No one can deny that the Bible in part and in whole claims to come ultimately from Deity. But what is the nature of that claim, and how does that impact the authority of the Bible?

The claim for inspiration is explicitly made in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, which reads:

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.

The KJV reading of the phrase “given by inspiration of God” translates one Greek word, the compound *theopneustos*, which literally means, “God-breathed.” The idea of the word is that of an “out-breathing,” not an “in-breathing” as implied by our Latin-based term *inspiration*. The Latin verb *inspiro*, the root word for *inspiration*, meant to “breathe upon or into” something. However, this is not really the idea of the Greek word. Rather than breathing into the Scriptures His thoughts so as to give authority to certain points, He in fact “breathed” the Scriptures “out” fully and completely authoritative. God is the Author of the Scriptures. He brought them into existence in complete form in the minds of those whom He used as His human agents in writing them. So, when we speak of the Bible’s *inspiration*, we actually are referring to a more comprehensive process than our English word denotes. It is far grander than our mother tongue captures in the word *inspiration*.

This process is clearly described by Paul, who served as one of those inspired penmen. In 1 Corinthians 2, he had stressed the blessings that God had in store in His great Mind for those who would receive the Gospel (2:9). These “things” human eyes and human ears had never conceived of before. The knowledge of them came by way of Divine revelation. Thus, Paul wrote:

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

The last term in our English versions translated *spiritual* should be taken as entailing an implied substantive—“words.” Thus, the idea is that of “comparing spiritual things with spiritual words.” The “things” refer to the thoughts of God. The “spiritual words” refer to the verbal means of revealing those thoughts in a more concrete form. For one to know the thoughts of another, oral-interpersonal communication is the best means of revelation.

God thus revealed His great thoughts regarding the Gospel through the medium of the Holy Spirit, whom He gave to the writers of the Scriptures to that very end. The Spirit knowing the Mind of the Father made known those wonderful thoughts through the avenue of words—words that were not derived by mere human genius, but were selected by the Spirit Himself. Men did not think up the Scriptures through their own wisdom. Rather, God, through the Spirit, selected the right word to convey the exact and proper meaning or thought He wished to have conveyed to the mind of the human agents in inspiration. In other words, the Spirit put the right thought with the right word expressing that thought and revealed the same to the writers of the Bible. That is how the Scriptures came into being. To be sure, this operation included the use of the several abilities, training, knowledge, and backgrounds of each individual so engaged in the production of the Scriptures. In other words, the Spirit made use of the individual personalities, knowledge, and abilities of the writers. This is clearly reflected in the many distinctions that exist in style, vocabulary, and formulation of argument found in each inspired document. Luke and Acts by far bear the bulk of Greek medical terms due to the writer being “the beloved physician,” while the epistles of Paul, the nonpareil student of Gamaliel, entail syntactical and argumentative structures typical of well-schooled rabbis, and those of Peter bespeak in their imagery of the country-style of life familiar to that apostle.

Even relative to the Old Testament, the nature of inspiration was the same. In fact, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 was written chiefly of the Old Testament text, as the New was just coming into existence. “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men

of God spake *as they were* moved by the Holy Ghost” (2 Pet. 1:21). The latter verb more properly means “to bear along.” The idea is that the Spirit picked them up and carried them along in the process of revealing the Old Testament Scriptures. They were guided, guarded, and directed throughout the process, as God “spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” (Heb. 1:1). It vouchsafed the certainty of their message (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-20). The personalities of the writers were used. Amos and Micah, two country preachers, and Isaiah and Habakkuk, the most eloquent of the prophets, are found in the same precious book. The vitality, sorrow, pathos, and tranquility of the sundry penmen come vividly to light even in the most cursory readings of the sacred text. The Scriptures, while not autonomically dictated, were nonetheless given verbally and fully by God, though in keeping with the personalities of the writers. This process is the very essence of verbal, plenary inspiration.

Belief in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures is fundamental to the issue of Bible authority. This doctrine of the Bible’s origin is essential to every other doctrine taught by the Bible, including the Deity of Jesus Christ. The essentiality of that teaching (cf. John 8:24; 14:6) makes it imperative that we understand the significance of verbal, plenary inspiration. If the Bible is not what it claims to be, if it did not come into being in the way that it states, then the doctrine of the Deity of Christ has no assurance of being true. For one to profess to believe in that doctrine, while denying the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, constitutes a monumental self-contradiction. The former depends on the truth of the latter. Furthermore, the fact of the verbal, plenary inspiration of the Bible is essential to the Bible’s authority.

Thus, inspiration involved the very words of the Bible. It is word-for-word inspired of God. This is supported by the way in which the Bible was treated in certain parts by both Christ and His apostles. Jesus, for example, maintained that even the smallest marks of punctuation in the original Hebrew text were inspired. He said: “For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled” (Mat. 5:18).

Paul in Galatians 3:16 makes an argument on the singularity of *seed* in the Abrahamic promise that Jesus is that promised Seed. The absence of one Hebrew letter made the difference between singularity and plurality of number. Thus, even the letters comprising the words were inspired of God in the production of the original text.

One implication of the nature of Biblical inspiration is that it primarily concerns the original text. The Old Testament was originally written in Hebrew with some small portions in Aramaic (ancient Syriac). The New Testament was originally written in Koine Greek. The original text of the Bible was inspired totally by God and can properly be termed “the Word of God.”

It should be duly noted that **faithful translation** of said text can also be said to be inspired by extension and thus be the Word of God inasmuch as it accurately conveys the meaning of the original. In fact, this principle is seen in the teachings of Jesus. He regularly quoted the Greek Septuagint translation of the Old Testament authoritatively, citing it as “Scripture” or even “the Scriptures.” In John 10:34-35, He even uses the phrases “your law,” “the Word of God,” and “the Scripture” to contemplate the same statement from the Septuagint text of Psalms.

WE NEED NOW TO DISCUSS THE MEANS BY WHICH THE BIBLE AUTHORIZES

Obviously, we cannot deal with every aspect of this subject in this chapter. At the end of our study is a list of recommended books to read toward a more thorough understanding of these matters. What we are concerned with here are just the bare bones, the very basic structure of Bible authority relative to ascertaining what we are to believe and do as accountable human beings.

In many respects, the Bible is like any other book. It contains information, but unlike any other book, that information has, by virtue of its origin as we have noted, a more important place relative to authority. Also, the nature of that information is endowed with capacities and qualities that set the Bible apart from all other such documents. As seen in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, it is not only inspired of God but is also “profitable for” certain things of lasting, spiritual im-

portance. Notice the following points, which are based on thoughts drawn from the belated and beloved Winfred E. Clark:

1. It is profitable for “doctrine.” It tells us what is right!
2. It is profitable for “reproof.” It tells us when we are not right!
3. It is profitable for “correction.” It tells us how to get right!
4. It is profitable for “instruction in righteousness.” It tells us how to stay right!
5. It is profitable to furnish us “unto all good works.” It outfits us to be able to do what is right!

The Scriptures provide us with “all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). “For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword” (Heb. 4:12). Indeed, the words of Jesus “are spirit, and are life” (John 6:63). They have the sufficient power to do exactly what they claim to do.

As regards the means by which they authorize men to believe and act, the methodology of the Bible is similar to all other books. The Bible is addressed to man as God made him, and it makes use of the moral faculties that God in His wisdom saw fit to bestow upon man. Humans have the capacity to reason, to examine the evidence, and to draw conclusions. The Word of God provides the evidence from whence we are to draw the right conclusions relative to our beliefs and practices in religion and morals. It is that simple. God does not expect us to “check our brains at the door” when it comes to these matters. He calls upon us to examine the evidence, draw the right conclusions, and then act accordingly (1 The. 5:21-22; 1 Pet. 3:15; 4:11; 1 John 4:1; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6; Rom. 10:17; Acts 18:8; Col. 3:17).

We need to be aware that the Bible authorizes by one of three specific ways. These are: (1) direct statement, (2) example, and (3) implication. Sometimes brethren have used the rubric CENI for command, example, and necessary inference. While this is easy to remember, it really is quite inaccurate. It does not go far enough.

Direct Statement

The Bible authorizes by **direct statement**. That *command* is insufficient to cover the various sentence structures used in the Bible to give instruction should be obvious even from a cursory reading of it. *Command* denotes properly an imperative statement—i.e., one given in the imperative mood (or the mood used to express the idea of command). In New Testament Greek there are six moods, including the participle and the infinitive as so categorized. The other four are the indicative, the subjunctive, the optative, and the imperative. Even our English translations make use of several different sentence structures beyond the imperative mood. Beyond this, there are the different verb forms and stems that are used to express different ideas in addition to what a particular mood may express. There are also three voices used in the Greek text (active, passive, and middle voices, as opposed to simply the active and passive in English) to depict the relationship of the subject to the verbal action. These with the moods and tenses make for numerous combinations that ancient Greek employed in its sentence structures, of which imperative constructions were but a fraction.

Mark 16:16, for example, is surely binding: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” However, it is a declarative sentence in English and uses the indicative mood in Greek. It does not stand in the imperative in Greek or English. It is not given as an imperative even in English translation. Yet, it is still binding.

When Paul asked, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1), he was not engaging in mere philosophical speculation. He was making a specific point—one that is binding in its truth. We are not authorized to continue in sin simply because God’s grace abounds. The question, which is called in English an interrogative, carries in such use its own answer. It is a quite forceful literary device that is not only rhetorical but also pedagogic. It teaches! Grammatically, Paul uses a future active indicative in the question, “What shall we say then?” but then a present active subjunctive in the central question, “Shall we continue in sin

that grace may abound?” The verb translated “may abound” actually involves an aorist active subjunctive as well. Paul closes verse 2 with yet another rhetorical question: “How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” while using an aorist and a future indicative in doing so. The indicative would normally be used in a declarative statement, but here we see the indicative, as also with the future indicative in the first question of verse 1, being used in an interrogative statement asking a rhetorical question.

Paul followed up that question by an emphatic construction, which is expressed in our English translations by an exclamatory sentence, “God forbid!” (6:2). The verb form *genoito* is an aorist middle optative. So, we have in these verses an indicative, two subjunctives, and an optative used by Paul by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to convey the truth of the texts. Paul continued with this in verse 3 with yet another rhetorical question (or interrogative statement) using two more indicatives. There is not a single imperative in the three verses, despite the fact that Paul has clearly taught certain truths that are binding.

The phrase **direct statement** contemplates every sentence structure that is used in Holy Writ to teach or to impart information. The idea of **command** simply is insufficient to do so.

Example

The Bible authorizes by **example**. The Scriptures contain numerous accounts of action, i.e., written records of acts performed by men and women. When said actions are based on compliance with what is bound by direct statement, the action thereby constitutes an example. An example may be obligatory or optional depending upon several factors, but it is nonetheless an example, and is binding. In other words, it either grants by its nature one the right to do the same action or actually requires the doing of the same action. An account of action by itself is not an example. There are accounts of action concerning the people as well as the devil lying. These accounts obviously do not authorize us to lie. There is an account of action of Cain murdering Abel, but that account is not an example authorizing us to murder others.

On the other hand, there is an account of action in Acts 20:7ff, which is binding upon us. The observance of the Lord's Supper was one of the five acts of New Testament worship observed by the early church. Direct statement enjoins it upon us as obligatory and even sets forth that it should be observed on a regular basis (cf. 1 Cor. 11:20-34). It should be noted from the text that Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:25-26 uses an adverbial marker translated "as often as" in conjunction with eating the unleavened bread and drinking the fruit of the vine. This expression does not mean, "whenever you feel like doing it" as often wrongly taken by readers. It is indicative of a regular practice, especially in view of the fact that the verbs for the action are present tense verbs. In fact they are both present active subjunctives (*esthieete* and *pineete* respectively). The primary use of the present, especially in the subjunctive mood as here, is that of progressive or linear action. They would not therefore be gnomic presents or so-called "aoristic presents," which itself is somewhat of a misnomer. The present tense in the subjunctive mood in Greek views the action as in process. Habituality is one form of that kind of action. By the way, even gnomic presents can entail habitual or iterative action—a fact that some of our liberal brethren on marriage, divorce, and remarriage often conveniently ignore.

The church at Troas, as recorded in Acts 20:7, regularly observed "the breaking of bread," the Lord's Supper, on the first day of every week. This was their habitual practice, as is implied by the construction of **that** verse. Relative to Acts 20, it should also be noted that Paul was in a hurry to reach Jerusalem by Pentecost of that year (20:16). If it were the case that the Lord's Supper could be observed Scripturally at any time during the week, as our liberal brethren often claim, Paul, especially as an apostle of the Lord, could have called the church together and done so at the earliest convenience to expedite his travel plans. Yet, he tarried with his companions seven days awaiting the first day of the week, when the brethren at Troas habitually observed the Supper. That is quite significant, to say the least! Furthermore, there is no other account of action (much less an

example) relative to the conduct of the early church in its observance of the Lord's Supper on a day other than the first day of the week.

Other matters also support this brief exegesis of the text. (1) The use of the term *kuriakos*. This term is used only twice in the Greek testament. It is a peculiar genitive that is used only of the first day of the week (Rev. 1:10) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20). It is quite fitting that the royal feast would be observed on the royal day. (2) The early history of the church conforms to this pattern of observance. Wherever we have record of the time in which the Lord's Supper was being observed, the early saints are pictured as doing it on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week.

Thus, we have in Acts 20:7, as pertains to the time of the observance of the Lord's Supper, an account of action that comprises a binding example for the church. It is just as binding as if it were explicitly commanded.

Implication

The Bible authorizes by **implication**. Sometimes *necessary inference* is used. First, *necessary* is not really necessary, especially if we have in mind the matter of **implication**. Also, the phrase involves an imprecise use of *inference*. An inference is something we may draw from a statement that may or may not actually follow. Human beings may **infer** from the statements of others a particular conclusion, but that does not necessitate the idea that the **inference** is always correct or that it necessarily follows from what is explicitly said. **Implication** properly refers to that which logically follows from an explicit statement or the combination of premises.

If a dime is placed in an envelope, and the envelope is placed in a trunk, then it is implied that the dime is in the trunk. One can logically know that the dime is in the trunk. It is the conclusion demanded by the two propositions embodied in the *protasis* or antecedent of the statement. It is an implication. It necessarily follows from the two propositions.

If the early church had the obligation to come together to observe the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:20-34), and if the act of eating the Lord's Supper is an act of worship (John 4:24), then it must be

the case that we have authority for a “worship assembly.” The first part of this hypothetical statement we have already discussed. The second part is true due to the very definition of what constitutes an act of worship, especially as contemplated by *proskuneo* used in John 4:24 showing that worship is obligatory. *Proskuneo* originally meant “to kiss the hand toward,” and then came to mean “to bow down or prostrate oneself to another.” In each case, the idea was to do obeisance, to give homage, or to show adoration. These ideas are involved in the word in Koine and New Testament use. The term came to properly mean “to express homage or adoration through specific acts.” One of those acts in the New Testament use is the observance of the Lord’s Supper. Thus, both parts of the antecedent are true, the implication then follows that we have authority for a “worship assembly,” despite the claims of some today.

It will be recalled that an implication is just as true and binding as an explicit statement. The Bible, for example, teaches in Genesis 12 that Lot travelled with Abram from Ur to Canaan and even dwelt with Abram and his family for some time. Later, the text says in Genesis 13:1 that Lot came up out of Egypt with Abram and his wife. Yet, the Bible nowhere says explicitly that Lot went down into Egypt. The only way, however, that he could come up out of Egypt is that at some point he had to have gone down into Egypt from Canaan. That is a matter of implication. It necessarily follows, and is just as true as if explicitly stated. Simply because something is implied, it does not follow that it is less true than if explicitly stated.

It should also be noted that when it comes to applying even direct statements to ourselves today, such is done by virtue of implication. The reason is there is no explicit text of the Bible that is addressed to us by name. If we fall under the purview of a text, it is by way of implication. How do we know, for example, that the passages pertaining to being saved by the Gospel of Christ apply to us today? The answer is **by implication!** There is no explicit text addressed to Daniel Denham by name. I am included by implication under such terms as “whosoever,” “he who,” etc., given in specific contexts concerning and in connection with salvation by the Gospel of Christ.

OTHER THINGS THAT WE NEED TO PROPERLY UNDERSTAND RELATIVE TO BIBLE AUTHORITY

There are many other things we need to understand relative to Bible authority in general and how the Bible authorizes in particular. These are too many to discuss in a lecture of this nature, but here is a brief list of some of the most pressing ones: (1) the nature of aids and expedients, (2) the distinctions between the covenants in rightly dividing the Word of God (cf. 2 Tim. 2:15), (3) the difference between circumstances and conditions, (4) the difference between custom and principle, (5) the difference between generic command and specific command, (6) the difference between temporary and permanent obligations, (7) the difference between temporary and permanent options, etc. A couple of these distinctions we will note a few things about here.

Relative to aids and expedients, it should always be remembered that a true “aid” or “expedient” actually aids or expedites the doing of the intended action. A coordinate thing is not an aid. It is an addition. A piano is not an aid to singing. It entails a different form of music. It is an addition. The same is also true of beat-boxing, humming, and whistling.

An expedient requires, at the very least, two key things: an obligation to expedite and the idea of advantage. One cannot expedite an obligation that does not exist. Also, if there is no real advantage in using a thing, it is by definition not expedient.

Relative to the covenants, we need to be aware that three great ages or dispensations have been involved in God’s unfolding of His plan to save man—the Patriarchal Age, the Mosaic Age, and the Christian Age, and that two major covenants or testaments comprise the Biblical text itself—the Old Testament given to the nation of Israel and the New Testament intended for the whole world. We live in the Christian Age and are directly subject to the New Testament of Jesus Christ as our standard for religion and morals.

The works in the recommended reading list address many of these matters in great detail. I have especially selected these works based on that fact and the fact that they were produced or published by

and large by faithful brethren. They each work from the same premise of this lecture that the authority of the Bible flows from its Source by the process of verbal, plenary inspiration.

CONCLUSION

Let us love God's precious, inspired Word. It is the inerrant, all-sufficient Word of the living God. It provides us with the only real light that directs our path to Heaven. Without it we would stumble and fall into outer darkness (Psa. 119:105, 130; 1 John 1:7).

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SILENCE OF THE SCRIPTURES

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 Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, Texas, in September 2005, for which he preaches (gratis) when he is not traveling.

Dub and his late wife Lavonne (James) have three children (Bronwen, Hal, and Andy), seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

Some 3,500 years ago, Moses explained the tragic enslavement of Israel in Egypt in a single, succinct statement: “Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph” (Exo. 1:8). A vast portion of what was once the church of our Lord has fallen victim in the past half-century to the spiritual enslavement of liberalism, resulting in countless innovations. We can lay much of the blame for the apostasy at the feet of a two-fold ignorance. First, people in the pews substituted drinking whatever religious Kool-Aid their elders or preacher dispensed for their personal Bible study and stopped “examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Second, as with the Pharaoh Moses described, a few decades ago a generation of the Lord’s people “arose who knew not” any uninspired church history (especially that of the two previous centuries). As it

did in 1500 B.C. Egypt, so in the church in our time, ignorance of history has resulted in indescribable tragedy for God's spiritual Israel.

There were plenty of preachers, professors, and writers with a change agenda who were quite willing to take advantage of this two-fold ignorance to advance their schemes. They have done so with devastating force. Along with their demonstrable general disrespect for the authority of Scripture, a major tactic of these "new hermeneutic" apostates has been the destruction of respect for the silence of Scripture. They know that only by eliminating (if possible) adherence to this necessary hermeneutical principle will they be able to accomplish fully their wicked intent.

A study of this subject requires reviewing some church history, some of which some readers may not know and which others may have forgotten (though they once knew it). In the course of this study it will be necessary to mention the names of various men and of some religious bodies for the sake of identity and documentation. After laying a historical foundation relative to respect for Scriptural silence, we will then consider what the Bible says about its own silence.

A HISTORIC STATEMENT CONCERNING SCRIPTURAL SILENCE

In the early summer of 1809, a small group of acquaintances met for Bible study in the farmhouse of Mr. Abraham Altars near Washington, Pennsylvania. The leader of the study and discussion concluded with a *rule* he suggested they all follow: "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent" (West 1:47). The devout, learned author of this statement was Thomas Campbell, who had not long before studied, preached, and practiced himself out of the Presbyterian Church. He had come to our very young, fledgling nation from Ireland two years earlier, on the advice of his doctor. He had lived with his family in both Scotland and Ireland, and was a licensed preacher in the Old-Light, Anti-Burgher, Seceder wing of the Scottish Presbyterian Church. He immediately gained his credentials to preach in Seceder churches in his new homeland, but by 1809, Presbyterian authorities closed their pulpits to him because

he preached and practiced too much Bible and too little of the Presbyterian creed.

Campbell's affirmation concerning the bounds of Scripture, particularly the silence of the Bible, became the watchword of the effort and plea to restore New Testament Christianity in early nineteenth-century America. His statement was unique in at least two respects. First, while other uninspired men before Campbell had called attention to the significance of Scriptural silence (Mattox 256), they applied the principle only to the abuses and innovations of Roman Catholicism (West 1:47). Thomas Campbell and his associates correctly applied the principle both to Protestant **and** Catholic departures. Second, Campbell distilled the principle to an easily-remembered slogan: "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

To correctly determine what God authorizes, must we respect the silence as well as the statement of Scripture, or is this merely another man-made rule in religion, formulated in a clever slogan? We will address and answer this question in the course of our study, but before doing so, we need to consider another issue: the meaning of the phrase, **where the Bible is silent, we are silent**.

OPPOSING SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT

Two opposing schools of thought have answered the following question differently: "Is the Silence of the Bible permissive or is it prohibitive?"

Is Silence Permissive?

Less than half a century after Campbell uttered his famous motto, some brethren began, as did Lot's wife, to look back and lust for certain unauthorized doctrines and practices they and their fathers had escaped.

These brethren asserted (and their disciples still assert) that Campbell and his early associates meant that silence is permissive—that where the Bible is silent, we have freedom to act. The first symptom of this attitude surfaced in 1849 with the establishment of an extra-church evangelistic organization, the American Christian Missionary

Society. Clamor for this society implied that the church, as commissioned by the Lord (Mark 16:15-16; etc.), was inadequate for the task. When faithful brethren opposed it as unauthorized, its defenders responded that, since the Scriptures were silent concerning such, it was permissible (West 1:203).

As early as 1851, scattered congregations began using musical instruments in worship assemblies (West 1:312), but the controversy over them did not become heated until soon after the end of the Civil War. As had those who justified the Missionary Society a few years before, apologists for instrumental music freely admitted the silence of the New Testament concerning instruments, but presumed upon that silence permission to employ them. This approach implied (and implies) that the Scriptures prohibit and exclude doctrines or practices only by explicit **thou shalt not** statements. (Incidentally, political/social liberals make the same argument in their efforts to justify such things as homosexual *marriages*: “The law doesn’t explicitly forbid it.”)

This attitude toward Scripture allows human desires and opinions to determine the work, worship, and organization of the church (as well as personal behavior). Desire became the father of doctrine, rather than Biblical doctrine controlling desires—a disastrous reversal of direction.

Jacob Creath, Jr., one of the stellar preachers of the middle years of the nineteenth century, recognized the *slippery-slope* nature of this approach to Biblical authority. In an 1875 *Gospel Advocate* article, he wrote:

When a man leaps the fall of Niagara, can he stop before he touches the bottom over the falls. When a man leaves the **Bible alone**, there is no rest for him this side of Rome. The most that can be said for all those persons who ceased to the **silence** of the Bible is that they are only partly in the reformation (West 2:240-41).

Those who pushed these innovations were so determined to have them that they forced a wide-ranging division upon the Lord’s church, a division recognized in separate census figures in 1906 for churches of Christ and the Christian Church/Disciples of Christ. These figures

revealed that 86% of what was once a united brotherhood had chosen to embrace the liberal innovations, leaving the remaining 14% of faithful brethren to begin with almost nothing except the Truth and their dedication to it (West 3:25). The liberals took the lion's share of the buildings, bank accounts, schools, and periodicals.

The digressives divided within a few years, as some who had clamored for the innovations were also outright skeptics, denying such fundamentals as inspiration and the Lord's virgin conception and resurrection. Most of the innovators merely wanted the instrument and the society. Unable to stomach the blatant infidelity, they broke from their unbelieving brethren. The modernists became the Disciples of Christ Christian Churches, which has been in the vanguard of liberalism and modernism ever since. The other group prefer to be called the Independent Christian Churches (hereafter, ICC) though in some sections of the country they employ **Church of Christ**, sometimes with **Instrumental** also on their signs.

Both wings of the Christian Church retain one thing in common: They hold the silence of Scripture in contempt, as did their forebears who began to abandon the Truth in the mid-nineteenth century. In 1984 some men from the ICC, along with some of our liberal brethren, fashioned what they called a "Restoration Summit" in Joplin, Missouri. One of the speakers from the ICC was W. F. Lown. In the course of his speech, he affirmed that "silence gives us freedom to speak" and "liberty begins where Scripture stops." Predictably, this disdain for Scriptural authority has led the ICC to introduce numerous other innovations and departures from the faith besides the use of instrumental music in worship.

The utter lack of recognition (whether through ignorance or contempt) of the significance of Scriptural silence is universal in denominationalism. This fact explains the existence of thousands of denominations and their varied and multiplied unauthorized doctrines and practices. Ignoring the silence of Scripture leaves religion resting on the ever-shifting sands of human desire, judgment, and subjectivism.

Is Silence Prohibitive?

The other school of thought understood (and understands) that the Bible does not authorize doctrines or practices by its silence concerning them. Biblical silence therefore has a prohibitive force. That Thomas Campbell and his early associates thus meant is proved by the fact that they gave up such denominational practices as infant “baptism,” instrumental music in worship, centralized church government, and host of other human trappings. The Bible was silent on these things in which they had participated in their earlier religious involvements. As one unlettered, but Bible-wise nineteenth-century brother from the hills of East Tennessee was reported to have said about why the church of Christ did not use a piano, “There ain’t no Bible fer it.”

Campbell and his cohorts, sick of the sectarian divisions of Protestantism (to say nothing of the totally apostate Roman Catholic religion) were intent on restoring the church of which they read in the New Testament. *Restore* means to bring the entity involved back to its original state. I learned to drive in a Ford pickup truck that “discovered America” the same year I did (1938). I got my driver’s license driving that old truck when I was fourteen years old. It was pretty beat up by the time my dad bought it, but I took a great liking to it since it was the only thing I was permitted to drive at that age. I have thought at times that it would be gratifying to find what was left of one of those old trucks and restore it for sentimental reasons. To do so I would need to secure from the Ford Motor Company the original specifications, detailing its equipment. Then I would need to find and assemble all of the missing or corrupted parts. If a pure restoration were my aim, I would not be able to include an automatic transmission, air conditioning, power steering, an entertainment/GPS system, or so many other things we take for granted on modern vehicles.

I would have to omit such innovations, not because the original specifications explicitly prohibited them, but because they were silent about them—and with good reason: they did not exist at the time the original was built. To restore the truck I would have to include

everything that originally composed it and leave out anything that was not originally part of it, regardless of how badly I might want to do otherwise. If I decided to add things not in the original or omit things from the original truck, I would not be restoring it, but customizing it (according to my own tastes). One cannot restore either a truck or the church if he is intent on adding things that were not part of it originally. Lamentably, when it comes to the church, men have almost universally preferred to customize rather than restore.

The early restorers did not understand or accept the claims of liberals of their day that silence gives consent or freedom to act. Nathan J. Mitchell was a confidant of Thomas Campbell's who accompanied him on many preaching trips, hearing him preach many times. As nineteenth-century liberals increasingly averred that Campbell agreed with their **silence-gives-freedom-to-act-or-speak** dictum, Mitchell responded in an 1879 article in *American Christian Review* by quoting a statement he said he had often heard Thomas Campbell make:

The order of the primitive churches, as to worship of God, under the immediate personal teaching and supervision of the inspired apostles, was equivalent to a command to us moderns; and that the silence of the inspired apostles, on any theme, was to be sacredly and scrupulously regarded as much as the positive teaching (West 2:242).

Six years earlier, John H. West wrote David Lipscomb, editor of *Gospel Advocate*, asking for help with problems regarding instruments in the church in Murray, Kentucky. Lipscomb stated in reply:

Our worship to God is regulated by laws of God. We have no knowledge of what is well-pleasing to God, in worship, save God has revealed it to us. The New Testament is at once the rule and limit of our faith & worship to God. This is the distinctive difference between us and other religious bodies. Others accept the New Testament as their rule of faith, but do not make it the limit of their faith.... We seek for things authorized, they for things not prohibited. Our rule is safe—theirs is loose and latitudinarian. Ours confines us to God's appointments. Theirs opens the worship and service of God to whatever will please men (West 2:241).

By any standards, Ben Franklin (descendant of the eighteenth-century statesman) was one of the most influential writers and preachers among the mid-nineteenth-century restorers. When the battle was raging over the role of Biblical authority and silence, he weighed in with a powerful exposure of the folly of assuming that silence confers liberty and permission to act:

Where has God forbidden sprinkling for baptism? Where has He forbidden the offering of incense, the counting of beads, in worship? What harm is there in all this? This is sophistry, deception, delusion, and that, too, of a very low and unworthy order at that. Where is the Divine authority for doing this or that? If there is no Divine authority for doing this or that in religion or worship, that very circumstance is **Divine authority against it**....

Those who consider themselves free to do anything **not forbidden in Scripture** are out at sea, pretty much cut loose from the Bible. They have in their horizon a broad range. They are not in search of Divine authority, not engaged in that for which there **is Divine authority**, but things for which there **is no Divine authority**—things **not forbidden**.... If there is no Divine authority for a thing, that is enough. We need no Scripture forbidding it (290-91).

Those who argued then that the early restorers, beginning with Thomas Campbell and his famous motto, meant that Biblical silence gives freedom and permission to act were history revisionists. So are those who now make the same allegations about the convictions of those dedicated men. As we shall see, they were Scripturally mistaken as well.

BEING SILENT WHERE THE BIBLE IS SILENT IS BASIC TO BIBLICAL AUTHORIZATION

We may refer to this principle as a law of inclusion and exclusion or authorization and non-authorization. A key passage regarding Biblical authority is Colossians 3:17: “And whatsoever ye do, in word or in deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” *In the name of the Lord Jesus* means “by the authority of the Lord Jesus” (cf. Acts 4:7). This subject is no more complex than men choose to make it. We must do and say only those things the Lord authorizes through His Word, which authorization is

established by the statement, not the silence of Scripture. When God and His Son are silent regarding any action, there is no authority for it; that is, it is implicitly **unauthorized** and thus prohibited, without His having to explicitly forbid it.

Some Common Applications of This Principle

We understand and employ this principle so naturally every day that we are likely not even conscious of it most of the time. In fact, effective communication would be all but impossible without acknowledgement of the validity of this principle. When a song leader in worship announces a song number, he “authorizes” us to join him in that song alone. Just as surely, he also implicitly excludes every other song without having to say so. *Men* and *Ladies* signs on restroom doors likewise indicate exclusions without saying so. When a doctor writes a prescription for me, I do not expect him to list all of the medications he is **not** prescribing. When the pharmacist fills the prescription, I would seek another pharmacist if he should hand me twenty others, explaining that I did not tell him **not** to prepare those for me. In all such cases, that which was stated was authorized or allowed, while things **not stated** were implicitly **not** authorized or allowed—without any explicit “thou shalt not” being necessary.

We see this principle illustrated in various Old Testament occurrences, which are recorded for our instruction (Rom. 15:4). The Bible begins early to emphasize the significance of God’s silence that we might not miss it.

Genesis 4 tells us that Cain substituted an offering of his choice in place of what God authorized/specified. We have no hint that God issued to Cain or Abel any prohibition of that which either of them was to offer. Abel heard and honored God’s stated will in his offering. Cain doubtless had access to the same instructions, but he seems to have reasoned, “I have raised this good produce from my field, and God did not say I could not offer it.” God apparently expected both Cain and Abel to understand He authorized only what He specified (cf. Heb. 11:4; Rom. 10:17).

Genesis 6 tells us that Noah understood and honored this principle as he used only the God-specified gopher wood in building the

ark: “Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he” (6:22). He did not reason, “God did not forbid me to use pine, cedar, and fir.”

God summarily executed Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron and nephews of Moses, for offering “strange fire” in their censers (Lev. 10:1-2). The description of the reason this fire was called *strange* is noteworthy. It was not because God had explicitly forbidden it, but because it was fire that He “commanded them not”—God was utterly silent about such fire, making it unauthorized. Other occasions in Scripture also illustrate this idea, but these suffice to demonstrate that God operates on the basis of this principle of authorization and non-authorization, and He expects men to understand and honor it.

Some New Testament Applications of This Principle

Jesus taught, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16; *believeth* in this context refers to believing the Gospel—16:15). He thus sets forth who is an authorized candidate for Scriptural baptism that brings salvation. His statement of inclusion also excludes the baptizing of infants, infidels, and/or those who are mentally incompetent (though *adults* in age). Likewise, sprinkling or pouring water on a person as *baptism* is excluded because *baptized* demands dipping, plunging, overwhelming, or immersing the believer. The foregoing “baptisms” are “strange” baptisms for the same reason the fire of Nadab and Abihu was “strange” fire—they are alike unauthorized. Note, however, that the “baptisms” (as the fire) are prohibited **not** by explicit statement, but because the Lord (as well as the remainder of the New Testament) is **utterly silent** about baptizing unbelievers or substituting sprinkling or pouring for immersing believers.

When the Lord instituted His memorial supper, He placed in it the elements of unleavened bread (of the Passover supper) and fruit of the vine (i.e., grape juice) (Mat. 26:26-29). All other items of food and drink are thereby excluded—thus unauthorized—not by any statement of prohibition, but by the silence of Scripture. Otherwise, coffee and donuts or any number of other food and drink items are permissible. Other elements besides the unleavened bread and fruit

of the vine constitute “strange” elements, like unto Nadab and Abihu’s “strange” fire.

In our worship assemblies, the New Testament authorizes (yea, commands) that each of us sing spiritual songs and hymns whereby we praise and glorify God and His Son and teach and admonish one another (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). These passages authorize only congregational singing that fulfills these functions. No other sort of music-making is authorized, whether it is instrumental music, mimicking the sounds of instruments with the voice, humming, whistling, emitting prolonged “ahhs,” hand-clapping, or employing a choir or other special group that sings **to** the congregation. These all constitute “strange” music and are prohibited on the principle of inclusion/exclusion: The Holy Spirit **included** the kind of music He authorizes in Christian worship, and simultaneously, without having to explicitly say so, by His silence, **excluded** every other sort of music.

DEMONSTRATING THE VALIDITY OF THIS PRINCIPLE

By implication, the foregoing examples in and statements from Scripture, along with ordinary human experience, serve to demonstrate the prohibitive force of the silence of Scripture. However, let us now specifically summarize various ways by which we can determine the validity of this principle.

1. Being silent where the Bible is silent is **not** valid merely because Thomas Campbell and other great and dedicated men advocated this principle. Rather, they advocated it because they, through their study, recognized its Scriptural validity.

2. It is **reasonable** to follow this principle. Ignoring it is unreasonable and creates impossibilities in both profane and sacred matters. The only alternative to recognizing the excluding force of silence is to demand that every possible exclusion be specified in every circumstance—an absolute impossibility. A song leader in worship could never know, much less name, every song the congregation is **not** to sing. We do not expect our doctor to specify every medication we are **not** to take. We do not expect a listing of all exclusions as we deal with one another, so why should anyone expect it of God? Doubtless, He could make such a list, but what man or men could be

found smart enough or live long enough to read or learn all of it? He has made it simple for us by means of His axiomatic, universal law of authorization/non-authorization, inclusion/exclusion. Respecting the silence of Scripture is reasonable; requiring the naming of every prohibited action or element is both unreasonable and impossible.

3. It is **disastrous** to ignore this principle. We saw it in the case of Cain's illegitimate and "strange" sacrifice. We saw it in the sad ending of Nadab and Abihu because of the "strange" fire they offered. We briefly traced the folly wrought in the church when some brethren in the nineteenth century began to deny the significance of Scriptural silence. This denial was their principal justification for their innovation in the worship (instrumental music) and in the work (establishment of the missionary society) of the church. Their denial, moreover, opened a "Pandora's Box" that paved the way for almost unending additional innovations.

Denial of this principle produced tragic and heartbreaking division. Brethren who had sacrificed greatly to establish congregations and erect buildings were rudely shown the door when they would not compromise with the innovators. Contempt for Scriptural silence produced two new denominations, both taking the name, *Christian Church*, and both wedded to their principal idol (i.e., instrumental music) on the pretext, **the Bible does not forbid it**. There is no Scriptural or logical way to oppose coffee and donuts on the Lord's table, infant baptism, praying with rosary beads, burning incense, dancing in the aisles, or a hundred other things (including instrumental music in worship) if the silence as well as the statement of Scripture is not duly respected. Spiritual disaster follows in the wake of contempt for Scriptural silence.

4. Respecting Scriptural silence produces only **good fruit**. We saw this fact regarding Noah, who did all that God commanded and did not presume upon that which God did not say concerning preparation for the flood. He thereby saved all of his family and the human race from that catastrophic event. The church of the Lord was restored, and its first-century purity has been maintained wherever devout disciples have adhered to this principle. If the church ever

completely apostatized so that for a century it ceased to exist, it could be restored as long as the New Testament still existed. However, the church could not be restored apart from respect for its silence as well as its statement. Only good fruit can come from faithful application of this principle, for it is God-ordained.

5. **God and His inspired writers employed this principle.** A case once came to trial, but the defendant, who was out on bail, failed to appear. The judge asked if anyone in the courtroom might know why he was not present or where he might be. When the defense attorney did not know, the judge turned to the gallery. A spectator indicated that he had known the defendant for several years, and he knew of more than one reason he might not be present. The judge asked him to name some of them. The man began his list by saying the defendant had died six weeks earlier. The judge interrupted him, saying, "You don't need to name any more." Likewise, if one respects the Bible as the Word of God, one need not remember any other factors that demonstrate the validity of this principle.

Hebrews 1 contains two arguments that demonstrate the prohibitive, excluding force of Scriptural silence:

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee? and again, I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?... But of which of the angels hath he said at any time, Sit thou on my right hand, Till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet? (1:5, 13).

Both passages declare and demonstrate the supremacy of the Christ over the angels by arguing from God's silence concerning the angels. He did not have to point to every angel in Heaven and say, "You are not my Son." His identification of His Son and His silence relative to any other Son excluded and forbade any angel to claim that unique Sonship, without having to exclude even one of them explicitly. In both passages, the entire argument for the exclusion of angels from Sonship of God rests upon God's silence.

Hebrews 7 and 8 contain an inspired argument, as clear as it is powerful, demonstrating the Holy Spirit's evaluation of the implications of Scriptural silence:

For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses **spake nothing** concerning priests.... Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law (7:14; 8:4).

The latter verse observes that Jesus was not authorized to be a priest under the law of Moses, the reason being that He was of the tribe of Judah (7:14). Where did the law state, “Thou shalt not appoint a priest of Judah?” There is no such explicit prohibition, but a prohibition nonetheless, based on two factors: (1) Moses’ specification that only the Levites were to “offer gifts according to the law” (8:4) and upon the fact that “Moses spake nothing” concerning priestly appointments from Judah (7:14). The inspired writer undeniably believed that where the Bible (Moses, in this case) is silent, we must be silent.

If God revealed His will by His silence as well as by His statements (and He clearly did), then we are bound to respect both of these vehicles of revelation. Further, if inspired men respected the prohibitive force of Scriptural silence, then we not only may, but must, likewise respect it to “handle aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). Further still, if inspired men established obligatory prohibitions based on the silence of Scripture, so must we.

CONCLUSION

Those brethren in the nineteenth century who foolishly began showing contempt for the silence of Scripture likely would never have done so had they not first determined to introduce their innovations and then scrambled, after the fact, to find some justification for them. When they abandoned their respect for God’s silence in an effort to defend their innovations, they opened the door for all other things that are not explicitly forbidden.

Many important principles of Biblical hermeneutics and interpretation exist, but none is more important than this one. Those who give it up or never learn it forfeit the ability to find, much less follow, the New Testament pattern for the church. Lipscomb was right: “This is the distinctive difference between us and other religious bodies.”

It is right to inquire of a matter: “Does the Bible forbid it?” in an explicit way (which the Bible does regarding various things). The more important question is, however, “Does the Bible authorize it?” concerning all things we teach and practice (cf. Col. 3:17). When men a century from now read the history we are making, they will see that the change agents of our day have aimed their attacks squarely at the “silence principle” more than at any other rule of Bible interpretation. Destroying respect for Scriptural silence is a principal aim of the so-called “new hermeneutikers.” These destroyers know that, only by so doing will they be able to perfect the agenda of ultimate apostasy that will drown the church in the cesspool of denominationalism.

Restoring and maintaining the New Testament church stands or falls on faithful and equal respect for the statement **and** the silence of Scripture. Peter’s exhortation of twenty centuries ago was never more appropriate than at the present: “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11—KJV). How dare any mortal presume to speak (or act) in matters concerning which God has been silent.

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LOGIC AND THE BIBLE

Terry M. Hightower

Terry M. Hightower was born in Winter Haven, Florida and is the grandson of Gospel preacher W. M. Barton. Baptized at 13, Terry participated in public speaking contests in 4-H. He is married Vicki (McCullough), and they have two children, Kacy and Bret, and four grandchildren (Breagan, Brantly, Madelyn, Eleanor). Grandsons Breagan and Brantly both give Bible sermons and lead singing. Terry graduated with academic honors from both Polk Community College (1969) and Harding University (1971). He began preaching while at Harding. Terry received his MA in 1974, his thesis being, "The Case For The Christian Policeman." He has preached or done Bible Chair work in Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida, Wyoming, and Texas; taught at a school of preaching for 10 years; done Bible Camp work and spoken at youth lectureships; written many articles and chapters for brotherhood publications; moderated several debates; edited seven volumes of Shenandoah (San Antonio) lectureship books plus *Christ The Controversialist*; debated the war question in 1987; instructor for Truth Bible Institute. Terry has handled Open Forums and has specialized in certain Bible topics, including Christian Evidences, Hermeneutics, Christian Ethics, and Logic. He and Vicki are members of the church of Christ meeting in Bushland, Texas.

INTRODUCTION

“**B**rothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature” (1 Cor. 14:20—ESV).

If you doubt the absolute necessity of logic in rightly dividing the Word of God, I would ask that you ponder the following depiction of a church very close to procuring a new minister:

The Story of the Good Samaritan

The group is about to hire a preacher. A candidate for the position arrives and the one appointed to do most of the interrogating asks him: “Do you know the Bible?” He responds strongly: “**Yes, Sir!**” “What part of the Bible do you know the best?” “Well, I know the story of the Good Samaritan the best.” “Go ahead and tell it to us.” “There was a Good Samaritan going down from Jerusalem to Jericho and he fell among thorns and they sprang up and choked him and left him for half-dead, and he said, “I will arise” and he arose and came to a tree and he got hung in a limb of the tree and he hung there 40 days and 40 nights and the ravens fed him. Delilah, she came along with a pair of shears and cut off his hair and he fell on stony ground. He said, “I will arise” and he arose and came to a wall and Jezebel was sitting on the wall and she mocked him,

and he said, “Chunk her down again” and they chunked her down again, and he said, “Chunk her down 70 times 70,” and great was the fall thereof and of the fragments that remained they picked up 12 baskets full and whose wife will she be in the resurrection?” (Hightower, “Necessity” 111)

Would you hire this man? Why or why not? If it is as some people claim that “everyone has a right to his/her own interpretation” (and they are not just referring to freewill and/or their civil right to do so which all of us should uphold), or if it is (as our New Hermeneutic—hereafter NH brethren say) really not a matter of “putting the pieces of the puzzle (i.e., the Bible) together correctly,” then why not hire him to study (?), preach, and to teach classes? In fact, why not let him teach everyone in the congregation his hermeneutical methodology (?) and pay him \$66,666 per year to do it! Or maybe he ought to be allowed to instruct tender young minds and hearts at a college or university being run by professed members of the churches of Christ!

This is as intelligent, Biblically-speaking, as the sign in front of the building of a (you guessed it!) Pentecostal “feelings-are-truth” denomination which urged:

BEWARE OF REASONING ABOUT
THE BIBLE, JUST **DO IT!**
GLORY PENTECOSTAL CHURCH

Hyper-emotionalism and irrationalism are never good substitutes for thinking because it is notoriously unreliable, causing humans to be confused even to the point of screaming: “Great is Diana of the Ephesians for two solid hours!” (Acts 19:23-34). “Whereas feeling has no purpose beyond expressing itself, thinking aims beyond itself to knowledge or action” (Ruggiero 16). This type of mentality is what led our old-time brethren to attack existential “lucky dipping” whereby folks (allegedly) being directly “led by the Spirit” just opened the Bible, ran their hand down the page, and vowed to do “whatever God told them in that verse.” Faithful, bold preachers of God demonstrated the foolishness of such uncontrolled (i.e., illogi-

cal) use of the Scriptures by portraying the “lucky dipper minister” as first getting the passage describing Judas as one who “departed, and **went and hanged himself**” (Mat. 27:5—KJV), then “Go, and **do thou likewise**” (27:37—KJV) as his second, and finally, “What thou doest, do **quickly**” as his third! (For good measure, add in Deuteronomy 6:6-7 so the kids will not be left out!) These faithful brethren refused to allow our God to be assigned or blamed with such confusion (1 Cor. 14:33, 40)! (I shudder when I think of these “Pentecostals” reading about Lot and his daughters after their escape from Sodom!)

Some claim that logic is obscure, unnecessary, foolish, and even **dangerous**, with the-less-one-knows-about-it-the-better. On the contrary, the Preacher-Who-Knew-The-Story-Of-The-Good-Samaritan-Best vividly demonstrates where the real danger lies! (Hightower, “Necessity” 112).

COLD LOGIC?

Christianity is not anti-intellectual unless you mean by “intellectual” the idea that apart from the special revelation in Scripture that a man can direct his own steps (Jer. 10:23; Isa. 48:17). To consciously use facts coupled with a solid, accurate, and orderly mental process (i.e., reason) to reach conclusions that are warranted by the evidence, is alleged by some to be “cold logic” that they claim strips all feeling and emotion from our faith. What these individuals fail to see is that in ascertaining truth such “cold logic” is exactly the right way to go about it! Heartfelt emotions should follow **after** knowledge of the truth, not the other way around. In the method under review, subjective feelings or emotion are allowed an opening to *lead* or *bend* the “evidence” to conclusions which we want or expect (Jer. 17:9). I am reminded of the farmer who was approached by a stranger one day who asked him how much he thought his prize Jersey cow was worth. The farmer thought for a moment, looked the stranger over, then asked: “Are you the tax assessor or has she just been killed by your car?”

LOGIC REQUIRED IN EVERYDAY LIVING:

Logic Should Be Everywhere

It is hard to imagine that inferences and deductions made in daily activity aren't based on logical reasoning. A doctor must reason from the symptoms at hand, as must the car mechanic. Police detectives and forensic specialists must process clues logically and reason from them. Computer users must be familiar with the logical rules that machines are designed to follow. Business decisions are based on a logical analysis of actualities and contingencies. A juror must be able to weigh evidence and follow the logic of an attorney prosecuting or defending a case: If the defendant was at the movies at the time, then he couldn't have committed the crime. As a matter of fact, *any* problem-solving activity, or what educators today call *critical thinking*, involves pattern-seeking and conclusions arrived at through a logical path (Bennett 18-19).

DATING: Lipstick On Your Collar (*Did What?*)

When you left me all alone at the record hop,
 Told me you were goin' out for a soda pop,
 You were gone for quite a while—half-an-hour or more,
 You came back and man-oh-man, this is what I saw.
 Lipstick on your collar told a tale on you,
 Lipstick on your collar said you were untrue.
 Bet your bottom dollar you and I are through
 'Cause lipstick on your collar told a tale on you, Yeah!
 You said it belonged to me, *made me stop and think*,
 And then I noticed yours was red; mine was baby pink,
 Who walked in but Mary Jane, lipstick all a mess?
 Were you smoochin' my best friend? If the answer's "Yes"!
 Lipstick on your collar told a tale on you,
 Lipstick on your collar said you were untrue,
 Bet your bottom dollar you and I are through,
 'Cause lipstick on your collar told a tale on you! Boy!
 Told a tale on you! Man!
 Told a tale on you! Yeah! (fade).

Taking time to stop and **think** is the key here! Using her God-given "*noggin* power" to put "two-and-two together," Connie Francis made a hit song in 1959 out of *Lipstick On Your Collar*, which by implication "told a tale on" her cheating boyfriend. She deduced from evidence presented by him and her best friend Mary Jane that he had gone out from the record hop for much more than a soda

pop! You can see that her jerk of a boyfriend attempted to get out of the situation by claiming (in what was actually a *Logical Fallacy*) that the lipstick on his collar belonged to Connie herself, but this just made her “stop and think, then I noticed yours was **red**, mine was baby **pink**”! (See *Law of Identity* later on.) One thing she knew at that moment was: (1) he would lie to cover himself, and (2) he had been smooching with someone **other than her!** The circumstantial evidence presented itself when good-old Mary Jane came in with her red “lipstick all a mess.” Though Mary Ann **could** have been smooching with someone else, a closer look would have revealed whether it was the same indicting red color which the boyfriend had on his collar “telling the tale” on him! Connie already had enough *goods* on him from the lipstick on his collar to deduce “that we are through” without a lab directly tying Mary Jane’s exact red lipstick by chemical analysis to him! What we see here is that you even need correct reasoning to recognize when other people are being **sincere** with you or not! What if Connie had viewed logic as something totally unnecessary to her life, failed to “stop and think,” and gone on to marry this dishonest two-timing bum? Or, maybe even worse, what if she was married to him and he was violating his vows to her with another woman, and she did not ever reason properly to be able to discover the adultery (Mat. 5:2; 19:9)?

Going Door-to-Door

Even door-to-door solicitors had better be able to reason logically when they come up on the following front-yard sign:

<p>SALESMEN WELCOME! DOG FOOD IS EXPENSIVE</p>

If for some unknown reason you are ever approaching such a house sign as this with a liberal *gospel preacher*, especially one who subscribes to the NH, please explain the (pardon the expression) **implication** involved here. Otherwise he might just get his leg torn off while looking for an explicit command from the homeowner! “Reality doesn’t care how *fervently* we believe something. What matters is not whether we strongly believe but whether what we

believe is true or not” (Moreland and Matlock 60). The foolish but oft-repeated claim that **only** explicit “direct commands” found in Scripture can be binding upon humans reminds me of a Herman cartoon in which Unger has one of his typical characters staring at a sign on the beach which says: “IF YOU SEE A LARGE FIN, **leave the water.**” Given that such reasoning is involved in our everyday **worldly** life, why would some be surprised to see how proper reasoning also permeates everything involved in such **spiritual** matters as in becoming and remaining a faithful disciple of Jesus? In fact, critical thinking goes beyond dating and going door-to-door into one’s ability to understand jokes or levity!

Humor

Any person with no logical ability will fail to “get the joke” when hearing quips, wittiness, and comedic material since his processing of information is flawed. Scripture contains all types of figures of speech—including **irony**, **satire**, and/or **sarcasm**. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians regarding their use of his not taking a salary while working with them to argue that he was not a real apostle he replied: “For what is there wherein ye were made inferior to the rest of the churches, except *it be* that I myself was not a burden to you? **forgive me this wrong**” (2 Cor. 12:13). Now, was Paul admitting that his action **did** make them inferior? Is he actually asking for their forgiveness in this matter? Certainly not! By means of satire or sarcasm he was ridiculing their argument by saying just the opposite of what would be the usual sense of the words. Converting his **words** into **meaning**, we have: “You Corinthians were **not** made inferior at all by my taking wages from other churches but not from you—in fact you should be thankful for my being gracious and kind to you by doing so—instead of using it against me.” We should note that it is not really technically correct to say: “The Bible **says** what it **means** and means what it says.” Just as when Connie Francis said “lipstick on your collar **told** a tale on you, boy” or “**said** you were untrue,” the Bible *says* what it says **in its own usage of words**, but it does not really **explicitly say** what it **means**—such is left up to the human to study to show himself approved unto God

in handling it aright (2 Tim. 2:15) even in something as simple as deciphering a figure of speech. This requires that we use our God-given minds to see true implications inherent in such language to infer true **meanings** (i.e., conclusions). Thus, it is better to more accurately say: “The Bible **implies** in context what it means and means what it implies as absolute truth since it consists of God’s verbally inspired words and His meaning by way of implication.”

JESUS DEMANDS I LOVE GOD WITH ALL MY WHAT?

Do you understand the importance of the intellect as it relates to Christian faith? One of the fears some people have about becoming a Christian is that once they do so they will have to leave their brains at the church door. Nothing could be further from the truth. After hearing Jesus logically put to rout the Sadducees (Mat. 22:23-33), a group of Pharisees gathered together and a lawyer from their number asked Him a question:

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God** with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and **with all thy mind** (22:36-37).

According to this declaration of the greatest commandment (which implied all the rest), the Lord Jesus Christ **demand**s that we cultivate our minds. “He wants a child’s heart, but a grownup’s head” (Lewis 75). Blamires warns: “We cannot make sense of adult life with the mental equipment of a child” (9). The “Christian faith is not an apathetic faith, a brain-dead faith, but a living, inquiring faith!” (Moreland 6-7). We must put away childish thinking (1 Cor. 13:11)! John Acker reflects on the Matthew 22:36-37 statement by the Christ by saying:

As...Alec Hill once put it, we “sincerely believe that Jesus was the **greatest thinker** who ever lived...we are to **prize the mind**, not shrivel into a false piety.” Our calling as Christians...is to ‘bring every inch of creation—**including the mind**—to the feet of Jesus” (emphasis added).

Now do not get mixed up and mistake humanistic, anti-Christian **rationalism**—(which is the principle and/or practice of accepting reason as the **only** authority or source for truth including

the “position that subordinates revelation to human reason or rules out revelation as a source of knowledge altogether”—Evans 98) for **reason!** Reason means to think coherently and logically or to properly draw inferences or conclusions from factual evidence. Our Lord separates Himself from those who would disparage rational thinking. Charles Hodge was speaking of **reason** and not **rationalism** when he correctly declared:

If the contents of the Bible did not correspond with the truths which God has revealed in his external works and the constitution of our nature, it could not be received as coming from Him, for God cannot contradict himself. Nothing, therefore, *can be more derogatory to the Bible than the assertion that its doctrines are contrary to reason.* The assumption that reason and faith are incompatible, that we must become *irrational* in order to become believers is, however it may be intended, the language of **infidelity**; for faith in the irrational is of necessity itself irrational. It is impossible to believe that to be true which the mind sees to be false.... Faith is not a blind, irrational conviction. In order to believe, we must know what we believe, and the grounds on which our faith rest. ... We can believe only what we know, i.e., what we intelligently apprehend (3:83-84).



“Think over what I say, for the Lord will give you understanding in everything” (2 Tim. 2:7—ESV).

While we will never be like God in the sense of knowing everything or knowing to the degree or depth to which He knows it, what we do know and can teach to others as competent believers is what we can actually comprehend with our intellect. “In order to restore spiritual vitality to the church, we must recapture a view of Jesus as an intellectually competent person who knew what he was talking about!” (Moreland 6). Tell me, brother or sister, in your everyday existence are you truly aware of and practicing our Lord’s requirement in regard to loving Him with all your **mind**? How? What are the practical steps involved in this endeavor? This is surely “the most neglected and misunderstood aspect of spiritual development in the church in America today”! (Moreland and Matlock 9).

Honestly now, since careful thinking is integral to a more complete apprehension of the Gospel, how do you fit into the following negative indicators (as taken essentially from my tract—Hightower, “How to Tell” 1-2)?

**TOP TEN SIGNS YOU MAY NOT BE
LOVING GOD WITH ALL YOUR MIND**

10. The preacher announces the sermon is from Galatians...and you check the table of contents in your Bible.
9. You think Abraham, Isaac and Jacob may have had a few hit songs during the 60's.
8. You open to the Gospel of Luke and a WWII Savings Bond falls out.
7. Your favorite Old Testament character is Hercules.
6. You think logic is a mental disease started by Aristotle.
5. Someone claims absolute knowledge about anything and your eyes bug out, your face turns red, and the veins in your neck pop out in anger.
4. After reviewing your lab work, your doctor says: “It’s T.L.—Terminal Logophobia.
3. A recurring nightmare involves waking up in the middle of a debate between Christ and the Pharisees.
2. You know the Bible is made up of explicit statements but can’t remember why.
1. You say everybody is right except those who are really right.

A typical outlook on the alleged futility of Bible hermeneutics is expressed in the words of the English poet William Blake. He described two would-be interpreters this way: “Both read the Bible day and night, But thou read black where I read white.” Would we approach sub-celestial **secular** letters from our peers the same skeptical way that we do the Scriptures?

PRINCIPLES OF INTERPRETATION

If six people receive the same (uninspired) letter from a friend, the basic elements involved in interpreting the letter would be: (1) the **letter** itself, and (2) the **handling** of the content of the letter. Similarly, before anyone can be a good student of the Bible (i.e., accurately interpret the message God has for man), he must understand that the basic elements involved in Biblical interpretation

are: (1) the **total evidence**, and (2) the **handling of that evidence**. Though God through Scripture was only giving **one message** (cf. Acts 17:11) to everyone, just as the “friend” in his letter to the six meant to do, failure on **either** of these two basic elements may (and very likely will) result in conflicting Bible interpretations by different people. Since most of us use texts of the Bible that are alike, this practically eliminates the problem of our receiving a **different letter** as being the primary cause of contradictory interpretations and divisive doctrines. So what is left to claim responsibility for such? The “**handling**” of the content as involving logic or illogic!

The Evidence. *The evidence* is synonymous with the expression “the total context” and refers to the adding together of three things: (1) the specific statement of the Bible under consideration, (2) the immediate context of that statement, and (3) the remote context of that statement. It is important to understand the meaning of these expressions. “The specific statement” refers to a single passage or sentence in the Bible (or other written material such as a letter from a friend or even the newspaper) which is being studied or considered. “The immediate context” refers to the material just before and after the specific statement. “The remote context” refers to all that **is** or **may be** relevant to the specific statement itself in the totality of the Bible (other than the specific statement itself and its immediate context).

Handling the Evidence. The mere reading (or even memorization) of the Bible text is not sufficient to guarantee that one will understand what the Bible actually teaches. One must surely know what the Bible says, that is, he must know the actual (explicit) statements making up Scripture from Genesis to Revelation. One must also learn how the various statements, paragraphs, chapters, and books relate to one another. Jesus made it clear that statements in one part of the Bible modify what is written in another part of it. After Satan had quoted Psalm 91:11, our Lord quite properly responded by pointing out “**Again** it is written” by then quoting from Deuteronomy 6:16, showing that this passage **modified** (i.e., revised or qualified) the surface meaning of Psalm 91:11. (Read and

study Mat. 4:1-11.) One must not follow Satan's hermeneutic (i.e., interpretational) methodology in "verse isolation" (Psa. 119:160)!

An Illustration. We can know that "Jesus wept" because a specific statement in the Bible (by an inspired person) explicitly says so (John 11:35), but we also know by human reasoning or inference that John 11:35 **implies** that Jesus Christ had the human emotion of sorrow. The immediate context of the verse in question teaches us **why** Jesus wept (i.e., because of the death of His beloved friend Lazarus and **not** because, say, of some mechanical difficulty such as sand or grit in His eyes). The "remote context" includes such passages as Luke 19:41, which demonstrates that Jesus wept over additional matters such as Jerusalem. It would be a **horrible mistake** to claim from John 11:35 that Jesus wept **only** over Lazarus! This would amount to drawing a conclusion from limited or restricted evidence. The results of this will be far different from the reader who wants and studies **all** the evidence available to him, and who puts it together properly. Thus, to understand the Biblical message, men today must know not only what the Bible explicitly (i.e., expressly) says, but what it **implies** by its explicit statements.

Rational or Irrational? Basically, there are only two alternatives as to how one will react to evidence: (1) he can choose to be rational, or (2) he can choose to be irrational. Since the religious world has available for its use exactly the same totality of Bible statements or evidence, it should be perfectly clear to us all that it is not enough merely to know what the evidence consists of—one must properly **interpret** that evidence! One can learn what the Bible **means** only by correctly reasoning about what the Bible **says**. In short, one must correctly apply the principles and rules of logic to the totality of statements making up the entire Bible. The Bible itself demands that we use logic, recognizing the proper role of reason in connection with the Biblical evidence (Isa. 1:18; 1 The. 5:21; Acts 17:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-19), "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15—KJV). Are you prepared for the practice of precision (Heb. 5:14) in your reasoning in reference to your ability to learn the conclusions which God has set forth both explicitly and implicitly

in the pages of Scripture? Will you **do** something about it by studying Critical Thinking to *upgrade* your ability to assess and evaluate God's doctrines? To fail here is to end up being swayed **emotionally** and **socially** (cf. Acts 19:23-34) instead of intellectually by the reality of the Truth which makes us free (John 8:32).

I pledge to learn more about Logic and Critical Thinking to be able to demonstrate in a better way that I love God with all of my **mind** (Mat. 22:37).

(signed)

(month day year)

PAUL ALSO DEMANDS YOU LEARN CRITICAL THINKING!

Do you truly believe that there is a Biblical basis for cultivating a truth-seeking inquiring mind? Do you realize that the logically competent apostle Paul not only followed Christ's example in rationality, but he pleaded with **every believer** to present his or her **body** (Rom. 12:1) as:

a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual [Gr. **Belonging to the reason**—ASV footnote] service. And be not fashioned according to this world: but be ye transformed by the **renewing of your mind**, and ye may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Rom. 12:1-2).

It is clear that *body* is the figure of speech where the part is representing the whole (i.e., **synecdoche**) person or being so **all** our members and faculties—including the brain which must make this decisive, deliberate dedication of our entire being in the first place. Looking back on it, did you have to use **critical thinking** in first learning the once-delivered faith (Jude 3) so as to be able to render your initial obedience to it? How so? Did you not wrestle with Biblical **implications** regarding hearing, believing, repenting, confessing Christ, being baptized—and even with the discovery that **you** were included by implication in God's Scriptures? Were there unfounded (i.e., fallacious) arguments to overcome made by others (e.g., ministers, family, friends, or even yourself) for you to cor-

rectly obey the Gospel? Fact is, if you are a baptized believer in Christ according to the Bible, you are already a pretty good logician! Logic does not teach us to reason, which we automatically learn by the natural growth of our God-given powers as we do to walk and talk (with some assistance from parents and friends). It does help us correct our own mistakes and to avoid being misled by others, because a person who reasons deliberately manages this better after more formally studying it than he/she could before. Additionally, logic is the backbone of rhetoric, which is the art or science of using words effectively in speaking and writing—including teaching the Gospel of Christ.

No doubt you are aware of the familiar non-optional **ultimatum** laid down by the apostle Paul that you must: “Give diligence to present thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, handling aright the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), but do you realize the importance of deliberately and calculatedly **educating your mind** in well-known, accurate principles of **logic** so as to be able to **enhance or refine** your ability to fulfill Paul’s inspired demand? Brian Shelley points out what this means.

The Lord wants you to use a form of logic He designed; we call it *critical thinking*. Logic is the science of correct reasoning, or reasoned thinking that discovers truth. Logic must, therefore, be the driving force of decision-making and interpreting of Scripture (16).

In view of the tremendous further demand by another apostle “exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3) because (as he explains) “certain men crept in privily...ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 4), I want to ask you another question. Exactly **how** are you improving your mind’s ability to **recognize various fallacies** so as to refute attacks upon the faith by false teachers (not only by skeptics, denominationalists, but perhaps especially by liberals among God’s people) in their attempt to lead you and other faithful Christians astray? Clean the cobwebs out of your mental

attic and turn up your *Baloney Detector* and critically contemplate contemplation!

Richard Paul and Linda Elder from the Center For Critical Thinking defined critical thinking as “thinking that displays mastery of intellectual skills and abilities. [It is] **the art of thinking about your thinking while you are thinking** in order to make your thinking better: more clear, more accurate, or more defensible” (Shelley 17).

Nosich further explains such **exactness** in thinking:

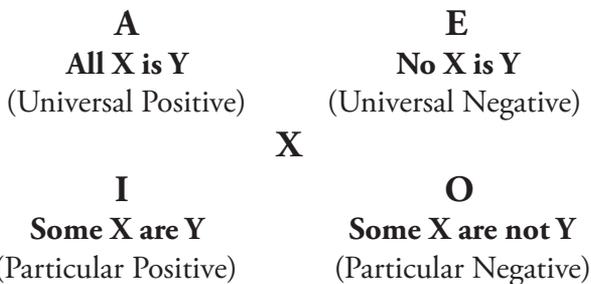
Critical thinking involves having my thinking measure up to criteria. I can think about something accurately or inaccurately. I can use evidence that is relevant to an issue or irrelevant (qtd. in Shelley 17).

Most (if not all) Buddhists, Hindus, New Agers, neo-pagans, and other occultists depreciate and sometimes outright deny the relevance of logical thinking to many issues. In addition to there being in general a religious revolt against reason across the world, surprisingly (especially among actual New Testament Christians) such calculated study as Nosich describes with a goal of **precision** is regarded by some as **completely foreign** to being a **Christian**. Invariably these individuals try to limit the applicability or scope of reason’s jurisdiction. Amazingly, it is viewed as being too complex or difficult to do any good—or as “just a bunch of incomprehensible and arbitrary rules that no one really follows anyway” (Geisler 11). Please, if you think along these lines: (1) do not criticize denominations when they allege things like: “Well, it doesn’t really matter to be so detailed—sprinkling, pouring, or immersion—who knows or cares what *baptidzo* means?” or “Singing or playing—why be so exact so long as your heart is right—besides we aren’t all Greek scholars on *psallo* anyway?”; (2) do not chastise fellow Christians who do the same thing about controversial subjects; (3) do not let your kids or grandkids hear about it, especially if they are still in school being required to learn new information; (4) realize that theological academia has produced numerous good books on loving God with one’s mind as an essential dimension of Christian discipleship

(which has been recognized as perhaps the most neglected Christian responsibility of our times!)—see Works Cited for these; and (5) if you persist in seeing no difference in being sloppy or haphazard instead of precise in logical thinking—when you finally find out you are wrong, have the godly humility to admit it! Brian Shelley illustrates:

A police officer stopped a man in his car after he ran a stop sign. The officer said, “Sir, you did not stop at that stop sign back there; you just slowed down and drove through it.” The guilty driver protested, “Slow down or stop, what’s the difference?” The police officer then took out his nightstick and began whacking the driver on the side of the head. After several blow to the brains, the officer asked, “Now, sir, do you want me to *slow down* or to *stop*?” (28).

Now some believers have somehow reacted negatively when some of us have urged a closer study of logic, especially refusing to open their minds to any possibility that such could be related to Scripture. For instance, a few tend to *freak out* when attempts have been made to demonstrate one of the most practical things to be found in critical thinking, namely the Square of Opposition (appearing here in a very simplistic form). Please note that all four types of categorical statements (A, E, I, O) portrayed by it appear in the Bible and could be shown from hundreds of verses!

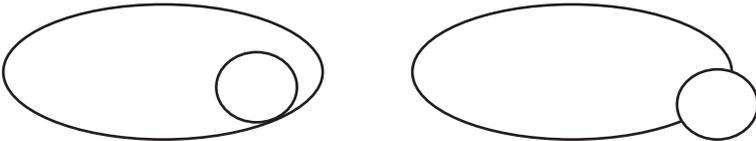


Match these Bible statements:

- “For all have sinned” (Rom. 3:23) _____
- “No man hath seen God” (John 1:18) _____
- “Now some [people] are puffed up” (1 Cor. 4:18) _____
- “And some disbelieved” (Acts 28:24) _____

Note: The **quality** of these statements is either positive or negative and the **quantity** is either universal (all-inclusive: **all** or **none**) or particular (making only individual claims: **some**).

Here is a question to consider. Suppose one person (A) alleges that the Bible teaches: “All persons who divorce and remarry without the ground of adultery against their spouse and marry another are living in adultery (Mat. 19:9).” Suppose another individual (B) alleges that the Bible teaches: “Some persons who divorce and remarry without the ground of adultery against their spouse and marry another, are not living in adultery.” What kind of statements are they making? According to the Square of Opposition, are these two people contradicting one another? If God’s Word teaches “**All** X is Y,” can it be true that His Word also teaches at one and the same time, “**Some** X are **not** Y”? Is it really possible that the Bible (i.e., God through Christ) is teaching **both** positions? Can you label the two diagrams below for both MDR positions which accurately illustrate them and their truth value compared to one another? Place an X and a Y on each of the two diagrams; then for the “Some X are not Y” shade in the part which is “not Y.”



Tagliapietra (28) points out that you will notice that Romans 3:23 is a statement stressing that everyone has done evil. While it is true that you usually consider evil to be negative, logically it is best to not use value judgments in classifying categorical statements. The negative idea of evil does not make the statement itself negative. Classifications must be made on the basis of **word choice**, so since the sentence does not use the words “not, no, none” or negative prefixes like “un,” the statement is positive. The same thought can be expressed negatively: “No man has done good.” How a statement is expressed can be as important as the thought expressed. Basically, any Biblical statement can be in effect translated into a categorical

statement. When taken in context no proper implication of any of the following kinds of statements in Scripture is false: conditional (if/then), question (interrogative), command (imperative), request, exclamation/hortatory (expressing a wish or strong desire), declarative, though the Bible accurately reports false statements as when the king of Babylon thought: “I will make myself like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14). With this clarification, we can thus agree with Jesus words: “Sanctify them in the truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17).

As a disciple of Christ, “you should desire to use clear words, truthful statements, and reasonable arguments, and to see through deceptions” (Tagliapietra xiii).

Clarity, truthfulness, and reasonableness are all qualities of God. God has declared His Word clearly in Jesus (John 1:1-14); He is truth itself (John 14:6) and reason itself (see *logos* in John 1:1). He has neither deceived nor been deceived; He is not the author of confusion (1 Cor. 14:33). Furthermore, He expects these qualities in His people.

1. *Use clear words*, “Let your yea be yea” (James 5:12), and like Paul, “use great plainness of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12). In fact, you will be judged for “every idle word” (Matt. 12:36).

2. *Speak the truth*—both “in love” (Eph. 4:15) and with all men (Eph. 4:25).

3. *Give good reasons*. Use “sound speech, that cannot be condemned” (Titus 2:8). Do things “decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40).

4. *Do not be deceived*. “Let no man deceive you by any means” (2 Thess. 2:3, also Eph. 5:6). Let no “man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit” (Col. 2:8), but instead search “the scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). (Tagliapietra xiii).

Without good thinking skills, many of God’s messages in the Word to you will appear to be *partly cloudy* if not *dense fog*!

Fact is, one cannot truly study Jesus without seeing how He was never *cloudy* much less ever found in a dense fog as to truth. This was due to His precision in the logical arena. T. R. Glover, in his

book *The Jesus of History*, analyzes how the early church in the face of immense opposition, triumphed. He writes:

The Christian declared a war of religion in which there shall be no compromise and no peace, till Christ is Lord of all; the thing shall be fought out to the bitter end.... He was resolved that the old gods should go, and they have gone. How was it done? If I may invent or adapt three words, the Christian “outlived” the pagan, “outdied” him, and “*out-thought*” him (213).

Glover elaborates by pointing out that the reason that the early church had such a tremendous impact on the world was that it did better **thinking** than the rest of the world. He writes:

The Christian read the best books, assimilated them, and lived the freest intellectual life the world had. Jesus had set him free to be true to fact. There is no place for an ignorant Christian. From the very start every Christian had to know and understand, and he had to read the Gospels; he had to be able to give the reason for his faith. They read about Jesus, and they knew him, and they knew where they stood.... Who did the thinking in the ancient world? Again and again it was the Christian. He *out-thought* the world. (217).

Brother or sister in Christ, when was the last time you read a serious book related to or about logic and Bible study?

A Moral But Verbal Warfare

From just Jesus’ own example we can really know what we should do (1 Pet. 2:21), but we also have Paul’s further **explicit** instructions in this matter! According to Paul in Romans 12:1-2, quoted previously, the Christian faith is to be fought with unavoidable logic: “demolishing **arguments** [*“reasonings”*—ASV footnote] and every barrier that is raised against the genuine knowledge of God, taking captive every **thought** to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5—Williams; cf. Acts 17:2-3; 18:4, 19). Do you realize we are not only in a “moral” war but one which at its heart is a “logical” or intellectual war involving numerous anti-biblical cultural viewpoints in opposition to Truth?

Think not that I came to send peace on the earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against

his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law: and a man's foes *shall be* they of his own household (Mat. 10:34-36; cf. Eph. 6:17).

They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths **reasoned** [*dielexato*] with them from the Scriptures, explaining and demonstrating that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and *saying*, "This Jesus whom I preach to you is the Christ.... Therefore he **reasoned** [*dielexato*] in the synagogue with the Jews and with the *Gentile* worshipers, and in the marketplace daily with those who happened to be there (Acts 17:1-3, 17—NKJV).

In the arena of ideas this world is a battlefield! The prize is the heart and mind of humankind. After all, it is not so much Rene Descartes' dictum "I think, therefore, I am," but rather **the Great I AM has asked us to think** (cf. Isa. 1:18), and, therefore, we must zealously serve Him through Christ with all our minds. Serious consequences result when we do not do so.

LOGIC REQUIRED TO REFUTE ANTI-CHRISTIAN PHILOSOPHIES

Parenting Our Young People Is More Than Raising Nice Kids

We have allowed Christianity to be looked at just as religion in general is viewed—as a mental defect that undermines the principles of science. Carl Sagan writes that while science "asks us to take nothing on faith," religion "frequently asks us to believe without question," and Richard Dawkins says faith "is a state of mind that leads people to believe something—it doesn't matter what—in the total lack of supporting evidence.... Faith seems to me to qualify as a kind of mental illness" (D'Souza 196). Such is "not for the thinking person" since God and the Bible are considered delusional make-believe, evoking images of Santa Claus and the Easter Bunny! Our faulty ungrounded belief is easily swayed and abandoned (even though it actually turns out to be correct from hard evidence). A worldview blogger named Joel Borofsky reported:

I once asked a juvenile felon why he chose a life of crime. His response was chilling: “Joel, if this is all there is, why not?”... Our schools indoctrinate young people into thinking that they are nothing more than products of time plus chance plus natural selection (Dembski “Comments”).

Being convinced that humans are in effect accidental descendants of earthworms which originally developed from a pond of primordial slime millions of years ago, instead of being the unique creations of an all-powerful God, will affect one’s mind for the worse! Yet the average young person today actually surrenders the mind or intellect to the world (Col. 2:8), presuming Christianity **to be bereft of rationality**, and believes this truly made up From-Goo-to-You-By-Way-of-the-Zoo fairy tale! “At school, at work, and sometimes at home, even identifying yourself as a Christian is often considered the same as wearing a sign that says, ‘Village Idiot’” (Moreland and Matlock 26-27). Anti-Christian comedian Bill Maher exhibits this erroneous philosophy in commenting on believers being involved in politics:

The hour is getting very late to be able to indulge in having key decisions made by religious people—by irrationalists—by those who would steer the ship of state, not by a compass, but by the equivalent of reading the entrails of a chicken.... I think religion is a neurological disorder...religion stops people from thinking. I think it justifies crazies.... I think flying planes into a building was a faith-based initiative... Faith means making a virtue out of not thinking. It’s nothing to brag about. And those who preach faith and enable and elevate it are our intellectual slaveholders, keeping mankind in a bondage to fantasy and nonsense that has spawned and justified so much lunacy and destruction (1-2).

Maher would really go for the Archie Bunker definition of faith as “believing what nobody in his right mind would believe” or “believing what you know ain’t true”! No doubt you strongly uphold (as I do) that the education of our young people is vital, but do you realize that it cannot be complete without a knowledge of what thinking logically entails? What our youth really need is a course in “Street-Fighting Logic” instead of being told (even sometimes

by well-meaning theists!): “Be good boys and girls and sit back and drink the Anti-Logic Kool-Aid!”

The National Study of Youth and Religion, conducted from 2001 to 2005 and perhaps the largest research project on the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents, cataloged the demise of the Christian worldview among [professed] Christians. While the vast majority of U.S. teenagers identified themselves as Christian, the “language, and therefore experience, of Trinity, holiness, sin, grace, justification, sanctification, church, [Communion], and heaven and hell appear, among most Christian teenagers in the United States....to be supplanted by the language of happiness, niceness, and an earned heavenly reward (White 19).

Emotional and inward-focused *felt-needs* are not enough to sustain a person in their Christian walk. Your daughter’s or granddaughter’s faith will be intellectually questioned in college: she’s ready...right? Preacher, could your weekly lessons be summarized as getting up and saying: “Make nice,” or do you take on some hard intellectual faith questions—giving them studied, evidential answers which meet real needs in our skeptical culture? The former type *sweet lessons* can be called moralistic therapeutic Deism:

A belief system that embraces the existence of a God who demands little more than to be “nice,” with the central goal of life to be happy and feel good about oneself. God is not particularly needed in daily life except to resolve various problems that might come our way (think “Divine Butler” or “Cosmic Therapist”). And regardless of religious convictions, beliefs or commitments, good people go to heaven when they die. This is *not* a Christian mind based on a biblical worldview (White 20).

TWO FUNDAMENTAL DELUSIONS

Bossard speaks of our modern society’s harboring two fundamental delusions we have already exhibited:

Modern society harbors two fundamental delusions. The first delusion is that *religion is at root an irrational psychological response to the unknown*. Don’t misunderstand the tolerance for religion that is generally advocated in Western societies. It is not quite as high-minded as it may seem. It is for the majority of the people, simply a benign [*polite*] way to accommodate an irrational factor of social life. Evangelical Christians reject this notion and affirm that

Christianity is a reasonable faith, a religion that will stand up under honest and open-minded rational inquiry. While Christians should welcome religious tolerance, they should at the same time understand its principal motivation. The second delusion that modern societies harbor is that *there is an unbreachable barrier placed between truth and the real world*. Pilate's retort to Jesus, "What is truth?" (John 18:38) is a cynical commentary on the vanity of the search for truth as seen by the educated people of his time. But the message of the Bible is that the quest for truth is a matter with eternal consequences, and that every man's most important task in life is to know and serve the true God. With this kind of message, how can a Christian then go on to affirm that there is no way for a human to come to the knowledge of truth, particularly if Christianity is held up to be a reasonable faith? He cannot.... [We] need to affirm that truth is accessible to the reasoning process, and in fact Scripture constantly appeals to reason to demonstrate the truth of what it claims, and argues for the importance of study by each believer (1).

Reading, writing, and arithmetic are **not** the most basic subjects, for they all depend upon **thinking**, and it is logic that provides the rules for correct, accurate thinking upon which everything else depends! Do you not see? Logic and the Bible go hand-in-hand! Samples quotes Ronald Nash who "tells it like it is" in the following dogmatic observation.

Even though most people who reject Christianity treat it as a refuge for enemies of reason, the truth is that there may be no worldview in the history of the human race that has a higher regard for the laws of logic (*A World* 39).

Samples lists four aspects of historic Christianity's reasonableness:

The Christian worldview offers a plausible explanation for affirming an objective, absolute source for knowledge, reason, and rationality—God.

Its truth-claims do not violate the basic laws or principles of reason, though they can transcend our finite human comprehension they aren't irrational or absurd.

The Bible encourages the attainment of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding—promoting intellectual virtues such as source-checking, discernment, testing, reflection, and intellectual renewal.

Its truths correspond to and are supported by evidence, facts, and reason (“Faith” 1).

Samples then describes how Biblical faith extends our learning non-empirically and non-intuitively:

Even the very faith that results in salvation involves knowledge (facts surrounding the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ) and discursive reasoning (as to what those facts really mean).... Believers would do well to use their God-given reason to explore the depths of their faith.... Christians should strongly endeavor to discover the Bible’s truths—stretching mental and spiritual muscles, so to speak, to apprehend (yet never fully comprehend) such doctrines as the Triune nature of God and the incarnation of Jesus Christ. Such exercise moves a person from the initial stage of faith to a deeper place of reflective understanding and a greater sense of God’s infinite and eternal majesty. Loving God with a person’s mind is part of fulfilling the overarching commandment to love and honor God with one’s entire being. And that’s not a bad place to be (“Faith” 2).

Practical Ethics Dependent On Guess What?

Without logic it is impossible to tell truth from error, to distinguish Bible teaching from heresy, or even to determine right from wrong in Christian ethics. Surely you see that the Bible is all about **ethics** from 2 Timothy 3:16-17 (cf. Col. 1:9-10; Gal. 5:16-24)! For those of us living today, it is all about knowing “**how men ought to behave** themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15)! Milton Rudnick accurately makes the point:

As we go about making our moral decisions, He expects us to use a basic faculty that is already a part of us: *reason* or *intellect*.... Ethics may be defined as *rational* reflection about what is right and wrong to do (75).

Clark agrees and declares:

Because many people disdain logic, it will be necessary to understand the relationship between logic and morality, for example. After all, many people think one should *not* study logic. “Life is deeper than logic,” we’re told. “Life is green, but logic is gray and lifeless.” The poets tell us that “we murder to dissect.” Many be-

lieve that one's time would be better spent in prayer, protesting, or preaching. Or if they are naturalistically-minded, they might suggest contemplating one's navel, or the sunset, or performing experiments in laboratories (Preface v).

We **must use logic** to learn from Scripture **why** and **how** we ought to pray, **why** and **when** we should protest evil (e.g., abortion, "homosexual marriage," and entitlements for those who can but will not work), and the **why** and **how** of preaching the true Gospel of Christ even at the risk of our own lives (Rev. 2:10). For my own part, I have never seen any reason to contemplate my navel except in the sense of seeing teleology (i.e., design) in the human body and especially in the totality of the phenomenal birth process. Ditto physical science courses! I do believe in thinking about a sunset because it is not only aesthetically beautiful to me in a subjective sense, but it causes me to analyze its order and adjustment in our world and to realize by implication that such "clockwork precision" could not be an accident (cf. Isa. 45:6, 18; Gen. 8:22; Heb. 3:4). Because of similar evidences found in Scripture which implies their deriving from that same awesome God, I look **beyond** the sunset of our lives to that blissful morning when with my Savior heaven is begun (Phi. 1:23).

The certainty that logic provides makes a major contribution to our discovery of truth. The great mathematician Leonhard Euler (pronounced *oiler*) said that logic "is the foundation of the certainty of all the knowledge we acquire" (Bennett 19).

Faith-Based Assurance

Do you have this same hope built upon conclusions reached by Biblical faith which is "the substance [assurance—ASV] of things hoped for, the evidence [conviction—ASV] of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1—KJV)? Biblical faith is **not** what secularists see it to be: an irrational psychological response to the fear of the unknown causing one to take a "leap in the dark" which is also foolishly believed by some professed Christians! Coupling this verse with James 1:5-7, one can see that a person's faith is only as strong as the **evidence** that one sees is **logically connected to** (i.e., implying) **it!**

Our problem here lies in our ignorance of, unwillingness toward, and laziness in regard to the time and effort required to study, not only the **value** but the **mechanics** of proper reasoning as related to our final arrival in Heaven instead of Hell. No wonder Os Guinness wrote *Fit Bodies, Fat Minds: Why Evangelicals Don't Think and What to Do About It!* No more jellyfish, chickens, or wimps—let us raise secure, assertive children!

WHAT'S LOGIC GOT TO DO WITH IT? EVERYTHING!

(See graphic on next page.)

While we know that God's **revelation** (in nature and the Bible) is the dominant and controlling factor in Christian ethics, we must recognize the priority in using our reason to determine or deduce that: God is, and the Bible is His **only** written authoritative Word! Can one go to heaven without being logical with the General/Natural Revelation available as brute facts in the cosmos in recognizing the truthfulness of the Cosmological, Teleological, and Moral Arguments proving the existence of Deity? Can one fail to infer from facts about the Scriptures that the 66 books making them up are **inspired** in a **verbal** sense (i.e., the very words as well as the thoughts expressed in the original languages) and a **plenary** sense (i.e., all parts equally inspired which accordingly means it is complete, authoritative, inerrant, and infallible) and **spend eternity with God**? Then since not everything in the Bible is required, we must further **interpret** that Word to show the how and the why as to "the Bible teaches Doctrine 'X' as a matter of **obligation** or as a matter of **option**." Thus, accurate thinking has a role to play in ethics and every other theological discipline—which is not only valuable but **vital** to every accountable human! As an overall summary statement I would contend that "X" involves the fact that: **The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that to be saved from their sins, men must believe in, love, and obey Him.** Please explain how the Bible defines Jesus, or does that matter? What does "saved from their sins" mean? By *men* do you mean infants or only those accountable? How do the Scriptures define "believe"? What

What's Logic Got to Do With It? **EVERYTHING!**

[To Do With the Truth That:]

How Does the Bible Define Jesus? Saved?
Sin? Men? Believe? Love? Obey?

"X" = the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is
the Son of God and that to be saved from
their sins, men must believe in, love, and
obey Him

Interpretation: Proof
that the Bible teaches "X"

The Bible (only)
Is
Word of God

God
Exists

Foundation/Crucial Matters:
How to think/reason properly

Without this, all of the above
is **Impossible!**

does God's Word really teach about loving and obeying God? Underneath **all** of this is a sometimes ignorantly neglected, deliberately ignored, and even disdained **crucial foundational matter: How to think or reason properly!** Without this, it is impossible to deduce anything from the true propositions (i.e., statements) of the 66 books of Scripture, man's final authority! Thinking correctly matters—eternity is an awfully long time to be wrong!

Much confusion arises when some people disparage or put down "head knowledge" as if rational thinking is suspect and ought to be strongly discouraged. When folks do this, just ask them: "What are your **reasons** for believing that?" Those who somehow imagine logic to be something at odds with Scripture need to see that Bible examples of logical argumentation could be multiplied indefinitely, since the Old Testament prophets preached by Divine inspiration, setting out sound arguments in promoting God's causes, and our Lord and His apostles regularly reasoned and argued the Truth with Jews in the synagogues and with Greeks in the marketplace (or even with pagan philosophers on Mars Hill in Athens as did Paul). Knowing how to argue and think correctly is essential in studying the Bible, proclaiming the Gospel, and even for learning all the subjects that are taught in secular schools and colleges! Logic is basic because **thinking** is basic. Such is a bedrock, fundamental necessity because no distinctively human activity can occur without **thought!**

LOSING OUR YOUNG

Thinking has a lot to do with life and certainty, and the Bible places supreme value upon the thought life: "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Pro. 23:7; cf. Mat. 15:18-19). Having done Bible Chair work in two different states and having endeavored in other ways to help young Christians keep their faith in Christ, I maintain that unless the next generation is trained how to think properly, our children and grandchildren will jettison the Savior and His blood-bought church in the face of overwhelming opposition from worldly philosophy (Col. 2:8). This is especially true from macro-evolutionary thinking and/or acceptance of erroneous atheistic teaching on the problem of evil. Our youth have already

been brainwashed with the notion that if anyone claims absolute, objective knowledge about anything that they should laugh that notion to scorn because, at best, all we can attain is “relative truth.” They will say things like: “Christianity may be ‘**our truth**,’ but it isn’t everybody’s truth.” Generally speaking, we have failed to even instruct them to ask: “Is **that** absolute, objective truth?” Or, when anyone makes the statement that “science is the **only source** of objective truth,” we should train them to say: “You just made a philosophical truth claim—which per your own rules cannot be tested by science, therefore it’s just your mere subjective view!” Our schools have enabled the young to *break free* and soar above “naïve notions of God and morality” or so they think, but we **must resist!** They must be taught that Christians do not have the right to be stupid! We must get materials to them that will serve the purpose of aiding maturing teenagers who want to go beyond “watered down Mickey Mouse youth group materials” into the serious business of Christian evidences. Why not buy them some e-books on the Bible and logic for their electronic gizmos? You might just be saving a soul from death and covering a multitude of sins (Jam. 5:19-20).

Alleged Biblical Contradictions

Tragically, some Christians (and not just our youth!) do not know enough logic to see through foolish and simplistic alleged contradictions or discrepancies made by critics of the Bible who use such to try to disprove its Divine authorship. For instance, Matthew 20:30 states that Christ healed two blind men, while Mark 10:46 states that blind Bartimaeus was healed. Skeptics use this to charge the Bible with contradiction! The Christian should have realized (even if the critic does not!) that a **contradiction** is defined as the conjunction of the affirmation and denial of a premise, in the same time, place, and sense (that is, P and Not-P, or in symbolic form: $P \bullet \sim P$). For any pair of contradictory premises, one **must be true** and the **other false**. So, Matthew says Christ healed two blind men and Mark says Christ healed Bartimaeus—thus **no contradiction exist at all**—since Mark did not say **only** Bartimaeus was healed. This is injected into the equation by the skeptic! Examples of logical

fallacies like this can easily be multiplied to demonstrate that without proper training in reasoning in this one area alone, one becomes easy prey for anti-Christian teachers. (What is your congregation doing about it? Has it ever had a class on how to handle these potential faith-destroyers for adults and youth?)

The “New Hermeneutic”

Unfortunately opposition comes from not only from those **outside** the church, but tragically, also from **within**. Some have even accused us of upholding the notion that until and unless one obtains a degree in philosophy or takes course work in formal logic, he cannot make it to heaven! This is a bald-faced lie! Nothing could be further from the truth! Some of us **have** rightly pointed out that accountable males and females must do more than just casually glance at the cosmos and the Bible, and that as much as possible learn proper, precise reasoning however they can. However, typical of apostates, Neal Griffin takes this even further and makes two major blunders in Charles Holt’s paper by stating:

The New Covenant is not a legal system with codified laws; or worse yet, a legal system with camouflaged directions which require legal specialists with special tools to unlock and make known what God expects of us.... Do we require the wisdom of the world (Aristotelian hermeneutics) to know what pleases God? Legalists say that we do. God says otherwise. Whom shall we believe?

Notice all the inferences and implication that Neal himself makes! He foolishly infers that the “wisdom of the world” described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 2:21 is “Aristotelian hermeneutics”! I must say I follow and agree with much more of Aristotle’s than foolish, confused “Nealian” hermeneutics! By the way, who *invented* Neal’s brand of interpretation? Our brother needs to study to see that Aristotle did not **invent** logic, he only helped discover and to sort out its main principles—those undeniable and necessary laws of thought which are the same for all thinking people everywhere. In fact, Neal is using these very principles in his article (but I guess he does not know it)! What Neal does with the logic of Jesus, John the Baptist, Paul, and the rest of the disciples is a real wonder, especially the

sound argument forms which these men used to deal rationally with other humans. You probably recall lots of times when you or others used the kind of reasoning we call a disjunctive syllogism (DS): “Either stop fighting or get to your rooms.”—“You did not stop fighting, therefore...”). Jesus repeatedly used this basic line of thought in **constructive dilemmas** on the Jews of His day and handily defeated His opponent’s attempts to use such against Him (cf. Hightower “Christ Confronted” 128-38)! Paul even borrows the *sorite* (which will be explained later) from the Greeks in 1 Corinthians 15:12-19 regarding the claim by some of no resurrection of the dead!

I would ask Griffin, who it is that claims the New Testament reads like the Ten Commandments? The truth is that most of **the rest of the Old Testament** does not read like the Ten Commandments either and yet it is still God’s law (Luke 10:26). Like all liberals, in his attempt to get out from under a “pattern theology,” Neal seems blissfully unaware that without law to form what he calls a “legal system,” there is **no sin** (1 John 3:4; Rom. 4:15)! Is he really oblivious to the fact that Paul said he **was** under law to Christ (1 Cor. 9:21; cf. Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 14:37) and that the New Testament is just as much law as was the Old Testament sections of law, poetry, and prophecy (Luke 24:44; Mat. 7:12)? The gospels, epistles, and Revelation are our “law” today (Jam. 1:25; Rev. 22:18-19)!

At least Griffin is a bit more consistent than some—in that he even describes **direct commands** along with examples and inferences as tools **invented by legalists** (despite the fact that he himself uses all three). **Note:** Since we have never made explicit statements alleging what they accuse us of, our opponents therefore have no alternative but to attempt (contradictorily to their own view of epistemology!) to use Logical Inference as their *proof* for such! In other words, brethren like Griffin have violated their own credo and once again have failed to deduce properly even when they attempt to use *our* logic! To play the hypocrite with us like this is evil enough, but when one does the same thing with **God’s Word** (2 Pet. 3:16b; Gal. 1:7-9; 1 Cor. 4:6) whereby he simply inserts information that is not there (or deduces falsehoods because of his own loose attitude, ig-

norance, or logical sloppiness), he thereby makes himself an adversary of **God Himself**. Then nothing remains “but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries” according to God (Heb. 10:27).

The Absolute Necessity of *Natural* Logic

I would like to go on record as saying that no accountable sinner will go to heaven without the proper use of reasoning which at least involves what is commonly called **natural logic**, which is our native or inborn facility of judgment and rationality.

This natural logic in some sense stands to the developed art and science of logic as any native ability (for instance—singing) stands to that same ability as perfected by training and criticism. By natural logic we are able to perform correctly and readily those primary acts of judgment and inference without which our later scientific and philosophical reasoning could not be valid (McCall xix).

This is in fact what is involved in our “reaching the age of accountability,” “age of discernment,” or ability to choose between right from wrong as to its cosmic or spiritual implications in the first place (Eze. 28:15; Neh. 10:28; Jon. 4:11; 1 Cor. 13:11; Heb. 5:13-14). Most of us are actually quite good *natural* logicians, or we would not still be alive! Consider the quite natural reasoning process exhibited by Nicodemus in his nocturnal visit to Jesus: “Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). Is his conclusion regarding Christ vital (i.e., obligatory) inferential knowledge (cf. 9:30-33; Mark 16:20) or only a hunch *read back into* the situation like liberals like to accuse us of when we have made similar deductions? Fact is, the teaching of the **NH** has caused digression from God’s Word all over the world, and this heinous error primarily centers upon attacking **inferential thinking**. This not only includes arguments for God’s existence, but also the parallel false notion that the old hermeneutic of CENIS (Command-Example-Necessary Inference-Silence Forbids) has failed miserably in relationship to the Bible. (See also Perryman’s volume in Works Cited for a classic *example* of this foolish and contradictory attack that

calls for a **NH** that is endorsed by such “liberals of renown” as Al Maxey). Part of our obedience to God the Father and Jesus Christ involves our proper use of reason so we do not **loose** where He has **bound**, nor **bind** where He has **loosed** (Deu. 4:2; Mat. 18:18; Rev. 22:18-19). This automatically requires us to recognize and correctly use logic, especially **implication/inference**.

We can only hope and pray that New Hermeneutikers (hereafter NH’ers) do not apply their unbiblical notions to taking (or giving others) medication! Imagine that you were to follow the NH’ers interpretational procedure of “express command-only/logic-is-unreliable...don’t focus on the rules of logic or emphasize inference”! What if you merely read on the label of a bottle of poison the explicit command: “**Use 2 ounces at a time**” and you infer that it is cough medicine? You will pay dearly for that wrong inference in regard to yourself (or even worse with your child) despite the fact that you *followed* the overemphasized (by NH’ers) express command (i.e., imperative)!

Don’t Take the Fence Down Until

In their attempt to do away with “Implication/Inferential” interpretation, liberals have failed in regard to the vital principle John F. Kennedy once wrote after reading some G. K. Chesterton material: “Don’t ever take a fence down until you know the reason it was put up.” This is true in reference to a Jurassic Park electrified fence and even more true regarding Biblical (Direct Statement, Positive and Negative Example, Implication, Silence-Is-Prohibitive) hermeneutics! Even if they were accurate about the past (they are not), NH devotees taking us on quaint little history trips through Restoration history using **long-distance subjective psychoanalysis** of brethren of yesteryear does **nothing** to answer those of us who presently use the so-called Old Hermeneutic and can easily falsify the “New” one! Liberals truly do not understand the reason the “Old Hermeneutic” was “put up” (i.e., ascertained and used) in the first place! As we have proved over and over again: **It is in God’s Word**. While they surely can find brethren who misapplied it, what they cannot do is refute its basic validity. Though they basically look at things

like reason and rationality as merely cultural biases, the fact is that NH'ers are living on borrowed capital from the world of the Old Hermeneutic.

LOGIC DEFINED

“So why study logic? Perhaps if we understood what logic is, we could better answer the question” (Clark Preface v). In raw, unpolished (i.e., colloquial) terms, logic is what tells you that you do not stand directly in front of a man who is chewing tobacco, with both his cheeks chockfull and juice running profusely down both sides of his mouth—and violently slap your hands together on either side of his face! The theistic astrophysicist Jason Lisle explains:

Logic involves the use of arguments. When some people think of “arguments,” they think of an emotionally heated exchange—a “yelling match.” But that is not what is meant here. An argument is a chain of statements (called “propositions”) in which the truth of one is asserted on the basis of the other(s). Biblically, we are supposed to argue in this way; we are to provide a reasoned defense (an argument) for the Christian faith (1 Peter 3:15) with gentleness and respect. An argument takes certain information as accepted (this is called a “premise”), and then proceeds to demonstrate that another claim must also be true (called the “conclusion”) (7).

Logic is defined by Geisler and Brooks formally as “**the study of right reason or valid inferences and the attending fallacies, formal and informal**” or as simply meaning “**a way to think so that we can come to correct conclusions by understanding implications and the mistakes people often make in thinking**” (12-13). Thus, logic can be defined succinctly as: “the science of necessary inference” (Clark 1). Is it any wonder that the NH'ers have an aversion to logic—ranging from a **distrust**, to **fear** (i.e., logophobia), and even to **hatred** (i.e., misology)? Every Christian should desire to “work heartily, as unto the Lord, and not unto men” (Col. 3:23) in being able to fulfill the verses which demand that we “prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21) and to “sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord: *being* ready always to give answer to every man that asketh you a reason concerning the hope that is in you, yet with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Thus, we will

be concerned with “ordering our thoughts” in recognition that the Bible requires it. “Logic is reason looking at itself to see how good reason works” (Geisler and Brooks 12). We therefore should study the methods that we use to analyze information using valid arguments with true premises which imply that our conclusions are true. It follows that Jesus implied such a study when He said, “and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). So did Paul in commending the noble Bereans for “examining the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so” (Acts 17:11).

Simply put, you can't avoid studying logic, so you might as well know what you are doing...Even interpretation requires logic... [because we] “have to assume that the author tried to communicate a logical thought, and the only way we have to find that thought is to put all the clues together and set them in logical order”

And giving a reason for your faith would be useless if it were not a logical reason that you expected others to accept on rational grounds. The only way to avoid logic is to quit thinking, because logic is the basis for all thought [and communication] (Geisler and Brooks 13).

IMPORTANT DEFINITIONS RELATED TO LOGIC

1. **Metaphysical:** relating to ultimates or ultimate realities—the meaning and nature of the universe. Why do some people prepare like any other sensible person for the future, getting an education, a job, saving money, buying cars and houses, preparing for retirement, and so on, always looking to the future and wanting to know what will happen and what they should do? Nevertheless, when it comes to investigating the **afterlife**, whether there is a God, a hell or heaven, why do they have all the initiative of a slug? They end up totally unprepared for death, and they seem to like it that way! In charge of the checkout counter is **death** itself. After your selection is made, you pay with your life. Whether there is anything outside the exit door and what happens there is the big question (Rials 1-2).

2. **Religion:** the recognition by man that is he not the greatest being (i.e., force) in the universe and that he must bring himself into harmony with that being (i.e., Force).

3. **God:** The “infinite, eternal, uncreated personal reality, who has created all that exists other than himself, and who has revealed Himself to his human creatures as holy and loving” (Hick 14). God is most fully explained in the Bible, and especially in the person of His Divine Son—Jesus the Christ.

This view entails the claim that God is *personal*: that he thinks, loves, hates, makes decisions, can hear and respond to the prayers of his creature, man. With reference to the *world*, the view entails the further claim that God is both immanent in the world and yet transcends the world, that he cannot be identified with the world yet is concerned with the world. God is the ultimate *source* of all reality other than himself (Warren, *Have Atheists v*).

A. **Atheist:** one who claims to **know** that God does not exist; he affirms that not only is there no sound argument which proves that Deity exists, but that there is evidence (primarily from the so-called *Problem of Evil & Suffering*) which positively “proves” that God does **not** exist.

B. **Agnostic** (in two flavors):

[**Strong**]: One who claims that **no one** can know if God exists or not, which affirmation when closely examined amounts to an (often-allowed-to-slip-by) audacious knowledge claim. Does he know that no one in the past, present, or future has known or will ever know? How? Where is the **proof**?

[**Weak**]: One who only asserts that **he** cannot or does not know if God exists or not. He may be correct in alleging that he does not know, but where is the proof that he absolutely **cannot** know in the future from evidence available to him?

Some religionists are agnostics to the point that they believe it is impossible to know Truth, with the **pessimistic** group saying, “So why even try?” while the other more **positive** group says that the exciting and only goal is in the “search” for it (though you never find it and know you found it). Unfortunately many professed Christians are in this latter group. If life were an exam, they prefer to leave most of their answers blank (see *The Religion of Vague* by Rials).

4. **Pascal's Wager:** According to Roman Catholic theologian Blaise Pascal, reason (in man) cannot determine or decide whether God exists or not, but a man ought to bet his life on God because of the chance of infinite gain (i.e., Heaven) and chance of Hell, as opposed to finite loss (Heads or Tails). Compare what the inspired apostle Paul wrote about such a mentality in 1 Corinthians 15:19, 30-32 and a paper titled, "A Biblical Refutation of Pascal's Wager" (Hightower 332-41).

5. **Finitism:** God is **not** held to be **infinite** (without bounds, limitless, endless, immeasurable); a deficient (as per the Bible) view that God is definitely limited in some attribute such as power, goodness, presence, or knowledge, etc.

6. **Truth:** corresponding to **reality**; statements are thus true when they correspond with actuality (i.e., what is so); a statement is true if what it says to be the case **is** the case, and false if what it says to be the case is **not** the case. Is truth logical? Yes! Even a liberal **should** be able to understand the three laws of thought.

In fact, we can know what we know about God, the Bible, or the church because thought applies to reality. In that context, knowledge is possible. If thought does not apply to reality, then we can know nothing. Logic is a necessary presupposition to all thought. Without logic (the laws of thought, including the Law of Identity, Law of Non-Contradiction, and the Law of Excluded Middle) we cannot even think. But is it only a presupposition? How do we know that logic applies to reality? We know it simply because it is undeniable. Now this gets us back to those self-evident first principles. Do not let this scare you or cause you to listen to the "logic illiterates" who try to frighten you about such! Even if your New Hermeneutic brethren cannot—you can understand Winnie-the-Pooh, can't you? Well, Pooh had an adventure that illustrates how self-evident principles work. He was walking through the forest when he came to Rabbit's house.

So he bent down, put his head into the hole, and called out: "Is anybody home?" There was a sudden scuffling noise from inside the hole, and then silence. "What I said was, 'Is anybody home?'" called out Pooh very loudly. "No!" said a voice, and then added, "You needn't shout so loud. I heard you quite well the first time." "Bother!" said Pooh. "Isn't there anybody here at all?" "Nobody."

Winnie-the-Pooh took his head out of the hole, and thought for a little, and he thought to himself, “There must be somebody there, because somebody must have *said* ‘Nobody.’”

See, it’s that simple! A self-evident principle is one that cannot be denied without assuming that it is true in the process of the denial. Rabbit’s statement is really the reverse of this. It is self-defeating because if you have to assume that a statement is true in order to deny it, it is actually undeniable. First principles of logic, which are the starting point of all truth and the foundation of all thought, are these kinds of statements (Hightower, “Declaring” 136-37).

7. **Knowledge:** to learn truth; clear and certain perception/understanding.

8. **Epistemology:** The study of how we come to knowledge, including sense experience—touch, taste, smell, hearing, and sight—called empiricism, and also by **reason**.

9. **Natural Theology or General Revelation:** proof of the existence of God by means of the Moral (i.e., real right and wrong), Cosmological (i.e., contingency), and Teleological (i.e., design) Arguments (See Hightower, “Atheism: True or False?”). Study Romans 1 and 2, Acts 14:15-17, and 17:24-29 which show the biblical approval of such argumentation. You ask: “Why do atheists believe in unbelief?” You must realize that you can “lead an atheist to evidence, but you cannot make him **reason** or **think**” (at least not correctly which is why the Bible refers to him as a fool—Psalm 14:1). You see, atheists in effect commit intellectual suicide in denying serious evidential arguments proving God, and (instead of Christians) it should be pointed out that **they**, as deniers of God, are the ones acting on **emotion**—an irrational response to even the possibility of a Supreme Entity higher than themselves. While such is certainly not the same as setting forth sound argumentation which positively set forth the case for God, two can play the game of **psychoanalyzing** the opponent or *couching the contender*! A number of good books have been written doing just this, in turning the arguments of atheism upon itself and showing how its underpinnings are fallacious. R. C. Sproul demonstrates in *If There’s A God, Why Are There Atheists?* that atheists have a vested interest in denying the existence of

God who claims moral authority over our lives. Just as Paul reminds us in Romans 1, the giants of secular philosophy are driven by their sinful hearts rather than their open minds.

A typical admission is made by famed Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz: “I have a nostalgic taste for tradition.... But I live my life as if there is no God. **The existence of God would interfere with my morality**” (emphasis added) (Bermingham). In 2008, Bill Maher produced his movie *Religulous*, which was a combination of *religion* and *ridiculous*, and in it “Maher himself says that he rejects God because **God has rules that interfere with his sex life**” (emphasis) (Houdman). Jesus gave a description and explanation of this (John 3:19-21; 7:7)! “The will of man is on a collision course with the will of God” (Sproul 146).

Sir Richard Dawkins in *The Blind Watchmaker* said, “Darwin made it possible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist.” Many people are becoming aware that the intelligent design movement is making it impossible to be an intellectually fulfilled atheist, and the intellectual atheists don’t like it (Bermingham).

Antony Flew certainly scandalized his former fellow colleagues in the church of fundamentalist atheism with his 2008 book, *There Is A God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind*, declaring why he had (after over 50 years denying a Supreme Being) become a theist! Along with Tom Warren’s debate books, every high school student ought to be required to read it.

It should be noted that Flew did not change his mind due to Pentecostalism, the warm fuzzies, a burning in the bosom, or because of Pascal’s Wager, but because—in the face of overwhelming **evidence**—he finally **reasoned** his way out of atheism and into theism. Please do not say that cliché of, “No one is ever ‘argued’ ” into belief, because **everyone** should only believe due to **evidence so logically related** that it produces exactly that conclusion—namely: **the Truth!**

10. **Special Revelation:** communication from God other than through Natural Theology or General Revelation: the 66 books of the **Bible**. Proof that the Bible is from God would include: its con-

taining true predictive prophecy clearly made in advance of their fulfillment, its being characterized by a humanly impossible unity, its treating science in such a way as to transcend human invention when written, and its possessing other features that are beyond mere human wisdom, invention, or are corroborative in nature (e.g., archaeology). (See Barfield, Comfort, Kearley, Kligerman, Newman, Schnabel, Shelly, Stoner, and Thomsen in Works Cited.)

11. **Theodicy**: an explanation of God's justice in spite of the fact that evil and suffering exists. See the book of Job in the Bible, *Have Atheists Proved There Is No God?*, debates with atheists (including Flew and Matson) by Thomas B. Warren, and the Moral Argument for the existence of God. On a personal level this must be dealt with, preferably **before** being confronted by skeptical intellectuals or by personal events which cause one to question God while emotionally "down in the valley of pain and sorrow." Study Warren's *Our God: A Sun & Shield For Troubled Hearts* for a devotionally marvelous volume.

12. **Faith**: that by which invisible things are proved and we are convinced of their reality (cf. Heb. 11:3; Rom. 1:20); a means of coming to knowledge by taking God at His implied "word" concerning Himself in Natural Theology or General Revelation and also Special Revelation (Rom. 10:17); Hebrews 11:1 says that faith is the substance/assurance (Greek *hupostasis*) of things hoped for, a conviction/evidence (Greek *elegkos*) of things not (empirically) seen; *elegkos* denotes a strict proof or demonstration—a proof which thoroughly convinces the understanding and determines the will (cf. "ask in faith, nothing doubting"—Jam. 1:6); like geometry—to produce conviction which carries the force of demonstration. Once one sees the evidence proving the **inspiration** of the **Scriptures** then it becomes our evidence by reading and logical studying to further **truths implied** by the God who inspired it. This includes both **explicit** ones (i.e., statements) from reading it, and also by logical inference on our part from His message (i.e., **implicit** statements) by "putting it together" (i.e., inferring) in a rational manner as creatures made in His Divine image (Isa. 1:18; Gen. 1:26-27; 1 Cor.

11:7; Psa. 119:16; Mat. 4:5-7). What makes something binding (i.e., obligatory) is **not** our inferences, but **God's** implications! "It is sad that faith is now understood as a blind act of will—a decision to believe something independent of reason or as a simple choice while ignoring the lack of evidence for what is believed" (Moreland and Matlock 24). Those who have merely been *socialized* into Christianity do not possess true rock-solid evidential Biblical faith, so it is no surprise they fall away from Christ (assuming they were ever actually Christians in the first place).

13. **Logic:** That discipline which attempts to distinguish **correct** from **incorrect** reasoning; the study of **argument**, and argument is a discourse involving **implication** (called inference so far as our human mental processes are concerned) or **transition from data to conclusion** (i.e., that to which implication proceeds); the **study** of the **principles** that determine whether inferences are **justified** or **unjustified**; thus, the science of valid inference. For the believer, it is the art of reasoning well—of learning to think God's thoughts after Him. Let us put it this way: "Logic starts with looking both ways to cross the street, and either progresses from there or it **stops!**" Logic helps to make a distinction between **what** is said or taught and **how** it is said or taught.

Unfortunately, the person with the clearest and most graceful expression does not always have the soundest idea. So, though it is natural for us to be impressed by eloquent writers or speakers, it's unwise to assume that their ideas are necessarily sound. As...Augustine once said, "Our concern with a man is not with what eloquence he teaches, but with what evidence" (Ruggiero 178).

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Christ, but their own belly; and **by their smooth and fair speech** they beguile the hearts of the innocent (Rom. 16:17-18).

14. **Inference:** A type of thinking or mental activity in which we say: "This is so **because** that is so," or "***This*** is so; therefore ***that*** is so." Inference is present whenever we assert that a given statement is true because another is true—whenever we furnish evidence for our

beliefs (1 Pet. 3:15; 1 The. 5:21; Acts 17:11)—whenever we answer the challenging question, “Why?” with a, “**Because,**” and state our reasons or evidence for believing as we do, we engage in the “logical type” of thinking. As a philosopher and author of logic texts, Lionel Ruby, says: “We have been logicians all of our lives without knowing it” (Ruby vii). We have no choice as to whether we will make inferences or not, just whether they will be good ones or bad ones! Strange as it is, liberals blame logical inference for nearly all the ills to be found (they think) in the Lord’s church, but they should not. They should rather blame only **improper** or **incorrect** ones and then feel obligated to show us **why** they are wrong ones? In logic, inference is **not** a subtle quality underlying or felt to underlie a situation, action, or person. It is **not** a mere hint, inkling, suspicion, undercurrent, undertone, or a mere insinuation, intimation, suggestion, or slight indication! See Jesus’ usage of Exodus 3:6 in Matthew 22:31-32 to which our modern NH friends would never have been able to escape the Lord’s use of the verse by alleging that it was not a “command”! No, our Lord proved these Jews dead wrong by means of an inspired declarative statement first stated to people living long before His time—by **implication!**

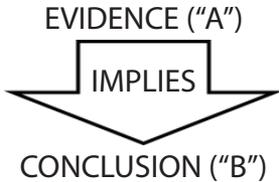
The non-inferring Christian (and especially an elder, preacher, or Bible class teacher) is about as worthless to the Lord’s cause as a pitch-pipe is to Yoko Ono! I don’t care how much he likes puppies, visits the hospitals, weeps over Max Lucado’s books, or how he empathizes with you over your (even adulterous!) marriage, if he hasn’t figured out that Bible preaching and teaching “**IS IMPLICATION**” and if he’s not part of those who show you the absolute cruciality and methodology of making accurate (i.e., logical) **INFERENCES** on the part of all followers of Christ, then he’s a Judas Iscariot! (Hightower, “An Exposé” 364).

Ignorance of inference is **not** piety and devotion to God, it is **heresy!**

15. **Implication:** the meaning is conveyed without being stated outright in so many words (i.e., expressly by directly stating the point); implied. Those claiming that **only** explicit Biblical statements are (or can be) binding upon us today obviously do **not** have an explicit statement stating such! This is a self-referentially refuting

(absurd) viewpoint since there is **no explicit** statement in the Bible saying **this!** So these foolish folks at the same time both **deny** and **affirm** their own principle! It is important to note that the Bible's **implicit** teachings are those statements that must also be true **due to the truth of the Bible's explicit teachings** whether we as humans **ever** decipher them or not (i.e., they are objective truth)! Ask yourself: "Were the Sadducees lost over their denial of an afterlife and the resurrection of the dead?" Were they accountable for knowing the **logically extended meaning or implication** from Exodus 3:6? World without end—**Yes!** More technically, "implication" means: "Statement A implies Statement B, if it is impossible for Statement A to be true and for Statement B to be false." One statement (or a combination of statements) **implies** (logically extends to) a second statement when the truthfulness of the first guarantees to truthfulness of the second. Note the following chart from George Beals (3):

IMPLICATION



IF IT IS IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE CLAIMED EVIDENCE TO BE TRUE WHILE THE CONCLUSION IS FALSE, THEN THE EVIDENCE IMPLIES (PROVES) THE CONCLUSION.

OTHERWISE
THE CLAIMED EVIDENCE
DOES NOT IMPLY
THE CONCLUSION



Here is a simplified version of Beals' illustration of the principle:

1. If it is true that "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" (John 3:16) (Statement #1), then
2. "God so loved **you** that He gave His only begotten Son." [Replace "**you**" with your name]. (Statement #2).

It is impossible for the first statement to be true and for the second (the one with your name in it) to be false. If God loved the world, then God also loved you because you are part of the *world* as meant in the original verse. The explicit verse of John 3:16 implies that God gave His only begotten Son for you! The first statement itself is in the Bible, and the second statement is not, yet we can know that both are absolutely true! What person bitten with the mad dog of *logophobia* wants to say: “Well, I accept the first statement, but the second one is tainted or polluted by human reasoning”? Or perhaps even if this person agrees we can know that the second statement is true, they then claim: “Well—we must not try to **bind it** on others!”

Some have claimed, like Olan Hicks, that our obligation to Statement #1 is not the same as our obligation to Statement #2 (Hicks 69)! So with liberals like Hicks, we have an individual who even fancies himself a Gospel preacher (I do not!) who does not know from John 3:16 that God so loved **him** that He gave His only begotten Son! Come on folks, this is **not** calculus or physics! We expect not only our schoolteachers to employ Venn diagrams but also our **kids** and **grandkids** to utilize them in **elementary** school on up **to think straight**. We rebut or stifle their whining about having to learn something sometimes a bit *new* to **them**, but what about **us**, brethren? Do some of us give *lip service* as to desiring to “rightly divide” the Word, but whine about learning something new to us as to logic?

IS A CATHOLIC WHO LIVED OVER 1500 YEARS AGO SMARTER THAN YOU?

The Roman Catholic “church father” Augustine had it right many years ago when he explained that the

science of reasoning is of very great service in searching into and unraveling all sorts of questions that come up in Scripture, only in the use of it we must guard against the love of wrangling, and the childish vanity of entrapping an adversary (Augustine 31:48).

In a certain sense, Paul condemns a Christian who is “proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over

words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth” (1 Tim. 6:4-5—NKJV). We must “avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and strivings about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless. Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned” (Tit. 3:9-11—NKJV).

Though living from A.D. 354 to 430, Augustine was too smart to think that the wisdom of the world (1 Cor. 1:20-21) referred to “Aristotelian hermeneutics” like Neal Griffin. He knew that Paul even used a Greek “sorite” argumentation in 1 Cor. 15:12-20 in connection ultimately with the valid Modus Tollens argument form or rule of inference. Do **you** my friend? In setting up his wonderful explanation of these verses, Augustine proceeded to say:

There are also valid processes of reasoning which lead to false conclusions, by following out to its logical consequences the error of the man with whom one is arguing; and these conclusions are sometimes drawn by a good and learned man, with the object of making the person from whose error these consequences result, feel ashamed of them, and of thus leading him to give up his error, when he finds that if he wishes to retain his old opinion, he must of necessity also hold other opinions when he condemns. For example, the apostle did not draw true conclusions when he said, “Then Christ is not risen,” and again, “Then is our preaching vain, and your faith also is vain” and further on drew other inferences which are all utterly false; for Christ **has** risen, the preaching of those who declared this fact was not in vain, nor was their faith in vain who had believed it. But all these false inferences followed legitimately from the opinion of those who said that there was no resurrection of the dead. These inferences, then, being repudiated as false, it follows that since they would be true if the dead rise not, there will be a resurrection from the dead. As then, valid conclusions may be drawn not only from true but from false propositions, the laws of valid reasoning may easily be learnt in the schools, outside the pale of the Church. But the truths of propositions must be inquired into in the sacred books of the Church [Scripture]. (emphasis added) (31:49).

Instead of being suspicious or afraid of logic, Paul uses a **sorites** (*sō-rī-tēz*) as if right out of a logic book! This just amounts to a series of propositions or enthymemes in which the premises are so arranged that the predicate of the first is the subject of the next, continuing this until the subject of the first is united or logically tied to the predicate of the last. As Hurley (274) says:

A **sorites** is a chain of categorical syllogisms in which the intermediate conclusions have been left out...Here is an example:

All bloodhounds are dogs.
 All dogs are mammals.
 No fish are mammals.
 Therefore, no fish are bloodhounds.

The first two premises validly imply the intermediate conclusion “All bloodhounds are mammals.” If this intermediate conclusion is then treated as a premise and put together with the third premise, the final conclusion follows validly. The sorites is thus composed of two valid categorical syllogisms and is therefore valid. The rule in evaluating a sorites is based on the idea that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If any of the component syllogisms in a sorites is invalid, the entire sorites is invalid.

If need be, get your kids or grandkids to help you draw out Venn diagrams so you can see this one’s validity! Do not let this run you away from understanding something much more important than dogs, mammals, or fish: **God’s Word!** Do you not see? Paul’s main point in making his premises hypothetical is to show the Corinthians’ disastrous consequences implied in their false view and then to contradict them firmly not only in 1 Cor. 15:4, but finally in 15:20: “But now **hath Christ been raised from the dead**, the firstfruits of them that are asleep.” From this you can easily see that his real argument is in the form *Modus Tollens* (MT): If P then Q; not Q; therefore, not P. Any one of the doctrines their “no resurrection from the dead” viewpoint implied, if **false**, would falsify their original premise because anything which implies that something is **true** when it is actually **false**, is false itself! One should notice that to draw legitimate inferences truly implied by another person’s position is **not** “putting words in his mouth” or “saying things I never

said"! One **does** say them by implication even if he never states them in so many words (i.e., explicitly)!

Jesus Inferential Ability Was Phenomenal!

Jesus repeatedly drew legitimate inferences from the false positions of others, especially the Pharisees. When they accused him of sinning when He healed on the Sabbath, He showed them (and all the people who followed them) that they therefore implied a regard for humans made in God's image as something of **less value** than mere animals (Luke 14:5). He also showed that they were implying that it was not lawful to **do good** on the Sabbath (Mark 3:4).

When they alleged that His eating with sinners and publicans implied that He could not be a righteous man (much less the Messiah), He refuted the claim by pointing out that a physician must go to where the sick are located (2:15-17).

When they used certain Scriptures about oath-taking to circumvent their duty to honor their own parents, He showed them (and all who would listen to Him) that they in fact were: (1) hypocrites, (2) making void or leaving the Word of God by way of human teaching and tradition, (3) vain worshippers, and (4) teaching as their doctrines the precepts of mere men (Mat. 15:3-9; Mark 7:6-13). So far as I can tell, not one of them had ever **explicitly admitted** these sins—but they still had committed them all!

Instead of their false view that "so long as a person stopped before the external act of sin, then he's a non-sinner" implied in various ways (Mat. 5:21-22, 27-28), He showed them that evil starts **internally** in the heart or soul and then proceeds outward to further sin **externally** (Mark 7:21-23). His series of charges set out in Matthew 23 repeatedly showed the serious implications involved in their beliefs and actions so without their repentance and change of life they could not escape the judgment of hell! He knew exactly what the coming destruction of the Temple would be implying about the future of Judaism and the old covenant (Mat. 24:1-2)!

He certainly correctly inferred that His coming death on the cross would be viewed as shameful by others and that it implied horrible pain and suffering (26:38-44). In summary, Jesus never

made an incorrect inference, showing us the true path to godliness involves due study and understanding of implication.

**LOGIC ONLY OBSERVED/ASCERTAINED
(NOT INVENTED) BY MEN!**

Augustine then went on to give the heading for Chapter 32 in his book as follows: **Valid Logical Sequence Is Not Devised But Only Observed By Man.** How true! Under this plain, correct statement, he explained the reality of the valid form of argument *Modus Tollens* to his ancient readers using *antecedent* (i.e., the component of a conditional or if-then statement immediately following *if*) and *consequent* (i.e., the component of a conditional or if-then statement immediately following *then*):

And yet the validity of logical sequences is not a thing devised by men, but is observed and noted by them that they may be able to learn and teach it; for it exists eternally in the reason of things, and has its origin with God. For as the man who narrates the order of events does not himself create that order; and as he who describes the situations of places, or the natures of animals, or roots, or minerals, does not describe arrangements of man; and as he who points out the stars and their movements does not point out anything that he himself or any other man has ordained; in the same way, he who says, “When the consequent is false, the antecedent must also be false,” says what is most true; but he does not himself make it so, he only points out that it **is** so (emphasis added) (32:50).

The logical form **Modus Tollens** that Augustine is describing looks like this:

Major Premise:

$A \supset B$ (If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ was not raised).

Minor Premise:

$\sim B$ (It is false that Christ was not raised—He **was** resurrected!)

Conclusion:

$\therefore \sim A$ (Therefore, it is false that there is no resurrection from the dead”

Augustine then continues:

And it is upon this rule that the reasoning I have quoted from the Apostle Paul proceeds. For the antecedent is, "There is no resurrection of the dead," the position taken up by those whose error the apostle wished to overthrow. Next, from this antecedent, the assertion, viz., that there is no resurrection of the dead, the necessary consequence is, "Then Christ is not risen." But this consequence is false, for Christ has risen; therefore the antecedent is also false. But the antecedent is, that there is no resurrection of the dead. We conclude, therefore, that there is a resurrection of the dead. Now all this is briefly expressed thus: If there is no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen; but Christ is risen, therefore there is a resurrection of the dead. This rule, then, that when the consequent is removed, is not made by man, but only pointed out by him. And this rule has reference to the validity of the reasoning, not to the truth of the statements (32:50). [For an even **more** finely detailed explanation of Paul's sorites, see Fahnestock!]

A word of **caution** is needed here. Remember that implication says: If statement P implies statement Q, and if statement P is true, then statement Q must also be true. Note this example: P—All Christians are followers of Jesus Christ; Q—Some Christians are followers of Jesus Christ. He who says P, must also say Q, because P implies Q. It would not be possible for someone to maintain that **all** Christians were followers of Christ, but that on the other hand **some** were **not**. Many students of logic get confused over the use here of *some*. In common conversation, we tend to contrast *some* with *others*. That is, to say that **some** Christians are followers of Jesus Christ implies (we wrongly think) that other Christians are **not** followers of Jesus Christ. In logic, when we say that some P are Q, we are saying **nothing** about whether other P are Q. Usually this happens because of the Fallacy of Accent (cf. many logic texts will list and explain the many varieties of fallacies).

16. **Law of Rationality:** This states that we must have adequate evidence for all the conclusions which we draw; also called **The Law of Sufficient Reason:** see Isaiah 1:18, 1 Peter 3:15, 1 Thessalonians 5:21, Acts 17:11. Is truth logical?

17. **The Three Laws of Thought Are Bedrock Principles:** There is no *getting behind* the following undeniable laws:

Law of Non-Contradiction

It is better to call it this than the “Law of Contradiction” since we ought to try to be *non*-contradictory! $\sim (P \bullet \sim P)$ —(It is false that P and not-P).

As to **Things**: nothing can both **have** and **not have** a given characteristic in precisely the same respect.

As to **Propositions**: a proposition cannot be both **true** and **false** relative to the same item or in the same respects.

Contradictory statements cannot both be true, and they cannot both be false. Consider the Bible’s teaching that “Jesus Christ is God incarnate” vs. “Jesus Christ is not God incarnate” as taught by Judaism, Islam, and atheists. At the exact same time and in the exact same way both statements cannot be true. The claim that there is “some truth” in both statements cannot **logically** be made. “This is perhaps the most fundamental of all laws of thought since the other laws can be reduced to it” (Geisler and Zukeran 69) (cf. Mat. 7:15; 24:24; John 8:12, 32, 42-47; 1 John 4:1, 6).

Law of Identity

(A is A)

As to **things**: anything is itself—as in “a cow is a cow” or “a horse is a horse” (even your preacher is himself) and different from all other things.

As to **propositions**: if a proposition (i.e., statement) is true, then it is true (for all persons, in all times, and in all places). Jesus implied this law when He said: “But let your speech be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: and whatsoever is more than these is of the evil *one*” (Mat. 5:37). There is every indication that He knew a fig tree was a fig tree!

In like manner, the average member of Christ’s church recognizes that the **Law of Identity** not only applies to cows, horses, and preachers, but also to the **church of the Bible** just as it did for the Lord (16:18)! No “one church is the same as another” for these logically consistent persons who want to think like God and His Son! “For were the principle of identity not true, then **God** could mean **not God**; **believe** could mean **not believe**, and **good** could mean **not good** [i.e., evil]” (Geisler and Zukeran 69). “Woe to 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; cf. Jam. 3:11).

Law of Excluded Middle

(A or not A)

As to **Things**: anything either has or it does not have that property.

As to **Propositions**: every precisely stated proposition is either true or false. No “middle ground” is possible, but rather one or the other statement must be true. Simply consider Jesus’ statement concerning the baptism of John the Baptist (Matt. 21:23-27; 12:30; Luke 11:23; cf. 1 John 1:5; 3:10).

Without exception, these three laws apply to all matters of thought and hold true for any and all worldviews. Therefore, the truth claims of other religions can also be subjected to these principles.

Logicians have traditionally considered these three principles to be both *necessary* and *inescapable* because all thought, correspondence, and action presuppose their truth and application. The laws are therefore said to be “*ontologically real*” [defining the ultimate characteristics of reality; including God!], “*cognitively necessary*” (no coherent thinking is possible without their application), and “*irrefutable*” (their attempted refutation presupposes their use in refuting them)” (Samples, *A World* 44).

18. **Assertion**: a thesis or belief not supported by adequate evidence; a mere unsupported opinion: “The moon is made out of green cheese.” Is this all your Christianity is to you—an unsupported opinion or maybe mere wish fulfillment? Why not believe “Dave Watson has a small nose”?; “Lynn Parker is a closet Catholic”?; “Baptism has nothing to do with salvation”? **Now be careful on this one**: “Terry is not talkative.”

Arguments, Premises, Conclusions

19. **Argument**: An argument is a group of statements (like we find making up Scripture); “a unit of discourse in which beliefs are supported by reasons.” A **sound** argument entails one which pres-

ents adequate evidence to support a thesis (i.e., conclusion); soundness involves (1) validity **and** (2) truthfulness of premises. A good argument (or claim) requires that the premises genuinely support the conclusion—in fact, they entail it. Be careful mentioning this around NH'ers, but this necessary connection between the premises and the conclusion is called an **inferential relationship!** Argument does not mean a mere verbal squabble or fight as one might have with a spouse, one's parent, or a friend. We use arguments every day. Every time someone asks you, "Why?" he is asking you to argue in support of a statement you previously made. Every time you ask someone, "Why?" you are asking him to support his position by evidence. The question is whether or not you will study the principles involved in good and bad arguments to improve your ability to correctly evaluate and construct good ones. Remember, your own arguments will rightly be scrutinized for weaknesses by others!

20. **Syllogism:** a kind of **argument** made up of three sentences (i.e., propositions); a **proposition** is what we call a **sentence** that affirms (or denies) something when we use it in a syllogism. Each proposition is made up of **two terms** (like a subject and a predicate in English grammar) with the key to whole thing depending on how the terms relate to one another as they are put together in the premises. A syllogism is an argumentative discourse in which, certain things being explicitly stated (premises), something other than what is stated explicitly (a conclusion) follows of necessity from their being so; several propositions (**statements**) are linked together to produce an entirely new proposition; two propositions (called the premises) would be taken to be true, and another (called the conclusion) would follow from the premises truthfulness, forming a three-line argument.

Modus Ponens and **Modus Tollens** are syllogisms; so is the **Disjunctive Syllogism** (cf. Jesus uses this concerning John's baptism being from Heaven or Men), and **Conjunctive Syllogism**. As you will see under Works Cited, excellent volumes going into more detail are available for your study.

21. **Premise:** The facts of the matter; a statement in an argument that sets forth evidence; a **statement** is a sentence (usually declarative) that is either **true** or **false**. **Truth & falsity** are the two possible truth values of a statement. It should be noted that Biblical statements that are of an “if-then” nature (i.e., conditionals), commands (i.e., imperatives), questions (i.e., interrogatives), hortatory (i.e., expressing a strong wish or desire), can be rightly translated into true or false statements and thus used as if they were in a declarative form. **Example:** When Paul rhetorically asks, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?” (Rom. 6:1), it demands that we interpret it in effect as saying (or **meaning**): “We should **not** continue in sin that grace might abound to us.” (See Warren’s *When Is An “Example” Binding* for Bible illustrations of each of the above-listed types of statements.) Keep in mind that those upholding the all-time dumbbell viewpoint that “only direct commands can be binding since examples and necessary inferences only exist in the mind of the one inferring and hence are just mere opinions” **cannot** (while upholding this doctrine) know that Paul here taught by means of a rhetorical question that we should not continue in sin that grace may abound! Believe it who can? As I have said before: Christians do not have a right to be this ignorant! Surprisingly, this same anti-logic crowd usually manages to sort their way through explicit or direct commands to determine **which ones** are applicable to them today and **how** they apply! Wonder where they (i.e., liberals like Neal Griffin) got **their** own “camouflaged directions which require direct command specialists with special tools to unlock and make known what God expects of us” from direct commands. So far, I have never heard of one obeying literally the direct command: “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (John 9:7)! It is very sad to realize that contextually they will never realize (i.e., **infer!**) from this verse coupled with the verse following: “He went away therefore, and washed, and came seeing” (9:7) that, “When one obeys the Lord’s Word (no matter what it is if applicable to him or her), he or she will receive the blessing promised.” Of course, a liberal cannot even

start to do this since he must first infer that a verse directly spoken to someone else **still applies to him!**

22. **Enthymemes:** a sawed-off syllogism; a standard syllogism with one part missing, usually one of the premises or more rarely the conclusion, or sometimes just missing an implied but unstated word or phrase. In 1 Timothy 5:23: “Be no longer a drinker of water [____], but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake and thine often infirmities,” is Paul commanding never to drink any water any more? If not, what is the missing but implied word that you need to supply?

Enthymeme comes from a Greek phrase meaning “in the mind,” because the writer or speaker assumes you already know the word, phrase, entire premise, or entire conclusion. See Geisler and Brooks (79) for practice enthymemes. In Romans 1:20 Paul argues: “All men clearly see God in nature” (premise)—“So all men are without excuse” (conclusion). You must supply his missing premise: “All men [are in the category of those] who clearly see God in nature” (Geisler 127).

What is missing from the argument set out against Jesus by the Sadducees in Matthew 22:23-28? How about Jesus’ doctrine of one man and one woman (5:32)? Hence no polygamy allowed! They therefore held that Christ’s doctrine would (under their dreamed up scenario) kosher polygamy in the afterlife. Jesus simply took away their assumed unproven premise that everything would continue as here in the next life (22:30), and He also dealt with the underlying cause of their error—a small view of God’s power. He used implication in Exodus 3:6 to Biblically refute their error. (See Hurley 269-76.)

23. **Logical Indicators: Premise/Conclusion Indicators:** A word that provides a logical clue to identifying a **premise** (e.g., since, as indicated by, because, for, in that, may be inferred from, as, given that, seeing that, for the reason that, inasmuch as (Luke 1:1), owing to) or **conclusion** (e.g., so, therefore, wherefore, for, then, thus, if/**then**, consequently, we may infer, accordingly, we may con-

clude, it must be that, for this reason, entails that, hence, it follows that, implies that, as a result).

24. **Conclusion:** the outcome of your argument; the statement that the evidence set forth in the premises is claimed to support or imply.

25. **Validity:** The premises in the argument are so (logically) related to one another that if true, then the conclusion **must** follow; the conclusion is demanded (i.e., implied) by the premises.

26. **Soundness:** means the argument is (1) valid and (2) the premises are true.

27. **Proposition:** A statement which says something **is** or **is not** the case; a statement with a subject and a predicate like, “God exists,” or, “Jesus wept.”

28. **Discursive proof:** Words (i.e., truths) used together to make a proposition, involving a sound argument.

29. **Reductionism:** a logical/philosophical term which involves oversimplification whereby we commit the “reductive fallacy” by stopping with a one-level description or conclusion when there are in fact many levels to be described, and which are not (as is often assumed) contradictory. You are probably old enough by now to realize that, just as the universe is rich and varied so it cannot be properly *boiled down* to one statement about it with any real accuracy of description, just so it is with the Bible (Psa. 119:160). (I am, of course, assuming that you did not attend any schools connected with our brethren like Abilene Christian University, Lipscomb, or Pepperdine.) Sectarians commit this fallacy when attempting to reduce down to a verse or verses cited teaching the necessity of faith—with the error being in isolating such texts and then declaring that salvation is by faith **alone**. We err greatly when we “reduce” a complex entity to only one of its aspects as, for example, one world-renowned atheist did when he described himself as **only** “a collection of water, calcium, and organic molecules called Carl Sagan” (Hoover 27). I might err by similarly thinking my wife Vicki is “**nothing but** a spare rib” (Gen. 2:22)! Looking at Michael Hatcher, I might say “Man is **just** an animal,” but even our

esteemed editor is something more than that (though most of us have a hard time figuring out exactly what that is)! Last year, Bruce Stulting committed this fallacy in front of a true American patriot by saying: “The American flag is **only** a piece of cloth,” and **she** beat him up!

Unfortunately, our great God is going to do more than that to those brethren who (ignoring the superiority of Truth) falsely reduce the Gospel of Jesus Christ to obtain what they perceive as the issue of paramount, over-riding importance: **unity among believers**. Our grace-centered siblings apparently have never read basic hermeneutical texts which usually describe this fundamental error in words similar to denominationalist James W. Sire’s delineation. Under the heading “Misreading No. 11: Selective Citing,” Sire says: “Another misuse of evidence in argument comes from when only a portion of the relevant texts is cited. You can ‘prove’ almost anything from the Bible if you are allowed to select verses or portions of verses *as if they told the whole story*” (*Scripture* 80). When they subsequently leave out relevant facts of the Gospel, especially in regard to salvation, it is only proper that we accuse them of oversimplification to the point of making the Scriptures appear to have contradictions!

Verbal Indicators: What about *Only* and *Alone*? “There are certain ‘cue’ words you should watch for in spotting a case of reductionism. Be on your guard for words like ‘just,’ ‘only,’ ‘merely,’ and especially ‘nothing but’” (Hoover 26). Whenever you hear someone argue like this: “It boils down to this, either God declares us righteous because we obey His law or He declares us righteous through faith ‘apart from the law,’” we should immediately be alert to a possible upcoming false reductionism. Of course, it is conceivable that the truth does boil down to something, but if the subject is a complex Bible issue, then the odds are we are being invited to accept a conclusion before we have studied all the facts from God that bear on the issue. However they may have learned it (i.e., formally or informally), faithful brethren have always *smelled a mouse* when they heard their denominational friends say salvation is by “grace alone,” “faith only,” or by “nothing but the grace of God”; they knew some-

thing was amiss. In a parallel way, they have always recognized the fallacy involved in alleging that the Bible teaches salvation is “not by works” if such meant **any** and **all** works, including those of obedience as in James 2:17, 24-26. When sectarians in bygone years made outlandish claims such as, “Even if we had **only** John 3:16 we’d know enough to be saved!” faithful Christians rightly took such as a charge against God and His full 66-book canon which includes other verses involving the subject of salvation. As usual, Jesus demonstrated to us the right way here by means of His Devil-routing statements that man should live “by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” and, “Again it is written” (Mat. 4:4, 7). *Again* speaks volumes against Satan’s misuse of the Bible by means of selective citing and/or verse isolation. We simply must learn the comprehensive view (Psa. 139:17) of the Bible on any subject! Remember, the “sum of thy word is truth” (119:160) breaks the back of **any** reductionist with or without a baptismal certificate in his hand. **Note:** See Works Cited for books explaining many more logical fallacies a good Bible student ought to be aware of.

30. **A Terry M. Hightower:** a person who tells you he is a strong, rugged, handsome, wonderful guy, and that he is also very humble and pious; having nothing to do with the Third Law of Thought (#17 above). (Keep in mind when mulling this over that I have access to a public podium while I am here with you! BTW, **this is a Fallacy** where I am trying to bully you into believing/accepting something for the wrong reason!)

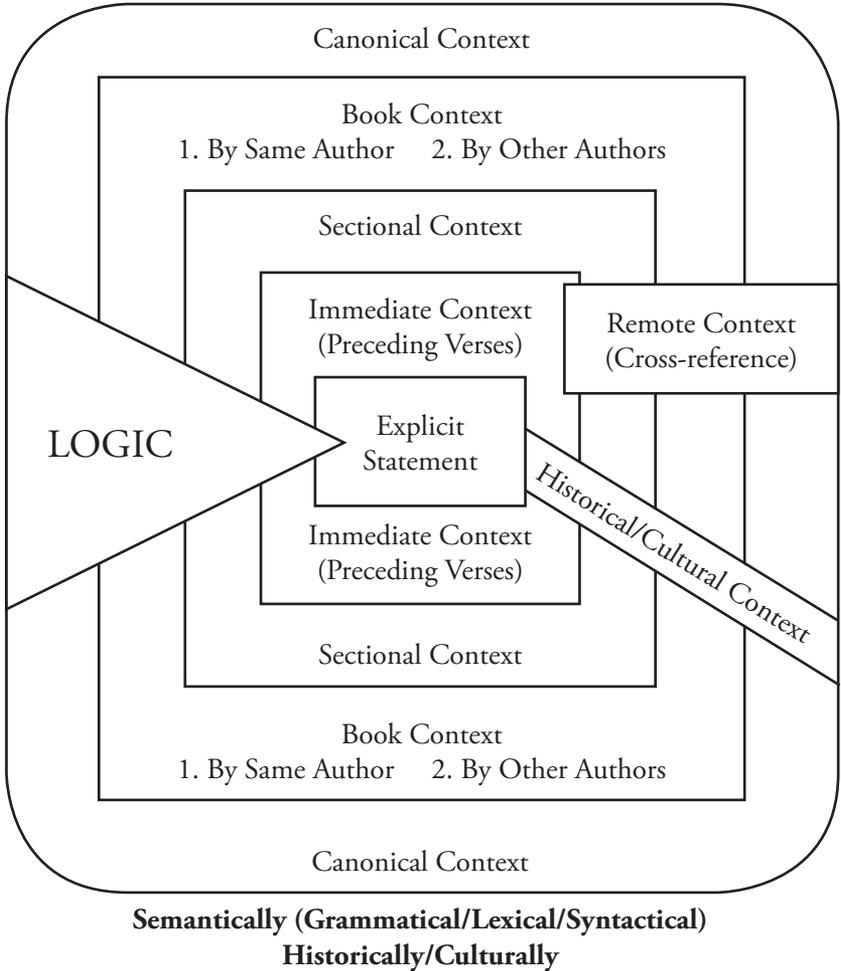
(See chart on next page.)

A LITTLE STUDY WOULD HAVE HELPED

Ronald W. Leigh further demonstrates the necessity of logic in rightly dividing the Word in speaking of **Improper Inference:**

It is possible to twist a biblical statement without even being aware that you are changing its meaning. Taking careful note of the exact way in which the statement is expressed (that is, the form of the statement) can help you avoid this error. Many of the statements in the Bible can be put into the If-A-then-B form. This type of statement is known in the field of logic as a conditional proposition or a

LOGIC HAS TO DO NOT ONLY WITH OUR REASONING TO THE TRUTHS OF (1) GOD'S EXISTENCE AND (2) THE INSPIRATION OF THE BIBLE, BUT ALSO WITH (3) OUR INTERPRETATION OF EXPLICIT VERSES FROM THE ENTIRE BIBLE:



sequential proposition. Such a statement says that *if* (on the condition that) the first part of the statement (A, the antecedent) is true, *then* it necessarily follows that the second part of the statement (B, the consequent) is also true. For example, common knowledge about automobiles can easily be put into the If-A-then-B form.

(If A)

(then B)

Conditional

Proposition: If your car is out of gasoline, **then** it will not run.

The above proposition is true; that is, the then-clause is true whenever the if-clause is true, and you are “safe” as long as you maintain the form of the statement. But when you begin to alter its form you may find that you have actually twisted it and changed its meaning. The three alterations in the form are known as (1) the *converse*, which interchanges the if-clause and the then-clause so that the statement reads If B, then A; (2) the *inverse*, which negates both clauses so that the statement reads If not A, then not B; and (3) the *contrapositive*, which interchanges and negates both clauses so that the statement reads If not B, then not A.

Converse: If your car will not run, then it is out of gasoline.

Inverse: If your car has gasoline, then it will run.

Contrapositive: If your car will run, then it has gasoline.

Here is a very basic rule of logic: Even though a conditional proposition is true, *the converse and the inverse of that proposition may be true or false*. [I have had people who are totally unaware of any of these three forms to argue, “Well, then the ‘reverse’ is also true, too”—but a little more **logical precision** would have helped them not to make this mistake as we shall see!] (By the way, if the conditional proposition is true, the contrapositive is always true). You can check this out easily by thinking through the automobile illustration above, or any other conditional proposition such as, “If you live in Illinois, then you live in the United States” or “If it is raining, then it is cloudy.”

If this rule of logic is neglected in Bible interpretation, you may unintentionally twist some biblical statements. For example, Proverbs 18:22 can be stated in the If-A-then-B form.

Conditional Proposition: If a man gets married, then he obtains the Lord’s favor.

Some people might interpret this verse to mean that all men should marry because God disapproves of celibacy. But notice that such

a viewpoint actually expresses the *inverse* of the original biblical proposition, and that the inverse is not necessarily true.

Inverse: If a man remains single, then he obtains the Lord's *dis*favor.

When handling Biblical statements you must be very careful lest you twist a true statement into a not-necessarily-true statement and then build your beliefs on that twisted statement. This illustrates only one of many types of statements which always operate according to the rules of language and logic. You would be wise to read as much as possible in the field of logic. Biblical statements must not be handled carelessly by a person truly determined to love God and Christ with all their heart, soul, and mind! (125-127).

CONCLUSION

Are you convinced yet? I hope that the reader has seen that once logic is gone, truth has also vanished. With a few additions by me, Clark explains:

The use of logic is *not* optional. It is so fundamental, so basic, that those who attack it must use it in order to make their attack. They intend the words they write, for instance, "Logic is invalid," to have specific meanings [but if truth is really subjective then why can't I interpret **their words** in any manner I please?]. The opponents of logic must use the law of contradiction in order to denounce it. They must assume its legitimacy in order to declare it illegitimate. They must assume its truth, in order to declare it false [or useless]. They must present arguments if they wish to persuade us that argumentation is invalid. Wherever they turn, they are boxed in [even by the examples and verbiage of those inspired men of the first century—including Jesus Himself]. They cannot assault the object of their hatred [the Old Hermeneutic], without using it in the assault. [They should give it up and come back home to God's truth.] They are in the position of the Roman soldier who arrested Christ, but they do not realize as the soldier did, that their position and action are dependent upon rules that they reject. They [quite ironically] must use the rules of logic in order to belittle logic [while he lost an external hearing part which Jesus healed so he could proceed with the arrest, NH'ers need like him to be *healed* of their false and reductionistic view of thinking so they can get back on the narrow way which leads to eternal life (Mat. 7:14)] (x).

Strictly speaking, there is no "mere human logic" as contrasted with divine logic, as some would have us to believe. The logic of

God lights every man; human logic is part of the image of God in us (Col. 3:10). God and man think the same way—not exactly the same thoughts since man is sinful and God is holy—but both God and man think that two-plus-two is four and that A cannot be not-A. Both God and Christians think that only the substitutionary death of Christ can merit a sinner’s entrance into heaven (Luke 17:10). The laws of logic are the way God thinks since, like morality, logic emanates from His very Being. He makes no mistakes, draws no unwarranted conclusions, or constructs no invalid arguments. We do, and that is one of the reasons why we are commanded by Paul to bring all our thoughts into captivity to Christ, and commanded by the Lord Jesus to love God with all our mind. We ought to think like Christ the Great Controversialist does—logically. “For hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). Without learning to think as Jesus did, to think properly, we will misunderstand Scripture and wrest it to our own destruction!

Dallas Willard On Logical Thinking

One can be logical only if one is committed to being logical as a fundamental value. One is not logical by chance, any more than one just happens to be moral. And, indeed, logical consistency is a significant factor in moral character. That is part of the reason why in an age that attacks morality, as ours does, the logical will also be demoted or set aside—as it now is (Willard, “On Logical” 1).

Amen!

A *Christian* mind is not simply thinking done by those who consider themselves Christians. Jesus confronted Peter and bluntly informed him, “Away with you, Satan.... You think as men think, not as God thinks” (Matthew 16:23 NEB) (White 20).

What about you? Are you developing good intellectual habits of the mind to present yourself body and soul at the feet of Christ? Why not make the commitment to allow Christ to take hold of your head and not just your heart (if the latter is even possible!)? This will allow you to follow God’s Word in avoiding speculations and cunningly devised fables (1 Tim. 4:7; 6:20; 2 Pet. 1:16), and

in exactness of thought (Col. 4:6) like the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 2:40, 46-48; Mat. 7:29; 22:22, 33-34, 46; cf. 1 Cor. 14:7-19). “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)!

ADDENDUM No. 1—Proof That You Are *Already* A Pretty Good Logician:

HOMEWORK SHEET ON EQUIVALENCE (MATCHING):

- | | |
|---|---|
| ___1. It never rains, but it pours. | A. Discretion is the better part of valor. |
| ___2. Kind hearts are more than cornets. | B. Troubles never come singly. |
| ___3. Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined. | C. A mountain out of a molehill. |
| ___4. Know thyself | D. None but the brave deserve the fair. |
| ___5. Carrying timber into a wood. | E. There is nothing so kingly as kindness. |
| ___6. First come, first served. | F. Strike while the iron is hot. |
| ___7. Faint heart ne'er (never) won fair lady. | G. Like father like son. |
| ___8. A tempest in a teapot. | H. One man's meat is another man's poison. |
| ___9. Don't put off until tomorrow what you can do today. | I. Carrying coals to Newcastle. |
| ___10. He who fights and runs away may live to fight another day. | J. The proper study of mankind is man. |
| ___11. Make hay while the sun shines. | K. The early bird gets the worm |
| ___12. Every man to his own taste. | L. No time like the present. |
| ___13. “The gospel” of Mark 16:15. | M. “The faith” of Jude 3 and “the doctrine” of 2 John 9-10. |

True or False: Your ability to figure out 1-12 on the previous page has nothing to do with your ability to determine #13.

True or False: Your ability to figure out #13 has something to do with your salvation.

Write out why the above exercise is related to this study:

“A _____ is a terrible thing to waste.”

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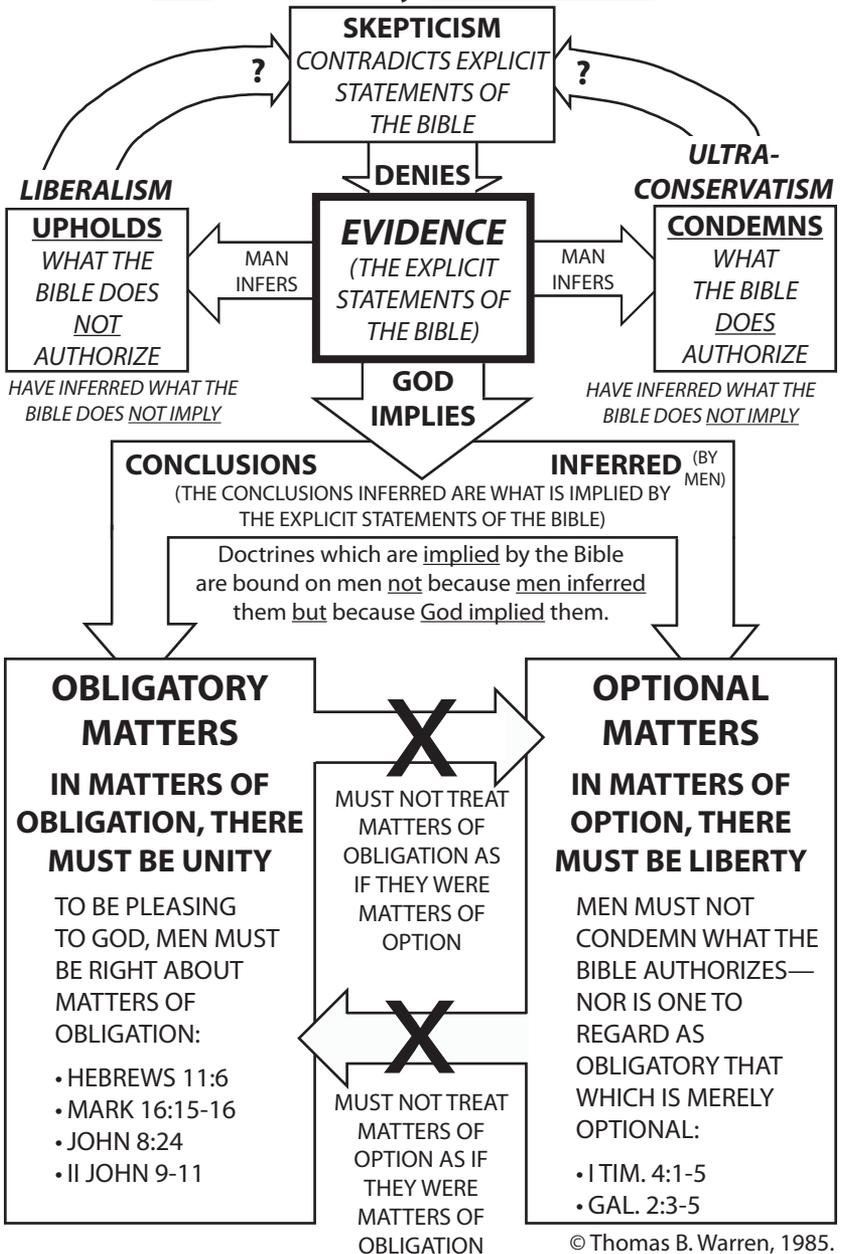
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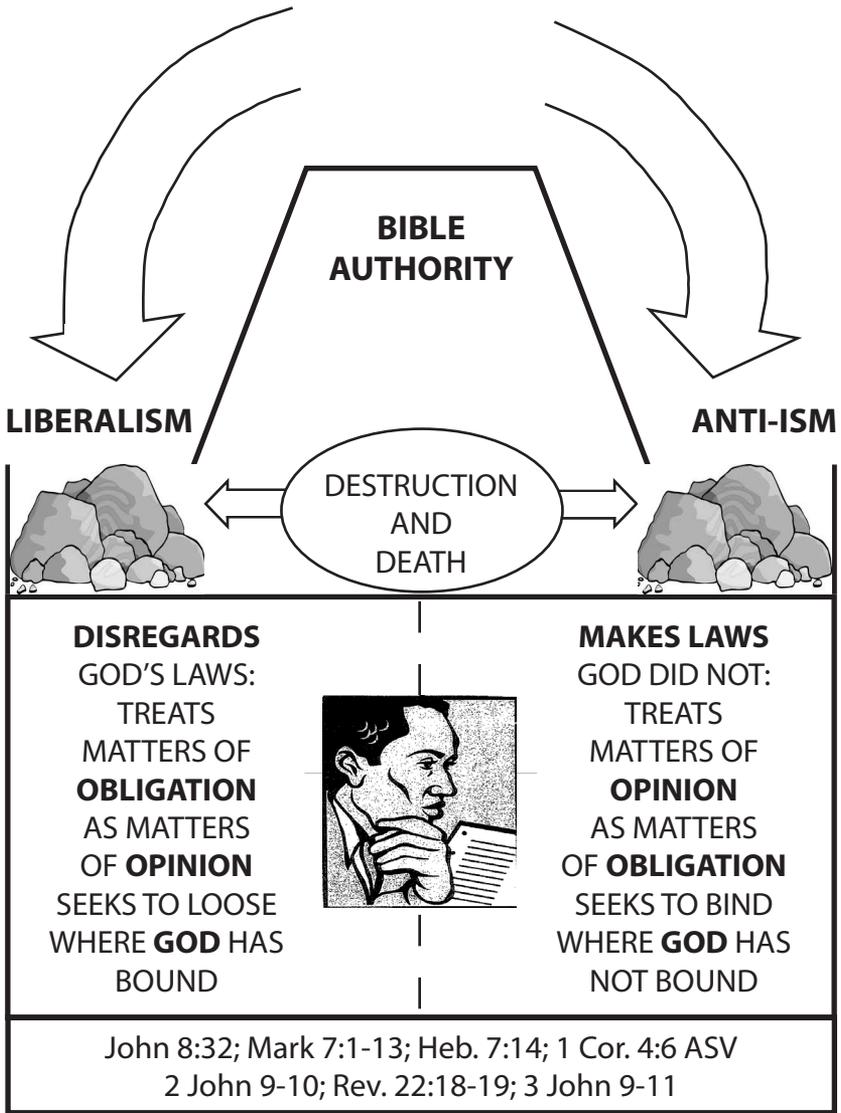
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*Bound Because **God Implied It**—
Not Because Any **Man Inferred It!***



You MUST use Logic—especially implication/ inference—or end up on the Soul-damning “rocks” of either liberalism or anti-ism.



MODERN TRANSLATIONS

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The appearance of the Revised Standard Version in the mid-20th century signaled an era of seriously flawed versions of the Bible. The brotherhood has been adversely affected by these new versions. It is our purpose to discuss certain aspects of these works.

Due to the limited scope of our study, we shall not deal here with which specific textual tradition in the area of textual criticism is to be preferred over the other (i.e., Majority Text vs. Nestle/Aland Text), but shall concentrate more on whether the specific translations we examine actually do an accurate job of translating the text from whichever tradition it accepts as its base. Does it accurately reflect how the text actually reads in Greek? Or have personal biases, denominational theology, and other subjective factors unduly influenced the product?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN GENUINE TRANSLATION AND INTERPRETATION

One significant point relative to the subject is that there is a distinct difference between **translation** and **interpretation** in the strict sense of each word. Some of our own preachers do not apprehend this simple truth. Yet, it is a fact.

The process of interpretation often tends to be more subjective by leaving many things up to the personal feelings and perception

of the individual handling the text—how he feels about or **what he thinks** about the **meaning** of the text. The work of translation, however, properly entails a stricter discipline that seeks to **allow the text to speak for its own self**. It is the difference between what are often termed **dynamic equivalence** and **literal equivalence**. These are sometimes referred to as the “thought-for-thought” and “word-for-word” approach to translation respectively. The former is also called **functional equivalence** as opposed to the latter, which is called **form equivalence**.

The latter is based on the fact that the Bible, in the original text, is verbally or word-for-word inspired of God. If that is the nature of its origin, and it is (1 Cor. 2:10-13), then translation ought to respect that principle in process. Wayne Grudem makes this specific case by raising and answering the question, “Are Only *Some* Words of Scripture Breathed Out by God?” in an excellent paper published as part of *Translating Truth: The Case for Essentially Literal Bible Translation* (19-56). Clearly, the Bible claims that its very words are from God, and this provides the basis for word-for-word translation.

Words are the medium by which thoughts are expressed in oral, interpersonal communication. It is logically and linguistically then essential to properly grasp the words to properly grasp the thought(s) they express.

Dynamic equivalence, on the other hand, ignores the actual significance of the words. Of course, the thought becomes totally subject to the personal **perception** of the interpreter in this case. This process owes itself to the assumption that the Bible was inspired only in its ideas. It thus proceeds from **a very low view of inspiration**. In fact, some of those utilizing this process do not believe the Bible is even inspired at that level. They believe that it is a product of sheer human genius, like the works of William Shakespeare or John Milton. Prof. Leland Ryken has, however, noted that for centuries prior to the rise of dynamic equivalence the practice of word-for-word translation was the norm among translators who held to verbal, plenary inspiration, and that the work on the KJV especially

was premised on that principle (*Choosing a Bible* 6). The view one held of inspiration clearly influenced translation practice.

In his more extensive work on translations, Ryken lists, among several fallacies involved in modern translation theory, the belief that “all translation is interpretation” (*The Word of God* 85). He begins by clarifying the distinction to be maintained on this point:

There is, of course, a sense in which the statement that all translation is interpretation is true. Whenever a translator decides that a given English word best captures the meaning of a word in the original text, the decision implies an interpretation. But there is a crucial difference between *linguistic* interpretation (decisions regarding what English words best express Hebrew or Greek words) and *thematic* interpretation of *the meaning* of a text. Failure to distinguish between these two types of interpretation has led to both confusion and license in translation (85).

The point is that **only in a broad or pregnant sense** of translation is it nominally the same as interpretation. In the strictest of senses, they are quite distinct.

Ryken next states unequivocally:

It is demonstrably untrue that *all* translation is interpretation. Essentially literal translations do not continuously abandon verbal translation to offer the reader what the translators think the meaning of a statement is. The goal of essentially literal translation is to keep the line of demarcation clear between translation and interpretation of meaning. For dynamic equivalent translations, on the other hand, all translation is potentially interpretation—interpretation defined as we define it hermeneutically to mean interpreting the thought of a statement or passage (87).

He then emphatically pleads:

It is time to call a moratorium on the misleading and ultimately false claim that all translation is interpretation. For essentially literal translations, translation is translation, and its task is to express what the original *says*. Only for dynamic equivalent translations is all translation potentially interpretation—something added to the original or changed from the original to produce what *the translators think the passage means* (89).

He also observes that dynamic equivalent translations tend “toward paraphrase, despite the way in which even the freest translations try to avoid that label” (89).

Ryken concludes:

Dynamic equivalent translators assume the roles of both exegete and editor. In those roles, they perform exactly the same functions that exegetes and editors perform—they offer interpretations of the biblical text right in the translation, and they make the stylistic changes that they think will improve the biblical text for a target audience (91).

In his smaller work on the subject, Ryken states:

Here is my concern: Most readers of dynamic equivalent translations do not have any understanding as to the liberties that have been taken with the words of the original text. What dynamic translators give us is a translation plus a commentary, but we have no way of knowing where translation ends and the translation committee’s commentary begins (*Choosing a Bible* 8).

THE PREDOMINANCE OF DYNAMIC EQUIVALENCE IN MODERN TRANSLATION PRACTICE

That dynamic equivalence predominates, as the working theory behind the production of most—if not quite all—modern translations is indisputable. Ryken notes several that expressly indicate their utilization of this theory in their origin by a **dumbing-down** process they have followed in their actual practice.

He gives the following statements by translators of some modern versions explaining in part their use of this process:

- This translation seeks “to express the meaning in a manner and form easily understood by *the readers*” (GNB).
- “Metaphorical language is often difficult *for contemporary readers* to understand, so at times we have chosen to translate or illuminate the metaphor” (NLT).
- “Because *for most readers* today the phrases ‘the Lord of hosts’ and ‘God of hosts’ have little meaning, this version renders them ‘the Lord Almighty’ and ‘God Almighty’” (NIV).
- “Ancient customs are often unfamiliar *to modern readers*” (New Century Version).

- “We have used the vocabulary and language structures...of a junior high student” (NLT) (*Choosing a Bible* 8).

He also provides enlightening statements from Eugene Nida, one of the formulators of dynamic equivalence, in an interview from *Christianity Today*. Ryken writes:

Nida made no attempt to conceal his scorn for translators who think that the original words themselves need to be translated. He said that these people are guilty of “word worship,” that “they don’t understand the text,” and that “they worship words instead of worshipping God as revealed in Jesus Christ” (*Choosing a Bible* 9).

This deep-seated animosity toward the text of the Bible held by conceited postmodern academicians has been seen even among our own liberal brethren, who throw around charges of “bibliolatry” like stink-bombs at those who uphold the primacy of the Word in the matter of authority. The devil has long known that to get people away from God, he must get them away from His Word.

The translators of the *Today’s English Version* admit in the preface that they made “no attempt to reproduce in English the parts of speech, sentence structure, word order, and grammatical devices of the original languages.” They also claim that the Holy Spirit’s presence was with them guiding them in their work. This subtle claim of illumination by the Spirit actually indicts the product even more so by its implicitly accusing the Spirit of sanctioning their butchery of the inspired text. If you throw away “the parts of speech, the sentence structure, the word order, and the grammatical devices of the original languages,” what would be left to convey the thoughts that this version supposedly translates?

While the translators for *God’s Word Translation* in the Introduction to their work verbally reject function-equivalence theory, they put forth a strange hybrid form of dynamic equivalence they term **natural equivalent translation**. The emphasis is still on the thought or meaning over the words and forms used to convey it. Their stated purpose was “to find equivalent English ways of expressing the meaning of the original text.” They claim: “This procedure ensures that the translation is faithful to the meaning intended by the origi-

nal writer.” Supposedly, they adopted a style that “reflects the style of the Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek text,” which style, they say, “is designed to avoid the awkwardness and inaccuracy associated with form-equivalent translation,” as well as “the loss of meaning and oversimplification associated with function-equivalent translation.”

Oddly, though, it seeks to accomplish this by repudiating (1) a word-for-word approach to translation and (2) even the original sentence structures and forms. They state: “The meaning is expressed in natural American English by using common English punctuation, capitalization, grammar, and word choice.” The statement is an implicit admission that the translation really does not reflect **the structures of the original text**. If the punctuation, grammar, word order, and word choices dramatically differ, then the styles will logically have to differ!

In attacking form-equivalent translation, they also make the ludicrous claim that those who hold to the literal approach to translation as having “made the Bible more difficult to read and understand in English than it was in the original languages.” Yet, for over 400 years, grade-school children, who have actually had a genuine classical education rather than postmodern indoctrination, have read and learned from the King James Version with great profit. Similar statements can be made concerning other translations based on the same philosophy. The comment made by the *God’s Word Translation* actually is more a testimony to the dumbing-down of Western culture.

They **do** make one significant observation on function-equivalence that is worth repeating. They note:

In this type of translation, the translator tries to make the English function the same way the original language functioned for the original readers. However, in trying to make the translation easy to read, the translator can omit concepts from the original text that don’t seem to have corresponding modern English equivalents. Such a translation can produce a readable text, but that text can convey the wrong meaning or not enough meaning.

This observation is stunning. It acknowledges that dynamic equivalence actually fails to do what it professes is **the** most important thing to do in translation—to reflect the **meaning** of the original text. It also acknowledges that this theory often removes “concepts”—meaning words and sentence structures—that “don’t seem to have corresponding modern English equivalents.” Thus, if it appears to the translators that there are no equivalent forms available in English, then they can take the liberty of just deleting the concept from the text

Kenneth N. Taylor, in his “Preface” to *The Living Bible Paraphrased*, similarly admits that “whenever the author’s exact words are not translated from the original languages, there is the possibility that the translator, however honest, may be giving the English reader something that the original writer did not mean to say.” Thus, the determination of the meaning is totally subject to the skills and even the biases of the translator(s). In Taylor’s case, he admits that his “theological lodestar...has been a rigid evangelical position.” That term admits to a **presuppositional approach** to the meaning of the text.

The *New Living Translation*, which originally was intended to be but a revision of the *Living Bible Paraphrased*, openly admits to being “a thought-for-thought translation.” It also claims to be more accurate than a literal word-for-word translation based on the raw **assertion** that its translators were scholars who had a full understanding of the proper meaning of the text. The following notation in the “Introduction” is of special interest here:

Of course, to translate the thought of the original language requires that the text be interpreted accurately and then be rendered in understandable idiom. So the goal of any thought-for-thought translation is to be both reliable and eminently readable.

It will be observed that the process they followed entailed **first** interpreting the text according to the training and techniques used by each respective scholar, and **then** translating the meaning that they arrived at according to their interpretive schema. As the vast majority of those participating were Calvinists, Arminians, or Wes-

leyans in their theology, what do you suppose their views of the meaning of the passages they handled were? To ask is to answer.

Charismatic concerns were also clearly indulged in texts that deal with the end of the miraculous era. 1 Corinthians 13:10 is *translated* (interpreted) as, “But when the end comes, these special gifts will disappear.” Ephesians 4:13 reads in this perversion, “until we come to such unity in our faith and knowledge of God’s Son that we will be mature and full grown in the Lord, measuring up to the full stature of Christ.” Thus, it implies that miracles were to continue until the church is united in faith and fully measuring up to the example of Christ Himself.

THE LOGICAL AND HISTORICAL ABSURDITY OF “THOUGHT-FOR-THOUGHT” TRANSLATION

It is fundamentally laughable to hold that “thought-for-thought” can more accurately reflect the meaning of a text in translation than a “word-for-word” translation utilizing the terms actually used to convey whatever thoughts supposedly existed. In oral, interpersonal communication, as already noted, the words are the vehicles of the thoughts. If they are not fully, properly understood, then the thoughts are not fully, properly understood. This axiom applies to translation as well, which is why Prof. Ryken emphatically states:

Dynamic equivalence claims to translate the thought rather than the words of the original. My claim is that this is impossible. The fallacy of thinking that a translation should translate the meaning rather than the words of the original is simple: There is no such a thing as disembodied thought, emancipated from words. Ideas and thoughts depend on words and are expressed by them.

When we change the words, we change the meaning...

The whole dynamic equivalence project is based on an impossibility and a misconception about the relationship between words and meaning.

Someone has accurately said that “the word may be regarded as the body of the thought,” adding that “if the words are taken from us, the exact meaning is of itself lost” (*Choosing a Bible* 20-21).

In point of fact, I know of no other document of antiquity that is treated with the practice of dynamic equivalence as the system of its translation other than the Scriptures. Why should this be the case? Why are they treated any differently in translational philosophy than any other ancient text? If we can translate Aristotle essentially literally or word-for-word and properly understand his meaning, then why is that not what we ought to do relative to the Sacred Scriptures? If the prose of Thucydides, Herodotus, and Xenophon can be literally rendered into intelligible English, despite the complexity of some of their constructions (especially those of Thucydides), then why should the New Testament, written originally for the common man in Hellenistic times, be more daunting a task in this regard? Yes, we are dealing with Sacred Scripture, which holds far more sublime messages than they with some things “hard to be understood” (2 Pet. 3:15-16), but God gave His Word in terms the common man of the time could understand.

If the poetry of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Aristophanes can be properly and intelligibly rendered through form-equivalence into English, then why should poetic texts be stripped of their beauty of expression in the name of dynamic equivalence? No more beautiful rendering of Psalm 23 has ever been given than that of the KJV text, which closely follows the Hebrew text.

William Whiston, using form-equivalence, translated the works of Flavius Josephus in the 18th century. That work still stands as **the** masterwork on the subject. There is virtually nothing like it in the field. The Greek text followed by Whiston was based on the same kind of Koine Greek in which God vouchsafed to the apostles and prophets the New Testament. Whiston succeeded in his efforts because he respected the text and was a master of both the original and the receptor tongue. When these things converge, the effect is good translation.

Finally, to say that it is impossible to ever translate literally is false. The New Testament has a number of examples where that was done at certain times by the inspired writers. Matthew, following the LXX text, translates the Hebrew noun *almah* from Isaiah 7:14

as *parthenos*, “virgin,” in Greek (Mat. 1:23). He even interprets the Hebrew name Immanuel as *meth’ heemon ho theos* (translated also in the KJV as “God with us”), which is the literal signification of the Hebrew term. Numerous other examples can be cited to this end.

Is it sometimes difficult to translate literally? Most certainly, but it does not follow from it that such is absolutely impossible. Even if some words do not make for easy literal translation or if some require more terms to reflect the proper force of the word in the receptor language such does not argue for dropping literal, word-for-word translation as the prescribed course and method for the translator to follow. Again, we are specifically exhorted to “live...by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Mat. 4:4). That was not just a helpful suggestion by the Savior, but an explicit rebuke of Satan.

I suspect that when translators, who fondly utilize dynamic equivalence in their handling of the Biblical text, have their own works translated from English into another language, like French, German, or even Chinese, they find translators with mastery of both the original English and the receptor tongue and insist upon word-for-word (rather than thought-for-thought) methodology. Why do they not allow others to translate their works according to the translators *interpretation* of them? Imagine the lawsuits that would come about from such handling of their materials!

SUNDRY EXAMPLES OF THEOLOGICAL MANIPULATION OF TEXTS

What follows is a small sampling of the butchering of seven specific texts misused to express a theological idea not found in the original text itself. These examples can be multiplied many times over to illustrate the danger inherent in the translational philosophies of the modern versions. We urge the reader to first examine each text in the KJV, NKJV, or ASV for comparison.

Psalm 51:5

This verse is one of the most abused texts of the Bible. The text is frequently mistranslated by Calvinists and Arminians to teach hereditary total depravity, as shown by the following examples:

New Revised Standard Version—“Indeed, I was born guilty, a sinner when my mother conceived me.”

New International Version (1984)—“Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.”

Today’s English Version—“I have been evil from the time I was born; from the day of my birth I have been sinful.”

God’s Word Translation—“Indeed, I was born guilty, I was a sinner when my mother conceived me.”

Easy-To-Read Version—“I was born to do wrong, a sinner before I left my mother’s womb.”

Contemporary English Version—“I have sinned and done wrong since the day I was born.”

Holman Christian Standard Bible—“Indeed, I was guilty when I was born; I was sinful when my mother conceived me.”

The Message—“I’ve been out of step with you a long time, in the wrong since before I was born.”

New English Translation (NET Bible)—“Look, I was guilty of sin from birth, a sinner the moment my mother conceived me.”

Common English Bible—“Yes, I was born in guilt, in sin, from the moment my mother conceived me.”

Isaiah 7:14

This verse has frequently been attacked by liberals who reject the doctrine of the Virgin Birth. They seek to remove from the text the idea of a virgin conceiving a child, which is what the original language actually indicates. The Greek Septuagint text uses the word *parthenos* for *almah*, just as Matthew does in Matthew 1:23, which shows the actual fulfillment of the Isaiah prophecy. Yet, many modern translations persist in rendering *almah* as “young woman,” even when they translate *parthenos* in Matthew 1:23 as “virgin.” Examples of versions rendering *almah* as “young woman” rather than “virgin” are: *Common English Bible*, *Today’s English Version*, *NRSV*, *NIV (1984)*, *Easy-to-Read Version*, *New English Translation (NET Bible)*, *New Life Version*, etc.

While *The Message* of Eugene Peterson translates *almah* as “virgin,” the text reads: “A girl who is presently a virgin”—thus implying that she may well not be such upon conceiving the child. Another especially egregious translation of this text is by the *Bible in Basic English Translation* which renders it, “a young woman is now with child”—thus removing any real Messianic connection in the text without any textual grounds whatsoever.

Matthew 5:17

This verse is often twisted by modern translators to teach that Jesus did not intend to abrogate the authority of the Old Testament at any time, despite clear teaching elsewhere that He did (cf. Eph. 2:14-16; Col. 2:12-14; Heb. 10:9). The following examples evidence this penchant to hold onto vestiges of Old Testament legislation:

New Life Version—“Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses or the writings of the early preachers”

New Living Translation—“I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets”

NRSV—“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets”

Contemporary English Version—“Don’t suppose that I came to do away with the Law and the Prophets”

Common English Bible—“Don’t even begin to think that I have come to do away with the Law and the Prophets”

God’s Word Translation—“Don’t ever think that I came to set aside Moses’ Teachings or the Prophets”

Today’s English Version—“Do not think that I have come to do away with the Law of Moses and the teachings of the prophets”

New English Translation (NET Bible)—“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets”

NIV (1984)—“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets”

Worldwide English Version (New Testament)—“Do not think that I have come to take away the law and the writings of the prophets”

A special notation relative to the *English Standard Version* on this text is in order. Even though it is ostensibly a word-for-word translation, the translators botched their handling of Matthew 5:17

by giving the following unwarranted reading: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets.” The Greek verb *kataluo* properly means “to destroy,” and carries with it the idea of doing violence to what is so destroyed. Jesus did not come as a rebel against the Old Testament law but as the One who kept it perfectly (Heb. 4:14-16; 1 Pet. 2:21ff.) and as the One who would fulfill its purpose and aims within Himself. He was not a violent revolutionary, but an obedient Servant of His Father. He fulfilled the law in Himself, and so accomplished its purpose and abrogated its authority to establish the second testament (cf. Heb. 10:9; Rom. 10:4; 2 Cor. 3:2ff.). The ESV missed it! The theology of the translators over-rode the obvious force of the text.

Mark 16:9-20

While it is the case that some manuscripts do not retain Mark 16:8-20 as part of their copy of Mark, it is not the case that the majority of manuscripts bearing on the chapter do not. Neither is it the case that the most ancient manuscripts fail to retain it. The manuscript evidence for the text is not only more numerous, it is also more ancient. Yet, you would not know this from some of the modern translations and their handling of the text of Mark 16. (For an excellent summation of the manuscript evidence, as well as other historical arguments in favor of what is termed the Longer Ending of Mark as embodied in verses 9-20, see the chapter by Maurice Robinson defending its authenticity in *Perspectives on the Ending of Mark* [40-79] and John William Burgon’s masterwork, *The Last Twelve Verses of the Gospel according to S. Mark*.) Some of the modern translations simply note that some manuscripts do not have these verses in them. Others go much farther in seeking to cast doubt on their authenticity, as the following shows.

The *New Living Translation* separates the Longer Ending from Mark and then gives the following notation in a footnote to the chapter: “The most reliable manuscripts conclude the Gospel of Mark at verse 8. Other manuscripts include various endings to the Gospel.” The fact that the view that the manuscripts not retaining the Longer Ending are the most reliable is not only highly debat-

able but historically suspect and is not observed by the translators in their notation. Also, they do not note that only two manuscripts actually are involved in the failure to retain the Longer Ending, and that other manuscripts from the same text-type nonetheless do retain it. In fact, they are the only two from the Alexandrian text-type that do so!

The *Common English Bible* in a very deceptive notation observes, “In most critical editions of the Gk New Testament, the Gospel of Mark ends at 16:8.” The note leaves the impression that the reading is not part of the original Greek text of Mark. Of course, the translators do not bother to define what they mean by “critical editions,” but leave it to the reader (often untrained in such matters) to surmise the worst for the Longer Ending.

The Living Bible Paraphrased states in a footnote, “Verses 9 through 20 are not found in the most ancient manuscripts, but may be considered an appendix giving additional facts.” The *NIV* also separates verses 9-20 from the book of Mark and notes in brackets between the two: “The most reliable early manuscripts and other ancient witnesses do not have Mark 16:9-20.” Again, the assertion that the two manuscripts in question (the Vaticanus and the Sinaiticus) are “the most reliable” is both highly disputed and logically disputable. The reader is simply left to accept the judgment of the scholars in determining that the text is not really part of the Word of God.

The Message, placing verses 9-20 in brackets, states in a footnote that the text is “contained only in later manuscripts.”

Romans 1:17

Romans 1:17 is a favorite text for modern translators to slip in faith only salvation, as seen in the following:

New Living Translation—“This Good News tells us how God makes us right in his sight. This is accomplished from start to finish by faith.”

New Century Version—“it begins and ends with faith.”

TEV—“it is through faith from beginning to end.”

God’s Word Translation—“begins and ends with faith.”

The Living Bible Paraphrased—“from start to finish by faith.”

NIV—“by faith from first to last.”

Easy-to-Read Version—“begins and ends with faith.”

1 Corinthians 7:15

The Bible’s teaching on marriage, divorce, and remarriage (MDR) has also been affected by the liberalism of modern translators, with no text being more adversely affected than that of 1 Corinthians 7:15. The negated Greek perfect participle *dedoulotai*, most often translated by conservative translators as “is not under bondage” or equally literal equivalent through the centuries, has been twisted by some of the modern translations to support the notion that there is another **exception** permitted by Paul in addition to that of fornication as per Matthew 5:32 and 19:9. This perversion of the text entails the translator wrongly assuming the marriage bond itself is under consideration in the phrase and also ignoring the primary force of a negated perfect participle in regard to its verbal aspect. Paul uses *deo* in the context for marriage, not *dedoulo*, which relates more to slavery. The verbal aspect of the negated perfect means here that the believer in question has “never” been in such a relationship of slavery to the unbeliever. The force is that such a relationship never even existed wherein the believer was the slave of the unbeliever simply by virtue of marriage. Some of the modern translations miss that point in interest of granting a new exception in MDR, as seen in the following cases:

The Contemporary English Version—“you are no longer bound to that person.”

Easy-to-Read Version—“the brother or sister in Christ is free.”

God’s Word Translation—“is not bound by a marriage vow.”

TEV—“is free to act.”

New Century Version—“is free.”

Worldwide English (New Testament)—“is free then.”

1 Corinthians 13:10

As noted, some of the translators of the Modern Translations are Charismatics and Pentecostals who put their theology directly into the text. Rather than translating *ton teleion* in 1 Corinthians 13:10 as “the perfect” or “that which is perfect” (or even “the complete”)

with the specific application to be determined by the reader on his own studies of the immediate context, these are willing to tie the construction to the Second Coming of Christ without any real textual basis for doing so.

The Message, while translating the phrase “the complete” places the noun in capital letters to imply that Deity, hence Christ as the Complete One, is to be understood in the text. The unsuspecting reader is led to conclude that the passage is a prophecy of the Second Coming and miracles are thus to last until then. *The New Century Version* renders it as, “when perfection comes” implying the ultimate state of things, which again would involve the Second Coming. This is not genuine translation, but commentary. Similarly, the *NIV*’s “completeness” steps over the boundary into speculation on the translators’ part. In similar fashion, we also have the following examples:

New Life Version—“when everything is perfect.”

New Living Translation—“when the time of perfection.”

Worldwide English (New Testament)—“when everything becomes perfect.”

Each of these ignores the obvious contrast with “that which is incomplete,” which phrase contextually concerns gifts that pertained to miraculous Divine revelation (13:8-9).

CONCLUSION

Clearly, there is an effort underway to alter God’s Word in such a way as to accommodate the contemporary mores and beliefs of the people, rather than seeking to be genuinely true to the Word of God as it was given by the Holy Spirit. The pernicious practice of dynamic equivalence in translation has had a destructive effect in translation work. The effect is a sad and sorry collection of phony volumes not really worthy of the name “Holy Bible.” What is especially sad is to see the indifference that so many brethren have to the version controversy! Many seem willing to be fed spiritual poison just as long as the label says, “Bible.”

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DIRECT OPERATION OF THE SPIRIT

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And it shall come to pass afterward, *That* I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions (Joel 2:28).

INTRODUCTION

How does the Holy Spirit work in conviction, conversion, and sanctification? That is the only real question that men have with regard to this monumental subject. There may be attempts to show that there are other concerns or considerations in the many books and studies that have been printed on the Holy Spirit, but if they were truly honest, it would stop with the question posed in the first sentence. The Holy Spirit, one of the three personages of the Godhead, has always been of intense interest to students and scholars of the Bible alike (and especially for this writing in the New Testament) with respect to His relationship to man since Jesus spoke of His coming in John 14-16, and since He was “promised” (more on this later, as in actuality there are the gifts, but not the Holy Spirit Himself) in Acts 2:38. The Holy Spirit is one of the most fascinating subjects in the Bible and is often subject to misinterpreted and misrepresented readings that derail the simple, clear teaching of Scripture. The third entity of the Godhead (along with the Father and Son), described by the Lord in John 14-16 as the person by whom God would reveal all things (“the Spirit of Truth”) to the disciples, often is obscured as some mystical telepathy undefined and unknowable.

The study of the Holy Spirit in Scripture has required an ongoing effort to both understand and explain with clarity what God's Word has revealed without any infusion of personal bias or intentional misrepresentation. Volumes have been written on the subject, as have multitudes of articles in both church bulletins and brotherhood publications/periodicals. The interest in the Holy Spirit as a subject is certainly in accordance with the idea of searching the Scriptures to rightly divide and understand the Word of truth. The Scriptures also provide the local memberships with a better grasp of a complex topic to enhance spiritual growth on the ground level by removing the lingering idea of some mysterious/confusing aspect of the Godhead that God Himself never intended. Recently (or once again), the brotherhood has become inundated with ideas about the Holy Spirit that may appear new (by working through some direct operation, and in the redemption of the alien sinner), but are, in fact, a rehashing of earlier Calvinist and Pentecostal musings. What we will cover in this piece are some of the historical tenets of error and their ultimate Scriptural extremes, a historical overview, and a look at the newfangled/mangled expressions of a formerly sound brother in Christ.

The Holy Spirit does work on the heart of the Christian, but not (ever) apart from the Word of God (it is through the Word that He influences us). One of the greatest contributions made by the Restoration Movement was the absolute imperativeness that the Holy Spirit works only through the Word of God in conviction, conversion, and sanctification. This was a correction of the (continually) widely influential teaching of John Calvin with his theme of Total Depravity. This teaching became the underpinning of many denominational foundations, with the view that man was inherently sinful, and only through the direct operation of the Holy Spirit could there be any hope of salvation. Pentecostalism took this ideology and embedded it throughout the denominational world (it became wildly popular for numerous reasons); it ultimately set at odds those who claimed to be led by a mysterious "spirit," and those led/informed by the clear and inerrant Word of God. People

were now being led by their feelings instead of the Scriptures (which they were told they could not understand—and no longer had any need to study), and more often than not, found themselves in contradiction to each other and, obviously, the Bible. It was the easy exposure and renouncement of such contradictions that allowed the Restoration plea of “back to the Bible” to resonate so strongly and to remove/replace the emotional froth that resulted from the “spirit-led” gallivants of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. That all being said, we are now again faced with a processional in the brotherhood for acceptance of clear error on the back (cult) of personality.

THE SEEDS OF THE SPIRIT (OR SOURCE OF THE PROBLEM)

The source of contention as to whether man is or is not directly influenced by the Holy Spirit today, apart from the Word of God, has its beginnings in Acts 2. This chapter is the place from which some believe that the special actions of the Holy Spirit and His influence on men derive and continue to this day. The idea that the Holy Spirit filled the hearts of every Christian, not just the apostles, is the platform from which these theories find their substance—yet the Bible clearly teaches otherwise.

One must take into deliberation that there are reasons for people believing that the Holy Spirit operates separate and apart from the Word of God. Some of that comes out of a misunderstanding when viewing the events in Scripture and thinking that the same circumstances are continuing today. Such would be the case for denominations that concur with the comments of the Lord regarding the coming of the Spirit in John 14-16 are still in place for our lives today:

I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; *Even* the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you (14:16-17).

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, *that* shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew *it* unto you (16:13-15).

Here one simply presumes that the comments directed to the disciples, specifically, are also meant for them.

ACTS 2:38

The actions taking place on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2 have always been a focus for those who are obsessed with the idea of a direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit that allows for miraculous “gifts” being handed out/dispensed to everyone in attendance then and to those who are being baptized today. They see the events unfolding as being the first of those which, matter-of-fact, continue to this day in/for those who believe that there is a direct and continuous link to the apostles.

Since the events of that day actually are of significance for Christians today, we need to see if we have been attributing things to God that are not true. We refer to some Old Testament commentary illustrations to prove the points made by Peter on that faithful day are relevant, but not in the way they have been portrayed. The prophet Joel has given us one of the more authoritative prophecies and commentaries on Acts 2 in the Old Testament.

And it shall come to pass afterward, *That* I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your old men shall dream dreams, Your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids In those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, Blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, Before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered: For in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, As the LORD hath said, And in the remnant whom the LORD shall call (Joel 2:28-32).

He is not only pointing to Pentecost, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, but Joel is very likely giving us utterances that indicate the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the work of the Holy Spirit

if we consider that what the Lord said in Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, and 1 Corinthians (where the argument can be made that, when revelation ended, so also ended the “gifts”). This portion of endeavor will need more time and space than here affords, but we still see the awe-inspiring words of Joel being fulfilled in Acts 2.

The gift of the Holy Spirit was not the Holy Spirit Himself, but rather various gifts to be used for the glorification of God and as manifestations of God’s power made evident through His use of men to extend the Gospel to other countries/peoples (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; To another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another *divers* kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.

The instances in the Scriptures that give proof to the fact that one could become a Christian and not yet have received any gifts of the Spirit are obvious and clear. One example is in Acts 8 when those Samaritans who believed Philip’s preaching were baptized (8:12). The apostles had to come down to Samaria and lay hands on them to bestow these gifts (8:14-15). We have another example in Acts 19 when Paul comes across some disciples who had only been baptized with John’s baptism. Paul’s question to them (“Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed?”) indicates that people could be Christians yet not have any spiritual gifts. The response to this question indicates they had not received any “gifts” or “indwelling,” as they had not even heard of such a possibility. Now reasonable men reading these accounts can see that the actions taken by the apostles in Acts 8 and by Paul in Acts 19 would never have been necessary had there been an indwelling or set of gifts delivered in the act of

baptism. Brother Daniel Denham delivers several knockout blows throughout his articles in *Defender* on the “Deaver Doctrine,” but you cannot tell stubborn obstinate people anything that the Lord has not already tried/and succeeded to tell them in His Word.

MAC DEAVER AND HIS CIRCUS OF ERROR

The first of a series of articles by Daniel Denham appeared in the publication, *Defender*, in August 2010. These articles by Denham seriously addressed one of the most egregious misreading of Scripture to front an agenda for some time: Holy Spirit baptism and the direct operation heresy. Brother Denham read quickly and alarmingly the potential consequences of this wave of error if it were allowed to gain a beachhead; he acted with such vigilance to dismantle the implausible logic that forms the foundation for Mac Deaver’s flawed and false teaching on the Holy Spirit. This series has continued for several years now because Denham sees the urgency in completely destroying any hint of ambiguity by exposing this pernicious position as anything other than a work of the devil. Even though brother Denham does not express his (and everyone else’s) responsibility in these words, he has undertaken the herculean effort to peel away the obfuscated rhetoric of Deaver’s denominational view of the Spirit.

Denham’s work in this area is so massive and persuasive, so valuable intellectually, that I would be remiss not to utilize his writing to make a number of points that are noteworthy and for the benefit of the brotherhood as a whole. When we provided this information to the congregation in San Mateo people were shocked that a “well-known” Gospel preacher could have such views regarding the Holy Spirit, baptism, salvation, and the Bible in general. Rarely has anyone put so much damning testimony in print during one’s lifetime, but Deaver has, and Denham has *nailed it*, speaking brilliantly and demolishing the Deaver doctrine. What is left is for the brethren (worldwide) to learn of this and refute it when it arrives on their congregational shores.

Brother Denham begins by taking two pieces of evidence to make the air-tight case against this spewing of error.

Our plan of attack in dealing with the error of present-day Spirit baptism is to begin with a background and overview of the issue relative to the Deaverites. Next, we shall focus in the serial on the portions of Mac's book *The Holy Spirit (Center of Controversy—Basis of Unity)* expressly addressing the subject and finally address the central texts used to try to support its underlying suppositions (Aug. 1).

It would be entirely possible to end the argument regarding any aspect of Deaver's doctrinal error, honesty, truthfulness, reliability, or sincerity by simply pointing out that in the very first of many articles by Denham, he presents evidence that contradicts Deaver's statement on when he began to accept the position he currently professes. By exposing the dates as being false/untrue one could designate Deaver as untrustworthy and glib.

A salient point on this issue is that Mac implies in his book that he did not come to accept the view of present-day Spirit baptism until 2006 and for the first time defended the view in a public debate on the necessity of water baptism April 3-6 of that year against a Baptist preacher (296-97). In fact, he expressly states: "And let me say that between 2001 and 2006, I had seen nothing and had heard nothing by way of evidence that falsified the position taken by Glenn" (Holy Spirit 296) (Aug. 1).

Denham, however, points to an article in the October-December, 1999 issue of *Biblical Notes Quarterly* that was written by Bob Berard (pushing the Calvinist doctrine) and edited by Deaver that clearly shows Deaver is in the camp at this earlier date instead of his professed 2006.

(If the reader would require even more precision, it could be said that the Holy Spirit changes the heart during baptism [Titus 3:5] and then moves into the heart to take up His indwelling after the heart is cleansed [Gal. 4:6], Editor) (16) (Aug. 4).

This is just one of the many *pants-on-fire moments* that comprised the signature of Mac Deaver and his fuddy-duddy doctrine. He will not even be honest about the date he began to immerse himself into this false teaching! Denham closes the article by revealing that he had received a letter from Mac dated September 28, 2004 that

expressed a willingness to debate (Deaver would defend) present-day Spirit-baptism. Brother Denham asks (and he could have been snarky at this juncture) whether 2004 came before 2006 (or the date of Deaver's conversion). Brother Denham ends with this comment:

The purpose of this first article is to set the background for the review and refutation of Mac's new hobby on Spirit baptism by showing that credibility is something woefully lacking in his book on the Holy Spirit. It calls into question his many assertions and textual assumptions at the outset. It also shows that the Deaver doctrine is in a perpetual state of flux and ferment, one so convoluted that Mac cannot even get his story straight as to how and when he came to accept his current teachings (Aug. 5).

Why is Mac Deaver of importance regarding innovation in church matters today? The answer is that his language, seemingly lofty (*faux* intellectual), obscure enough for the average person to drink it in without resistance. Those who remain in fellowship with him they could lose their souls. The ideas put forth are so astoundingly denominational that, when we covered the articles in the local congregation, the membership shrieked in horror that any Christian could have manufactured those pronouncements knowingly.

By the time the September issue of *Defender* had been published, Deaver's mantle of invincibility (or intellectual superiority) had been removed. He is now an emperor with no clothes. Daniel Denham disclosed even more damaging evidence of Mac's having either completely apostatized or lost much of his formerly brilliant mind. One will find everything one needs from brother Denham on Deaver false doctrine in his articles published in *Defender*, but we will offer just another example of how dishonest (or simply unscrupulous) Deaver is with dates, which in such a case is more than enough without having to listen to or read all of his unscriptural positions. In a December 14 letter from Deaver to Denham, we have the following admission of (not from Deaver, but from his **words!**) confusion, inaccuracy, or Biblical malpractice. The first quote is from Deaver's letter to Denham, and the second quote is Denham's response in the September 2010 *Defender*.

Does God forgive, in baptism, a sinner or a saint? He forgives a sinner in order to make him a saint. God cleanses the heart by the Spirit in order to make the heart a fit dwelling place for the Spirit. **If that is heresy, do what you can with it!** You may think you have a great point here, but I assure you, brother, that you do not....

Mac affirmed in his letter that Holy Spirit baptism is the means by which God cleanses the heart of the alien sinner **in order to make him a saint!** Thus, he affirmed that at the point of contact by the Holy Spirit upon the human spirit of the baptismal candidate he is still an alien sinner up until God cleanses his heart and so now considers him a saint, rather than a sinner. Folks, if that is not a direct operation on the heart of the alien sinner, then what is it?

Furthermore, it implies that one can be cleansed of his sins—sins that condemn him—and yet not be a Christian! He has not entered the kingdom or the church, because he still must be regenerated or “born again” by water and the Spirit (John 3:3, 5). He has no sins to condemn him, but he is still an alien sinner—**a sinner without any sins!** Thus, people are saved from their sins without being in the Lord’s church, according to this implication of Mac Deaver’s doctrine of present-day Spirit baptism. The alien sinner is still a sinner because he is not a saint. Yet, he is a sinner without sins. He is an accountable non-saint who has no sins for which God holds him any more to account, but he is not a Christian....

Surely, one would have hoped that no brother in Christ, especially one professing to be a preacher of the precious Gospel of Christ, would believe that man’s innate nature as an alien sinner is so tainted with some literal, ethereal filth that it required a direct and immediate scrubbing by the Spirit to clean it up! But, alas, that absurdity is an essential to Mac Deaver’s new view on Spirit baptism. He has premised that doctrine upon it (Sep. 4-5).

Brethren, this is enough to sadden the heart of any faithful Christian, but the astonishing (innovative) aspect of all this is that brethren have embraced Deaver while at the same time heavily criticizing any and all (from the denominational world) who accept this heinous doctrinal error. Denham, in over two years, grinds this doctrinal farce to dust and blows it away beyond recognition, yet we find mindless drones still attending where Deaver speaks, attending where he preaches, and believing he sincerely wants to debate Denham on this issue (mind you, he has avoided Denham’s attempts to

meet him more than half way by distorting the role that Michael Hatcher is to have in this effort to bring the men together). That ordeal will never find fruition because Deaver would be exposed/unmasked as the charlatan he is—and that just might hurt someone's feelings.

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THEISTIC EVOLUTION

Lynn Parker

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Theistic evolution is a philosophy that combines a belief in God with an acceptance of the theory of evolution. It especially has a problem with the creation account of Genesis. In an effort to reconcile both evolution and belief in God, theistic evolution says that we have to look at Genesis 1 as an allegory, myth, or perhaps just figurative. The whole doctrine is false and untenable to the faithful child of God.

And God saw everything that he had made, and, behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day (Gen. 1:31).

For in six days Jehovah made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore Jehovah blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it (Exo. 20:11).

Nobody is limiting God when we say God created the earth and all that in them is in just six literal days. We are not, by averring that all was created in that week of beginnings, telling God what He had to do. Rather, we are accepting and teaching what God said He **did** do! The Bible declares:

Then Jehovah rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from Jehovah out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground (Gen. 19:24-25).

If Scripture states that God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah by raining fire and brimstone, do we do any harm by saying it did not

happen the way the Bible record states? Perhaps we could theorize that a violent hailstorm overtook the evil cities. Maybe (if you believe in theistic evolution) Christ was not really dead but simply “swooned” and was laid in the tomb, only to come to consciousness the third day and roll away the stone to walk out. Such reeks of modernism, liberalism, and poor hermeneutics. Of course such tampering is harmful! It undermines the veracity and integrity of the Scriptures. If God wanted to use evolution to produce the creation, He surely could have, and He could have indicated such in the Bible record. Instead, God’s Word leaves no room for evolutionary processes in the creation.

IF I WERE A THEISTIC EVOLUTIONIST

A “theistic evolutionist” claims to believe in God as a Creator, and evolution as God’s process for creation. John Clayton, a member of the Lord’s church and a theistic evolutionist, seemed to have it all resolved when he announced:

If we look carefully at the issues about which we are talking, however, we can find that evolution and the Bible show amazing agreement on almost all issues and that one is not mutually exclusive of the other (119).

Clayton could not be more wrong. Evolution is an arch enemy of the Bible account of creation. If I were a theistic evolutionist, I would need to find time, lots and lots of time, in the creation account. Now I do not mean minutes or days or even years—evolution needs millions of years for the speck in some primordial soup to become a two-legged, air-breathing, Coke-drinking, Chevrolet-driving human being. That time is not present in the Genesis account of creation.

WHY DO SOME ESPOUSE THEISTIC EVOLUTION?

There are a number of brethren, some well-known, that are theistic evolutionists. One writer, refuting this doctrine, listed five reasons leading some to embrace theistic evolution:

Why do people choose to believe in theistic evolution? First, no doubt many believe in theistic evolution because they feel that the

evidence for organic evolution actually having occurred is just too strong to ignore....

Second, some people believe in theistic evolution because they are convinced in their own minds that it not only is not contradictory to the Bible, but is, in fact, quite compatible with the Divine Record....

Third, there are those who believe that the concept of theistic evolution somehow heightens God's glory by having allowed Him to create the Universe via an evolutionary process. They feel this makes God "more believable," and simultaneously bestows more honor on Him....

Fourth, no doubt there are some theistic evolutionists who believe it "just doesn't matter" one way or the other....

Fifth, theistic evolution is popular among some people because they feel Genesis has not told us **how** God created (Thompson).

Simply stated, it may be that intellectual snobbery causes more than a few to court theistic evolution. Why, science cannot possibly be wrong, can it? After all, is not evolution a proven fact? One writer, claiming to believe in both God and the evolutionary process, believes that because science is, in his mind, too overwhelming to dismiss, then we must take a different view toward interpretation of the Bible. He believes that we must take the Genesis account of creation figuratively. The following quote is lengthy, but it helps one to understand some of the *thinking* that occurs in the minds of theistic evolutionists. He writes:

The Age of the Earth

There are too many scientific disciplines that state that the earth is more than 10,000 years old. Astronomy, genetics, linguistics, geology, plate tectonics, and archeology all say it is a lot older. The probable figure is about 4 billion years for planet Earth, and roughly 3 billion for life itself. We base our conclusions on appearances and scientific observations. The **weight of evidence** from all these disciplines is too much for me to dismiss. I do not find at all credible the assertions that the earth is only 10,000 years old and all the natural processes occurred within that time. (Bishop Ussher calculated 6,000 years old, and the Flood at 2348 BC.)

One often reads the statement that “evolution says the earth is billions of years old.” This statement is incorrect. Astronomy and geology say that the earth is billions of years old. Evolution draws on these disciplines for an estimate of the time in which the evolutionary processes can work. This point is important in order to realize the breadth of the quarrel about the age of the earth. If you assert that the earth is only 10,000 years old, you are disputing far more areas of the natural sciences than just a portion of biology.

Some young-earth creationists assert that the earth is 10,000 years old, and others assert that the earth is 6,000 years old. That’s a big difference: 4,000 years, or 67%. Bishop Ussher’s chronology, derived from the Bible, clearly states that the earth is 6,000 years old. Extending the age to 10,000 years conveniently places the date of Creation and the Flood beyond the oldest trees, and beyond the pyramids and dynasties of ancient Egypt. I have heard the following accusation from young-earth creationists: **You are interpreting the Bible in the light of science; you should be interpreting science in the light of the Bible.** (I have **not** heard a Bible verse to back up that charge.) 10,000 years is not what Bishop Ussher said. What is the reason for changing his number? Creationists who claim 10,000 years, **unless they do so for purely Biblical reasons**, should hear that same accusation ringing in their ears at least once....

Old Earth, Local Flood

There is a body of Christian thought that agrees with me, and it is sometimes termed “Old Earth, Local Flood.” One can find this thinking on the World Wide Web. There are many committed Christians who believe that creation took longer than 6 24-hour days, or that the whole-world flood reported was the entire known world at that time (Mesopotamia, the Mediterranean or the Black Sea basins).

There are many committed Christians who believe that Genesis and evolution are compatible. It angers me when Christian speakers mock “Theistic Evolution” on non-scriptural and non-scientific grounds. I believe that **mockery is sin**; because it creates contempt in the hearts of Christians instead of love for those whom Christ came to save, and it produces sharp resistance in the hearts of non-believers if they ever hear about it. It bothers me that self-described “fundamentalist” Christians seem to have no knowledge that there are Christians out there who accept evolution. (For what it’s worth,

Pope John Paul II has stated that evolution is a theory that is worth serious consideration.) It bothers me to hear someone assume that all “evolutionists” must be atheists.

Genesis

So what of the first 11 chapters of Genesis (before Abraham)? Either all these scientific disciplines are wrong, or we’re reading and interpreting our Bible wrong. As Christians we do not permit the Bible to lie, but we do permit it to be non-literal. Examples:

1. Jesus said, “I am the vine, you are the branches” to His disciples (John 15:5). I believe that Jesus literally said those words, but I don’t believe that His words there are to be taken literally. Nobody claims that Jesus physically became a plant....

These words have some literal meaning: Jesus Christ has been part of the Trinity since the beginning of time. But the Word here is not literally the Bible, lest we conclude that the Bible always existed physically. The light is not literal photons, but the spiritual light of salvation to all mankind.

Many words, phrases, and stories in the Bible are obviously non-literal. Some cases are not so obvious. But it is a mistake to insist that certain portions of Genesis must be taken literally because it supports someone’s viewpoint. It incorrectly projects our Western data-centric mindset onto the Hebrew way of thinking. There are fundamentalist Christians who insist that the Apostle Paul’s “thorn in the flesh” (2 Corinthians 12:7) must be interpreted **non**-literally (they contend that this passage refers to a person who was harrasing [sic] Paul, not a physical ailment). The Bible uses non-literal metaphors and illustrations to reveal the ways of God because our language and experience cannot fully express His divine nature.

The slippery slope here is the danger of stating that too much of the Bible is non-literal, including the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Fundamentalist Christians will claim that if you say that the first part of Genesis is non-literal, then you’ll say that the entire Bible is non-literal (like the proverbial camel’s nose poking in under the edge of the tent). That’s wrong. It is a logical mistake to assert that if you take a position in one direction you will inevitably go all the way to that extreme; it’s called the “All-or-Nothing Fallacy.” As an example of extremism: You are permitted and even encouraged by the Bible to discipline your children, but if you beat them you will go to jail (as you should). The extreme position is wrong, but the moderate position is okay.

I believe that everyone interprets the Bible, whether they claim to or not. Every time you make an interpretation, **your salvation is at stake**. So be very careful. Be guided by prayer, other Scripture, and the Holy Spirit. Notice that Paul rejects the non-literal Resurrection of Jesus Christ in 1 Corinthians 15:12-20 (Drews).

It is a well-known rule of proper Bible interpretation that we understand passages to be literal unless other factors require the language to be viewed as figurative. Dungan wrote, “As before said, nothing should be regarded as figurative unless such a demand is made by the meaning of the immediate context, or by the evident meaning of the passage as a whole” (160). The fact is that there is nothing in the Genesis account to make it figurative. A reading of Genesis 1 and the creation days indicates to the reader that these were days like we have now—with a morning and an evening. You would not even begin to think of any “longer” day than a 24-hour period if it were not for some trying to stuff evolutionary notions into the Genesis record.

Theistic evolution is wrong because the Bible states that the heavens, the Earth, the sea and all that is in them were created in six days (Exodus 20:11; Genesis 1). Genesis 1:5 even states that each of these days was a period of “evening and morning” so that there would be no doubt as to their length. Additionally, we are told in Genesis 1:14 that the lights in the heavens were “for signs, for season, and for days, and **years**.” If the days that are described by evening and morning were long epochs of time (as some theistic evolutionists would have us believe), then what, pray tell, would the “years” have been? Either the Universe was created in six literal days, or it evolved over billions of years, but of one thing we may be certain—both concepts cannot be true! (Lyons and Thompson)!

Dr. Henry Morris states the obvious when he writes:

It seems to us that we should take Scripture as the literal Word of God, intended to be understood by its readers in every generation and every nation—especially *this* chapter, which is the foundation of all the rest. If God had meant to convey the idea of long ages, He could easily have used a number of other Hebrew words and phrases to convey that idea. All the ancients were already familiar with the concept of long ages of evolutionary change in their various nature religions.

The idea of six-literal-day creation, however, was a radical departure from what the early Hebrews could have heard from their pagan neighbors; so God was very specific in using such words to preclude any such misunderstanding. For example, He defined the word “day” the very first time He used it. “God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day” (Genesis 1:5). The word “day” in Genesis does *not* mean a geological period! (“The Literal Week of Creation”).

Morris further wrote in convincing fashion:

The language of Genesis chapters 1 and 2 are technically precise and linguistically clear. Any reader would understand that the author of those pages intended to convey a normal six-day creation, involving God’s supernatural intervention both to *create* (something from nothing) and to *make* and *shape* (something basic into something more complex).

Three days (Day 1, Day 5, and Day 6) involve creation. Three days (Day 2, Day 3, and Day 4) involve the organization, integration, and structuring of the material created on Day 1.

Life was created on Day 5, a life in which all animals and man share. A special image of God was created on Day 6 that only man has. The movement from “simple to complex” may appear to follow evolution’s theory, but the specific order (water > land > plants > stellar and planetary bodies > birds and fish > land animals > man) most emphatically does not.

The Hebrew word for day (*yom*) is used some 3,000 times in the Hebrew Bible, and is almost always used to mean an ordinary 24-hour day-night cycle. On the few occasions where it is used to mean an indeterminate period of time, it is always clear from the context that it means something other than a 24-hour day (day of trouble, day of the Lord, day of battle, etc.). Whenever it is used with an ordinal (1, 2, 1st, 2nd, etc.), it always means a specific day, an ordinary 24-hour day.

The language of Genesis 1 appears to have been crafted so that no reader would mistake the word use for anything other than an ordinary 24-hour day. The light portion is named “day,” and the dark portion is named “night.” Then the “evening and the morning” is Day 1, Day 2, etc. The linguistic formula is repeated for each of the six days, a strange emphasis if the words were to be taken as allegorical or analogous to something other than a day-night cycle.

When God wrote the Ten Commandments with His own finger (certainly the most emphatic action ever taken by God on behalf of His revealed Word), God specifically designated a seventh day to be a “Sabbath” day (rest day) in memory and in honor of the work-six-days, rest-one-day activity of God during the creation week (Exodus 20:11). In that context, spoken and written by God Himself, the creation week can mean only a regular week of seven days, one of which is set aside as holy (“Creation Was 24/6 and Recent”).

CONCLUSION

You cannot purport to respect the Bible and be a theistic evolutionist. If Genesis 1 is not to be taken literally, then the remainder of Scripture stands in peril. There is no tolerance for those attacking the veracity and credibility of the Scriptures. Our God is quite capable of creating in His desired timetable and quite capable of communicating the events to His creation.

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THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Lee Moses

Lee Moses was born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania and was baptized into Christ by Gary Summers in 1999 in Denton, Texas. He graduated from the University of North Texas in 1998 with a Bachelor of Music degree in music education and from the Memphis School of Preaching in 2002. He also attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, and has done graduate work at Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama. Lee is working with the church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas and is editor of the *Fulton County Gospel News*.

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Whatever God has made is perfect. As He created the universe, every facet of it was of excellent quality. As He crowned the creation by creating mankind, all was objectively observed to be of an **exceeding** excellence (Gen. 1:31). Yet, through the obfuscation of Satan and the restlessness of man, the perfection of the creation was lost (3:1-24). “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecc. 7:29). The innovations of man abandon the perfection of God. One such innovation is the **social gospel**.

WHAT IS THE SOCIAL GOSPEL?

The term and concept *social gospel* has been variously defined and described. The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines *social gospel*: “Christian faith practiced as a call not just to personal conversion but to social reform.” While phrased so as not to offend, this definition at least points in the correct direction. However, Bobby Duncan’s definition of *social gospel* is much more complete:

The philosophy of those professed Christians whose conception of Christianity is that the major significance of the gospel is related to the needs of this present world; and that “gospel” preaching should be designed to correct the ills of this present life, with only a passing reference to life beyond the grave—if there be any such life (367).

The social gospel represents a shift of the Gospel's emphasis. The social gospel shifts the emphasis away from individual sin and accountability to societal ills. The social gospel shifts the emphasis away from serving the eternal Creator to serving "the universal brotherhood" of man. The social gospel shifts the emphasis away from a heavenly hope to an earthbound mission. The social gospel shifts the emphasis away from spiritual truths to material needs more pressing to the carnal mind. "Ministering to the whole man" is a key concept behind the social gospel, and it reflects its de-emphasis on man's spiritual needs. Scripture is de-emphasized in preaching, as are key doctrines of Scripture including the virgin birth, the atoning blood, and the resurrection of Christ.

As the social gospel shifts the Gospel's emphasis in its preaching, so it shifts the Gospel's emphasis in its practice. The social gospel de-emphasizes preaching and the worship of God in favor of community benevolence and political involvement. Some of the social gospel's political causes include advocating for labor unions and opposing war. The social gospel has favored the virtual abandonment of foreign evangelism altogether in favor of "medical missions." Instead of focusing on preaching the Gospel to redeem the souls of men, the social gospel focuses on feeding the hungry, righting civil injustices, and meeting any number of physical needs or "felt needs."

Calling a false doctrine or system of doctrine a *Gospel* of any kind is really a misnomer, as there is only **one** true Gospel: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto **another gospel: Which is not another**; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7). This in and of itself, tells us something about the social gospel—it is something other than the one true Gospel.

This manuscript will use *social gospel* accommodatively, as it is an established term in widespread use, but this use in no way affirms it to be the true Gospel—it is an innovation and a perversion.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

Around the time of the Civil War, Protestant denominations gradually began assuming a political role previously very atypical in America. Battles raged in denominations over the immediate abolition of slavery, the War Between the States, and the culpability of North versus South. Churches also were becoming more involved in social reform. In the late 19th century:

Washington Gladden, a Congregational minister who had been much influenced by Horace Bushnell, became an outspoken advocate of the right of labor to organize during a long pastorate in Columbus, Ohio (Handy 229).

Was it the teachings of Scripture that prompted Gladden to devote his efforts in this direction? This is highly unlikely, since he firmly disavowed the authority, and even the accuracy of Scripture: “The Bible is not an infallible Book.... The book is not infallible historically.... It is not infallible scientifically.... It is not infallible morally” (Gladden 351-55). This would not be an altogether extreme viewpoint among social gospellers, and Gladden’s influence upon the movement would be profound, both theologically and practically.

The social gospel arose not from honest souls searching the Scriptures, but from the social, scientific, theological, and political climate of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Charles Darwin had shaken the faith of many in a Divine creation. Mankind had been depreciated from his creation in God’s image and his preminent role among creation to a beast—an intelligent beast, but a beast nonetheless. Mass immigration, industrialization, and other factors brought urban slums and crime. Advancements in military technology had brought about advanced numbers in deaths on the battlefield. Fresh from Germany, inspiration-denying theories of the Bible’s origin had infiltrated the denominational seminaries and university schools of divinity. Society had taken a new, much more cynical view of humanity—that of a cheap and meaningless existence.

Walter Rauschenbusch, a native of Rochester, New York, and son of a Baptist preacher who had emigrated from Germany, had a much more optimistic view of his own purpose—at least in his youth, prior to entering seminary. He later reminisced:

The idea came to me that I ought to be a preacher, and help to save souls. I wanted to go out as a foreign missionary—I wanted to do hard work for God. Indeed, one of the great thoughts that came upon me was that I ought to follow Jesus Christ in my personal life, and die over again his death...and it was that thought that gave my life its fundamental direction in the doing of Christian work (“Kingdom”).

Here was a young man who, though misled by the errors of denominationalism, had an admirable devotion to the infallible Word of God and to serve the Christ who died for him.

However, after receiving his allotted brainwashing at Rochester Theological Seminary, his previous “inherited ideas about the inerrancy of the Bible became untenable.” He also repudiated the substitutionary atonement, claiming:

It was not taught by Jesus; it makes salvation dependent upon a trinitarian transaction that is remote from human experience; and it implies a concept of divine justice that is repugnant to human sensitivity (“Walter Rauschenbusch”).

While his faith and previous views were shaken, Rauschenbusch did not abandon his profession of Christianity or preaching altogether—even though he confessed that he “had nothing to offer the people” (qtd. in Coats 84). In 1886, he began preaching at Second German Baptist Church in New York City. This was located in “Hell’s Kitchen” in midtown Manhattan, then an Irish and German immigrant neighborhood stricken with poverty, crime, and disease. Devoid of Biblical faith, but heavily influenced by the writings of Washington Gladden, he led the Baptist congregation with which he worked in a new direction. “As a means of putting some sort of vitality into a dead system which would not survive, the Rauschenbusch church became a social welfare program” (Coats 83). Around this time, Charles Sheldon wrote novels advocating the social gos-

pel, including *In His Steps*, in which he coined the phrase, “What would Jesus do?” Sheldon’s popular works would continue to influence and prod Rauschenbusch in the direction he was taking.

To justify the changed emphasis and message, Rauschenbusch developed a new theology, defined in such works as his landmark bestseller *Christianity and the Social Crisis* (1907) and especially *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (1917). In the preface to *Theology*, he stated, “This is the main proposition of this book. . . . We have a social gospel. We need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it” (i). Basically, he is saying, “We have decided what we are going to practice—now we need to figure out what to believe that will support it.” Never mind that, Biblically speaking, the beliefs come **first** (after the Word, Rom. 10:17); which, if correct, will produce the proper works (John 13:17; 1 The. 1:3; 1 Tim. 1:5; Jam. 2:18). Rauschenbusch went on to lament, “The pioneers of the social gospel have had a hard time trying to consolidate their old faith and their new aim,” admitting that their aim was not directed by their faith (9). The social gospellers chose instead to walk by sight (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7).

Rauschenbusch’s theology was based on a perverted understanding of the **kingdom of heaven**. He certainly understood the kingdom as being distinct from the church (77). Rather than viewing the kingdom as Christ’s body of the redeemed, he viewed the kingdom as the transformation of society on earth (Thiselton 594). As he said:

The victorious coming and kingly rule of Christ on earth is achieved by the organization of all mankind in a fellowship of children of God, and by the continuous ethical transformation of all society through the power of the Christian spirit (*Theology* 132).

Rauschenbusch saw it as the church’s mission to “save the social order” (114).

Such teachings, though contrary to Scripture, were well-adapted to the evolving mindset of the twentieth-century man. The mindset of people in urban populaces was especially changing—in its view of man, in its view of God, and in its view of religion. People

sought for less dependence on man, God, and religion. People had less interest in learning about God and His will for mankind. It was believed that religion could be made more attractive to people if they could more clearly see religion's love for mankind.

Obviously, many reacted vehemently against the social gospel. As numerous theological conservatives joined with liberals in embracing the social gospel, Dwight Moody and other denominational conservatives railed against the social gospel's focus on social issues and benevolent aid. There were certainly overreactions to the social gospel. One such overreaction was a lurch into Premillennialism. The theology underlying the social gospel demanded that the kingdom be presently realized. Since Christ is currently reigning in heaven above, social gospel advocates claimed that He deserved a kingdom on earth worthy of Him. It is not altogether coincidental that the rise of Premillennialism came shortly after the rise of the social gospel, although there were numerous other factors involved as well.

Rauschenbusch would heavily influence later advocates of the social gospel, such as Martin Luther King, Jr. and Desmond Tutu. Although King distanced himself from Rauschenbusch's views on the kingdom, he wrote:

It has been my conviction ever since reading Rauschenbusch that any religion which professes to be concerned about the souls of men and is not concerned about the social and economic conditions that scar the soul, is a spiritually moribund religion only waiting for the day to be buried (qtd. in White and Hopkins 274).

MODERN MANIFESTATIONS OF THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

The social gospel is not only a byword of past history. Unfortunately, it is alive and active today. The Salvation Army, championed by Charles Sheldon well over a century ago in *His Brother's Keeper*, may remain the most obvious bearer of the social gospel torch, as evidenced by their stance: "We believe in the sacred freedom and dignity of persons and are committed to the redemption of the world in all its dimensions (physical, spiritual, social, economic and political)" ("Economic"). The more theologically liberal denomina-

tions have now been living and dying by the sword of the social gospel for decades. The Episcopal Church USA has a special feast day honoring three pioneering heroes of the social gospel: Walter Rauschenbusch, Washington Gladden, and Jacob Riis, as well as another feast day for social gospellers Richard T. Ely and William Dwight Porter Bliss. The Disciples of Christ denomination, brought about by a split from the churches of Christ, proudly boasts of their representation “at every level of Christian social protest” (Harrell 85). The Disciples Justice Action Network (DJAN), a wing of the Disciples of Christ denomination, boasts in their “Christmas 2012” newsletter of their participation in **Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice**:

The theme of this year’s conference will be *At God’s Table: Food Justice for a Healthy World*. The emphasis will be on food security: “ending hunger, improving nutrition, creating more just and sustainable food systems and protecting God’s creation” (*Call 1*).

This same issue revels in revealing that the Christian Church in Indiana revoked “a prohibition against knowingly granting standing to gay and lesbian persons.” Homosexual advocacy has become a common cause among social gospellers.

Even the more conservative “Evangelical” wing of Protestantism is heavily involved in the social gospel. Evangelical superstar Rick Warren of the Saddleback Community Church and author of the *Purpose-Driven* series “has taken the social gospel to where it’s never been” (McMahon). One example of this is found in his Global PEACE Plan:

The PEACE Plan is a hopeful response to the five giant problems in the world: Spiritual Emptiness, Self-Serving Leadership, Poverty, Disease, and Illiteracy.

PEACE is a movement to mobilize Christians in churches working together to...

- Plant churches that promote reconciliation
- Equip servant leaders
- Assist the poor
- Care for the sick
- Educate the next generation (PEACE Plan).

Is it not a little strange that among the “five giant problems in the world,” **sin** is not specifically named? Is it not a little strange that among the enumerated efforts being made, no mention is made of preaching the Gospel or saving the lost?

The emerging church movement is heavily influenced by the social gospel. Rob Bell writes:

Salvation is the entire universe being brought back into harmony with its maker. This has huge implications for how people present the message of Jesus. Yes, Jesus can come into our hearts. But we can join a movement that is as wide and as big as the universe itself. Rocks and trees and birds and swamps and ecosystems. God's desire is to restore all of it.... The goal isn't escaping this world but making this world the kind of place God can come to. And God is remaking us into the kind of people who can do this kind of work (109-110).

The social gospel has extended to the highest offices in the land. Mere days after he took office, former President George W. Bush instituted a new bureau called the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, renamed by his successor as the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships. The purpose of this bureau is to provide government funding for local churches, synagogues, mosques, and other religious ministries that were providing a social service to their community. Bush believed that programs run by “people of faith” could be at least as effective as secular organizations in helping the needy, and perhaps more so because of their moral commitment to “love and serve their neighbor” (qtd. in McMahan).

Especially distressing, even the bride of Christ has been blemished by the social gospel. The congregation with which this writer works receives propaganda via mail and e-mail every week pushing social gospel programs among professed churches of Christ. One such headline reads, “Water Purification Church Building Launched.” It explains:

In response to the request of village officials, negotiations are in progress to adopt this village of 12,000 and attempt to raise their standard of health, education, well-being and spirituality. We have

discussed with them that great nations can only be built through education, improving the general health of its people and teaching them the importance of ethical practices and hard work. They have asked us to help them do just that (“Water”).

This professes to be a work of the church, specifically of the WindSong Church of Christ in Little Rock, Arkansas, and solicits funds from other churches. Yet, the closest approximation of preaching the Gospel in this particular work is attempting to raise a village’s “standard of...spirituality,” and judging by their account of discussions with village officials, this is far from the focal point of their work.

Other churches have “grocery giveaways” and soup kitchens, without any assessment of need. The gymnasiums being erected by more liberal congregations are manifestations of the social gospel, although Rauschenbusch and gymnasium churches would emphatically deny any relation with each other. However, gymnasium churches are forced to justify their innovations by the same reason—they are “ministering to the whole man.”

PROBLEMS WITH (OR “ERRORS OF”) THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

The problems with the social gospel are not always immediately evident. Some honestly wonder, asking questions such as, “What is wrong with the church seeking to better the world?” The obvious answer to such a question is, “Nothing!” However, such questions fail to address the entire matter, as the social gospel does more than simply seek to better the world.

Shifts the Emphasis from the Spiritual to the Material

In defining the social gospel, this writer previously mentioned that the social gospel represents a shift of the Gospel’s emphasis. To this its advocates historically would agree—they feel that an emphasis on social needs is much more compelling to the unsaved than doctrinal discourses. Many of them feel that emphasis is **essential**—as Rauschenbusch brazenly asserts: “An outlook toward the future in which the ‘spiritual life’ is saved and the economic life is left unsaved is both unchristian and stupid” (*Theology* 131). By such reasoning, a soul who is led to obey the Gospel and serve Christ

faithfully throughout his life—yet remains economically poor—is a failure. This is not what Solomon observed through inspiration’s eye: “There is that maketh himself rich, yet *hath* nothing: *There is* that maketh himself poor, yet *hath* great riches” (Pro. 13:7). Neither is it what Christ observed, as He noted the co-existing economic poverty and spiritual wealth of the Smyrnan Christians: “I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and *I know* the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but *are* the synagogue of Satan” (Rev. 2:9). On the other hand, Christ also pointed out the co-existing economic wealth and spiritual poverty of the brethren in Laodicea: “Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (3:17).

The social gospel focuses upon fleshly needs and places its hope in this world. “The ‘social gospel’ places most of its hope upon making this sin-cursed world perfect” (Fields 111). Rauschenbusch went so far as to say:

Belief in a future life is not essential to religious faith.... There is doubtless an increasing number of religious men and women today who find their satisfaction in serving God now, but expect their personal existence to end at death (*Theology* 134).

However, inspiration speaks of a greater vision and a true hope: “While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen *are* temporal; but the things which are not seen *are* eternal” (2 Cor. 4:18). As such, “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2).

Shifts the Church Away from Its Mission

Christ has given the church a mission: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). This remains the church’s mission in every generation. As Christ came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), and as God sent Christ to preach the Gospel of the kingdom of God (4:43), so the

church is to do. But the social gospel would turn the church away from this mission to focus her time, energy, and resources on works that are secondary at best and often unauthorized altogether.

The financial and human resources of the church are not infinite. There are certainly far more of both in store than are presently being utilized; but regardless, they are not infinite. As numerous spiritually-destitute souls lack the Gospel, the church must not veer from her mission to bring them the Gospel.

Minimizes Sin, Salvation, and Personal Responsibility

We previously noted that Rick Warren's "five giant problems in the world" fail to include a specific mention of sin, and that his PEACE Plan fails to make any mention of preaching the Gospel or saving the lost. When things other than the most important are moved to the forefront, it should be fairly obvious what happens to that which is most important—it moves to the background to make way. The social gospel moves sin and salvation—that which is most significant—to the background to make way for the priorities of the social gospel. Some social gospellers may object to this, but even Rauschenbusch admits:

It may well be that with some individuals there is a loss of seriousness in the sense of sin as a result of the social gospel. But on the whole the result consists chiefly in shifting the emphasis and assigning a new valuation to different classes of sins (*Theology* 25).

"But," one might ask, "by who's standard are we reclassifying and revaluing sins?" The answer is, "By a very human standard." Rauschenbusch found this a positive development, demanding, "How is it...that only in the last three years has war been realized as the supreme moral evil?" (24). War is "the supreme moral evil"? Says who? The wisdom of modern man, before which Rauschenbusch and the minions of the social gospel bow! This is certainly not to say that war is ideal. In a world where men have not fallen and they universally lived by the "golden rule" (Luke 6:31) and other similar principles of Christianity (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:12-15; Jam. 4:1-2), there would be no war. However, war was at times commanded by God (Deu. 20:10-13; etc.), John the Immerser permitted soldiers to

continue in their service (Luke 3:14), and the Gospel continues to delegate to civil governments the responsibility to “bear the sword” as “a revenger to *execute* wrath upon him that doeth evil” (Rom. 13:4).

Rauschenbusch exaggerates the evil of war because it is a **national** sin. He makes corporate and national sins out to be “the unforgiveable sins,” yet, personal sins are apparently no sins at all (*Theology* 34-35). However, at what level are sins addressed in the New Testament dispensation? National and other collective sins are certainly mentioned and condemned, but sin is most often addressed at the individual level. Even though Israel was collectively rejected by God for their collective rejection of His Son, individually they could each be saved by obeying Him (cf. Acts 22:3-16). Social gossellers emphasize that Christ and other men of God took wicked rulers to task (cf. Eze. 34; Mat. 23). The social gossellers cite this as evidence that the church needs to focus on changing the social order. However, they fail to note that the reprovved rulers had elevated levels of **personal** accountability that accompanied their ruling power (cf. Deu. 16:18-20; 1 Kin. 14:7-16; Jam. 3:1; Heb. 13:17). The New Testament speaks of political leaders, soldiers, and entrepreneurs being addressed about their sins, but they are each addressed concerning their **personal** sins, personal accountability, and personal salvation (Mark 6:17-18; Luke 19:8-9; Acts 24:24-25; 26:27-29).

Social gossellers generally believe the significance of sin pales next to the importance of providing for the physical needs of the poor and changing the social order. As Rauschenbusch seeks emphasize causes of the social gospel, he also seeks to de-emphasize individual morality: “The fact that a man is too respectable to get drunk or to swear is no proof of his righteousness” (*Theology* 34). This writer would agree with this statement in and of itself, but he would take it a step further—the fact that a man may contribute to charitable works and be personally involved in them is no proof of his righteousness—not before God, anyway.

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (Mat. 7:21-23).

There may well be numerous persons on the Day of Judgment who appeal to their “wonderful works” of charity: “Lord, Lord, have we not set up soup kitchens?” Al Capone, one of the most vicious and bloodiest murderers ever, was also philanthropically-minded. Actually, he is the “father of the soup kitchen.” He opened up the first soup kitchen at the onset of the Great Depression, serving three meals a day and ensuring that anyone who lacked the means could eat come mealtime (“Depression-era”). Some sources claim that a Detroit soup kitchen started by Jack Daniel and Jim Beam predates that of Capone—either way, one can see that these efforts were not first initiated by men motivated toward the righteousness of God.

Each of us will be judged individually by our faithfulness to God, both in doing what He commands and in abstaining from what He forbids (Ecc. 12:14; 2 Cor. 5:10).

Misrepresentation of the Gospel’s Approach to Social Issues

Does the Lord call for radical social revolution, as the social gospel recurrently does? Consider what the New Testament teaches:

Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called. Art thou called *being* a servant? care not for it: but if thou mayest be made free, use *it* rather. For he that is called in the Lord, *being* a servant, is the Lord’s freeman: likewise also he that is called, *being* free, is Christ’s servant (1 Cor. 7:20-22).

Servant is alternately translated “bondservant” or “slave”—it does not refer to a butler or maid, but rather to one entirely under control of another. Such a slave had no right to seek better employment or to quit his job when mistreated by his master. He really had no rights whatsoever. (It is worth noting that “the slavery of Judaism [directly regulated by God—LM] was not the cruel system of

Greece, Rome, and later nations”—Raffety). While Paul encourages a slave who is given the opportunity for freedom to take advantage of that opportunity, he nowhere implores slaves, “Rise up, and cast off the shackles of your bondage!”

Violates the Principle, “If Any Would Not Work, Neither Should He Eat”

The giveaways and soup kitchens of the social gospel typically fail even to determine **need**—social gospellers are so set on doing such things, they often squander their resources on people who are financially capable of feeding and otherwise providing for themselves. Among people who are not financially capable, social gospellers typically have little interest in determining **why** someone has need—they indiscriminately feed people and enable many who could work, but instead choose to live off of handouts.

Paul wrote, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (2 The. 3:10). This literally says, “If anyone is **not willing** to work”; that is, not willing “to engage in activity that involves effort” (Bauer 389)—others are not to provide for him. However, the social gospel almost universally violates this principle and enables slothfulness.

Inextricably Tied to Liberalism

The social gospel is inextricably tied to liberalism. These ties run both ways, as liberalism is both the spring that feeds and the river that flows from the social gospel. The roots of the social gospel lay in the theological liberalism of such German theologians as Albrecht Ritschl and Adolf von Harnack (Thiselton 594). This is not to affirm, as some have, that “to accuse one of being a preacher of the Social Gospel is to accuse him of being a Modernist of the rankiest sort” (Roberts 419). Many theologically conservative preachers and religious groups have advocated some type of social gospel. However, their conservative credentials do not prevent it from being the social gospel they are advocating, nor do their conservative credentials break the social gospel’s ties to liberalism. In every case of which this writer is aware, the social gospel has been advocated

and implemented only after significant doctrinal compromises have been made.

The social gospel inescapably leads to further erosion of doctrinal integrity. The social gospel admits to being a “reformatory and democratizing influence.... The religious belief that [God] is immanent in humanity is the natural basis for democratic ideas about him” (Rauschenbusch, *Theology* 105). So the social gospel tends to diminish the authority of God and His Word to make Him a mere *vote* among the throngs of a democracy. Rauschenbusch proudly asserts that those who follow his doctrine “make less of heresy and private sins” (*Theology* 34). Where heresy is tolerated, heresy will run rampant (Tit. 1:10-11; 2 Pet. 2:1-2).

Rauschenbusch believed that eschatology merely developed in response to contemporary social causes and situations—he believed that the doctrine of purgatory was eliminated primarily because of the economic stranglehold that the Roman Catholic Church was able to put on others by means of the doctrine of purgatory (*Theology* 125). Consequently, Rauschenbusch felt that he and others were also at liberty to dispose of the doctrine of hell—or at least to share “modern hesitancy about the doctrine of hell”—because of the modern social situation, including a change of perspective toward the role of the penal system (125-26). There is little doubt that the thinking of the social gospel has been a contributor to modern deniers of hell, including Rob Bell.

We previously mentioned the Disciples Justice Action Network (DJAN) and their proud boast of homosexual advocacy. This has become a favorite cause of the modern social gospel. Time and again, not only do social gospellers find themselves advocating causes which have nothing to do with the mission or work of the church, but they find themselves standing opposed to God altogether on a multitude of issues. There can be little doubt that the Disciples of Christ denomination’s lust for advocating social causes has been a factor pushing them to the far end of the spectrum away from what the Bible supports.

THE BIBLICAL ALTERNATIVE TO THE SOCIAL GOSPEL

While error is rightly to be opposed and avoided, some sadly respond to error by “running right past Jerusalem in their haste to get from Rome.” In fairness, one should remember that some of the formulators of the social gospel itself were running from errors in the opposite direction, such as ritualism, self-absorption, and spiritual lethargy. Our intent should not be to stand as far from the social gospel as possible, but to stand right with the Gospel of Christ in every respect.

One certainly does not need to knee-jerk to the social gospel by running to Premillennialism. Actually, Premillennialism shares more in common with the social gospel than it cares to admit, and in the very respect it professes to oppose the social gospel—in its understanding of the kingdom. Both the social gospel and Premillennialism fail to equate the kingdom with the church. Christians will respect the church as the kingdom of Christ, established on the Pentecost shortly following His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Mat. 16:18-19; Acts 2:30-36; Col. 1:13).

To reject the social gospel does not mean that one should reject addressing “social issues” altogether. Faithful Gospel preachers have been accused of preaching the social gospel for preaching on abortion, homosexuality, medical ethics, alcohol use, and similar subjects. However, Gospel preachers do not preach on these subjects because they are “social issues”—they preach on them because these subjects involve sin and will mean the difference for some souls between heaven and hell! Yes, Gospel preachers need to focus on Christ, the church, and the means of salvation, but brethren need to be aware of ways their society stands against God, and they need to be warned against sin (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal. 5:19-21).

To reject the social gospel does not mean that Christians are altogether to turn their backs on those in physical need. **Unconcern for humanity is never acceptable!** Our final judgment will be contingent in part upon whether we have helped those in need (Mat. 25:34-45). Rather, let Christians seize opportunities to do good where such opportunities arise (Gal. 6:10), verifying when possible

whether the recipients are truly needful and whether they are incapable of working or finding work, or if they simply refuse to work. As they provide for the physically needy, Christians are to remember that any such benevolence is only secondary and incidental to the church's mission to preach the Gospel.

While the church is not to follow the social gospel's call to radically undermine the social order, there are ways in which the church will seem revolutionary. David Lipscomb was known for advocating equal treatment and non-discrimination toward blacks. He once wrote, "I doubt if one who refuses to fellowship and encourage and help one who is his disciple, because he or she is of another race, can be saved" ("Queries" 580). Such a position may seem borderline revolutionary in the Jim Crow South, but consider his response when a brother wrote, asking: "Do you think the social discrimination made against the Negro race in the South is justifiable by the Scriptures?" Lipscomb answered:

The Bible never proposes to disrupt and change social and political changes suddenly. It plants truths in the heart, changes character and life, and, as these are modified, fits for changed social conditions; and these come gradually and almost imperceptibly. To force them is to destroy them. Let the Negroes and the white cultivate kindly and Christian relationships toward each other, help each other as they can, and the social conditions will adjust themselves ("Neglected" 377).

Lipscomb's approach was much like the inspired approach of the apostle Paul. As Paul wrote to ask Philemon to grant his slave Onesimus freedom, he did not issue an apostolically-authoritative command. Rather, he "besought" Philemon by virtue of their new relationship in the Lord. Onesimus had become a Christian, and thus a spiritual brother and peer of his slave-master (Phe. 16; Gal. 3:28). As such, could Philemon continue to subjugate his brother in Christ in such a way? These were thoughts, implanted by the Gospel, that would come to weigh on the mind of every Christian slave-owner. There is little doubt that the influence of Christianity was the leaven that ultimately brought about the abolition of slavery in all cultures.

Early Christians bought slaves off the sale block, and wrote them certificates of freedom when they brought them home. Early Christians saved infants from abandonment and exposure. Christians are to stand on the side of right, regardless of how revolutionary or unpopular it may be in their contemporary culture. However, their influence is exerted through proclamation of the Gospel and godly living, rather than through forced societal upheaval.

CONCLUSION

God, being perfect Himself, can only make that which is perfect. He has established the perfect kingdom in the church of our Lord. He has given her the perfect mission in commanding her to preach the Gospel to the world, and He has given her the perfect message in the Gospel itself. Man has no need to formulate or follow a social gospel, or any other innovative *gospel*. Let Christians be content with perfection.

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MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS OF MUSIC

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INTRODUCTION

Some tell us that since the New Testament is **only** an inspired historical narrative concerning Jesus Christ and His church, covering about the first sixty-five or so years of the first century A.D. (unless one holds the time for the writing of Revelation to be about A.D. 96), that, therefore, we must not think of it as any kind of law obligating anyone to do anything to be saved from sin. Furthermore, this means that whatever it reveals about the church—its organization, work, worship, and the conduct of its members during this time—must not be bound on anyone today. Hence, this means that the New Testament epistles are only inspired letters of love set in a historical narrative that at the time they were written expressed to those to whom they were addressed God's love and care for them through His grace and mercy in the person of Jesus—His life, sacrificial death, burial, resurrection, ascension to heaven, reign, second coming, the universal judgment of mankind at the end of the world, and, for the saved, eternal bliss in heaven. Furthermore, we are told by the same people that if the New Testament is only an inspired historical narrative, what is essential for man's salvation to-

day is this—to mentally assent to the message of it about mankind's sin and its consequences, Christ's suffering and sacrificial death on our behalf (thereby He did for all mankind what we could never do for ourselves), and in some manner or another we ask Christ to come into our hearts to save us from our sins. Our salvation is all a matter of God's grace. Christ having done as we requested, acting as Christians, we continue to believe the previous historical facts regarding Him until we die or Jesus comes again, at which time we will be ushered into the glories of heaven to abide forever. More than this, Jesus does not require of us for us to be saved and remain faithful. Possibly some would require even less information for one to know than that cited for God to save one from sins. The whole idea of such people is to determine how **little** one must know and do to gain heaven.

The preceding paragraph sets out in a very general way the view that many hold toward what they are to get from the Bible regarding how and at what point God saves mankind from sin and keeps him saved in the church. Of course, usually those who believe and teach the preceding false doctrine think that the saved are found not only in the church of Christ (as that term is defined and used in the New Testament) but among all the man-made denominational churches too. Thus, they see the New Testament through this false view as if they were seeing a page of white paper through dark red tinted lenses. Until they remove those heavily tinted red lenses, they will never see the Bible, and especially the New Testament of Christ, for what those two covenants actually are. This means that they can never properly study and understand what the New Testament teaches regarding music in the worship of God or any other topic discussed on its pages. The foregoing erroneous view of what the New Testament is, and how to study it, must be completely refuted by the student of the Bible before the truth set out therein may be comprehended by those who presently wear such spectacles as previously mentioned.

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT SAYS ABOUT ITSELF

That the New Testament is far more than a historical narrative is evident from what the New Testament says about itself. Notice that the apostle Paul says God's Bible "*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). Also, throughout Romans, Galatians, and Hebrews inspiration makes it plain that the New Testament law of Christ is superior to the law of God given through Moses to Israel. Please realize that the simple and plain definition of law is this: "a rule of action" ("Law"). Moses' law (rule of action) did what it was designed to do (Rom. 7:13; Gal. 3:24), but it was never meant to do what only the New Testament law (rule of action) can do (Heb. 8:6-13; see Col. 2:14). Clearly the New Testament is for doctrine and is to reprove people in sin as it also instructs them in "righteousness" (right doing—Psa. 119:172), or the correct rule of action having to do with spiritual and moral matters. Also, the New Testament is explicitly (in just so many words) called "the perfect law of liberty" (Jam. 1:25; 2:12), "the law of faith" (Rom. 3:27), "the law of the Spirit of life" (8:2), and "the law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2). All of these previous terms are used by inspiration to contrast the New Testament with the Old Testament. Therefore it is clear that the authority of Christ is extended to all men through the language of our Lord's New Testament or "the law of Christ" (Mat. 28:18; Col. 3:17; Gal. 6:2).

The New Testament is the Lord's standard for judging all who have lived since Jesus received from His Father all authority in heaven and on earth and manifested His authority in the words of the New Testament (Mat. 28:18; Mark 9:24; Heb. 9:15). With that in mind, please notice that grace reigns or rules through righteousness (Rom. 5:21). The grace (favor) of Christ that saves us cannot reign through the Law of Moses: "for by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight" (3:20). It is the Gospel of Christ that is God's power to save today (1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Those who do

not obey the Gospel will be lost eternally in a devil's hell (2 The. 1:7-10).

HOW LANGUAGE WORKS

All languages communicate by their words, grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Specifically in the study of the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular, the direct statements, examples, and that which is implied by the foregoing make known to us the will of God. Some words are more specific than others and therefore one must note the difference in a **generic** term such as *music* from a **specific term** that, in the case of music, **specifies** the **kind** of music used, such as *sing*. From the very language of the New Testament, it is clear to anyone who desires to see it that the document is far more than a historical narrative—inspired or otherwise. Permeating the New Testament through the afore-mentioned communicative elements of language, there is constant emphasis placed on doing what Jesus through the Holy Spirit-inspired penman authorized man to do, in the way He directed them to do it, and for the reason(s) He told them to do it.

With these few important preliminary points in mind about the law of faith (Rom. 3:23; also see Jude 3), we understand the view that the New Testament is only a historical narrative is palpably false. Plainly, the New Testament is to be approached and studied as a testament, or body of law, a book of instruction, the Divine standard for man's conduct on earth before God. Thus, the emphasis in the New Testament is that to be pleasing to God we must have authority from Christ our King for all we believe and practice (Col. 3:17). There is no other way to "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7; Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:6). Thus, in complying with 2 Timothy 2:15, we must fully realize that it is imperative we approach the study of the New Testament from the standpoint of it being the "perfect law of liberty" (Jam. 1:25), "the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls" (1:21). That fact demands we study it as the law of Christ and not as something else.

WHAT WE ARE NOT AND WHAT WE ARE AFFIRMING IN THIS STUDY

We are **not** affirming that:

1. All “music” is sinful.
2. All “mechanical” music is sinful.
3. All “instrumental” music is sinful.

We are not concerned with the music that was employed in the worship of God in the Old Testament because we are **not** under the Old Testament’s authority (Col. 2:14; Gal. 3:24; Heb. 8:6-13). We are under the authority of Christ as it is set out in the words of the New Testament (Mat. 28:18; Jam. 1:25; Col. 3:17; John 12:48). Furthermore, we are not concerned with what may or may not be used in the worship of God in heaven when it comes to what God authorizes us to do here on earth (Tit 2:11-12). Clearly there will be radical changes in many things when heaven is the place glorified humanity lives. The need for marriage is a good example of how radical things will be altered in heaven (Mark 12:25). Obviously, the New Testament addresses mankind’s spiritual needs while he is still in the flesh on earth and not when he is glorified with Christ in heaven (1 John 3:2).

Therefore, in this study we are affirming:

1. **All** mechanical instruments of music used in the worship of God *are* sinful.
2. Singing is the **only** kind of music the New Testament authorizes to be used in the worship of God.

MUSIC IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The following is a list of all the New Testament passages that mention music. In every verse the music that is specified is singing.

And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives (Mat. 26:30; Mark 14:26).

And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them (Acts 16:25).

I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also (1 Cor. 14:15).

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

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).

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee (Heb. 2:12).

By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of *our* lips giving thanks to his name (Heb. 13:15)

Is any merry? let him sing psalms (Jam. 5:13).

For those who believe the Bible to be the Word of God, the question is not whether singing is wrong or not, but whether they can engage in some **other kind** of music and remain as pleasing to God as we know we are when we sing and only sing in worshipping Him. We do not hesitate to say we only know the will of Christ by the words of Christ. It is in the words of Christ that we have the authority of Christ set out for us. Thus, to use some other kind of music than that found on the pages of the New Testament is to act contrary to His Word and thereby reject what He has authorized on the matter.

WHAT THE NEW TESTAMENT PASSAGES ON SINGING TEACH US

We have already emphasized that the New Testament of Christ does not say to “make music” when one worships God, but it specifies the kind of music to be used in the worship of God—**singing**. In Ephesian 5:19 we learn not only that singing is authorized but also congregational singing is authorized. We are to speak to one another as we sing praise to God. Notice that to comply with the teaching of this passage, each individual must participate and that melody is made in each heart of all those engaged in singing the songs authorized in the worship of God—“psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.”

Mechanical Instruments of Music and All Other Music but Singing Violates God's Law of Faith

The Hebrews' writer penned that faith is essential to please God (Heb. 11:6). Also, we are taught to walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Thus, to walk by faith is to walk as the Word of God leads, guides, and directs or authorizes us to walk or live. Since mechanical instrumental music is not a part of the New Testament, we cannot engage in it by faith. Thus, it is a sin to use it in the worship of God because it is not worshipping God in truth (1 John 3:4; John 4:24).

Mechanical Instrumental Music Violates God's Law of Worship

No religious service is acceptable to God unless it is authorized by God's Word (John. 4:24; 17:17; Col. 3:17). Notice that the New Testament speaks of four different types or kinds of worship and only one of them is pleasing to God:

1. Vain worship (Mat. 15:9).
2. Ignorant worship (Acts 17:23).
3. Will worship (Col. 2:23).
4. True worship (John 4:24).

Only singing in the worship of God is according to His Word—the Truth (John 8:31-32; 17:17).

Mechanical Instrumental Music Violates God's Law of Unity

The use of it causes unnecessary division (1 Cor. 1:10). All acknowledge that singing is acceptable to God, so why engage in any other kind of music when worshipping God?

Mechanical Instrumental Music Violates God's Law of Inclusion

This law means that, when God has specifically authorized a thing, it is **included**. If the thing is not authorized, it is **excluded**. This is not difficult for us to understand. For instance, when we see a rest room door with *Females* on it, the law of inclusion means that females and only females may use that rest room for its intended

purposes. Since a male by definition is not included in the meaning of female, any and all males are excluded from the restroom with *Females* on the door. In the worship of God singing is authorized and is thus included in the worship, but any other kind of music that is not singing is excluded because it is not authorized and thus not included.

Mechanical Instrumental Music Violates God's Law of Silence

Regarding our actions, the Holy Spirit through the apostle John prohibits us from going beyond what is written in the New Testament when it comes to our actions being authorized (2 John 9-11—ASV; also see Col. 3:17). One cannot find written in the New Testament that anyone is to use mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God. Therefore, mechanical instrumental music in the worship of God is going beyond what is written in the New Testament. In worshipping God, we are not authorized to make music, but to sing and sing only.

In the following paragraph please consult any reputable dictionary to define the following words—*preclude*, *interdict*, and *sing*. We are giving great emphasis to the following because the information is tremendously important when it comes to “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), especially in the matter we are presently studying.

We must realize that a word authorizes us to do **only** what it **includes** in its meaning. However, a word does not **preclude** or prevent anticipative action. Neither does a word **interdict** or declare authoritatively against things that it does not include. **Sing** includes all that the word is defined to be—saying words or sounds musically or with melodious modulations of voice. If it were the case that somewhere else in the New Testament another kind of music was authorized, the authority to sing would not preclude or interdict the other kind of music that the New Testament authorized. However, in the absence of any other kind of music being authorized by the New Testament, the supposed other kind of music is excluded.

Thus, we are left with the kind of music that proceeded from the mouth of God regarding man's worshipping him—**sing**.

SOME ARGUMENTS FOR MECHANICAL INSTRUMENTS EXAMINED

There is only enough space for us to examine some of the arguments used in by unruly men in their attempt to prove that mechanical instrumental music is acceptable to God. We will study three of the arguments most used by those who attempt to justify the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God.

The *Psallo* Argument

The *psallo* Argument derives from the Greek words in Ephesians 5:19. The passage reads, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

Let us study, "Singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord." *Making melody* is the Greek *psallontes*. It is the present participle of *psallo*. Please notice that *psallontes* is used in addition to *adontes* (singing). If *adontes* means *singing* and it does, then clearly *psallontes* means something else other than *singing*. If that is not the case then Paul wrote "singing and singing," which is nonsense. Please take note of the Greek conjunction *kai* (and). Whatever the definition of *psallontes* is, both "singing" and "making melody" are obligatory and not optional.

We are told that if the instrument is intrinsic in the word, then the instrument is not just authorized, but it is obligatory. Moreover, all who sing must *psallo*. If *psallo* naturally involves the mechanical instrument, then all who sing are also obligated to play on a mechanical instrument. Thus, there is no authority from God for one or some in the assembly to play while everyone else sings. That is not what the passage obligates the worshipper to do.

In consulting any of the reputable Greek lexicons, we learn in the etymology of *psallo* that the following meanings are given to the word: (1) to pluck the hair, (2) to twang the bowstring, (3) to twitch the carpenter's line, (4) to touch the chords of a musical in-

strument—to make instrumental music, (5) to touch the chords of the human heart—sing, and (6) to celebrate with hymns of praise. Although the fundamental thought in *psallo* is “touch” that which is “touched” is not found in *psallo* itself. We must go outside of *psallo* to learn what is “touched.” This is not unusual in such studies. For instance, regarding the fundamental thought in the Greek word from which we get the transliterated word *baptize* or one of its forms. *Baptidzo* means to dip or immerse. However, we cannot tell from the word itself what or who is dipped or immersed. It is not fundamentally a part of *baptidzo*. When we study the baptisms of the New Testament we learn the element into which one is dipped or immersed. It may be suffering, water, fire, or the Holy Spirit. **We must look outside of the word to find the element.**

Psallo demands the instrument—it demands that something be touched, and it is an instrument that is touched. Yes, I believe in and teach that instrumental music is necessary to the proper worship of God in music. Thus, no one can worship God acceptably without the instrument. The question is: “What is the instrument that is demanded by the meaning of *psallo*?” **That instrument is the human heart.** Mechanical instrumental music **is not** found in the Greek word *psallo*. Hence, we must recognize that to worship God acceptably, the human heart must be involved in the right manner in the action (John 4:24; Mat. 9:13; Rev. 1:10).

If it is the case that one can read a psalm without using mechanical instrumental music, then it is the case that one can sing a psalm without it too. The root word for *psalmos* (Psalm) and *psallo* possess the same Greek root stem. If mechanical instrumental music is inherent in *psallo*, then one cannot read a psalm in the way that is acceptable to God without playing a mechanical instrument of music when the psalm is read.

“Does Not Say ‘Don’t Have It’ Argument”

The “does not say ‘don’t have it’ argument” is the next effort we shall notice by which some have sought to involve mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God. What is meant by the foregoing quotation is this: mechanical instrumental music in wor-

ship is authorized upon the basis that the New Testament does not say, “Don’t have it.”

In general, in the beginning of this chapter we dealt with this erroneous view. It is this: “We can do anything in our service to and worship of God unless the Bible specifically condemns it.” Of course, as we have already shown, the Bible does not direct men in this way. We are to do **only** those things that are authorized by the Bible, especially the New Testament of Jesus Christ because His authority is revealed in the words of His last will and testament.

Remember, without faith it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). For anyone to be right in the sight of God one must “walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7). Since faith comes by hearing the Word of God (Rom. 10:17), it is clear that to “walk by faith” is to live one’s life directed by the authority of Christ, which authority is found only in the words of the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular. The condemnation of God is upon anyone and everyone who transgresses, goes beyond, or falls short of what is written in the Bible (2 John 9; 1 Cor. 4:6; Rev. 22:18-19). **Who believes that all things the Bible does not specifically say, “Don’t have or do,” are things that may be used in Christian worship?** In the New Testament there is no “thou shalt not” offer animal sacrifices, burn incense, kiss the Pope’s toe, substitute chicken and buttermilk for the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine of the Lord’s Supper, count the beads in the Roman Catholic rosary, or a thousand other things. The authority of Christ is made known by what is said, not by what is not said.

The “Aid” Argument

The “aid” argument claims that mechanical instrumental music in the worship of the church is an aid. It is claimed to be an aid because it aids or helps the singing in the worship of God. Saying that something aids something else in what it does is to say that it is parallel, for instance, to using spectacles in seeing, or a “hearing aid” in hearing, or a “walking stick” in walking.

Spectacles have to do with observing and perceiving. Since there are various ways to observe and to perceive (feeling, hearing, seeing,

smelling, and tasting), **these means are co-ordinates**—they possess equal value in relationship to observing and perceiving. So, in the list of the previous sentence, we see the different ways we observe and perceive. We certainly would not conclude that *seeing* aids “tasting” or *tasting* aids “seeing.” Things that are **co-ordinate** cannot be **sub-ordinate** and therefore they cannot be aids. However, spectacles are an aid. When we use spectacles, we are still seeing. One is **not** feeling with his spectacles, or hearing with his spectacles—he is still seeing. He is **not** seeing **and** tasting. In using spectacles one is not using a different manner of observing or perceiving.

One may travel by riding or walking. We have pointed out that the *walking stick* is an aid—it helps one walk. Question: “Does the walking-stick aid or help one to walk (one kind of travel or movement) or to ride (another kind of travel or movement)? We may travel by walking or riding. Walking and riding are **co-ordinates** (different ways of traveling). Please notice, when the walking stick is employed by the one who is moving by walking, that one is still walking. Thus, using a walking sick is not a different manner of traveling but an **aid** or **help** to walking.

Mechanical instrumental music relates to the area of making music. There are only **two kinds of music**: mechanical instrumental and vocal. One way to make music is to play a mechanical instrument and the other way is vocal, but those vocal sounds must be singing. These ways of making music are **co-ordinates**. Just as seeing and tasting, walking and riding are co-ordinates. It is impossible for singing to aid playing or for playing to aid singing.

When we use a song book (an aid) while we are singing, we are still singing and only singing. We are not singing and making another kind of music as we sing. Thus, mechanical instrumental music does not aid or help us sing, it is another way to make a different kind of music. It is a kind of music not authorized by the New Testament to be used when worshipping God.

WHAT ABOUT THE PITCH PIPE, ETC.?

Let us also note that some of those who confuse a song book with a mechanical instrument of music are those who declare that Chris-

tians song leaders violate their own doctrine of singing and singing only in their worship to God when they use a tuning fork or pitch pipe, for they make a mechanical sound, and, thus, they are using mechanical instruments of music in their worship to God.

The foregoing comment proves at least that those who make such an argument do not know what constitutes music. *Music* is defined as **a succession of tones in an orderly pattern**. The only reason the tuning fork or pitch pipe is used is to **find the pitch** of the song to be sung. It is impossible to sing without pitch. We may have the wrong pitch, but no one sings without pitch.

Whatever is involved in what is authorized is necessarily a part of what is authorized. Since no one can sing without pitch, getting the correct pitch (or a pitch) for the song to be sung is an inseparable part of the authorization to sing. Has God specified in His authoritative word **how** the pitch is to be obtained? The answer is, no. One is free to obtain it by using a pitch pipe, tuning fork, or by the song leader's special natural ability or his training to do so. It is after the pitch is obtained that the singing begins. As we have heard it explained clearly, when the pitch pipe gives us the correct pitch, it shuts up and the singing begins. However, when the mechanical instrument is played along with the singing, another kind of music, a kind not authorized by the New Testament, is added to the kind of music (singing) that is authorized by the New Testament. To add to the Word of God is a sin (Rev. 22:18-19).

CONCLUSION

We are to live by every Word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Mat. 4:4). We are not to live by every word that does **not** proceed out of His mouth. God's authoritative Word authorizes only what the words comprising it mean in the normal way words in a language function to make the thoughts, intents, and purposes of one person (Divine or human) known to another person. The pharmacist does not put everything into the prescription that the physician did not expressly forbid. Furthermore, a marked road map or GPS does not inform us of every road "thou shalt not take." Can anyone imagine what size book or how many books it would take if

God told us everything we were not to do in worshipping and serving him? Thus, **we are told** in the divine volume to baptize believing penitents for the remission of their sins, that Christ is the head of the church, that we are to use bread and the fruit of the vine in the Lord's Supper, and the **kind** of music to use in worshipping Him (Mat. 26:30; 1 Cor. 11:23-28; Eph. 5:19). Where does the Bible expressly forbid baptizing dogs and cats, tattooing people for the Lord, dancing for the Lord, and on and on we could go in adding to such a list from the "silence of the scriptures."

Nadab and Abihu knew what fire to use by the meaning of the words that proceeded from God's mouth and not by what He did not say (Lev. 10:1-2, 8-11) What had Nadab and Abihu failed to do that caused God to kill them? The brothers had failed to distinguish between what the Word of God authorized (what it said) and what it had not authorized (what it did not say). The idea that the "silence of the scriptures" permits us to do as we please in worship and service to God is the doctrine that caused the death of Nadab and Abihu. If we are to learn anything about acting where God is silent, it is that such actions bring about death, not life, for those who do so. Since the people were held accountable to God for what He authorized them to do under the Old Testament, how much more so does He hold us accountable for what we believe and practice under the superior Covenant that is the New Testament of Jesus Christ (Heb. 2:1-4; 12:25-29; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:1-11)?

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PRAISE TEAMS

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 Orlinda (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.

In the past few years an increasing number of congregations have begun using "praise teams" during the worship services. The use of a "praise team" is one of the innovations that some congregations of the Lord's church have borrowed from the denominations. It seems that whenever the denominations come up with something new, some congregations quickly take them up without regard to whether they are authorized by Scripture. The children of Israel in the days of Samuel wanted to be like the nations around them (1 Sam. 8:5) with their accompanying sinful practices. Likewise, some congregations and Christians are so intent on being like the denominations around them that they pick up their sinful practices. The intent of this chapter is to determine whether the use of "praise teams" is authorized by the Scriptures or whether it is a sinful practice.

What is a Praise Team? Basically a "Praise Team" consists of a group of four, six, eight, or even more singers who lead the singing as a group. Some have a dominant soprano voice as the primary leader and the others serving as supporting leaders. Others will have a blended group whereby there is complete equality among the participants. In some congregations the team is up on the stage by

the pulpit where they visibly lead the singing. Others will place the team in the congregation where they are not seen but their voices are heard over a voice amplification system.

WHY PRAISE TEAMS?

It might be asked why these congregations chose to do this. Joe Ed Furr gives three reasons in an article titled, “Praise Teams,” found on the “ChristianHomeSite” web site. He gives a brief discussion of each if these points:

- First, it provides balance. The traditional system of solo song leading actually provides leadership only for the soprano voice. In the traditional system the alto, tenor, and bass lack leadership. The praise team provides vocal leadership for all voice parts. This enhances the coordination of four-part harmony.
- Second, praise teams provide a fast and efficient system for introducing new songs. A praise team can introduce a new song on Sunday morning, and most churches can quickly pick up the melody of the song and join in the singing. Churches that do not use praise teams have a more complex and time consuming task of bringing new songs into the assembly.
- Third, praise teams provide more general focal blend. The traditional system of solo song leading provides a dominant voice for the soprano. Visitors often discover this if they arrive a few moments late to a public assembly. When they enter the foyer, they can only hear the song leader’s voice on the P.A. system. When a visitor arrives a few moments late in an assembly led by the praise team, the visitor hears a balance of all voice parts over the P.A. system in the foyer.

Note that none of these reasons has any reference to whether there is Scriptural authority for such but rather has to do with the aspect of *entertainment* rather than worship! He does, however, briefly acknowledge that there are objections that are raised and attempts to justify their use (we will note these later).

However, I believe that there is another motive, although not voiced directly, behind the use of “praise teams.” Those who form the “praise team” are the most accomplished singers, since they are usually found in larger congregations. They have microphones, and special equipment is purchased to amplify their voices so all can

hear them. Thus, the poorer or average singers in the congregation are drowned out by the amplified voices of the accomplished singers, thus making the overall song service sound better to the human ear. Hence, it is the desire to sound better to others that is the driving force behind “praise teams.”

Furr also discusses the matter of what he terms the “universality” of the practice:

Will the day come when all churches adopt praise teams? No. Why? The answer in part has to do with the size of churches and the dynamics of a praise team. Approximately 50% of all churches of Christ have 50 members or less. Another 25% have a membership near 100. 15% of all churches have a membership near 200, and only 10% of all churches have a membership of 300 or more.

In the average church only one member in 40 has the ability and ambition to participate in a praise team. (However, the ration can be as low as one member in 20 in a church in a college community). Thus, only churches of 200 members or more will generally find enough talent to organize an effective praise team. This means that only 25% of all congregations have the likely potential of finding the talent necessary to create a praise team.

The ratio of talent to membership means that most churches will do well to perpetuate the tradition of solo song leading. Praise teams in many churches may be a short-lived fad. Successful praise teams are labor intensive. Team members must research repertory, sight-read new songs and rehearse group singing. In the history of our brotherhood, other popular labor intensive projects have experienced a relatively short life cycle. Membership turnover, time management complications, and interpersonal conflicts have restricted the durability of such projects. The churches that experience long-term success in labor intensive team efforts are often those that employ professionals to provide leadership. Congregations that employ a full-time worship minister may be able to perpetuate their praise teams for many years (“Praise Teams”).

Note, he indicates that praise teams are only going to be found in larger congregations. He also suggests that many would not have the “ability and ambition to participate in a praise team.” Thus, he makes it clear that they are an *elite group* within the congregation

that cannot be maintained in a small congregation. Notice his emphasis on having “professionals” to provide the leadership.

On the web site for the Johnson Street church in San Angelo, Texas, we find the justification for its use of a “praise team.” The “mission statement” for the “praise team” states: “The Johnson Street Praise Team’s purpose is to assist in worship by teaching and edifying fellow Christians through song.” In speaking concerning “Team Members,” it states: “Christians who are passionate about worshiping God through music are encouraged to join.” Should not all Christians “be passionate about worshipping God” not only in singing but in the other avenues of Scriptural worship? Note they used the generic term “music” rather than the Scriptural term “singing.” Christians are not commanded to “make music” but to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Under the section “Outreach,” it states: “The Johnson Street Praise team is always ready to sing for local or out of town community events. Many small congregations in the area have invited the Praise Team to aid in their worship on a Sunday evening. The Johnson Street Praise Team is well recognized in San Angelo and the surrounding area for great acappella music.” Pardon me if I say it sounds just like a choir!

The Campus Church in Gainesville, Florida, also has some interesting statements on its web site. Under the segment regarding requirements for being a part of the “praise team,” we note some statements.

Musical ability—For obvious reasons, PT members must have an effective level of musical talent. We must be able to carry our own “part” (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) while others around us are singing their different harmony lines.

It continues:

Commitment to excellence in our personal lives as well as our public ministry—Because we’re visible to all when we’re on stage, we know it’s especially important for us to do our best (on and off the stage) to represent Christ and His church honorably, never losing sight of Whom we are proclaiming.

The use of “on stage” gives, at least, the appearance of putting on a performance before the congregation, rather than participating in spiritual worship to Almighty God. Later, the web site states: “Campus Church members may click *here* to download the application form for a Praise Team audition.” Again, some of the requirements for this “praise team” seem like one joining a choir to participate.

The congregation in Troy, Michigan, has the following under the section “Singing”:

One of the first things you will notice is that our singing is largely congregational and unaccompanied by instrumental music. This method honors the historical traditions of our heritage in the Restoration movement tradition and the tradition of the Christian church for the first several centuries when they assembled together. Our singing is led by a Praise Team that uses the talents of both men and women (“Our Sunday Assembly”).

Note the singing is “largely congregational,” thus indicating that some of the singing is not congregational. Does that mean that sometimes the “praise team” sings as a choir? Note the use of the expressions “historical traditions of our heritage in the Restoration movement” and “the tradition of the Christian church.” No reference is made to Biblical authority. Since what is done, they claim, is just tradition, does that mean they believe they are free to change such traditions when it suits them?

The now infamous Highland church in Abilene Texas, on its web site under “Worship Ministry,” has the following statement:

If you are interested in participating in this ministry as a praise team singer, choir member, instrumentalist, actor, reader, artist, or in any other creative way, please contact...for ways to get involved. We believe that God raises up men and women for specific leadership roles and we want to be a place where people can serve the Lord using their gifts to lead people in worship. We are also always interested in those who have sound or media experience.

Note what they have—do you find any of these mentioned as being present in any congregation that is spoken of in the New Testament? Clearly Biblical authority is no longer of any importance to these apostates.

FURR'S "OBJECTIONS" AND HOW HE "ANSWERS" THEM!

Earlier, we mentioned that Joe Ed Furr did point out that there were objections to the use of the "praise team." He writes:

Many church members are objecting to the use of praise teams. They express the view that they fear that Biblical principles are being compromised or violated in this new fad. Three different objections are expressed. Let us briefly describe them.

- First, some contend that there is no Biblical sanction for praise teams. This objection is based on the belief that churches should not engage in an action without a clear Biblical precedent. There were no praise teams in the first century church, so this means that there should be no praise teams in the modern church. This is the weakest of the three objections because an honest Bible student will have to admit that we find no clear precedent for song leaders, hymnals, four-part harmony, or P.A. systems in the early church. We have no problems recognizing the cultural role of song leaders, hymnals, and four-part harmony. But some have difficulties extending this same principle to something that is different from past customs. The only difference between a solo song leader and a quartet of song leaders is one of custom or culture. Second, many people contend that praise teams are a clever, but subtle introduction of the choir.
- Some churches that have brought praise teams into the assembly have experienced a diminution [sic] in congregational participation in singing. Some singers prefer listening to the more professional praise team over participation in the assembly. The validity of this objection is determined by the way a praise team system is managed. This writer is aware of one congregation that has allowed its praise team to become a choir. Congregational singing has greatly diminished in that church. But this writer is also aware of several congregations where the praise team has improved congregational singing. If we are to preserve our heritage of congregational singing, then churches that use praise teams must pay attention to the way they manage the system.
- Third, many people object to the role of women in praise teams. They fear that the New Testament principle of patriarchal leadership is gradually being compromised by the role of women in praise teams. The validity of this objection is also determined by the way a praise team system is managed. Some praise teams do indeed position women in a position of leadership that is open

to question by all who would defend the principle of patriarchal leadership. But many churches have taken steps to overcome this problem without canceling the use of praise teams. With the use of wisdom, we can have praise teams that eliminate these objections.

These *objections* do not get to the heart of the matter, as we shall see. However, it is not surprising that Furr seeks to *soft ball* any possible objection since he desires to promote the use of “praise teams.” The first “objection” that he discusses can be summarized as “praise teams” were not used in the first century, as are some other things that are done today, and he says that this is the weakest “objection.” It is weak when it is stated the way he does because he ignores the matter of Biblical authority for the practice. Indeed, there are things that are done today that were not done in New Testament times, but they are authorized by Scripture. For instance hymns—we are commanded to sing and the use of the songbook does not change the command, but it is an expedient having the words and the musical notes to help us do what we are commanded to do. Such is not so with “praise teams,” as we will discuss later.

The second “objection” Furr notes is that some think it is “a clever, but subtle introduction of the choir.” Well, if it “quacks like a duck, and waddles like a duck, pardon me if I call it a duck.” As he discusses this “objection,” he points out that in some cases congregational singing has diminished because some “prefer listening to the more professional praise team over participation in the assembly.” He indicates that the validity of this “objection” is “determined by the way a praise team system is managed.” Thus, he claims it is a *management* problem rather than a Scriptural one!

His third “objection” is the matter of women leading. He states: “They fear that the New Testament principle of patriarchal leadership is gradually being compromised by the role of women in praise teams.” While admitting that it can be a problem, he downplays it as not being a serious problem by, again, seeking to make it a “management” issue rather than a Scriptural one.

Maybe Furr thinks he can fool brethren into thinking that there are no serious, Scriptural objections, and, thus, it is acceptable to use “praise teams” in worship. Such might satisfy worldly-minded brethren but not those who seek to obtain Scriptural authority for what is taught and practiced.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

First let us look at Ephesians 5:19. In context, a contrast is being drawn between the Greek debaucheries that they called worship (5:18) with the Spirit-filled worship of Christian (5:19). It is worship because it is addressed to God the Father. What are Christians commanded to do? They are exhorted, “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (5:19). A parallel passage: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). What is to be done? Singing and making melody in the heart. Who is to do it? “Yourselves,” or “to one another.” Some would argue that an individual or a group of singers (a choir) would fulfill this command. Let us pose some questions. If only some understand what “the will of the Lord *is*,” would that be satisfactory to God (Eph. 5:17)? If only some “submitted one to another” would that fulfill the command (5:21)? Clearly, we understand that these verses apply to all Christians. Some might say it does not have to be at the same time as long as all do some singing at some point. Can we say that we do not all have to submit at the same time as long as all eventually get around, at some point, to doing it? Can some of us forgive, as long as we all eventually, at some point, get around to doing it (Col. 3:13)? We all understand that these verses apply to all Christians acting as one.

Some would argue that listening is implied in these passages; how can one teach if there is no one listening? Thus, they say, with some singing and some listening, the command is being fulfilled. Again, could we say (respecting Ephesians 5:21) that submitting means someone is being submitted to; thus can we say that, as long as

some submit and some are submitted to, the command is fulfilled? Just as submitting and submitted to can be done at the same time, so can singing and listening. The only way that these verses can be understood is to recognize that they are referring to congregational singing where everyone who is able participates in the singing of the psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and is thus being taught. These verses cannot be fulfilled by only some people participating.

Some would use 1 Corinthians 14:26-33 to argue that speaking in tongues should be done one at a time as with revelation and interpretation. The argument continues that one has a psalm and so it is asked, “Doesn’t this imply a solo?” However, if it did it would mean there could only be solos and that would be limited to two or three songs. Further, one having a psalm does not imply a solo. When a song leader picks out a song, he “has a song,” but the entire congregation sings it. If this passage means that the one who chooses the song is the only singer, then it would place this passage in direct conflict with Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, which indicate that all must sing.

Another problem, Scripturally, with the use of “praise teams” is the matter of the role of women since women are a part of the “team” that **leads** the worship in song. Scripture speaks of a man leading the brethren in song:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying (1 Cor. 14:26).

Such leadership is forbidden to women. A few verses later, Paul writes by inspiration:

Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church (14:34-35).

Then in writing to his son in the faith, he states: “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to

teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:11-12). The “praise team” seeks to avoid this restriction by having a group of men and women simultaneously **lead** the congregation in singing. Yet, many men only sing the soprano (or lead) part. Thus, there is still leadership being exerted (even if no men are singing the soprano part), and, thus, there is a violation of what God has commanded with respect to the role of women.

CONCLUSION

“Praise teams” in the worship services of the church are wrong and sinful. There is no Scriptural authority for them. Further, the use of such is a step in the wrong direction as it often leads to further unscriptural practices—solos, choirs, instrumental music, etc. Also, those who use and promote the use of “praise teams” seek to impress men (the congregation) with the beautiful sound of the singing. The inspired Paul wrote: “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

That we may like something is an insufficient reason to permit its use. When Christians meet together for worship, they are gathered to worship God—not to be entertained by some of the brethren. Worship is to God, and the focus of our worship services should be on the Father and the Son and not on what makes it more enjoyable and pleasing to the ears of men. The Bible has always given specific instructions as to how He is to be worshipped in each dispensation. We see this throughout the Scriptures. Nadab and Aihu used fire that was not authorized by God and paid for that error with their lives (Lev. 10:1-5). Even before the giving of the Mosaic Law, Cain’s sacrifice was rejected by God because it was not of the kind that God had authorized (Gen. 4:3-7). In our worship as Christians, we are instructed to sing, and there is no authority for mechanical instruments, choirs, or “praise teams.”

Regarding our worship, our Lord said, “God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). *Must* indicates a compelling authority and an absolute necessity. For our worship to be acceptable to Almighty God means it

must be “in spirit and in truth.” How can we worship God in truth? Jesus, in His prayer, stated, “Thy word is truth” (John 17:17). Thus, to worship God in Truth, we must worship Him according to His Word. One cannot worship God in a “praise team” and worship Him in Truth.

The Bible teaches: “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). All that we do in worship to God is to be done “in name of the Lord”—that is, by His authority. The New Testament does not give any authority for a congregation to be entertained by the performance of a praise team or choir. It does not give authority for women taking a leading role over men by performing in a praise team. There is no authority for such since it came from man and not from God. Remember the words of Jesus: “Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7). When worship is “vain,” it becomes useless, and souls will be lost that worship in such a way. Let us not lose our souls by adopting unscriptural practices.

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ANY-DAY, ANY-THING LORD'S SUPPER

David B. Watson

David B. Watson was born in Webb City, Missouri (1947). He is a graduate of Webb City High School (1965), The Florida School of Preaching (1977), and Southern Christian University (1994). While serving in the United States Army (1967-1970), he saw active duty in Vietnam as a Chinook Helicopter Mechanic/Crew Chief (1968-1970). He married Peggy Lee (Comstock), and they have three children (Ryan, Kristie and Michele), one daughter-in-law (Andrea), two sons-in law (Chris and John) and four grandchildren (Riley, Haylie, Ansley, and Jack). His son-in-law (John Rose) is a Gospel preacher working with the Central Congregation in Naples, Florida. He has been preaching for 40+ years and has done local work in Florida and Oklahoma. David served as the Associate Editor (with Dub McClish as Editor) of the *Original Gospel Journal* (2002-2005). He now preaches for the Clay Hill Church of Christ in Middleburg, Florida, and from time to time writes articles for publication and speaks in various Gospel Meetings and Lectureships.

INTRODUCTION

According to Webster, the meaning of *innovation* is: “something newly introduced; new method, custom, device, etc.; change in the way of doing things.” In reference to the Lord’s Supper, we will study: (1) Some Problems Concerning Innovations, (2) Some Passages Concerning Innovations, (3) Some Principles Concerning Innovations, and (4) Some Perversions Concerning Innovations.

SOME PROBLEMS CONCERNING INNOVATIONS

During the Bellview Lectureship in 1988, in a lesson on “The Purity of New Testament Worship,” Eddie Whitten stated:

On one particular occasion during a “Conference for Churches in Change,” held at the Central Church of Christ building in Irving, Texas, on February 20-22, 1986; the following event took place, according to the Bering Drive Church bulletin, Houston, Texas, Vol. 24, No. 24, in an article by Edward Fudge (59).

Brother Whitten then quotes from the article written by Fudge:

This was a worshipful conference, prayerful in tone. It climaxed in a moving Communion service the final morning. Worshipers filed past the Table for the Bread and Wine, then exchanged silent greetings of handshakes, hugs or smiles as they left the sanctuary.

The conference itself demonstrated both freedom and responsibility. When host minister Jim Carter introduced the *Saturday morning Communion service*, he noted that the day was not a usual one for churches of Christ to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Those whose consciences did not allow them this privilege should abstain, he said, with the full knowledge that they are equally loved and welcomed whether they participate or not. In this manner, persons with *stronger consciences* did not force anything on those whose *consciences were weak*. At the same time, those with weaker consciences did not draw limits for their brothers and sisters who enjoyed a *greater measure of gospel freedom* (emp. mine, EW) (59).

Brother Whitten went on to say:

In addition to this glaring and blatant example of departure from pure worship; other incidences have been reported of the taking of the Lord's Supper on Thursday nights, in order to be free from that obligation on Sunday which would interfere with a long weekend; and on Friday night at a wedding because the bride and groom wanted it then, and the preacher did not object! (60).

The problems concerning these innovations involve at least the following changes: (1) changing the time (day) for the observance of the Lord's Supper from Sunday to Thursday, Friday, or Saturday, and (2) changing the place for the observance of the Lord's Supper from the worship assembly of the church on Sunday to an assembly on Thursday, a wedding on Friday, or a conference on Saturday. These were and are unauthorized changes in the Biblical way of doing things.

SOME PASSAGES CONCERNING INNOVATIONS

The apostle Paul wrote, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). The things written aforetime were and are the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old Testament Scriptures were and are written for our learning. Let us notice some passages from The Old Testament Scriptures concerning innovations to see what we can learn.

1 Kings 12:20, 25-33

In this passage we read of: (1) The Crowning of Jeroboam, (2) The Constructions of Jeroboam, (3) The Contemplations of Jeroboam, (4) The Counsels of Jeroboam, (5) The Changes of Jeroboam, and (6) The Condemnation of Jeroboam.

The Crowning of Jeroboam

When the United Kingdom of Saul, David, and Solomon divided in 931/930 B.C., we read of the crowning of Jeroboam as king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. “And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only” (12:20).

The Constructions of Jeroboam

We read of the constructions of Jeroboam. “Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel” (12:25).

The Contemplations of Jeroboam

Third, we read of the contemplations of Jeroboam.

And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, *even* unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah (12:26-27).

The Counsels of Jeroboam

We read of the counsels of Jeroboam. “Whereupon the king took counsel” (12:28).

The Changes of Jeroboam

We read of the changes of Jeroboam. These were unauthorized changes in the Biblical way of doing things concerning worship. (1) Jeroboam changed the object of worship from the One God to two calves of gold. He “made two calves *of* gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt”

(12:28). (2) Jeroboam changed the place of worship from Jerusalem to Dan and Bethel. "And he set the one in Beth-el, and the other put he in Dan" (12:29). (3) Jeroboam changed the house of worship from the Temple of God in Jerusalem to a house of high places in Bethel. "And he made an house of high places" (12:31). (4) Jeroboam changed the priesthood of worship from the sons of Levi to the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. He "made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi" (12:31), "and he placed in Beth-el the priests of the high places which he had made" (12:32). (5) Jeroboam changed the feast of worship from the feast ordained of God to one ordained of Jeroboam. "And Jeroboam ordained a feast" (12:32). Jeroboam "ordained a feast unto the children of Israel" (12:33). (6) Jeroboam changed the time of worship from the seventh month to the eighth month. His feast was "in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that *is* in Judah" (12:32), in "the fifteenth day of the eighth month, *even* in the month which he had devised of his own heart" (12:33). (7) Jeroboam changed the high priesthood of worship. Instead of having a Levite of the sons of Aaron officiate, Jeroboam, an Ephraimite, officiated. "He offered upon the altar. So did he in Beth-el, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made" (12:32). "So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Beth-el...and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense" (12:33).

The Condemnation of Jeroboam

We read of the condemnation of Jeroboam. "And this thing became a sin: for the people went *to worship* before the one, *even* unto Dan" (12:30).

Numbers 9:1-13

In this passage we read of: (1) The Proclamation Concerning the Passover, (2) The Particulars Concerning the Passover, (3) The Practice Concerning the Passover, (4) The Problem Concerning the Passover, (5) The Pronouncement Concerning the Passover, and (6) The Perversion Concerning the Passover.

During the Bellview Lectureship in 1989, B. C. Carr observed:

Some worship is limited as to time. a) The Passover was to be observed on the fourteenth day of the first month (Num. 9:5). Before an exception could be granted, Moses had to have a command from God (Num. 9:9-13) (186).

The Proclamation Concerning the Passover

God proclaimed that the children of Israel were to observe the Passover at the appointed season.

And the LORD spake unto Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, in the first month of the second year after they were come out of the land of Egypt, saying, Let the children of Israel also keep the passover at his appointed season (9:1-2).

The Particulars Concerning the Passover

God gave particular instructions concerning the time for the observance of the Passover.

In the fourteenth day of this month, at even, ye shall keep it in his appointed season: according to all the rites of it, and according to all the ceremonies thereof, shall ye keep it. And Moses spake unto the children of Israel, that they should keep the passover (9:3-4).

The Practice Concerning the Passover

The children of Israel practiced the observance of the Passover as proclaimed by God at the particular time proclaimed by God. "And they kept the passover on the fourteenth day of the first month at even in the wilderness of Sinai: according to all that the LORD commanded Moses, so did the children of Israel" (9:5).

The Problem Concerning the Passover

There arose a problem concerning the time for the observance of the Passover:

And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said unto him, *We are* defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel? And Moses said unto them, Stand still, and I will hear what the LORD will command concerning you (9:6-8).

The Pronouncement Concerning the Passover

The Lord issued a pronouncement concerning this problem.

And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If any man of you or of your posterity shall be unclean by reason of a dead body, or *be* in a journey afar off, yet he shall keep the passover unto the LORD. The fourteenth day of the second month at even they shall keep it, *and* eat it with unleavened bread and bitter *herbs*. They shall leave none of it unto the morning, nor break any bone of it: according to all the ordinances of the passover they shall keep it (9:9-12).

The Perversion Concerning the Passover

The Lord condemned any perversion concerning the time for the observance of the Passover by those not having a legitimate problem.

But the man that *is* clean, and is not in a journey, and forbearth to keep the passover, even the same soul shall be cut off from among his people: because he brought not the offering of the LORD in his appointed season, that man shall bear his sin (9:13).

SOME PRINCIPLES CONCERNING INNOVATIONS

We learn from these Old Testament Scriptures the following principles:

1. All acts of worship must be authorized by God.
2. Unauthorized changes in the Biblical way of doing things concerning worship are sinful. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized object of worship. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized place of worship. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized house of worship. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized priesthood of worship. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized feast of worship. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized time of worship. It was and is sinful to change the Biblically authorized high priesthood of worship.

3. Before any change can be made concerning any act of worship, such a change must be authorized by God.

SOME PERVERSIONS CONCERNING INNOVATIONS

As was previously quoted, Edward Fudge stated concerning a Saturday morning observance of the Lord's Supper:

Those whose consciences did not allow them this privilege should abstain, he said, with the full knowledge that they are equally loved and welcomed whether they participate or not. In this manner, persons with *stronger consciences* did not force anything on those whose *consciences were weak*. At the same time, those with weaker consciences did not draw limits for their brothers and sisters who enjoyed a *greater measure of gospel freedom* (qtd. in Whitten 59).

Fudge makes an obvious reference to Romans 14. As one studies this passage, he learns that it does not authorize making changes in the Biblically authorized way of doing things.

Whatever we do in word or deed must be done by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). The Bible authorizes by (1) direct statements, (2) implication, and (3) examples. Actions described in the Bible were and are either authorized and thus acceptable, or unauthorized and thus unacceptable.

Concerning actions which are unauthorized and, thus, unacceptable, such actions are forbidden for any of at least four reasons. First, actions may be explicitly forbidden by the Bible. For instance, the worship of anything or anyone other than God is explicitly forbidden by the Bible (Mat. 4:10). Second, actions may be implicitly forbidden by the Bible. For instance, the use of mechanical instruments of music in the worship of God (in New Testament times) is implicitly forbidden because it is not authorized by the Bible (Col. 3:17). Third, actions may be forbidden because they forbid that which the Bible allows. For instance, marriage by a qualified person to another who is qualified to marry is that which the Bible allows (1 Cor. 7:28). Forbidding marriages which the Bible allows is sinful (1 Tim. 4:1-4). Fourth, actions may be forbidden because they bind what the Bible has not taught to be essential. For instance, circumcision is that which the Bible has not taught (in New Testament times) to be essential (Acts 15:1-2); thus binding it upon others is sinful (Gal. 2:3-5).

Concerning actions which are authorized and acceptable, such actions may be either obligatory (must be done) or optional (may be done). For instance, the worship of God upon the first day of the week is obligatory (Mat. 4:10; Acts 20:7); it must be done (John 4:24). Marriage and circumcision are optional matters (1 Cor. 7:28; Acts 15:1-2; Gal. 2:3-5): they may be done.

In Romans 14, Paul deals with authorized actions that are optional in nature. The eating of meats or not eating them is an authorized action that is optional in nature. The same is true regarding the esteeming or not esteeming certain days. These actions are clearly right if they are done and just as clearly right if they are not done.

Romans 14 has no application to actions that are unauthorized and unacceptable. Further, this passage has no application to actions that are authorized obligatory matters that must be done. Romans 14 is only applicable to actions that are authorized optional matters that may or may not be done.

CONCLUSION

It is a perversion of Romans 14 to claim that it (or any other passage) allows unauthorized changes in the Biblical way of doing things concerning worship. It is a perversion of Romans 14 (or any other passage) to claim that it grants liberty to change the time (day) for the observance of the Lord's Supper from Sunday to Thursday, Friday, or Saturday—or to change the place for the observance of the Lord's Supper from the worship assembly of the church on Sunday to an assembly on Thursday, a wedding on Friday, or a conference on Saturday. These were and are unauthorized changes in the Biblical way of doing things.

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DRAMA TEAMS/PUPPET MINISTRY

Lee Moses

Lee Moses was born in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania and was baptized into Christ by Gary Summers in 1999 in Denton, Texas. He graduated from the University of North Texas in 1998 with a Bachelor of Music degree in music education and from the Memphis School of Preaching in 2002. He also attended Berklee College of Music in Boston, Massachusetts, and has done graduate work at Amridge University in Montgomery, Alabama. Lee is working with the church of Christ in Mammoth Spring, Arkansas and is editor of the *Fulton County Gospel News*.

Lee is married to Kelley Jo (Goodman). They have twin sons, Luke Garland and Travis Lee, and a daughter, Laina Ruth Mae.

Guitars begin to eke out the familiar strains of the intro to the Eagles' "Hotel California." Two donkey-riding puppets—evidently Joseph and Mary on their way to Bethlehem—pop up over the curtain of the puppet stage, and a few chuckles emerge from the crowd as the puppets amble across. They make their way down to the stage, which is set up like a hotel front desk, the rhythm section kicks in, the Mary puppet begins bopping her head to the beat, and the Joseph puppet mouths the words being pumped through the sound system:

From a dark desert highway we pulled into the inn
Rome called for a census—I was from Bethlehem
Up above from a distance a star was giving me light [There are no
worries that, Biblically speaking, the star gave guidance to the
wise men from the east rather than to Joseph and Mary]
My wife was heavy cause her child was due—We had to stop for
the night
So we stood in the doorway of Bethlehem Hotel (Joseph taps the
front desk bell)
And I was thinking to myself, "I hope to Heaven they'll give me
some help" (the front desk clerk enters the scene)
But they told us no-can-do and they sent me away
"There's a place around the corner though where you both can stay"

Welcome, but the hotel can't afford ya
 Such a lovely place (The Mary puppet mouths the repeated "Such
 a lovely place.") but we're out of space
 Ran out of room and the hotel can't afford ya
 It's the time of year—with the census here (The front desk clerk
 exits the scene, and the Joseph and Mary puppets are now in
 a barn.)

My wife was definitely gifted—That's what the Lord's angel said
 She was about to have a baby boy while still virgin (Mary reclines
 and is evidently having birth pangs—much to the uproarious
 delight of the crowd. Animal puppets enter the scene to replace
 the star that had previously been bopping in the sky.)

Spent the night in a barnyard—cheap slumlord's rent
 Some night to remember—some night to forget
 So because of what happened I was grieving for my wife
 I said, they probably haven't cleaned in here since B.C. 65 (The
 raucous laughter has crescendoed to such a volume at this point
 that it is difficult to make out the lyrics.)

Animal voices were calling for straw and hay
 Keep you up through the middle of the night just as if to say

Welcome, but the hotel can't afford ya
 Such a lovely place, but we're out of space
 Holiday rush and the hotel can't afford ya
 What a nice surprise for your silent night

He was born that evening and shepherds came that night (Shep-
 herd puppets enter the scene.)

And they said, We are all just visitors here—of the Holy Christ
 And in an ass's manger, they found the boy asleep
 They started gettin' teary eyed so they went back to their sheep
 (Shepherds exit stage right, just before wise men puppets enter.)

Last thing I remember there were wise men at the door
 They had a bunch of packages from the place they were before
 We're late, said the wise men, We had problems Christmas Eve
 We've been checking out your shiny light all through the Middle
 East

(The scene ends with the Joseph and wise men puppets bowing
 before the baby Jesus puppet as the guitar solos begin.)

The aforementioned show actually took place, and it took place
 in an assembly (as part of their "Christmas Production") of what

purports to be a “Church of Christ,” specifically the Fairfax Church of Christ in Fairfax, Virginia (“Hotel”). They have produced other puppet classics viewable online, including “Bethlehemian Rhapsody.” Such events are occurring at numerous congregations throughout the brotherhood, although it is questionable how many of these congregations are still actually part of the **brotherhood** (cf. 1 Pet. 4:17; 5:9), and thankfully, drama presentations and puppet shows in churches of Christ would still be called the exception rather than the rule. However, the exception is becoming increasingly **accepted** rather than excepted. Drama presentations and puppet shows have become so integral to the work of some congregations that they list their drama and puppet teams among their “ministries.”

Are drama teams and puppet ministries part of the work of the church?

WORSHIP

Worship is a central function of the church (John 4:23; Acts 2:42; 20:7; Phi. 3:3), and churches that utilize drama and puppet shows typically incorporate these innovations into their worship. At Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church in Bethesda, Maryland, worshipers are “treated to drama”:

Chancel Players, Bradley Hills’ drama troupe, is an intergenerational group of actors/readers who present speech choir readings, monologues, sermon sketches, and chamber/readers theatre selections in worship services. Chancel Players, directed by Andrew Wolvin, has showcased its work in workshops and master classes at local, regional, and national conferences of the Christians in Theatre Arts organization. Worshipers at both services are treated to drama from the group about once a month (“Chancel Players”).

At “megapastor” Rick Warren’s Saddleback Church, one can find several drama groups devoted to what they call “Worship Arts”—there is the drama team, SNAP (Short Notice Actor Productions), among others (“Worship Arts”). Among the “Worship Teams” at the Plainview Church of Christ (Minnesota) is the Drama Team (“Worship Teams”).

Many find puppet shows and dramatic presentations a good way to “liven up” what seems to be an otherwise stagnant worship service. Jim Somers, co-leader with his wife of S.T.A.R. (Start Taking A Role) Puppet Ministry at First Congregational UCC of Rowley, Massachusetts, reveals:

“Every time we do something with the puppets at church, everybody goes crazy.... They just swarm the stage afterwards.”

“They just love it. They just can’t get enough of it. Why is this? It’s probably just because it’s different and it’s entertaining.... Entertaining isn’t usually a word that is associated with a church service, but why not? My theater background says, you’re putting on a show in the sense that you’ve got an audience, and you have to captivate them. The Word is out there, the Word is exciting. So let’s not make it boring, let’s make it exciting. It’s a good excuse to say, ‘Hey, let’s be dramatic here’” (Pavlik).

Rubel “Reverse Paul” Shelly—who “now destroyeth the faith which once he preached”—calls the brotherhood at large to incorporate drama and similar innovations into the worship, insisting, “[W]orship that is not relevant is not biblical” (56). He speaks of a particular occasion when worship was made relevant to him by means of dramatic reenactment:

One of the most memorable communion experiences I have had in my life happened in our Sunday morning assemblies at Woodmont Hills a couple of years back when twenty or so people dramatized the “Sounds of the Crucifixion” to worshipers sitting with their eyes closed. Men and women exclaimed, “Crucify him!” The sound of the lash on his back brought tears to my eyes. The sound of nails being hammered through his flesh was almost more than I could bear (65).

While one can understand why such would make an impression, is it worship? Can one freely incorporate “what my theater background says,” as Mr. Somers does, and it still be worship? “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). One must worship God “in truth,” all truth concerning worship is found in God’s Word (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:3), and for our age one finds truth concerning

worship specifically in the New Testament (Col. 2:14; 3:17). The acts of worship authorized by the New Testament include only singing (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19), prayer (Acts 2:42; Col. 4:2; 1 Tim. 2:1-3), the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-26), giving (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 16:2), and Scriptural reading, exposition, and exhortation (Acts 20:7; 1 Tim. 4:13). When God authorizes worship, it is intended as a pattern to be followed (Exo. 25:40; Num. 8:4). Any innovation is a deviation.

So into which classification do drama presentations and puppet shows fall? None of the above! So the defenders of drama feel compelled to justify their practices otherwise. Shelly makes the unfounded assertion, "Worship that is not relevant is not biblical." Somers claims, "You're putting on a show in the sense that you've got an audience, and you have to captivate them." This is apparently what Bradley Hills Presbyterian Church seeks to do by "treating" worshipers to drama. However, are "relevance" and "captivating the audience" really the church's responsibility? Are "relevance" and "captivating the audience" really a function of worship? Expressing such demonstrates an ignorance of the **true** audience of worship—not the congregation, not visitors in attendance, but God Himself. As Jesus reminded the tempter, "Thou shalt worship **the Lord thy God, and him only** shalt thou serve"; as the early church "lifted up their voice to God with one accord"; as "Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises **unto God**"—so do we (Mat. 4:10; Acts 4:24; 16:25). Worship must be directed to God, authorized by God, and to the glory of God.

"Relevance" and "captivating the audience" certainly are not measures of faithfulness:

Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein* (Jer. 6:16).

The Lord does not instruct us to ask for the **relevant** paths; quite the contrary—He instructs us to ask for the **old** paths, regardless

of how irrelevant some perceive them to be, who say, “We will not walk therein.”

EVANGELISM

Some attempt to justify drama teams and puppet ministries as helping to accomplish the church’s work of evangelism. A congregation in Minnesota boasts, “The Plainview Church of Christ Drama Team is a ministry of teens and adults, who are spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ through live drama presentation” (“Worship Teams”). Church growth experts point to modern-day expectations and demands of people to be entertained.

They are largely correct in their assessment of people. Neil Postman wrote of how American society has devolved since the mid-nineteenth century from the “Age of Exposition,” characterized by “The Typographic Mind”—“a sophisticated ability to think conceptually, deductively and sequentially; a high valuation of reason and order; an abhorrence of contradiction; a large capacity for detachment and objectivity; and a tolerance for a delayed response”—to the “Age of Show Business” (75). He summed it all up in the title of his book, *Amusing Ourselves to Death*.

Modern religion has determined to appeal to diminished intelligence with diminished intelligence. The Gospel has been dumbed down to such extremes that one now finds Bibles themselves repackaged in *teen magazine* formats with cover headlines such as, “Tons of Cool Facts to Share with Your Friends,” “‘Are You Dating a Godly Guy?’ and other Quizzes,” and “Beauty Secrets You’ve Never Heard Before!” (*Explore, Revolve*). Rubel Shelly uses this societal change of mental makeup to justify drama and similar innovations, saying:

Sermons typically assume sequential thought patterns and address people on the basis of that assumption....

Modern Americans aren’t particularly logical and sequential.... They think in visual imagery, not in abstractions. They are accustomed to free-standing TV stories, not serials. (Even the soap operas are essentially free-standing. You can drop in and drop out without losing the story line.)...

It's time for us to come out of the Dark Ages with regard to communicating with the people in our churches and larger communities. Stories, object lessons, color slides, and videos...must be embraced as tools for the church to use in reaching people.

In today's visual culture, a six-minute piece of drama, for example, can have more "punch" in awakening people to their spiritual needs than a forty-minute sermon. A well-done dramatic monologue from Ecclesiastes, the Sermon on the Mount, or the book of Romans can communicate more of the essential message of these textual materials to some people than a four-month sermon series (64-65).

Is "more punch" justification for an action? A literal **punch** to the nose would likely do more to arouse someone's attention than a figurative *punch*, but this does not grant justification for the practice (cf. Rom. 3:7-8). Are deteriorating attention spans and marshmallow minds justification for drama as evangelism?

Much of this is largely a misunderstanding of what evangelism is. For most of the denominational world and an increasing segment of the brotherhood, *evangelism* means "getting as many people as possible in the church building." However, *evangelism* comes from the Greek *euangelizō*, meaning generally, "bring good news, announce good news," or more specifically, "proclaim the divine message of salvation, proclaim the gospel" (Bauer). The apostles were commanded, "Go ye therefore, and teach ["make disciples of"—ASV] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Mat. 28:19). They succeeded (Col. 1:6, 23). Our charge is no different from theirs, and our **means** are no different from theirs.

Paul knew that weakened mindsets were on the horizon, and he charged Timothy:

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

Paul did not say, “Prepare to change your approach when they get ‘itching ears.’ ” He was all the more insistent that Timothy simply **“Preach the word.”**

If one succeeds at getting overflowing multitudes into a church building for the purpose of getting entertained, and has trained those multitudes to expect entertainment if they continue to attend there, has one succeeded in anything that really matters?

EDIFICATION

Numerous innovative practices are justified under the all-inclusive umbrella of “edification.” Edification has historically been classified as one of the three primary ways of accomplishing the work of the church (i.e., saving souls). Edification, along with evangelism and benevolence are the ways the church saves souls. As Paul commanded, “Let all things be done unto edifying” (1 Cor. 14:26). However, many make “edification” an all-inclusive umbrella by giving it an all-encompassing definition. They define *edification* as “making members feel good.”

Leadership Training for Christ and Lads to Leaders & Leaderettes train young people in puppet ministry, among other things, as if puppet shows were an integral part of serving Christ.

The *Christian Chronicle* often proudly reports of drama and puppets being incorporated into the work of the church. For example:

Attendance at four performances of “A Mountain Christmas Memory” averaged 285 people each, Menninger said. The musical tells of a Kentucky family in the early 1900s who celebrate Christ’s birth despite hardships and discouragement.

“Our musical is a ministry,” he said. “Our goals are three-fold: glorify God, edify each other and introduce the church to the community via drama” (“North Atlanta’s”).

So there you have it—worship, evangelism, and edification all accomplished in one dramatic presentation.

While edification is indeed an authorized work of the church, edification does not mean “making members feel good.” *Edification* is related to edifice which is a building. The members of the Lord’s church comprise “God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:9). The Greek word for

“building” is elsewhere translated “edification” or “edifying” (Rom. 15:2; 1 Cor. 14:3, 5; Eph. 4:12, 16). So *edification* carries the idea of structural reinforcement and building up, and falls along the lines of what is sometimes called, “Keeping the saved saved.”

However, the Bible provides the **means** for edification. Paul instructed, “Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do” (1 The. 5:11). The implication is that this would be done through the inspired words he had written; as he previously said: “Wherefore comfort one another **with these words**” (4:18). Paul exhorted the Ephesian elders: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to **the word of his grace, which is able to build you up**, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32).

Some would say, “You have to adapt to the times.” However, the appeal of drama is not unique to our time. The ubiquity of the theater in the first-century Greco-Roman world is well documented. However, one does not find Paul and Barnabas engaging the citizens of Ephesus with a dramatic reenactment of Noah and the ark. One does not find Peter holding up a puppet to tell the Pentecostians, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (2:36).

Of course, the notion is laughable that anyone would have a puppet proclaim such a message. It seems that with drama and puppet shows, truth is inescapably compromised for the sake of comedy, cleverness, and modern conventions of storytelling. The aforementioned “Hotel Can’t Afford Ya” puppet show evidences this as it has the star which guided the wise men from the east instead guiding Joseph and Mary, it cutely calls the inn “Bethlehem Hotel,” and it provides the anachronism of a front desk bell. Yes, most people would be readily able to sort the fact from the fiction, but why the fiction? “For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). The His-

tory Channel's recent miniseries, *The Bible*, also contains numerous inaccuracies, but that simply goes with the territory of drama.

The *New Oxford American Dictionary* defines *edification*, "the instruction or improvement of a person morally or intellectually." Just as the proclamation of the Gospel constitutes Biblical evangelism, it is the proclamation of the Gospel that edifies.

CONCLUSION

Why do so many *Christians* express discontent at the prospect of the Lord's commendation: "Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord"? (Mat. 25:21). Christians are indeed to be **servants**, carrying out the work with which their Lord has entrusted them until He returns again. The church does not need to act like the Sorcerer's Apprentice, seeking roundabout schemes to accomplish ends without attentiveness to the commanded means.

Baptist preacher Archibald Brown wrote:

The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the Church of Christ that part of her mission is to provide entertainment for the people with a view to winning them into her ranks. The human nature that lies in every heart has risen to the bait. Here, now, is an opportunity of gratifying the flesh and yet retaining a comfortable conscience. We can now please ourselves in order to do good to others. The rough old cross can be exchanged for a "costume," and the exchange can be made with the benevolent purpose of elevating the people.

Let not the true body of Christ become enamored with drama teams and puppet ministries as a replacement for the pure proclamation of the old Jerusalem Gospel.

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HANDCLAPPING IN WORSHIP

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Innovation has been defined as: “(1) the introduction of something new (2) a new idea, method, or device” (Webster 624). When we consider the myriad of innovations being foisted on the Lord’s church by the change agents of our time, we realize these are all descendants of the Athenians. “Now all the Athenians and the strangers sojourning there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell or to hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21).

Innovations have always faced the church and always will. When one of these issues arises, the subject will be preached, journalized, analyzed, and then put on the shelf to prepare for the next confrontation. Brotherhood issues bring mixed emotions and divide families, friends, and congregations. All of us have seen it happen in far too many instances. There are issues that must be faced head-on in the interest of Truth (Gal. 2:5). Let us confront these in the interest of Truth and never to the cause of division. Some issues are more personality-related than to the cause of Truth. Personality-related issues lead to carnality among us and should be avoided (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Some issues are so shallow and ridiculous that we are somewhat resentful when they polarize brethren—i.e., cannot sing songs of praise to Jesus, bus ministry, cannot cooperate to preach the Word, and handclapping in worship! It is the latter that demands our attention in the course of this study.

Let us never become so indifferent toward issues that we become gullible for every “new thing.” Jude 3 reminds us that there will always be issues. The change agents generally attack some aspect of our public worship to God. Most of us have observed or heard of congregations where the assembly breaks forth in applause at the conclusion of a baptism, the singing of a hymn, or even when a preacher makes a good point in his lesson (which has not personally happened to me so far). The two disciples who spoke to Jesus on the road to Emmaus returned to Jerusalem and Luke records, “And they rehearsed the things *that happened* in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread” (24:35). The KJV and the NKJV use *told* for the ASV’s *rehearsed*. The disciples related the resurrection of the Lord and “told” it or “rehearsed” it, but they did not applaud it.

When it comes to this addition of handclapping during our worship to God, let us heed the warning of God against all change agents: “My son, fear thou Jehovah and the king; *And* company not with them that are given to change” (Pro. 24:21). These Athenian innovators shall not pass!

WHEN IT COMES TO APPLAUSE, IS THERE A C-OMMAND?

Does Acts 20:7 read that the disciples “were gathered together to break bread, **and to applaud**”? **No!** Does Colossians 3:16 say brethren were “teaching and **applauding** one another”? **No!** Does 1 Thessalonians 5:17 state: “Pray and **clap your hands** without ceasing”? **No!** Did Jesus say in Matthew 4:10 that “thou shalt worship the Lord thy God in **applause** and Him only shalt **receive a standing ovation**”? **No!** Applause in worship has no approval from God.

Christ posed a most interesting question to the chief priests and elders in Matthew 21:25: “The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven or from men?” Let us pose the same query to those advocating this perversion of applause in worship to God. Where does it originate, from men or from heaven? If it is of heaven, then we should have authority. What New Testament passage will you offer in defense of this innovation? Do we have a direct statement? If so,

where? Do we have any implication somewhere? If so, where? Do we have an approved apostolic example of such? If so, where? Where is the authorization from heaven that applause and handclapping in worship has God's Divine approval?

My first introduction to handclapping in worship was in the sectarian church buildings of Oklahoma. Pentecostal programs on radio and TV were filled with applause for preachers and pseudomiracles. Chuck Lucas and his cult of Crossroadism were filled with handclapping. Nowadays, the Cowboy churches run rampant with rowdy riots of applause. It is my understanding that in the Texas A&M Church of Christ, it is a common practice not only to hear applause at the conclusion of prayers, but it has become even more commonplace to hear a loud "**whoop**"! Where will it end? Once we open the door to transgressions from the Word of the Lord, then more innovations are sure to follow. Let us speak and practice as the "oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11). Congregations that have applause must consider whether this is done to please God or to please men (Gal. 1:10).

WHEN IT COMES TO APPLAUSE, IS IT APPROVED BY DIVINE L-AW?

It is not likely that this innovation was introduced to the Lord's church because brethren searched, examined the Scriptures, and found that we were lacking in a practice that God had always intended to have His people offer in our worship. Like so many other innovations, it was borrowed from denominationalism. My dad used to say, "Son, if you borrow something, make sure you return it." It is past time for my brethren who have borrowed handclapping in worship to take it back.

In a frantic search for Divine authority for this practice, some have actually advocated a few passages. Let us consider only a few of those in this examination.

Oh clap your hands, all ye peoples; Shout unto God with the voice of triumph. For Jehovah Most High is terrible; He is a great King over all the earth (Psa. 47:1-2).

Let the floods clap their hands; Let the hills sing for joy together (98:8).

For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing; and all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands (Isa. 55:12).

Please notice that all these references are taken from the Old Testament. That is because there is not one passage in the New Testament that makes mention of handclapping in worship to God. There is absolutely no indication that applause was part of worship in any churches for many multiplied centuries after the time of Christ.

Psalms 98 and Isaiah 55 are obviously symbolic passages and cannot constitute Divine command. If a brother appeals to Psalm 98 for Divine approval of applause in worship, then he must also accept the instruments of music. Notice what the Psalmist says just before the floods clapping their hands: "Sing praises unto Jehovah with the harp; With the harp and the voice of melody. With trumpets and sound of cornet" (98:5-6).

Psalm 47 might be parallel to Psalm 150, which commands the use of mechanical music to praise God. It is extremely difficult to teach the lost that the Old Law was abolished to bring Jews and Gentiles together. Paul writes, "having abolished in the flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; that he might create in himself of the two one new man, *so* making peace" (Eph. 2:15). He also teaches, "having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and he hath taken it out that way, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). The Law of Moses was a tutor to bring man to Christ (Gal. 3:24-25). Paul warned in Galatians 5:4: "Ye are severed from Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; ye are fallen away from grace." Those who attempt to justify handclapping in worship to God today are likewise "fallen away from grace." The New Testament is our sole rule of faith and practice. You can search from Matthew to Revelation and never find Divine authority for applause in our worship to God. Christ showed the superiority of His words over the

Old Law in Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 33-34, and 43-44. “Ye have heard that it was said...but I say unto you.”

WHEN IT COMES TO APPLAUSE, IS IT THE SAME AS SAYING A-MEN?

Those who attempt to justify applause as part of acceptable worship have attempted to equate handclapping with the saying of “amen.” There is a distinct difference between applause and the solemn “amen.” Applause is designed to show our approval and appreciation of a performer’s skill, ability, talents, and such like. The saying of “amen” is focused upon the message and not the messenger.

Is there a difference between a person sincerely saying, “Amen,” and a person applauding and clapping their hands? *Nelson’s Bible Dictionary* says, “In Isaiah 65:16 the Lord is called ‘the God of truth’; the original Hebrew means, ‘the God of Amen.’ This is Isaiah’s way of saying that the Lord is the One Who remains eternally true” (40). James Millar states, “Amen is derived from the reflexive form of a verb meaning ‘to be firm’ or ‘to prop.’...used as an adverb of assent or confirmation –fiat, ‘so let it be’” (115). Stephen Renn observed, “The ‘amen’ also expresses worship and praise of God’s person and majesty (cf. Rom. 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; Eph. 3:21; 1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16ff; Rev. 1:6ff; 5:14; 7:12; 19:4; 22:20ff.). It also concludes a blessing or benediction” (31-32). Vine says, “Thus, ‘Amen’ said by God, ‘it is and shall be so,’ and by men, ‘so let it be.’ Once in the NT ‘Amen’ is a title of Christ, Rev. 3:14, because through Him the purposes of God are established, 2 Cor. 1:20” (25).

There is quite a contrast between the reverential “amen” in solemn worship to God, and the audible “applause” offered to men. Applause shows approval to an actor, an athlete, or author in recognition of a job well done. When we hear of applause following a baptism, during a lesson taught, at the conclusion of a song well directed/sung, or other times, is the approval for the message or the messenger(s)? In Hebrews 13:15 we learn, “Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name.” Herein we find authority to worship God in song, as noted in the “fruit of lips.” Where

is the Bible authority that makes mention of “fruit of the hands” (applause), or “fruit of the feet” (foot stomping), or “fruit of the fingers” (snapping fingers)?

Over a century ago the innovation of mechanical music was being introduced to the Lord’s church. Faithful brethren challenged, “Where is the Bible authority for such a practice?” To this day such authority cannot be found, nor will it ever be. Elders and preachers who are now introducing handclapping as a part of our worship to God need to be similarly challenged, “Where is Bible authority for such a practice?” It cannot be found within the pages of Holy Writ, and, mark it down, if the same challenge should be made a century from now, there will still be no Bible authority for such an innovation. Peter reminds us: “If anyone speaks, *let him speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11—NKJV). There is just as much authority in God’s Word for applause in worship, as we have for instrumental music.

The most frequent use of applause among the change agents will be observed in connection with a baptism. If we have authority for applause, then would we not have just as much authority to cheer, to whistle, or to blow air horns? How about bringing in a team of cheerleaders? If not, why not? By the way, if there is authority for handclapping when one obeys the Gospel, what should happen when a sinner walks in and does not obey the Gospel? Would that not be sufficient authority for us to boo and hiss?

WHEN IT COMES TO APPLAUSE; DOES GOD RECEIVE THE P-RAISE?

I, will sing praise to Jehovah (Jud. 5:3).

Praise Jehovah, the God of Israel (1 Chr. 16:4).

We thank thee, and praise thy glorious name (29:13).

Praise and thanksgiving unto God (Neh. 12:46).

Sing praise to thee (Psa. 30:12).

Praise unto our God (40:3).

Praise waiteth for thee, O God (65:1).

Let the peoples praise thee, O God; Let all peoples praise thee (67:5).

I will praise thee, O Lord my God (86:12).

I will sing praise to my God (104:33).

Praise ye Jehovah (106:48).

While I live will I praise Jehovah (146:2).

Praise ye Jehovah. Praise God in his sanctuary: Praise him in the firmament of his power. Praise him for his mighty acts: Praise him according to his excellent greatness. Praise him with trumpet sound: Praise him with psaltery and harp. Praise him with timbrel and dance: Praise him with stringed instruments and pipe. Praise him with loud cymbals: Praise him with high sounding cymbals. Let everything that hath breath praise Jehovah. Praise ye Jehovah (150:1-6).

All the people...gave praise unto God (Luke 18:43).

The disciples began to rejoice and praise God (19:37).

Unto the glory and praise of God (Phi. 1:11).

Give praise to our God (Rev. 19:5).

Surely we can all see that the praise, glory, and honor is due only to Jehovah God!

Perhaps the real crux of this innovation boils down to John 12:43: "For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (KJV & NKJV). The ASV (1901) has: "For they loved the glory *that is* of men more than the glory *that is* of God." Why are men not content with God's simple plan of salvation: faith or belief (John 8:24; Heb. 11:1), repentance (Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9), the good confession (Rom. 10:9-10; Mat. 10:32-33), baptism by immersion (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12; Mat. 28:18-20)? Many men in the world of religion are like Ford; they think they have a "better idea!"

When it comes to the matter of acceptable worship, many men desire to change things to suit themselves. We understand there are only five acts of acceptable worship to God: the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-28), singing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16), praying (Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 2:8), teaching God's Word (2 Tim. 4:1-4), and giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:1-5). Worship is not designed for our personal entertainment. We must come together to worship God, do so with reverence, and give praise to Him. Consider this question: "How can ye believe, who receive glory one of another, and the glory that *cometh* from the only God ye seek not?" (John 5:44). The NKJV reads, "How can you believe, who receive honor

from one another, and do not seek the honor that *comes* from the only God?” It is time for New Testament Christians to ask what Paul asked, “For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? or am I striving to please men? if I were still pleasing men, I should not be a servant of Christ” (Gal. 1:10).

The Psalmist declared, “Jehovah is my strength and my shield; My heart hath trusted in him, and I am helped: Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; And with my song will I praise him” (Psa. 28:7). He did not say that he would applaud or handclap God with song, but rather would praise Him. Therefore, the applause must be for men rather than for God!

In Ezekiel 25:6-7 we discover:

For thus saith the Lord Jehovah: Because thou hast clapped thy hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced with all the despite of thy soul against the land of Israel; therefore, behold, I have stretched out my hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the nations; and I will cut thee off from the peoples, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah.

God had told Ezekiel to set his face against Ammon (25:1-2). The sin of Ammon was haughty, prideful, contempt against the children of Israel. The Ammonites had rejoiced over Israel’s downfall through handclapping and the stomping of feet (so, now we know what to expect next)! Their actions of applause and stamping their feet revealed their attitude. God assures them of their certain demise in four awesome “**I Will**” statements: (1) **I will** deliver thee for a spoil to the nations, (2) **I will** cut thee off from the peoples, (3) **I will** cause thee to perish out of the countries, and (4) **I will** destroy thee. Except in history, the name of the Ammonites can no longer be found! God warned: “and thou shalt know that I am Jehovah.”

LET US HEAR THE CONCLUSION OF THE MATTER

Worship must be authorized. If it is not authorized, it cannot be approved. Handclapping in worship for baptisms or sermonic remarks has no sanction from heaven. If there is sanction from heaven

for such as this, what if the sermonic remark is not popular with some? Would that not give them the right to throw rotten eggs and tomatoes, to boo and hiss? If not, then why not? Let us say that brother Hatcher thinks I do a fair job when I present this lesson. Would that give the two of us the authority to run toward one another, jump up and bump bellies, while slapping a high-five? I believe a first-grader would understand that such is not reverent or right with God.

Some seem intent on re-writing that old restoration slogan: “We speak where the Bible speaks, and where the Bible is silent, we are silent.” It has now become, “We speak where the Bible speaks, and where the Bible is silent, **let us applaud!**” In our worship to God, “let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). Let us seek to always worship God “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). James instructs us about the use of our hands: “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. **Cleanse** your hands” (James 4:8).

When it comes to applause in worship to God:

1. **Is there a God-given C-ommand? No !**
2. **Is such approved by Divine L-aw? No !**
3. **Is it the same as saying A-men? No !**
4. **Is it God who receives the P-raise? No !**

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SPECIAL SERVICES (EASTER, CHRISTMAS)

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INTRODUCTION

For years the denominational world has had special celebrations for “holy days” such as Easter and Christmas. The Lord’s church historically has refused to observe such “holy days.” However, times they are a-changing. We are now seeing many congregations who will have or engage in “Sunrise Services” on Easter, or have on signs: “Jesus Is The Reason For The Season” at Christmas time. Attitudes in the church have also changed in recent years. Brian Jones reports of a survey published by Abilene Christian Press that asked the question: “Is it acceptable for a congregation to observe religious holidays like Christmas and Easter through special worship experiences?” The result was that 38% agreed with the statement while 56% disagreed (nothing is stated about the other 6%). What should our views be concerning special services to observe religious holidays like Easter and Christmas?

AUTHORITY

The answer to whether or not we should have special services for Easter and Christmas lies in the area of authority. We must have authority for everything we do: religiously or otherwise (Col. 3:17). Everything has its origin in either God or man (Mat. 21:23-27). The authority for our actions is to come from God. Since there is another chapter devoted to this subject, I will limit this section to saying that God authorizes by direct statements, implications, and examples.

BIBLE AUTHORITY FOR OBSERVANCE

Realizing our need for Bible authority for all that we do and considering how God authorizes by the Bible, we now must consider the Biblical authority for special services for the observance of Easter and Christmas. When we go to the Bible, we find the authorization for such special services woefully lacking (and that is being generous). In reality, there is **no** Bible authority for the observance of either Easter or Christmas. There are **no** direct statements, there are **no** examples, and there are **no** implications concerning the observance of either of these “holy days.”

Some would immediately object that Easter is found in the Bible. They would then turn to Acts 12:4 in the King James Version which reads:

And when he [Herod the king] had apprehended him [Peter], he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people.

Please note that this is a Jewish feast, not a Christian observance. Being a Jewish observance, it is not something which we would observe today since the Old Testament with all its observances have been done away in Christ (Mat. 5:17-18; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Heb. 10:9). Additionally the Jews would not be observing the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord. Notwithstanding, the King James translation mistranslated the word. It is the Greek *pascha* and should be translated “Passover.” After checking all the English translations I have access to, the King James of 1611 is the only one that uses *Easter*: the others either using the feast of (or days of) Unleaven Bread,

or Passover. The possible reason that the King James translators used Easter was (1) they were following “*Tindal, Coverdale, Becke, and Cardmarden*, following the old Saxon mode of translation, insert *Easter*” (Clarke), and (2) trying to give the time of year. Very few people would have known when Passover was, however everyone would have known when Easter was. Thus, to inform people when Herod imprisoned Peter they incorrectly used Easter instead of the proper word Passover. Thus, Acts 12:4 offers no help to the practice of observing special services for Easter.

Others have argued that the **idea** of Easter and Christmas are both found in the Bible. They would liken this to the idea of God’s providence. The word is not found in the Scriptures in reference to God, but the concept is found throughout the Bible. They would argue the same regarding the observance of Easter and Christmas. These would go to the Bible and read the birth of our Lord and state that, since the Bible records His birth, all we are doing is observing that event when we observe Christmas. They would, almost indignantly, inform us that all Christmas is, is the observance of the birth of Christ and since that is recorded for us we should celebrate it. They would also turn to God’s Word recording the death and resurrection of Christ and tell us that, since the Bible records that event, the Bible is authorizing our observance of Easter.

Then there are others who will simply challenge us with the question: “What’s wrong with having special services for Easter and Christmas?” They quickly inform us that the Bible does not say **not** to do them (the old mechanical instrumental music in worship today argument). This returns to the subject of authority and specifically if the silence of the Scriptures allows or prohibits. If the Scriptures are silent about a matter, then they do not authorize that subject. “The Bible authorizes by what it says—not by what it does not say!” (Deaver 49). The principle that silence does not authorize is seen in the Scriptures. Let us consider two examples from Hebrews.

God uses this principle to prove the supremacy of Jesus over the angels. He writes, “For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will

be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?” (Heb. 1:5). The Father did not say this to any of the angels (silence); thus the angels are not God’s Son. Why? Because of the law of silence: God did not say this to any of them.

The Hebrews’ writer in showing that the Law of Moses has been taken away proves that the priesthood must also be changed. The priesthood had to be changed for Jesus to be a priest. The reason is that God authorized ones from the tribe of Levi to be priests. Paul writes, “For *it is* evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Heb. 7:14). Since Moses “spake nothing” concerning priests from the tribe of Judah, someone from that tribe could not be a priest according to the Law of Moses. The silence of the Law on priesthood did not authorize or permit.

When we apply this principle to our discussion on having special services for Easter and Christmas, we realize that the Scriptures do not authorize such, and therefore we cannot do them. The silence does not permit us to act in this area, but it prohibits special services for these “religious holy days.” Since it is the case that Christmas and Easter services do not come from God’s Word, what is their origin?

EASTER

As we consider the origin of Easter, let us first notice those events associated with this celebration. Of course, Easter is a celebration of the resurrection of Christ from the dead. The time leading up to Easter is called Lent. Lent is a forty-day period excluding Sundays prior to Easter. It begins with Ash Wednesday and ends at Holy Saturday. “The Lenten period should result in a spiritual self-examination and in rededicated living for each devout believer, preparing us for the celebration of our risen Lord” (Osbeck 104). Ash Wednesday is a day when ashes are placed on the forehead (usually in the sign of a cross) to remind people that man is but dust and that the *faithful* must do penance. Ash Wednesday is observed on the seventh Wednesday before Easter. Holy Saturday is that day before Easter.

The next observance we have is Passion Sunday.

Passion Sunday, in the liturgical year the second Sunday prior to Easter and the Sunday that begins the Lenten season of Passiontide. With the reforms of the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the period of Lent was simplified, for the Roman Catholic church, and the Sunday prior to Easter, formerly known as Palm Sunday, was re-named Passion Sunday. Other churches have also made this change, and on occasion both names are retained as Passion Sunday (Palm Sunday), or Sunday of the Passion: Palm Sunday (Achte-meier 753).

Palm Sunday, the Sunday before Easter, was to observe the Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem when the Jews took branches of palm trees (John 12:12-13) "and went forth to meet him, and cried, Hosanna: Blessed *is* the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord." With Palm Sunday, we then have the beginning of Holy Week.

During Holy Week we have two major events which we should note. The first of these is Holy or Maundy Thursday. This is done in memory of the last supper Jesus ate with His apostles. " 'Maundy' comes from Latin 'mandatum (novum),' the words in John 13:34 (Vg) used in the service of foot washing observed in the Catholic Church on the Thursday before Easter" (Achte-meier 616). This leads to Good Friday, which is observed to memorialize the crucifixion of our Lord.

There is one other event associated with Easter—Mardi Gras. *Mardi Gras* means "Fat Tuesday" and comes before Ash Wednesday. Since Ash Wednesday is a period of sacrifice, Mardi Gras allows the participants to enjoy a day of fleshly satisfaction before giving up their luxuries. It derived its name from the custom of leading a fat ox in a procession in celebration of the day.

As one can see, none of these things are mentioned in the Word of God as something that we are to observe today. "There is no trace of Easter celebration in the New Testament" (Porter). We must also consider the problem of when Easter should be observed. There was extensive disagreement when it should be observed for centuries. Early Jewish Christians observed Easter on the specific date of Nisan 14 as established by the Jewish Passover, while Gentile Christians celebrated Easter on Sunday regardless of what day of the month

it fell on. As time passed by, more tended to observe it on Sunday instead of Nisan 14. The Nicean Council (A.D. 325) determined that Sunday should be the day in which Easter was observed. However, which Sunday? No set Sunday was decided and it was left to the bishop of the Alexandrian Church to determine the date each year.

By the 7th cent the practice of the Church had become reasonably uniform. The time agreed upon was the first Sunday following the full moon that comes on or after the vernal equinox. The date of the equinox was set at Mar. 21. This allowed for a variation in Easter dates from Mar. 22 to Apr. 25. The uniformity of practice which prevailed for a number of centuries was again disturbed for a time with the adoption of the Gregorian calendar in 1582 (Burdick 2:6).

Let us also consider the origin of the term *Easter*. There does not seem to be a consensus on the term's origin. Vine says, "The term Easter is not of Christian origin. It is another form of *Astarte*, one of the titles of the Chaldean goddess, the queen of heaven" (15). Easton says:

originally a Saxon word (Eostre), denoting a goddess of the Saxons, in honour of whom sacrifices were offered about the time of the Passover. Hence the name came to be given to the festival of the Resurrection of Christ, which occurred [sic] at the time of the Passover.

Harper, and most others, basically agrees with Easton by saying, "The name 'Easter' derives from the Anglo-Saxon goddess of Spring (Eostre or Ostara)" (Fuller, 233). However, one might come about it, *Easter* is not a Bible term and, in reality, originally had nothing to do with the Bible.

In the origin of the term *Easter* we find the origin of the celebration of Easter. Easter was a pagan festival held in the honor of the goddess of Spring, Eostre. Vine sums it up well when he said that Easter "was introduced into the apostate Western religion, as part of the attempt to adapt Pagan festivals to Christianity" (15). Porter indicates how the Catholic Church was able to bring the pagan festivals into *Christianity* when he adds, "The Jewish Christians in the early church continued to celebrate the Passover, regarding Christ as the true paschal lamb, and this naturally passed over into a com-

memoration of the death and resurrection of our Lord, or an Easter feast.” Thus, the origin of the Easter celebration was a combination of paganism and Judaism. Regarding Eostre (the goddess of Spring), since Spring was a time to celebrate the breath of new existence, there came an association with some other things: Easter eggs and bunny rabbits. The egg symbolized new life, and the rabbit, which is prolific in reproducing, represented fertility.

While the Scriptures do not speak about Easter or anything associated with it, the Bible does command Christians to remember the death of Christ on a weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34). We are to observe that memorial on the first day of every week—Sunday. Let us shun following the apostate world and do what God commands.

CHRISTMAS

Christmas, we have previously noted, is not found in the Bible. The birth of our Lord, while recorded for us, is not even given a prominent place in the Record. What is stressed is the nature of that birth—that it is a virgin birth. However, we do not find anything within the Scriptures indicating in any way that anyone ever celebrated His birth into this world (or that we should). History does not denote the observance of Christmas during the first-century church either. *Christmas* was coined in the twelfth century from “Christes Masse” or “Mass of Christ.” However, what is the origin of this holiday?

Philip Schaff gives some interesting background of Christmas when he writes:

We find it first in Rome, in the time of bishop Liberius, who on the twenty-fifth of December, 360, consecrated Marcella, the sister of St. Ambrose, nun or bride of Christ, and addressed her with the words: “Thou seest what multitudes are come to the birth festival of thy bridegroom.” This passage implies that the festival was already existing and familiar. Christmas was introduced in Antioch about the year 380; in Alexandria, where the feast of Epiphany was celebrated as the nativity of Christ, not till about 430. Chrysostom, who delivered the Christmas homily in Antioch on the 25th of December, 386, already calls it, notwithstanding its recent introduc-

tion (some ten years before), the fundamental feast, or the root, from which all other Christian festivals grow forth. (3:395-6).

He goes on to give this backdrop of Christmas.

The Christmas festival was probably the Christian transformation or regeneration of a series of kindred heathen festivals—the Saturnalia, Sigillaria, Juvenalia, and Brumalia—which were kept in Rome in the month of December, in commemoration of the golden age of universal freedom and equality, and in honor of the unconquered sun, and which were great holidays, especially for slaves and children (3:396).

When Christianity was declared to be the official state religion in the fourth century, unconverted pagans were ordered to be baptized now that they were officially Christians to Rome, yet they were still unconverted pagans. They retained their pagan practices and festivals and simply called them by a different name. The birthday of the unconquered sun became the birthday of our Lord.

As with Easter, there was also a difficulty determining the date Christmas should be observed. Hultgren notes:

Although there are various theories on the selection of December 25, the most widely accepted is that this date had already been a major pagan festival, that of *Sol Invictus*, the “birth” of the “Unconquerable Sun,” marking the winter solstice (the sun’s triumph over darkness). With the triumph of Christianity, Christmas replaced the pagan festival, Christians having applied “Sun of Righteousness” (Mal. 4:2) to Christ (163).

However, “before the 5th century there was no general consensus of opinion as to when it should come in the calendar, whether on Jan. 6, March 25, or Dec. 25” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 5:642A). The Bible is silent on when our Lord was born into this world. That date is simply unknown to man today. Additionally, the

pasturing of flocks at night indicates that this was a warmer season, not winter (when they would graze more in the day); Roman Christians later adopted December 25 as Christmas only to supersede a pagan Roman festival scheduled at that time (Keener).

There are many modern customs that developed around Christmas. Schaff points out:

This connection [the heathen festivals] accounts for many customs of the Christmas season, like the giving of presents to children and to the poor, the lighting of wax tapers, perhaps also the erection of Christmas trees, and gives them a Christian import (3:396).

Let us consider some of these. Holly and mistletoe were considered sacred by ancient people because it depicted the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head. Originally it was hung over the doors for good fortune. The kiss for standing under it is of recent origin.

The Christmas tree is thought to have begun in early Rome. Tree worship was common in Scandinavian countries. When the pagans of Northern Europe became *Christians* they made their sacred evergreen trees part of the Christian festival and decorated them with gilded nuts, candles (which was a carryover from the sun worship), and apples to stand for the stars, moon, and sun. Others believe Martin Luther introduced it in the sixteenth century, but it was not in wide usage till the eighteenth century.

The sending of Christmas cards grew up since about 1860. The giving of gifts is attributed to an ancient woman of Palestine who awaited the return of the "Three kings of the Orient" who had passed her way bearing gifts for the baby Jesus. It is said that she still waits today since they returned a different way.

Another of the customs today deals with Santa Claus: a contraction for Saint Nicholas. He

was born in the 3rd century; he became a bishop and gained distinction in the councils of the church, being especially famed for unexpected gifts, and later associated with the giving of presents during the season at the end of the year. He seems to have been first adopted by the Netherlands as the patron saint of children, and there, on St. Nicholas eve, they leave their wooden shoes, filled with hay for the saint's white horse, on which he jumps from roof to roof, leaving toys and sweets. He is none the less real to little children the world over, under such various names as *Kris Kringle*, *La Befana*, *Yule Tomten*, *Christkindli*, driving reindeer and coming down chimneys (*Encyclopedia Britannica* 643).

While it might have been a person originally, it is now no more true than any other fairy-tale or legendary figure.

Most Americans are familiar with yule logs and boars' heads only through pictures, but they are still part of the Christmas celebration in many lands. Of them it has been said that the ashes of the yule log were kept throughout the year. It was supposed that they would "protect the house from fire and lightning, and to have the power of healing wounds and making fields and animals fertile." "The yule log was originally used by the Germanic tribes as a pagan celebration for the yule-god Thor at the time of the solstice." "In Germany the yule feast, held at the winter solstice, had been celebrated in pre-Christian times, and many customs of the earlier festival were transferred to the Christmas holiday." "The boar's head procession goes back to the days when the northern peoples believed that the spirit which made grain grow (the "corn-spirit") was embodied in the hog. So at yule they sacrificed and ate a boar to bring good crops" (Denison 21).

However, these modern customs have lost much of their original significance. This brings us to another question: Can we celebrate these days in a non-religious way?

NON-RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE?

Especially Christmas, but also Easter, has lost much of its religious significance. However, it is still culturally important. There is nothing specifically religious about a national holiday and thus there is nothing sinful in Christians enjoying them. It is certainly right and proper to observe special days secularly if no moral wrong is involved and no religious significance is attached. Thus, we can observe days such as the Fourth of July (Independence Day), Thanksgiving, and others. When we consider Christmas and Easter in a purely secular way, then there would be no sin involved. Brother Woods points out:

The argument, that Christmas (Christ's + Mass), is of Catholic origin, and that the use of the term perpetuates the errors of this ecclesiasticism, lacks merit, for two reasons: (1) the word no longer conveys its exclusive earlier meaning, signifying to many of us no more than a holiday; (2) it is inconsistent to offer this objection and to refuse to use the word Christmas, because of its origin, while using, without question, many others of similar objectionable *origin*, but which have also undergone modification but no longer convey an improper sense. Sunday derives from *sacred* day of the sun; Monday, *sacred* day of the moon; Wednesday, "Wooden's Day," (Wooden was

one of the chief idols of mythology); Thursday designates the day of the war god, Thor; and Saturday comes from Saturn, the ancient god of seed sowing. To us the days of the week bear no resemblance to earlier usage and we use them in harmony with their meaning to us and not to others. Similarly, *Christmas* is not a “mass of Christ,” but a day of joy, gladness, and warmth when friends and loved ones take occasion to meet and mingle, exchange gifts and good wishes, and relax in a season of happiness and good will (203-4).

Thus, “to observe December 25th as a secular holiday can be no more wrong than to observe any other non-religious holiday of the year” (Robinson). I have often asked those who believe it is wrong to celebrate Christmas if they take the day off from their job. Invariably they take the day off and usually with pay. They do not refuse to take the day off, thus they do not mind enjoying the benefits of this day (and celebrate it to that extent). There is nothing inherently wrong with celebrating the time of year known as Christmas in a secular way. However, we have no authority for celebrating it as the birth of our Lord. We should enjoy the generosity, family togetherness, and other aspects of the season, yet without placing upon it any religious connotation.

Having said this, if one cannot conscientiously celebrate these days in a non-religious way, he should abstain from them. We should never encourage anyone to violate his or her conscience for such is sin. “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because *he eateth* not of faith: for whatsoever *is* not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

CONCLUSION

Christians walk by faith. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Inspiration, by Paul’s hand, informs us: “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). If there is nothing in the Word of God about something, then we cannot do such and walk by faith. There is nothing in God’s Word about the observance of Easter or Christmas in Christian worship, thus Christians cannot engage in a religious observance of either of these and walk by faith. Thus, let there be no special services for Easter or Christmas among us: there will be no such thing among God’s people.

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CHILDREN'S WORSHIP/ DIVIDED ASSEMBLY

Bruce Stulting

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Bruce is married to Sue (Bemus), and they have three children and eleven grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

There have been many attacks on the assembly of the saints. As predicted, there have been men who have departed from the faith that was once delivered to the saints (1 Tim. 4:1; Jude 3). Their supporters labeled these men as *progressive*. However, these men were/are **innovators** and have brought in damnable heresies. These agents of change have corrupted the worship assembly by: (1) the addition of mechanical instruments of music, (2) changing the elements and actions in partaking of the Lord's Supper (as well as the frequency), (3) changing the content and style of our preaching, (4) using special music (i.e., choirs, solos, praise teams, etc.), (5) altering the manner of prayer, and (6) allowing women to take leadership positions in public worship. It seems that every item of worship has come under the attack of men.

Each of the aforementioned controversies centers around the activity that takes place in the assembly. In our present study, we are concerned with a new innovation. The controversy over divided assemblies (Youth Worship, Junior Worship, Children's Bible Hour, etc.) does not deal with the actions that take place during the wor-

ship assembly, but with the very nature of the assembly itself. The basic controversy is: **What is the assembly in the New Testament?** The very nature of the assembly is the controversy.

THE REAL ISSUE

It is important at the outset of our study to identify which assembly is under consideration. The assembly under consideration is the worship assembly of Christians on the Lord's Day. The writer of Hebrews described it as an assembly of exhortation (Heb. 10:25). Also, in the context, it is stated that this assembly must not be forsaken (10:25). This does not mean that Christians are forbidden to meet in every group situation smaller than the local church. The fact is elders have the authority to call the saints together for various specific purposes. In such cases, elders may separate such gatherings by category as is expedient in any given situation (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; Heb. 13:17). It may be expedient in some situations for the elders to offer: (1) a young men's training class, (2) Bible classes for different age groups, or (3) a ladies' class. Such arrangements are expedient ways for elders to make certain that all members are spiritually nourished, corrected, and protected.

The meetings which may be divided are distinguishable from the assemblies of exhortation mentioned in Hebrews 10:25. These assemblies must not be forsaken and, therefore, must not be divided by anyone (even the elders) for any reason. By divided assemblies, we mean the removal of the children (or any other group) from the worship service of the church to meet in another part of the building for a separate service for either the entire duration of the service or part of it. Thus, as previously mentioned, excluded from present consideration are a number of special meetings of members that an eldership might rightly call into separate groups.

Having originated in denominationalism, the practice known as Children's Church or Children's Bible Hour has become increasingly popular among churches of Christ. The purpose of such divided assemblies is to teach children the Bible in a way that is more conducive to their learning. It is claimed by those who promote this practice that the worship environment is not a proper place

for a child to learn. Thus, they claim that it would be better for them and the rest of the congregation if they had their own time of study during the worship assembly. The real issue before us is: “Do the Scriptures authorize Children’s Bible Hour during the worship assembly?”

THE NATURE OF THE ASSEMBLY OF THE SAINTS

The Christian has not been left without instruction regarding the nature of their worship to God. Revealed in the Scriptures, we find specific instructions pertaining to the five authorized avenues of worship. In worship, Christians are to: (1) teach the Word (Acts 20:7; 2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Cor. 11:1-5; 14:34), (2) sing (vocally as a congregation) psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs while making melody in the heart (Col. 3:16; Eph. 5:19), (3) partake of the Lord’s Supper upon the first day of the week, remembering the body and blood of Christ in unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:19-29), (4) give cheerfully according to prosperity upon the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 9:5-7), and (5) sincerely pray in the name of Jesus, not to be seen of men (Acts 2:42; 1 The. 5:17; 1 Cor. 14:15).

Would it not seem strange if every aspect of the acts of worship was regulated and the very nature of the assembly itself was not? The fact is the nature of the assembly itself is specified just as are the various acts of worship. The assembly of the saints was and is the coming together of **every** member of the local congregation into **one** place as **one** group. The purpose of this assembly is designed by its very nature to provoke one another unto love and good works while, at the same time, offering praise and thanksgiving unto God.

A good place to start our discussion regarding the nature of the assembly of the saints is Hebrews 10:23-25:

Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; (for he *is* faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Here, the writer of Hebrews demands that the assembly be a priority in the Christian's life. One is not given a choice whether or not to attend. Rather, one is forbidden to forsake the assembly. To forsake the assembly is to forsake the church, which in turn is to forsake Christ. "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together" is not just a good suggestion, it is a command!

The definition of *assembling* and *together* is essential to our study. We will consider the definition in both English and Greek respectively. According to Webster, *assembly* means, "A company or collection of individuals, in the same place; usually for the same purpose." The same dictionary defines *together* as, "in or into one gathering, group or place." In summation, the English meaning is this, every Christian in one place at the same time. *Together* is used colloquially and serves as reinforcement to the implication.

Since the New Testament was not originally written in English, it is therefore necessary to consider if *assembling* and *together* is an accurate translation of the Greek. The phrase "the assembling of ourselves" translates *ten episunagogen heauton* (τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν ἑαυτῶν) which literally means "the assembly of ourselves" Of *episunagogen* (ἐπισυναγωγὴν), Thayer writes: "b. (the religious) assembly of Christians" and cites Hebrews 10:25 for an example (244). The root of *episunagogen* (ἐπισυναγωγὴν) is *sunagoge* (συναγωγή) of which Thayer states: "the name is transferred to an assembly of Christians formally gathered for religious purposes" (600). Thayer cites James 2:2, which reads, "For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring" as an example.

From the foregoing, we learn that the English and Greek definitions agree and both imply coming together in one place in one group. In every instance of the use of the words *episunagogen* (ἐπισυναγωγὴν) and *sunagoge* (συναγωγή) in ancient writings (i.e., secular literature, Septuagint, the Apocrypha, or New Testament), the meaning is always **to gather together in one place** with all of the inherent implications. *Assembling...together* is, therefore, a correct and accurate translation of the original language.

This command to assemble together refers to both morning and evening worship assemblies. Luke records that the disciples came together on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). Luke does not mention the first day of **every** week, yet it is implied. Even so, the command to assembly does not mention **every** worship assembly, yet it is implied. There is nothing in the context that would limit its application only to the morning worship service on the Lord's Day. Thus, on any given Lord's Day, all of the saints have been called together in a morning service for worship through the five obligatory avenues. The only difference between the morning assembly and the evening assembly is that those attending the morning assembly will not be partaking of the Lord's Supper and giving their weekly contribution. Like the morning service the evening service is an assembly of exhortation that is not to be forsaken by anyone.

EXAMPLE OF THE SAINTS ASSEMBLING TOGETHER FOR WORSHIP

As demonstrated in the foregoing, the saints are all to assemble together in **one** place at **one** time for worship. This assembly of exhortation must not to be forsaken. In discussing the abuse of the Lord's Supper in Corinth, Paul stated:

For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. When ye come together therefore into one place, *this* is not to eat the Lord's supper. For in eating every one taketh before *other* his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What? have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise *you* not (1 Cor. 11:18-22).

Church is used in the New Testament in the following ways: (1) the universal body of Christ (Mat. 16:18), (2) the realm of the saved in any geographic location, designated or not (1 Cor. 1:2; Rom. 16:16; Gal. 1:1), and (3) an assembly of the local congregation (1 Cor. 11:18, 20). Thus, in 1 Corinthians 11:18-22, Paul

is discussing an assembly of Christians convened for religious purposes. Notice carefully that there is a coming together “in the church” (11:18). Literally this means coming together “in the assembly.” The King James Version renders verse 20 as: “When ye come together therefore into one place” while the American Standard Version of 1901 reads: “When therefore ye assemble yourselves together.” Verse 22 reads: “or despise ye the church of God?” Literally this verse would read, “or despise ye the assembly of God?” Thus one single, solitary assembly is under discussion in 1 Corinthians 11:18ff. The Corinthian brethren were accustomed to coming together in one place, (one assembly) for the purpose of observing the Lord’s Supper.

Paul also states, “When ye come together therefore into one place” (11:20). *In one place* is translated from *epi to auto* (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ) and literally means, “in one and the same place.” Consider the translation of *epi to auto* (ἐπὶ τὸ αὐτὸ) in the following verses:

1. Matthew 22:34 the Pharisees “were gathered together.”
2. Acts 1:15 “the number of names together” (“there was a multitude of persons *gathered together*”—ASV).
3. Acts 2:1 “they were all with one accord [together—ASV] in one place.”
4. Acts 2:44 “And all that believed were together.”
5. Acts 4:26 the “rulers were gathered together.”
6. 1 Cor. 14:23 “If therefore the whole church be come together [assembled together—ASV].”

In 1 Corinthians 14:23, Paul states, “If therefore the whole church be come together into one place.” Regarding the use of *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία) which is translated *church*, Thayer stated, “for as appears from 1 Cor. 14:23, the whole Corinthian church was accustomed to assemble in one and the same place” (196). He further stated, that *ekklesia* (ἐκκλησία) “in the Christian sense, a. an assembly of Christians gathered for worship; *en ekklesia*, in the religious meeting.” Thayer also cites 1 Corinthians 14:19, 35 and 1 Corinthians 11:18 in reference to the whole church coming together in one place. There is no doubt that these are the same kind of assemblies

as those under consideration in Hebrews 10:23-25, (i.e., assemblies of exhortation).

Combining the totality of the information available regarding our subject, we may conclude that the assembly in which the exhortation transpires is an assembly of (1) a church in any geographic location such as the one in Corinth; (2) assemblies in which all members of said church are commanded to be in attendance; including, but not limited to, the first day of the week assembly wherein the Lord's supper is observed and a collection taken from those in attendance, along with the observance of the other avenues of worship; and, (3) any assembly of the church as herein defined and described whose elders have called it together for the express purpose of exhortation (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Heb. 13:7,17) (Brown 137).

DIVIDING THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLY IS UNSCRIPTURAL

The main reason for rejecting the practice of divided worship assemblies is: there is **no command** authorizing it. Also, there is **no Biblical example** for doing so found anywhere in the New Testament. Furthermore, the **Scriptures do not imply** the practice. Finally, since there is no underlying command, the practice cannot be authorized as an expedient. Since there is no Scriptural authority for the practice, it is therefore sinful.

Dividing the worship assembly for such things as Children's Church/Children's Bible Hour is unscriptural because it violates the clear principles set forth concerning the worship assembly. As previously mentioned, when first century Christians came together in the assembly to worship, Paul demanded that they "all come together in one place" (1 Cor. 11:20). Paul's teaching here applies specifically to one act of worship—the Lord's Supper. Many people think that the principle is limited only to the Lord's Supper. Those who have Children's Bible hour often wait until after the Lord's Supper to dismiss the kids. However, Paul applies this principle in another situation that is not confined specifically to the Lord's Supper. Rather, Paul applies the need to "all come together in one place" as a general principle for worship (14:23). Paul consistently taught that brethren gather together in one place and never authorized brethren to

divide the worship assembly. Thus, Children's Church/Children's Bible Hour is an unscriptural division of the worship assembly. Not only is the practice **not authorized** in the New Testament; **it is actually condemned** by Paul (11:20; 14:23).

Dividing the worship assembly for such things as Children's Church/Children's Bible Hour is an unscriptural practice because it causes some to violate the principle of not forsaking the assembly (Heb. 10:25). Many believe that an eldership can authorize such division. Yet how then could an eldership authorize an action during worship that willfully causes some of the saints to forsake the assembly? The fact is, if the assembly is divided for Children's Church/Children's Bible Hour, there must always be at least one adult saint who forsakes the assembly to teach the children. Thus, although God says, "Don't forsake the assembly," Children's Church/Children's Bible Hour by its very nature causes some brethren to "forsake the assembly." This practice is in clear violation of Hebrews 10:25 and is, therefore, sinful.

DIVIDING THE WORSHIP ASSEMBLY FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH IS BASED UPON A FALSE PREMISE

The practice of dividing the assembly is based upon a false premise. Those who participate in this practice believe that children cannot learn properly in the worship assembly. It is thought that children would be better off in a Bible class situation, which is a mere assertion with no basis in fact. In reality, children can and do learn a great deal from the worship assembly. Godly parents can teach their children reverence for God by disciplining their children to sit quietly in worship. This is part of a father's responsibility to bring up their children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4). In so doing, children will learn how to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). Not only will this teach children respect in the worship assembly, but it will also benefit them in other assemblies, such as school.

By simply observation, children can learn much in the worship assembly. By watching their parents and other adults, children can

learn: (1) the proper attitude and respect toward prayer, (2) the joy of singing praises to God, (3) reverence and thanksgiving necessary in partaking of the Lord's Supper, (4) the value of exhortation (that they receive and give), (5) generosity in giving to the collection according to one's prosperity, and (6) children can even learn something from the deepest most detailed study of God's Word. By taking our children from the worship assembly we are depriving them of one of our greatest educational tools—the example of faithful Christians!

The fact is the Scriptures demonstrate that every time God's people gathered together in one place for worship, children were present in the assembly.

When all Israel is come to appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose, thou shalt read this law before all Israel in their hearing. Gather the people together, men, and women, and children, and thy stranger that *is* within thy gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law: And *that* their children, which have not known *any thing*, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it (Deu. 31:11-13).

Blow the trumpet in Zion, Sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, Gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: Let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the LORD, weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, Spare thy people, O LORD, And give not thine heritage to reproach, That the heathen should rule over them: Wherefore should they say among the people, Where *is* their God? (Joel 2:15-17).

Notice that there were children in these assemblies (even some that were still nursing). Also, notice the reason given for their presence: "that they may learn, and fear the LORD your God, and observe to do all the words of this law." Those who assert that children cannot learn in the worship assembly are exalting their wisdom above God's. Paul says, "For the wisdom of this world is foolishness

with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness" (1 Cor. 3:19).

Another reason given for removing children from the assembly is that they are disruptive and distracting. However, this is not a problem with the assembly or the child, but with the parent. The parents must train their children to sit still and listen during worship. When necessary, discipline must be administered to enforce the teaching. Children need to be taught that worship is not about **them**!

CONCLUSION

One must have Biblical authority for all that is done in worship and service to God. Paul commanded, "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Col. 3:17). Consider also the following admonitions: (1) one is "not to go beyond what is written" in the Scriptures (1 Cor. 4:6), (2) one is forbidden to add to or subtract from God's Word (Rev. 22:18-19), (3) one is forbidden from preaching another Gospel (Gal. 1:8-9), and (4) one must not bid God speed to a false teacher (2 John 9-11).

One must take care even in the smallest matters. Nadab and Abihu learned that details are important in the way one worships God (Lev. 10:1-2). The divided worship assembly is without authority. It is an addition to God's Word and those who practice such are going beyond what is written. Those who support it are preaching another Gospel and must be marked and avoided. To bid these false teachers God speed is to partake of their evil deeds.

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VOTING ON ELDERS

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INTRODUCTION

According to Webster, the meaning of *innovation* is: “something newly introduced; new method, custom, device, etc.; change in the way of doing things.” The question for consideration in this lesson concerns voting on elders. *Vote*, when used as a noun, means: “a decision by a group on a proposal, resolution, bill, etc., or a choice between candidates for office, expressed by written ballot, voice, show of hands, etc.” When used as a verb intransitive, it means: “to express the will or a preference in a matter by ballot, voice, etc., give or cast a vote, to declare a preference, wish, opinion, etc.” When used as a verb transitive, it means: “to decide, choose, enact, or authorize by vote, to grant or confer by vote, to support in voting.”

We will study (1) Some Problems Concerning Voting, (2) Some Passages Concerning Voting, (3) Some Principles Concerning Voting, and (4) Some Perversions Concerning Voting.

SOME PROBLEMS CONCERNING VOTING

In the *San Jose Family Bulletin* of the San Jose Church of Christ, Calvin Warpula (the preacher at that time) wrote the following:

This Sunday, the names of the men you nominated to be elders will be presented to the congregation. For the next two weeks, you can

visit with these men, pray about our selection process, and submit your evaluation of these men on or before January 7th. Those men receiving a minimum, of sixty per cent approval rating, with not more than twenty per cent disapproval, will be ordained on January 21st.

The Bible does not tell us, except by general principles, how to select men to be elders. The procedures we are following are scriptural, fair, democratic, impartial, and honorable. The church is selecting its own leaders. The men you want are the men that will be ordained.

Thirty-nine men were nominated, and eight received the minimum threshold of twenty nominations. Three of those men declined to be considered at this time. The remaining five will be presented Sunday for your prayerful and thoughtful consideration.

These five men recognize that they may not reach the sixty per cent approval threshold required. It could be that they are not that well known or that the congregation thinks that they should grow more in their maturity, servant leadership, or personal qualities. If so, each of them will gladly accept that as a growth challenge to continue serving in the congregation. Possibly later with more service, maturity, and experience they will have earned the congregation's approval.

Our present elders have requested that they also be subjected to the same approval criteria. They want to continue serving if the congregation wants them to continue. Their names will also be on the ballot for you to evaluate. This excellent precedent makes leadership accountable to the membership. I admire and respect our elders for requesting this evaluation.

Is voting on elders, as was done in this procedure, an unscriptural innovation, or is it a Biblically-authorized way of doing things.

SOME PASSAGES CONCERNING VOTING

There is a Biblical procedure for ordaining elders in every church (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5). This procedure involves at least the following: (1) A Selection Process, (2) An Examination Process, and (3) An Ordination Process. Let us notice some passages that set forth the Biblical way of doing things concerning each of these procedures.

The Selection Process

There are a number of passages in the Bible that set forth the Biblical way of doing things when selecting men to be officers of the church.

First, in Acts 1:15-26, Matthias was “chosen” (1:24) to replace Judas and to be “numbered with the eleven apostles” (1:26). According to this passage two men were selected for this office, but only one was chosen. “And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who is surnamed Justus, and Matthias” (1:23). The pronoun *they* refers to the “disciples” of whom “the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty” (1:15). The disciples “appointed” (selected) Joseph and Matthias. The American Standard Version has “put forward” (1:23) instead of “appointed,” and Berry’s Interlinear has “set forth” instead of “appointed.”

Second, in Acts 6:1-4, seven men were selected to be appointed over the business concerning the church’s daily ministration to widows. “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples *unto them*, and said...look ye out among you seven men...whom we may appoint over this business” (6:2-3). McGarvey wrote:

The selection, then, was made by the multitude, and the appointment by the apostles. The distinction made between these two terms should not be overlooked. The term appoint...is distinguished from the selection which precedes it (72).

Third, in Acts 16:1-3, Timothy was selected to travel with the apostle Paul as an evangelist of and for the church. The fact that him “would Paul have to go forth with him” (16: 3) was based on the fact that Timothy was “well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (16:2).

Fourth, in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul wrote “concerning the collection for the saints...And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by *your* letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem” (16:1, 3). The church approved by letters (selected) those that Paul sent (appointed) to bring their liberality (collection) to Jerusalem.

Fifth, in 2 Corinthians 8:16-24, Paul speaks of “the brother, whose praise *is*...throughout all the churches...who was also chosen [selected] of the churches to travel with us [Titus and Paul] with this grace [contribution], which is administered by us” (8:18-19). These brethren were said to be “the messengers of the churches” (8:23).

The Examination Process

There are also a number of passages in the Bible that set forth the Biblical way of doing things when examining the qualifications of men to be officers of the church.

First, in Acts 1:15-26, the men selected by the disciples as possible replacements for the apostle Judas were required to meet certain God-given qualifications before one could be ordained as an apostle.

Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection (1:21-22).

Second, in Acts 6:1-4, the seven men selected by the disciples for appointment over the business concerning the daily ministrations of the church to widows were required by the apostles to be “men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom” (6:3) before they could be appointed “over this business” (6:3).

Third, in Acts 16:1-3, Timothy was selected as an evangelist to travel with Paul based on the fact that he “was well reported of by the brethren that were at Lystra and Iconium” (16:2).

Fourth, in 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, the men selected by the churches to bring their liberality (contribution) to Jerusalem had to be “approve[d] by...letters” (16:3).

Fifth, in 2 Corinthians 8:16-24, Titus and the other brother(s) selected and then chosen as “messengers of the churches” (8:23) were “oftentimes proved diligent in many things” (8:22).

Sixth, in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and in Titus 1:5-11 qualifications for “the office of a bishop” (1 Tim. 3:1) are specified so Timothy, Titus, and others could “ordain elders in every city” (Tit. 1:5).

The Ordination Process

Finally, there are also passages in the Bible that set forth the Biblical way of doing things concerning the ordination of officers in the church. McGarvey stated:

The following statement is made concerning Paul and Barnabas while engaged in their first missionary tour: “When they had *ordained them elders* in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” Acts xiv:23. The term here rendered ordained is *cheirotoneo*. It is compounded of *cheir*, the hand, and *teino*, to stretch forth, and its primary meaning is to stretch forth the hand. But from the fact that bodies of men frequently expressed a choice by an elevation of the hand, it acquired the meaning of to choose or to appoint by an extension of the hand; and finally it came to mean to appoint without reference to the method of appointing. Such is the testimony of scholars, and it is confirmed by the usage of the term. It occurs in only one other place in the New Testament, where it is said of an unnamed brother whom Paul sent to Corinth with Titus, that he “was chosen by the churches.” 2 Cor. vii:19. How the churches chose him, whether by a show of hands or in some other way, is not determined by this term, nor by the context. Another instance of its use is found in Josephus. He represents Alexander Bala, the Syrian King who claimed jurisdiction over Judea, as writing to Jonathan, the brother of Judas Maccabaeus, these words: “We therefore do ordain thee this day high priest of the Jews.” Here there was no stretching out the hand, but an appointment to office by a single individual, and through the instrumentality of a letter (11-12).

McGarvey also commented on Paul’s statement to Titus:

“I left thee in Crete, that thou shouldst set in order the things that are wanting and *ordain elders* in every city.” Ti. 1:5. The term here rendered *ordain* is *kathisteemi*, the Greek word most commonly used in both the New Testament and the Greek version of the Old Testament, for appointing to office. It is used to express the appointment of Joseph as governor over Egypt, and of the other officers under him, Gen. xli:33-34; Acts vii:10; for the appointment of David as ruler over Israel, 2nd Sam. vi:21; for the appointment of rulers over household servants, Matt. xxiv:45; of a judge in civil jurisprudence, Lev. xii:14; Acts vii:27; and of Jewish high priests, Heb. v:1; viii:3...With the universal consent of scholars and crit-

ics, we render it *appoint*. Titus, then was to appoint elders in every city (12-13).

SOME PRINCIPLES CONCERNING VOTING

Some Principles Announced

There are some general principles announced in the Bible for all that we do including the selection, examination, and appointment of elders. First, “whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:17). Second, “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Third, “Let all things be done decently and in order” (14:40).

Some Procedures Advocated

Based on the general principles just listed, Batsell Barrett Baxter, in his book, *Family of God: A Study Of The New Testament Church*, advocated the following procedures for selecting elders and deacons. He wrote:

No specific plan is outlined in the scriptures for the selection of elders and deacons. The matter is left to the judgment of the Christians in any local congregation. In the absence of a prescribed plan, it may be helpful to make a few general suggestions about a method that has been used extensively and does work well.

The *first step* is to choose a small group of men who are not themselves eligible to become elders or deacons. These men then become the “receiving body” to receive the names of those whom the congregation feels are qualified to serve either as elders or deacons. Of course, if the congregation already has elders and is seeking to appoint additional ones, the present elders would be this receiving group.

The *second step* is to instruct the congregation very carefully in the qualifications set down in the scriptures for both elders and deacons. Then, the members of the church are asked to look among themselves and to suggest the names of men who meet these scriptural qualifications. Their suggestions should be submitted in writing to the receiving group and the lists should be signed.

Step three is for the receiving group to contact each person put forward to see if he himself knows any scriptural reason why he should not serve, and also to see if he is willing to serve if appointed to the office.

Step four is to put the names of the men, thus nominated and cleared, before the congregation for a period of time so that their qualifications may be carefully analyzed and studied. Members of the congregation should be asked to submit in writing any scriptural objections to any person who has been put forward as a possible elder or deacon. If such scriptural objections are put forward, the receiving group must then investigate the charges, make a decision as to their validity, and then either leave the name on the list or remove it from the list.

Step five, after a reasonable length of time, is the public announcement that the men whose names have been put forward and who have passed careful examination are now to serve as elders or deacons of the congregation (81-82).

Some Principles Applied

First, in the process of selecting possible officers (apostles, elders, deacons, evangelists, messengers, et al.) for local congregations, the disciples always did the selecting. L. R. Wilson, in his book, *Congregational Development*, stated: "It is evident from the above Scriptures that the church (not a pope, not a diocese, not a conference) was to select her own officers" (21). Since *vote*, by definition, means a decision, a choice, to express the will, to declare a preference, wish or opinion, to decide, choose, enact or authorize, to grant or confer, to support, then by definition, there was and there is a vote by members of local congregations in the process of selecting men as possible elders of and for local congregations. Wilson commented: "Let no one get excited at the words 'vote' and 'nominate.' We are not advocating democratic or congregational government" (25). Two points need to be proclaimed. First, this vote (so called) does not appoint or ordain men (qualified or unqualified) to the eldership. Second, this vote (so called) does not remove men (qualified or unqualified) from the eldership. This process simply selects men as possible elders.

Second, in the process of examining potential officers (apostles, elders, deacons, evangelists, messengers, et al.) for local congregations there were and there are at least three stages of examination. To begin with, the disciples who select men as possible elders make

their own examination (based on Biblical qualifications) of the men they select. Next, the men selected make an examination of themselves (based on Biblical qualifications). As a result of this self-examination (based on Biblical qualifications) the men selected will either remove themselves from consideration for the eldership or proceed to the next stage of the examination process. Finally, the whole congregation will make an examination (based on Biblical qualifications) of the men selected as potential elders to determine if they are qualified (based on Biblical qualifications). If it is determined that they are qualified (based on Biblical qualifications) they can then be appointed or ordained as elders. If they are accused of not being qualified (1 Tim. 5:19-20), then there must be an examination of the accusations (based on Biblical qualifications) and a final determination (based on Biblical qualifications) as to whether the men are qualified or not. If it is determined that they are not qualified (based on Biblical qualifications), then they cannot be appointed or ordained as elders. If it is determined that the accusations are unfounded (based on the Biblical qualifications), then they can then be appointed or ordained as elders. Once again, since *vote*, by definition, means a decision, a choice, to express the will, to declare a preference, wish or opinion, to decide, choose, enact or authorize, to grant or confer, to support, then by definition, there was and there is a vote by members of local congregations in the process of examining men as possible elders of and for local congregations. However, the two previous points need to once again be pressed. First, this vote (so-called) is not to appoint or ordain unqualified men (based on Biblical qualifications) to the eldership. Second, this vote (so-called) is not to remove qualified men (based on Biblical qualifications) from the eldership.

Third, in the ordination process the men who have been selected and who are found to be qualified (based on Biblical qualifications) are appointed or ordained to the eldership. In this process there is no vote authorized by the Bible to prevent men who have been selected by the congregation and who have been found qualified (based on Biblical qualifications) from being appointed or ordained to the el-

dership. Further, in this process there is no vote authorized by the Bible to remove men from the eldership, when they are qualified (based on Biblical qualifications) or to keep them from continuing to serve as elders when they are qualified (based on Biblical qualifications). Only when men are selected, examined, and appointed to the eldership, based on Biblical qualifications, can it be said: “the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers” (Acts 20:28).

SOME PERVERSIONS CONCERNING VOTING

The San Jose congregation stated: “The procedures we are following are scriptural, fair, democratic, impartial, and honorable.” Not so! In reality, the San Jose congregation perverted the Scriptural principles concerning the selection process, the examination process, and the ordination process.

In the selection process: “Thirty-nine men were nominated, and eight received the minimum threshold of twenty nominations.” This obviously means that thirty-one men never made it past the selection process even though they might have possibly met all the Biblical qualifications for elders. So much for being “scriptural” and “fair.”

In the examination (they called it an evaluation) process, instead of examining (evaluating) the qualifications of these men based on Biblical qualifications, this process was perverted by changing specifically-stated, Biblical qualifications into ambiguously-stated, but required, man-made qualifications, such as “well known” and “maturity,” and “servant leadership,” and “personal qualities.” It was stated:

These five men recognize that they may not reach the sixty per cent approval threshold required. It could be that they are not that well known or that the congregation thinks that they should grow more in their maturity, servant leadership, or personal qualities.

Thus, instead of examining the Biblical qualifications of these men, this process was perverted by changing it into an unauthorized *democratic* popularity vote. It was stated: “Those men receiving a minimum of sixty percent approval rating, with not more than twenty percent disapproval, will be ordained on January 21st.” Con-

cerning those men who were not popular enough, it was stated: “Possibly later with more service, maturity, and experience they will have earned the congregation’s approval.”

This obviously means that men who might possibly have been Biblically qualified to be ordained as elders were not ordained because they did not meet the unscriptural man-made threshold of sixty percent approval rating, or they had more than the unscriptural man-made threshold of twenty percent disapproval rating. This further obviously means that men who might not have been Biblically qualified to be ordained as elders were unscripturally ordained because they did meet the unscriptural man-made threshold of sixty percent approval rating and did not have more than the unscriptural man-made threshold of twenty percent disapproval rating. So much for being impartial and honorable!

During the ordination process, not only was it possible that Biblically-qualified men were not ordained as elders and/or that Biblically unqualified men were ordained as elders, but it was further possible that Biblically-qualified men already serving as elders were removed from the office of elder. It was stated:

Our present elders have requested that they also be subjected to the same approval criteria. They want to continue serving if the congregation wants them to continue. Their names will also be on the ballot for you to evaluate.

CONCLUSION

The San Jose congregation concluded their unscriptural man-made perversions of the selection process, the examination process, and the ordination process for elders by stating: “This excellent precedent makes leadership accountable to the membership.” The Bible teaches that the shepherds of a congregation are accountable to the Chief Shepherd and that the members are accountable to both the Chief Shepherd and their congregation’s shepherds (Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). What the San Jose congregation practiced was indeed a “precedent.” It was an innovation (an unauthorized way of doing things) involving unauthorized voting on elders.

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FEMALE LEADERS

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INTRODUCTION

There has never been a time, nor will there come a time, when new innovations cease to threaten the Lord's church. It seems that the problems of society sooner or later affect the denominations and, in turn, eventually affect the church. This is especially true regarding our current subject—the role of women in the church. It would be great if the church would be spared from such influence, but such is not the case. Since the onset of the women's liberation movement in the 1960s, we have seen an ever-increasing demand for women to have a role equal to men in church leadership. At first, this trend had little impact on the Lord's church. However, that has begun to change with the passage of time. Through sin and ignorance, the trends and lust of the world continue to creep into the church.

In the world, a militant group has arisen to advocate for "women's rights." This group centered for many years on the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) and are mostly found in the National Organization for Women (NOW). Along with others, they have become very vocal in their hatred of men and against virtually every fundamental principle set forth in the Bible regulating the woman's

role in the home and church. Furthermore, they are strong advocates for the “rights” of homosexuals and in pressing for the right of women to have abortions on demand. Yet, God’s role for women has not changed, nor will it ever change. We make no apology for what the Bible teaches on this or any subject. Yet, Satan’s efforts will continue, as will our warfare, not only in this area, but also in every area that comes under attack. We continue our battle to “pull down strongholds,” “cast down imaginations,” and fight against “every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God” (2 Cor. 10:4-5).

THE LORD’S CHURCH IS NOT IMMUNE TO THIS ERROR

Wiley Clarkson is a long time acolyte of Al Maxie and is a self proclaimed Christian Biblical Egalitarian. According to Webster, *egalitarian* means, “a belief in human equality especially with respect to social, political, and economic affairs.” Since Clarkson is a “Christian Biblical Egalitarian,” he believes in equality among members of the Lord’s church especially in relation to the role of women in worship and leadership. He claims to have had a “life altering epiphany” when his daughter decided to attend Abilene Christian University and become a “minister.” As with other liberals before him, Clarkson knew he could not achieve a radical change in the church regarding the woman’s role without a radical change in our method of Bible study. Thus, he proposes a New Hermeneutics. Clarkson states that brethren need to start

changing on how we should understand scripture and associated hermeneutical principles. For my years in the Churches of Christ, I had always been taught the hermeneutical principles of silence of scripture and CENI (command, example, necessary inference)....I realized we can’t truly understand many subjects in scripture unless we jettison the hermeneutics of silence of scripture and CENI, which are read in the present day English and are thus very open to legalistic interpretation (“How in the World”).

Boy, are we not glad that he came along and enlightened us! It makes one feel sorry for all those who have gone before and had to muddle through with poor hermeneutics. Is it not amazing that no

one turns against the “old” hermeneutics, until the “old” hermeneutics turns against them? The fact is, a “new” hermeneutic is not needed; one just needs to honestly apply the “old” hermeneutic and follow wherever it leads. Clarkson’s “new” hermeneutics led him to conclude:

God puts no restrictions on the use of gifts because of gender, whether it is simply helping serve communion or serving in the eldership and the pulpit! Man having authority over woman [Patriarchalism and Complementarianism] or woman having authority over man [extreme feminism] is not being one in Christ. Man **AND** woman [Gal 3:28 “male **and** female”—ASV] working together, serving together, sharing all authority together, worshiping together, and using the gifts of the Holy Spirit together [Biblical Egalitarianism] to bring about a more spiritual and purer worship is showing reverence to God (emphasis added) (“Uzzah”).

Speaking of Paul’s writings, Peter stated, “As also in all *his* epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as *they do* also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” (2 Pet. 3:16). This describes Clarkson perfectly.

Clarkson has a web site wholly devoted to “Gender Inclusive and Egalitarian Churches in the Church of Christ Heritage.” On this site, he states, “The churches listed below have all become more inclusive to participation by women in the worship, leadership, ministries, and teaching.” The guidelines he developed for listing these churches are as follows:

- a) Does this church use women in the worship to help lead worship by leading prayer, giving communion talks, leading singing, etc?
- b) Are women used to their fullest capabilities to teach all age groups regardless of gender in bible classes?
- c) Do women serve in leadership positions such as pulpit minister, worship leader, deacon, and elder?
- d) Does the church publish a clear statement of purpose to be an egalitarian church or gender inclusive church on their web site?
- e) Is a woman serving only in the position of Children’s Minister or Women’s Minister and none of the above apply? (“Gender Inclusive”).

Clarkson says:

If the answer to one or more questions is YES, then I include the church on my list. However, if the only YES answer is selection (e), I do not list that congregation. I have chosen to not list churches where the only position for a female is the children's or women's minister because many churches that presently have these staff positions do not allow women to serve or participate in any other part of worship, teaching, or leadership ("Gender Inclusive").

He then lists forty-five congregations in seventeen states along with three more from Canada that have adopted the egalitarian philosophy.

EXTREMES OVER THE ROLE OF WOMEN

There are several questions that naturally arise when discussing the role of women in the church.

1. Is the Christian woman denigrated by her submission to the authority of her Creator?

2. Does this submission make her an inferior, second-class citizen in the kingdom as proposed by those who support full participation in church leadership by women?

3. Does the fact that women are making significant contributions in the secular realm (in the workplace, corporate leadership, governmental positions, etc.) authorize their acceptance in full leadership roles in the spiritual realm?"

There are extremes of opinion in every field of study, such as in society, in politics, as well as in religion. Regarding the role of women, one extreme is the idea that a woman can do anything in the church that she chooses including filling any leadership roles. Proponents of this view assert that any restrictions that the New Testament places upon a woman are purely cultural with no binding force upon us today. They further assert that all we do in the church is bound by tradition, and traditions change. These extremists believe that to withhold leadership opportunities from Christian women is sexist, prejudicial ignorance, and implies that the woman is inferior to man and, thus, second-class citizens in Christ's kingdom. They see the woman as exploited by the male leadership.

The other extreme is equally wrong. The proponents of this extreme would deny a woman any leadership, educating, or supervisory role. In the secular realm, women would not be allowed to teach a high school or college classroom, or be over male employees in a business setting, or hold political office. Such proponents would even deny the woman the privilege of teaching children in our Bible classes.

The advocates of both extremes forget, perhaps willfully so, that the New Testament is the sole standard of authority for all people past, present, and future. Nor do they recognize that the faithful church cannot and will not deviate from that which was established over 2000 years ago on first Pentecost following the resurrection. What, then, does the Bible teach, and how shall Christian women apply that teaching in their service in the church? What is their role of women and what can they do to be of service?

DISTINCTION BETWEEN "SUBMISSION" AND "INFERIORITY"

Before we can discuss the role of women, we must first distinguish between *submission* and *inferiority*. The church at Corinth had trouble with the Divine chain of authority. In dealing with the problem, Paul stated plainly and directly: "the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God" (1 Cor. 11:3). In the same plain and direct way, Paul stated the reason for this order of authority is that "the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man" (11:8-9). Now, if submission equals inferiority, would this not make Jesus inferior to God? Yet, He was in no way inferior to God. To the contrary, Paul stated that Jesus was equal to God (Phi. 2:6). His role as God the Son simply differs from that of God the Father. Each, along with the Holy Spirit, is an equal member of the Godhead. Furthermore, there is difference between the *roles* (functions, responsibilities) that each member fulfills in the church. Just as the members of the Godhead are equal in value (worth), so are Christians, all are equal.

How can we reconcile Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 11:3-9 with his statement to the Galatians that "There is neither Jew nor

Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)? (Remember, this verse is the point of contention with the “egalitarians” and used in support of their error.) From this verse it is very obvious that the congregations of Galatia were comprised of a diversity of individuals. In terms of nationality, some were Jews, and some were Greeks. In terms of legal status, some were bondservants and some were free men. Also, in terms of gender, some were men and others were women. Regardless of these differences, the blessing of salvation, the remission of sins, the privilege of worship, the beauty of hope, the preciousness of fellowship, and the promise of a home in heaven belonged to each of them. In this sense, they were all **one** in Christ Jesus!

When this point is made, one must not overlook or fail to consider matters that are peculiar and personal regarding each group mentioned. For instance, Jewish and Gentile Christians would have to ensure that they conducted themselves properly toward one another (Eph. 3:12-22). They must not let old Jew/Gentile prejudices and rivalry surface. Also, bondmen and freemen, just as those who were masters would each have to perform as pertained to their station all the while keeping loyalty to Christ as their top priority (6:5-9). Likewise, when God speaks of the respective roles of men and women, no superiority/inferiority is involved, but obedience is required of each one! We must keep in mind that all are **one** in Christ and that there is **no** respect of persons with God (Acts 10:34; Rom. 2:11; Eph. 6:9; Col. 3:25; 1 Pet. 1:17).

The Bible is replete with examples of God’s equality for men and women. Consider the following:

1. God created both man and woman in His own image (Gen. 1:27).
2. Whether male or female, the Christian is the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mat. 5:13-14).
3. Whether male or female, the body of a Christian serves as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and both male and female

- Christians are bought with a price, the precious blood of God's own Son (1 Cor. 6:19-20).
4. God is mindful of mankind, regardless of gender, and has made us only a little lower than the angels and crowned us with glory and honor (Psa. 8:5-6).
 5. God demonstrates His concern over the trials and sorrows of both men and women by collecting their tears in His own "tear bottle" (56:8).
 6. Christians, both men and women have the privilege of casting all of their cares upon God for He cares for all of us (1 Pet. 5:7).
 7. Men and women are fearfully and wonderfully made (Psa. 139:14).
 8. All, both men and women, are so special in God's sight that He knows the number of hairs on the head of each one of us (Luke 12:6-7).

These passages, as well as many others, speak of the true value of the Christian (both male and female) in God's sight. Yet, it must be remembered, that though men and women are equal in Christ, they perform different roles in the home and church that are regulated by the Scriptures. Furthermore, this difference in roles in no way implies inferiority or superiority.

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

When we turn our attention to the New Testament to study about the role of women in relation to the church we learn that: (1) women would prophesy (Acts 2:17), (2) women did propheesy (21:9), (3) women are commanded to teach (Tit. 2:3-4), and (4) women did teach (Acts 18:26). Therefore, it is obvious that any interpretation of any passage that completely (totally) forbids a woman to teach is an erroneous interpretation. Yet, there are many who maintain that the Christian woman cannot—in any way—be involved in the teaching program of the local church. Luke records an event in Acts that is pertinent to our study:

And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, *and* mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. This man was

instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John. And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto *them*, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly (18:24-26).

In this instance, Priscilla's role in "expounding the way" could have been: (1) she did none of the teaching, (2) she did all of the teaching, or (3) she did some of the teaching. The text makes it plain that the first two possibilities are incorrect since she did teach, but was accompanied by her husband who participated in the teaching. The third alternative must be true; she did some of the teaching. We, therefore, conclude that: (1) it is in harmony with God's will for a Christian woman to teach for, she taught, (2) it is in harmony with God's will for a Christian woman to teach the Word of God, for she taught the Word of God, and (3) it is in harmony with God's will for a Christian woman to teach the Word of God to a man, for she taught the Word of God to a man. Yet, it must be understood that Priscilla's teaching was subject to the **totality** of the New Testament's teaching regarding how and when a woman may teach.

Further Evidence That Women Can Be Teachers

We have already seen from the example of Priscilla that women are authorized to teach. The following demonstrates the areas in which a woman can teach: (1) women can teach other women (Tit. 2:3-4), (2) women can teach children (2 Tim. 3:14-15), (3) women can teach men as did Anna the prophetess who gave thanks "unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption" (Luke 2:36-38), (4) women were chosen to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus to the apostles (24:9-10; John 20:1-2, 18; Mark 16:1-11; Mat. 28:1-10), and (5) women "labored [with Paul] in the gospel" (Rom. 16:12; Phi. 4:3).

Furthermore, God set women as teachers in the church by Divine authority. Paul told Titus to "set in order" the church in Crete (Tit. 1:5). Part of setting the church "in order" involved using women teachers (3:3-4). Teachers were set in the church: "And God hath

set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues” (1 Cor. 12:28). God set teachers in the church for the perfection and edification of the saints (Eph. 4:11-16).

The Spiritual Role of Women Has Always Been in Submission to Men

Paul stated, “Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:9). In Genesis 4, Cain and Abel, not their sisters, offered sacrifices. Although all of Noah’s family worshipped together, he offered the sacrifices (6:20). The same can be said of Abraham and Sarah (Gen. 12, 22; etc.). Women did not serve as priests under the Law of Moses (Exo. 28:1; etc.). Although women could bring sacrifices to the door of the tabernacle, they were to be offered by the priest “for her” (Lev. 12:5-7). Although the roles of women differed from men in these cases, they were equal in value regarding their worship and service to God.

Women Cannot Teach Usurping Authority Over Men

To Timothy, Paul wrote instructions on the way in which he was to behave himself “in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). Part of those instructions included restrictions on the woman’s role in the assembly, which states:

Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence. For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing, if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety (2:11-15).

As demonstrated previously, women are to teach. However, that teaching must be done in such a way as not to usurp authority over a man. Thus, women are not to preach. One of the differences between “teaching” and “preaching” is a matter of authority. Preaching involves the exercise of authority: “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee” (Tit. 2:15).

Women are specifically commanded to “learn in silence with all subjection” (Tit. 2:11) The “silence” here and in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, is not in reference to not speaking. The Greek translated *silence* here is ἡσυχία (*hesuchia*) and means, “1. quietness; stillness, descriptive of the life of one who stays at home doing his own work, and does not officiously meddle with the affairs of others. 2 Thess. 3:12” (Thayer 281). It is translated in various other versions of the Bible: “Let a woman learn in quietness” (1 Tim. 2:11—ASV) and “Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness” (2:11—NAS). As Thayer mentions in his definition, the same word used by Paul here, is also used in 2 Thessalonians 3:12 to apply to all Christians: “Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread” (3:12).

The “quietness” Paul commands of women is a calm, meek, and submissive spirit that listens carefully and speaks quietly and calmly. The opposite would be one who was loud, rude, interrupting, and boisterous, not giving proper submission and respect to the teacher. Likewise, Peter instructs women: “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. 3:4).

Paul further stated that women are to learn “with all subjection” which means “the act of subjecting, obedience, subjection” (Thayer 645). The opposite of this is Paul’s instruction to Titus, “These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority” (Tit. 2:15). *Authority* means “an injunction, mandate, command...with every possible form of authority” (Thayer 244). This is the type of teaching that women are restricted from doing.

Another passage where Paul regulates the teaching of women is 1 Corinthians 14. The restriction is found in the following context:

How is it then, brethren? when ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation. Let all things be done unto edifying. If any man speak in an *unknown* tongue, *let it be* by two, or at the most by

three, and *that* by course; and let one interpret. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God. Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If *any thing* be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. For God is not *the author* of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints. Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but *they are commanded* to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it unto you only? If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord. But if any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant. Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues. Let all things be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:26-40).

The context of this passage reveals the following principles: (1) the assembly is for edification, therefore, the speaking must be orderly to be understood (14:26), (2) God is not the author of confusion (14:33), (3) women are to be under subjection (14:34), and (4) all things to be done decently and in order (14:40). The purpose of the assembly that Paul is regulating was the exercise of spiritual gifts, which included speaking in tongues and prophesying.

There are five classes of church workers listed in Ephesians 4:11: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. The problems in this assembly only involved prophets and tongue speaking. The work of the prophet differed from that of the teacher. The prophet revealed the will of the Lord. The teacher expounded, illustrated, and enforced what the prophet revealed. The work of the prophet did not involve questions or discussion. The work of a teacher would involve questions and discussion. Jesus and the apostles used this method of teaching (Mat. 21:24; 22:15-22; Acts 6:9; 17:17).

Paul's instructions were designed to regulate and stop the abuse of tongue speaking and prophesying in the assembly. The problem was the disorderly assembly was causing confusion and chaos. In

this assembly, some were speaking in foreign languages, which could not be understood. There was more than one prophet speaking at a time. There were women interrupting those who were speaking. The solution Paul gives is: (1) tongue speakers were to be silent if there was no interpreter present, (2) prophets were to speak one at a time with all others remaining silent, and (3) “your women” are to be silent and not interrupt the speaker. What do we know about the women? We know that these women were married and that their husbands were Christians. We know that their husbands exercised spiritual gifts in the assembly, and we know that they were not to interrupt the exercise of spiritual gifts even with questions. Rather, they were to ask their husbands questions at home.

The silence commanded in 1 Corinthians 14:34 is different from that commanded in 1 Timothy 2:11 and Titus 2:11. Here, *silence* is translated from the Greek word *σιγάω* (*sigao*) which means, “Keep silence” “not...to speak” (Thayer 574, 368-369). If Paul were commanding women not to speak in the church universal, this would imply that a woman could not speak another word after obeying the Gospel. If Paul were commanding women not to speak in the local church, this would imply that a woman could not speak after becoming a part of the local congregation. I know of no one who would accept these implications. Therefore, Paul must be commanding a woman not to speak and interrupt in the assembly of the church under certain conditions. However, the silence is not absolute in every situation for there are times when a woman must speak.

Women Can Speak in the Assembly

Women Are to Sing in the Assembly

Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19).

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).

This command applies to all Christians, both men and women. Why can a woman teach others in the assembly in song? Because, in doing so, she is not exercising any authority or dominion over a man.

Women Are to Confess Christ in the Assembly

But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, *even* in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation (Rom. 10:8-10; cf. Mat. 10:32-33).

Women Are to Confess Their Faults in the Assembly

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).

Women Can Answer Questions in the Assembly

But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back *part* of the price, his wife also being privy *to it*, and brought a certain part, and laid *it* at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land? Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. And Ananias hearing these words fell down, and gave up the ghost: and great fear came on all them that heard these things. And the young men arose, wound him up, and carried *him* out, and buried *him*. And it was about the space of three hours after, when his wife, not knowing what was done, came in. And Peter answered unto her, Tell me whether ye sold the land for so much? And she said, Yea, for so much (Acts 5:1-8).

Taking into consideration the restrictions in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 and 1 Corinthians 14, we must conclude that women are not to speak in the assemblies of the church in such a way as to usurp authority over a man. To do so would be a sin. Yet, as has been demonstrated, women can and must speak in the assembly under certain circumstances. There should never be bound on a Christian

woman more than what the Scriptures bind. Nor should the Christian woman be allowed to assume roles in the church from which she has been restricted.

WERE PAUL'S INSTRUCTIONS FOR ALL CHURCHES OF ALL CENTURIES?

Some are saying that the commands quoted above were meant only for first century Christians, or were only for the particular situation at Corinth. This cannot be true for many reasons. Consider:

1. Paul said that his instructions in 1 Corinthians 14 are the commandments of the Lord (14:37). As such, they must be obeyed by all Christians and by every church.

2. The apostle said that the instructions of 1 Corinthians 14 are a test of spirituality. He said that those who are truly spiritual must acknowledge that the instructions are the very commandments of God. "If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord" (14:37). Those who are rejecting the teaching of 1 Corinthians 14 concerning a woman's role in the church, are proving themselves to be unspiritual.

3. In 1 Timothy, the apostle gives the very same instructions concerning women, and this epistle was written to teach the proper order for churches in general. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (3:15). The things contained in 1 Timothy are general instructions about church order to be obeyed by all churches in every century, and it is in this book, the book that contains standards for church leaders, that God has forbidden women from taking authority over or teaching men.

4. In giving the instructions about women in the church, the Holy Spirit referred back to the original order of creation—Adam first, then Eve. The Holy Spirit, in guiding Paul's pen, used this order of creation to prove that women must not take authority over men. Therefore, since the order of creation has not changed since 1 Timothy was written, and since it does not change in our culture

or century, we know that the instructions of the New Testament about the woman's role in the church apply to us today.

5. Paul referred to Eve's sin in support of his teaching regarding the Christian woman's subjection to the man. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (2:14). Again this shows that the apostle's teaching about the woman transcends any one culture or generation. Though forgiveness of sin (including Eve's) can be obtained through Jesus, we are still living under the abiding consequences and conditions resulting from Eve's sin for as long as the world continues.

6. Paul points out that Eve's leadership ended in ruin. "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression" (2:14). The woman has a different makeup than the man. She was designed for a different role in life—that of wife and mother. Her emotional, psychological, and rational makeup is geared perfectly for this, but she was not designed for leadership. In the Garden of Eden the devil deceived her. This was not true for Adam. He sinned, but was not deceived. Eve had allowed herself to be thrust into a position of decision-making that she was never supposed to occupy.

7. Paul commanded that his instructions were to be kept until Christ's coming. "That thou keep *this* commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ" (6:14). This command is given at the end of the epistle in which the apostle had so clearly required that women be in subjection to men in the church (2:9-15). Since Jesus has not yet appeared, these restrictions must be strictly maintained until His coming.

8. Paul's letter to Corinth, in which he spoke of women being in subjection to men, was for all Christians, not just those in Corinth. In his introduction to this epistle, the apostle tells us plainly to whom he is speaking:

Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called *to be* saints, **with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord**, both theirs and ours (1 Cor. 1:2).

It is clear that Paul's instructions were not intended merely for some peculiar situation at Corinth.

9. While Galatians 3:28 says there is neither bond nor free in Christ, other passages teach that this does not mean there are no servant/master relationships. The Christian servant is free in Christ—free from the eternal wages of sin—but he is not free from his earthly position and responsibilities of servitude toward his master (Eph. 6:5-8; Col. 3:22-25; 1 Tim. 6:1-2; Tit. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 2:18-25).

In fact, anyone who teaches against these instructions regarding submission of servants to masters is labeled proud and evil:

Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed. And they that have believing masters, let them not despise *them*, because they are brethren; but rather do *them* service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort. If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmising, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:1-5).

These are strong words, and they refer directly to those who try to contradict the apostle's teaching referring to woman's subjection to man in the church and home. Such are proud, ungodly, and destitute of the Truth. From such the church must turn away! This demonstrates the seriousness of this matter. Likewise, Galatians 3:28 also says there is neither male nor female in Christ. However, other passages show us that this does not mean all distinctions between the sexes are done away in this world. Nor does it mean that the original order of creation has been dissolved in Christianity. Thus, the restrictions of the woman's role in the church and home still apply.

LESSONS FROM HISTORY

History has revealed the tragedy that results when women take the place of leadership in spiritual things. A dominant woman named Jezebel married and ruled over an indecisive, weak-kneed king named Ahab. As a result, she poisoned the nation of Israel with the idolatrous worship of Baal, which brought down the displeasure and judgment of God upon the nation. “But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up” (1 Kin. 21:25).

God’s plan for women has been clearly revealed in His Word. Yet, women like Jezebel, who rejected God’s plan for them, are responsible for establishing many of the modern-day religious cults. This has resulted in religious confusion around the world. Consider (1) The cult of Spiritualism was founded by the Fox Sisters; (2) The subtle and destructive cult of Seventh-day Adventism was founded by so-called prophetess Ellen G. White; (3) Theosophy was founded by Madam Elena Blavatsky; (4) The blasphemous cult of Christian Science, which is neither Christian nor scientific, was founded by Mary Baker Eddy; and (5) The Four Square Gospel Movement was founded by Aimee Simple McPherson who lived a questionable moral life and died a tragic death (Stulting).

CONCLUSION

God has appointed the husband as head of the wife, and men as leaders in the church. Consequently, women are not to teach men, exercise authority over men, nor speak authoritatively in the assembly. Decisions for the church are made either by the elders or, if there are none, by the men of congregation. God has appointed men as leaders in the home and in the church.

All of us have a personal responsibility to serve God in the way he authorized. We are to live our daily lives in accordance with His will. Those who disobey, whether man or woman, will be dealt with equally by God on Judgment Day, for He is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). “For it is written, *As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God.* So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Rom. 14:11-

12). Conversely, the rewards are equal, too, as all those who love and serve the Lord will receive a crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8). All who sow “to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:8).

One final thought. Jesus promised to build only one church (Mat. 16:18). That one church was purchased with the precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28). Scriptural organization is one of the earmarks of the one church, which Jesus established. Any church, which is not Scripturally organized, cannot be the one true church that was purchased by the blood of our Savior. It has been and always will be the plea of the church of Christ for all to forsake man-made creeds and be united on the Scriptures. Jesus prayed for unity (John 17:20-21) and Paul condemned division (1 Cor. 1:10ff). We are encouraged to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). The unity of the first-century church can be maintained only if all will speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where the Bible is silent.

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MISSIONARY SOCIETIES

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 Orlinda (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

The concept of using missionary societies amongst the Protestant denominations had its beginnings at the end of the eighteenth century. In an effort to evangelize the English colonies in North America, an Anglican (Episcopal) preacher made several missionary trips and as a result began laying the groundwork for the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel to Foreign Parts. This was officially organized in 1701, and its first missionary arrived in America in 1702. From this beginning over the next century numerous missionary societies were established in Europe, some being denominationally based while others were inter-denominational. They also became popular in the young nation, the United States of America. Thus, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, they were commonly found on both sides of the Atlantic.

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT AND THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

When efforts began to restore the Christianity of the New Testament, the concept of using a missionary society to do the work of the church was rejected as being without Scriptural authority. Al-

exander Campbell, in his *Christian Baptist* paper, wrote concerning the apostolic church:

The order of their assemblies was uniformly the same. It did not vary with moons and with seasons. It did not change as dress nor fluctuate as the manners of the times. Their devotion did not diversify itself into the endless forms of modern times. They had no monthly concerts for prayer; no solemn convocations, no great fasts, nor preparation, nor thanksgiving days. Their churches were not fractured into missionary societies, bible societies, education societies; nor did they dream of organizing such in the world.... In their church capacity alone they moved. They neither transferred themselves into any other kind of association, nor did they fracture and sever themselves into divers societies. They viewed the church of Jesus Christ as the scheme of heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it, they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men. They dare not transfer to a missionary society; or bible society, or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in so doing they should rob the church of its glory, and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God. Their church they considered "the pillar and ground of the truth"; they viewed it as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the house of the living God. They considered if they did all they could in this capacity, they had nothing left for any other object of a religious nature (6-7).

However, as the number of congregations seeking to follow the New Testament pattern increased, questions were raised concerning the co-operation of churches in the preaching of the Gospel. By the year 1849, much had been printed concerning this matter and ways that it could be carried out without doing violence to the teaching of the Scriptures. Campbell, himself, was much engaged in the discussion through the pages of his *Millennial Harbinger*. Space limitations do not allow us the opportunity to examine all of this discussion. For a study of these discussions, Earl West's, *The Search for the Ancient Order*, Volume 1, is a good source.

A pivotal year concerning the matter of cooperation among brethren is 1849 with the establishment of the American Christian Missionary Society in October of that year in Cincinnati, Ohio. Alexander Campbell was not present for the meetings but was ap-

pointed President of the Society. When one examines the formative documents for the society, it is clear that the society is very much like its denominational counterparts. Although a number of leading brethren supported the society (some because of their respect for Campbell since he had been appointed its first president), there was opposition from the beginning.

One of the first to come out in opposition was a well-respected preacher, Jacob Creath, Jr. He objected to the organization primarily on the ground of the departure from the plea which had characterized the disciples from the beginning. He and others including Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb, and Benjamin Franklin, published protests insisting that the delegates from churches, paid memberships, ecclesiastical tribunals, and extra-congregational missionary societies were without support in Scripture. Creath also charged Campbell with inconsistency then as compared to his position in the *Christian Baptist*, which we quoted previously. Below is a quote from one of two letters that Creath wrote to Campbell that the latter published in the *Millennial Harbinger*:

Because God our Father *divinely commissioned* his Son to our world, and his Son sent the apostles as missionaries to the world, and they *divinely organized* individual congregations all over the Roman empire, in the first century, does it, therefore, follow, that we in the nineteenth century, without any *divine warrant* and contrary to our own rule of faith, have the right to call conventions, form Bible, missionary, and tract societies, elect popes, and do other things we wish? My logic does not run that way. They have divine credentials for what they did. We have none for what we are doing. That is the difference between them and us. We are bound, as well as the early Christians to spread the gospel. They did it without conventions; so can we do it without them, and have done it. The Apostles and early Christians were condemned by Jewish conventions—clerical organizations; Christians were condemned after 325 by Catholic and Protestant organizations (615-16).

Campbell denied any inconsistency between his statements in the *Christian Baptist* and his later writings. However, it is difficult to harmonize these two positions; one of two things must be admitted: Either he never realized fully the nature of the new society, continu-

ing to think only in terms of co-operation between churches, or he changed his mind and position. There was much discussion concerning Campbell's position at the time, and some concluded that following his being jailed in Glasgow, Scotland, in 1847 as a result of his position on slavery, his mind was not as clear as it previously had been, but such is speculation.

From the founding of the American Christian Missionary Society, serious objections were raised. We will note some of these. Since officers, delegates, membership were all limited to those who paid the set fees, the society was built on a money basis and thus was considered wrong. Congregations and individuals who were not wealthy enough to pay the dues were unable to participate in the organization. It was also argued that the Word of God "knows nothing of a confederation of churches in an ecclesiastical system, culminating in an earthly head, for government or for any other purpose." Indeed, an examination of Scripture shows this to be true. It was further argued that it was a "dangerous precedent, a departure from the principles for which we have always contended." Again, this was indeed a departure from the principles of the restoration and the adoption of denominational machinery to do the work of the church. Many also had fears that "the society would grow into an oppressive ecclesiasticism." The history of the society and its successors shows that this is what indeed occurred as it resulted in control of the churches through the organization of the Disciples of Christ in such a manner that it even took over the church buildings making them the property of the Disciples organization and not the local congregation.

Opposition, from the beginning, was not limited to individuals, but congregations, as a body, took action against it. Among those which spoke out and refused to have any fellowship with the society was the church in Connelsville, Pennsylvania. This congregation sent a letter to four leading papers that circulated among the brethren, including Campbell's *Millennial Harbinger*, asking that it be printed. In it were ten resolutions made by the church, stating their grounds for objection to such an organization as the society.

It should be noted that numerous brethren, while opposed to the innovations regarding instrumental music, were supportive of the missionary society. However, when division came, as recognized by the 1906 U.S. census, both the society and the instrument became the grounds for division. Again, for further study on these matters we recommend Earl West's four volumes of *The Search for the Ancient Order* which are extremely valuable.

One thing to be noted with respect to the Independent Christian Church is that the division with the Disciples of Christ came not as a result of the use of the missionary society but rather as a result of what the Independents saw as an abuse of the society. They were opposed to some things that were happening in the society rather than the society itself. This is clearly seen in that they set up some alternative societies, smaller in nature, but designed to do the same thing—namely the work of the church as respect to missions, whether at home or abroad. Such organizations included the Christian Restoration Association, Texas Evangelism, White Fields Evangelism, as well as a number of others. These organizations come complete with their own organizational structure: president, secretary, treasurer, etc., and the members come from various congregations. These then raise funds to support mission work and missionaries in the field which are under the oversight of the mission organization and not under an eldership. As an example of this, note the following from the “Concerned Christians’ Clinic”:

Concerned Christians’ Clinic Guidelines

Why The Clinic?

The purpose of the Concerned Christians’ Bible Clinic is to: (1) Set the church in order, (2) encourage and strengthen weak congregations of the Lord’s church (3) establish new congregations of Churches of Christ and (4) promote Christian love, brotherhood and fellowship ONLY on the basis of a “thus saith the Lord” in all matters of faith and obedience to God.

The Director

The founder-director of the Concerned Christians’ Bible Clinic is Bro. O.D. Wilson, who was chosen, unanimously, at the close of the first session of the clinic held at Ft. Pierce, Fla., February, 1972.

Bro. Wilson shall serve in this capacity as long as it is possible for him to do so.

In the event a proven need arises to appoint a different director, the existing board of Trustees shall appoint a successor. This shall be done at the regular session of the clinic. In the absence of a director, the present chairman of the board of Trustees shall serve as the Director.

The document continues to outline the duties of the director and the board of trustees, including the appointment of a general treasurer to receive funds given to the organization and distribute funds from its treasury in support of its aims. Incidentally, this same O.D. Wilson had, for a time, in the sixties, been associated with the “anti-cooperation” churches.

SCRIPTURAL OBJECTIONS TO THE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

The historical background, although important, is not the main thesis of this chapter, so we turn now to a discussion of Scriptural objections to the missionary society.

While not quoting Scripture, Alexander Campbell, in his article in the *Christian Baptist*, quoted previously, sets down some of the basic objections to the missionary society doing the work of the church. He points out that the church was “the scheme of heaven to ameliorate the world; as members of it, they considered themselves bound to do all they could for the glory of God and the good of men.” As has been stated by others, the church is the Lord’s missionary society. Thus, as stated by Campbell, faithful Christians

dare not transfer to a missionary society; or bible society, or education society, a cent or a prayer, lest in so doing they should rob the church of its glory, and exalt the inventions of men above the wisdom of God (7).

Scripture teaches that Christ is glorified in His church (Eph. 3:21), why would anyone want to give glory in evangelism to an institution that is founded by man. Campbell continued:

Their church they considered “the pillar and ground of the truth”; they viewed it as the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the house of the living God. They considered if they did all they could in this

capacity, they had nothing left for any other object of a religious nature (7).

Since the church is the “pillar and ground of the truth” and “the church of the living God” (1 Tim. 3:15), why would anyone want to promote a human institution to do the work of the Lord in the preaching of the Gospel?

A look at the founding documents gives us an idea of the nature and purpose of the Society. Those who assembled at Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1849, to establish the American Christian Missionary Society adopted this resolution, as quoted by Earl West:

Resolved, that the missionary society as a means to concentrate and disperse the wealth and benevolence of the brethren of this Reformation in an effort to convert the world, is both scriptural and expedient.

West commented: “One cannot help but wonder as to the propriety of such a resolution, for certainly the fact that it was passed or declined would effect the issue of whether or not the society was scriptural in no way” (174-75). Later during the meeting a constitution was adopted consisting of thirteen articles. We will note only the first five because they are germane to our discussion (a full listing is given by West 176-78):

Article 1st. This society shall be called the American Christian Missionary Society.

Article 2nd. The object of this Society shall be to promote the spread of the gospel in destitute places of our own and foreign lands.

Article 3rd. The Society shall be composed of annual delegates, Life Members and Life Directors. Any church may appoint a delegate for an annual contribution of ten dollars. Twenty dollars paid at one time shall be requisite to constitute a member for life, and one hundred dollars paid at one time...shall be required to constitute a director for life.

Article 4th. The officers of the Society shall consist of a President, twenty vice-presidents, a treasurer, a corresponding secretary, and a recording secretary...

Article 5th. The society shall also annually elect twenty-five managers, who together with the officers and life directors of this Society,

shall constitute an executive board, to conduct the business of the Society (176-77).

Where is the Scriptural authority—direct statement, implication, or example—to form an organization, separate and apart from the church to do the work of the church, “to promote the spread of the gospel in destitute places of our own and foreign lands”? Where is the Scriptural authority to have a delegate body composed of those who can and will provide the necessary contribution? Where is the Scriptural authority to appoint managers, who, along with officers and life directors conduct the business in which the society was to be engaged—“to promote the spread of the gospel in destitute places of our own and foreign lands”? Truly, there is **no** authority to be found for it in the Scriptures. Our Lord has commanded that we teach the Gospel, and that we spread that teaching throughout the world (Mat. 28:19-20). He set up an organization to accomplish this work, that organization being the church. The New Testament, from Acts through Revelation records this work taking place. The brethren were rightly concerned about the need to preach the Gospel and having cooperation among themselves to ensure that the work was done. Cooperation is a Scriptural concept (Phi. 4:15-17), but one can examine the whole of the New Testament and not find any such organization, like the society, to work together in cooperation. Earl West makes the following observation when writing concerning the missionary society:

It will be necessary to notice at this point a particular concept which Campbell held which clashed with that held by many others. Over these concepts considerable division was yet to come. The church of the New Testament is spoken of in two different senses—the universal and the local. The church universal consisted of all baptized believers. The church in this sense is spoken of in the scriptures as the body of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, the house of God, temple of God, etc. The church universal has but one officer—Christ who is the Head of the body, the King plenipotentiary over the kingdom. In New Testament times this King appointed his special ambassadors to establish the church and indoctrinate it in its infancy. The apostles, strictly speaking, were not officers of the church. They existed before the church did, and were ap-

pointed by Christ, not the church. They were officers *pro tempore* and with the close of the first century left the church in the form of individual congregations overseen by bishops or elders to accomplish the work of converting the world to Christ. The church universal, as such, was not left with any specific work to do, but all work to be done was left up to the local congregations. Hence, in New Testament times, the only organization of Christians to exist was a local church. It is obvious, then, that the plan of the New Testament by which the world was to be converted was the establishing of local churches in every community of the world, and these local churches, in turn, under Christ convert those within its reach. From Jerusalem to Judea, thence to Samaria and finally to the uttermost parts of the earth, churches were planted in New Testament times without the aid of any other organization than the local church, and souls were thus converted to Christ (158-59).

Later West writes:

This is the heart of Campbell's reasoning on Church Organization, He insists upon beginning with the church in the aggregate or universal sense of the term. It is vital to his viewpoint to ignore, at least for the time being, the local character of the church. It is with the church universal that he begins. Reasoning from the point that the church in the aggregate has the responsibility of converting the world, and that since Christ has given no divine plan for the church, in this sense, to function; therefore, the church is left free to devise its own plan, according to its own wisdom, with only the law of expediency applying. To be sure, any plan the church would devise would be unauthorized in the New Testament, and it would be the height of folly to look for a New Testament example for it. To Campbell, it was expediency pure and simple and on that ground could be defended.

The weakness of Campbell's reasoning was to be found in his beginning point—the church universal. The church universal had but one set of officers—the apostles, and these were the personal ambassadors of Christ sent on a special mission to supervise the work for Christ in the infancy of His Church. Through the apostles the divine word was spoken by Christ, and through the apostles Christ established and confirmed His Messiahship. At the close of the apostolic age, when the last apostle had died, the church was known only by individual congregations scattered over the world. The work of Christ through the church to evangelize the world was carried out through the influence of the local church in its com-

munity. Even in apostolic times the churches felt no need of an organization, devised by human planning, through which the church could cooperate to evangelize the world. They had a fervency and zeal, and the history of the church has well shown that the less zeal and devotion there is in the church, the more institutionalism and human organizations are needed (169-70).

Generally speaking, a missionary society operates in the following way. A group of churches (county, state, or national) agrees to enter into a relationship, as described in the articles of the American Christian Missionary Society, with the purpose of doing mission work. It is agreed by the participating churches to send special representatives to meeting that are held periodically, and these representatives are empowered to formulate and ratify policy. They then return to the churches from whence they came bearing the decisions made by the society. By their agreement to be a part of the society, the congregations were **bound** by the decisions of the delegates, and thus the churches came under the control of a body that was independent of any congregation. Such an arrangement is wrong, sinful (as it subordinates the local congregations to an outside body), and void of any New Testament authority. No congregation of the church can be made subservient to any other. Each congregation is independent and self-governing in all matters of expediency.

Do the arrangements whereby one congregation assists another with a particular mission work, commonly called the “sponsoring church arrangement” whereby one church supports a missionary in the field with the aid of other congregations, parallel the structure of the “society”? Clearly, such is not the case. Each congregation is free to continue or discontinue their support or alter the amount of support at any time. Missionaries can testify to this as from time to time congregations, for various reasons, cease their support without any penalty from the sponsoring congregation. Further, such an arrangement enables more missionaries to be sent, since many congregations do not have the financial capability to fully support a missionary themselves, but this enables them to participate with a missionary of their choice. Many of us who have served as missionaries have benefited greatly because of this Scriptural arrangement.

This missionary society concept however violates the Scriptures concerning the autonomy of the church and the work of the church, as authorized in the Scriptures. The attitude often expressed with respect to this matter by those from the Independent Christian Churches that support such is that “the Bible does not say that we cannot do it this way.” This is the same basic response they give with respect to the instrument. They believe that since God did not say, “Thou shalt not,” they are free to do as they wish, regardless of the fact that what God has said would prohibit such. Sadly, such is also often the answer given by liberal brethren to justify unscriptural practices. God has told us how to carry out the work of the church; He does not have to tell us all of the ways that we are not to do mission work. When God has specified what He wants, there is no need to tell us what He does not want. We recognize this in other areas, when a parent tells a child to go and get a specific thing, he does not have to specify that which he does not want.

COOPERATION BETWEEN CONGREGATIONS ATTACKED

In the 1950s and 60s, after the start of the Herald of Truth program under the oversight of the elders of the Highland church in Abilene, Texas, there were those who contended that the program and similar works were nothing more than missionary societies or benevolent societies and began splitting churches as a result of their new found doctrine. From my personal experience with the Christian Church, I can categorically state that they are not parallel, and it presents a false picture to so associate them. The “anti-brethren” are not consistent with the facts when they make this argument. Further, it is clear that they do not understand the nature of the missionary society, as we have previously discussed.

At the time when I came out of the Associated Churches of Christ (Christian Church) in Australia, three preachers of this persuasion had come to Australia with the express purpose of dividing the few congregations that existed in the country. At the time, the Herald of Truth program was on a few radio stations across the country with the air time being paid for by congregations in the U.S.A. These three preachers managed to convince one family, from one of the

two congregations in the Sydney area, to adopt their ideas, and they established another congregation. Incidentally, these preachers were supported in different ways by congregations and individuals in the States, and even though they thought each other to be supported unscripturally, they were in fellowship with each other!

The above situation had occurred just a few months before my separation from the Associated Churches of Christ and brethren feared that once I heard of what had occurred, I might be influenced in that direction. However, my experiences in the programs of the Associated Churches of Christ enabled me to quickly see the fallacious nature of their arguments in equating the Herald of Truth and other similar works with the societies. Also, through the efforts of Jack Hardcastle, a preacher from the States, who had had considerable experience in refuting these false notions, he was able to be of further assistance to me and numerous other brethren in seeing the erroneous nature of their claims.

HERALD OF TRUTH TODAY

The *Herald of Truth* still exists today. However, it is a far different work today and a far different organization. First, the program began to espouse error and in discussion of the so-called “anti-cooperation” issues, brethren started to speak of “Herald of Truth” type of works in their defense of the Scriptural nature of these works. However over the years the nature of the work has also changed. It is no longer a good work of a congregation, under the oversight of its elders, that others chose to help to support but has turned into a missionary society in which it seeks to do the work of the church in the preaching of the Gospel. A look at the web site shows the nature of the organization. It may not call itself a missionary society but it has all of the trappings of a missionary society with its own president and board (including women). Concerning the board, the web site states: “Our ministry is served by a dedicated and gifted Board of Directors. Our Directors do not receive compensation for serving; they in fact, are financially committed to the ministry.” However, they continue to solicit churches to support the work that the church has been commissioned to do. They also solicit funds on

the Internet where they state: “All online gifts to Herald of Truth will be directed to the current greatest need.” In other words, they determine, just like a missionary society, where the funds go and **not** the giver.

Concerning their history the web site states:

Founded in 1952, Herald of Truth has an illustrious past that began as a local radio program. When we entered the sixties, our programs could be heard on 238 radio stations and 50 television stations throughout the United States. In the seventies, our coverage grew to 468 radio stations and 152 television stations. Many of our broadcasters became household names in the Christian community. Men like James Walter Nichols, James Willeford, Harold Hazelip, Batsell Barrett Baxter, Glenn Owen, Juan Monroy, Landon Saunders, Phillip Morrison and Randy Becton.

Note there is not **one** reference to the church in its history even though, as we have shown, it was originally a work of the Highland church in Abilene. The web site only mentions the church in the section concerning news and events of where speakers are speaking at congregations about the program. Another organization that has its genesis in Abilene, Texas, is World Christian Broadcasting Corporation that began in 1976. A look at their web site clearly reveals the organizational arrangement. It could well be that the change at Herald of Truth was brought about by the example of World Christian Broadcasting Corporation. There is not one jot of difference between the Herald of Truth, as it exists today, the World Christian Broadcasting Corporation and the mini-missionary societies of the Independent Christian Church.

CONCLUSION

Thus we have seen that there is no authority in Scripture for a missionary society to do the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ. It is the work of local congregations that can voluntarily work together to support a specific missionary or mission field. A failure to understand this has brought about organizations, although not as all-encompassing as the missionary society of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), that seek to do the work that the Lord has au-

thorized the church to do. Although their goals may seem laudable, we should not entangle ourselves with these kinds of unscriptural organizations.

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Disaster Relief Organizations

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INTRODUCTION

We begin our study of disaster relief organizations by defining the terms involved in the chapter title. A *disaster* takes place when people suffer from the consequences of war, etc., and/or natural calamities such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, forest fires, famines, disease epidemics, and/or earthquakes.

The *relief* provided those who suffer from said consequences takes the form of direct support and emergency services immediately following a disaster. Some of these services include blankets, water, food, clothing, and relief kits. Also provided are fixed/mobile feeding stations, shelter, cleaning supplies, comfort kits, first aid, blood and blood products, emergency transportation, rent, home repairs, household items, medical supplies, vocational evaluation, career counseling, skills training, and job placement. In addition to providing vocational services, some organizations provide drug and alcohol abuse programs for the homeless, specialized services for welfare recipients, and workshops for disabled individuals. Moreover they provide clean-up and rebuilding assistance, especially to the elderly, disabled, widowed, and those least able to help themselves. By understanding what these organizations do we are able to

define what they are and the kinds of disasters they are seeking to relieve.

The following list contains some disaster relief organizations: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the Federal government's disaster relief organization.

Other relief organizations are:

The Adventist Community Services (ACS)

The American Radio Relay League, Inc. (ARRL)

The American Red Cross

The Ananda Marga Universal Relief Team (AMURT)

Brethren Disaster Ministries

The Catholic Charities

USA Disaster Response

Children's Disaster Services

The Christian Disaster Response (CDR)

The Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)

The Church World Service (CWS)

Disaster Response

Enterprise Works/Volunteers in Technical Assistance

The Episcopal Church Presiding Bishop's Fund for World Relief

Feeding America

The Friends Disaster Service (FDS)

The International Association of Jewish Vocational Services (IAJVS)

The International Relief Friendship Foundation (IRFF)

The Lutheran Disaster Response (LDR)

Mennonite Disaster Services

The National Emergency Response Team (NERT)

The National Organization for Victim Assistance

The Nazarene Disaster Response

The Phoenix Society for Burn Survivors

The Points of Light Institute

The Presbyterian Disaster Assistance

The REACT International

The Salvation Army

The Society of St. Vincent De Paul
 The Southern Baptist Disaster Relief
 The UJA Federations of North America
 The United Methodist Committee on Relief
 The Volunteers of America, and The World Vision (“Disaster Center”)

The foregoing information pertains to disaster relief organizations in general. They are operated by various and sundry groups both secular and religious. Our study pertains to disaster relief organizations operated by members of the Lord’s church and specifically one such organization—“Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc., 410 Allied Drive, Nashville, TX” (CCDRE).

WHAT WE ARE AND ARE NOT STUDYING—WHY AND HOW

We **are** studying the Bible to see if there is New Testament authority for a benevolent organization comprised of Christians, but not the church, that is known as “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.” to exist and do the work it does as previously defined. We are **not** examining the benevolent work of a certain congregation of God’s people wherein they engage in disaster relief work under the oversight of that church’s elders with other individual Christians and churches of Christ assisting them in it. At the outset of this study let it be clearly understood that **without New Testament authority no one has the approval of Christ** in whatever actions they may involve themselves.

It, therefore, must be understood that in general the sovereign King of heaven and earth (Mat. 28:18; Eph. 1:19-23) communicated His Will to mankind through the languages of the Bible and specifically through the Koine Greek in which the New Testament was originally written. Thus, when we have a true translation of the languages of the Bible into English (or in whatever one’s native language), we have the Word of God in our own mother tongue. Regarding God communicating with mankind through words (**signs of ideas** or **vehicles of thought**), consider what the Holy Spirit-inspired apostle Paul wrote to the Lord’s church in Ephesus, saying,

How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit (Eph. 3:3-5; also see Acts 2:42; Jam. 1:18, 21-22; 1 Cor. 2:7-13; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2:15; Jam. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:1-4; Heb. 4:12; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; 1 The. 2:13; Luke 8:11; Eph. 6:17; John 8:31-32; 17:17; 12:48).

In revealing His Will to mankind in a language (in our case English translated from the original Greek of the New Testament), the mechanics and grammar of the English language, along with its direct statements, examples, and implications, must be understood to know whether Jesus has authorized or not authorized our actions, or if He has expressly forbidden them. (Of course, if there is any doubt about the English translation one must always settle such doubts by going to the Greek text.) The foregoing are the communicative elements of language and by them Jesus authorizes mankind to act or thereby specifically forbids certain actions. Thus, without New Testament authority to act, one cannot act by faith. This is the case because faith comes by hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17). Thus, to walk by faith is to walk as the Word of God leads, guides, directs, and authorizes us (2 Cor. 5:7). Therefore, with His Will originally couched in the mechanics and grammar of the Greek language, Jesus located His authority therein. Hence, without a proper working knowledge of the communicative elements inherent in any language one cannot ascertain the authority of Christ revealed on the pages of the New Testament—**but ascertain his authority for our beliefs and actions we must** (Col. 3:17; John 12:48).

WHY DID JESUS COME INTO THE WORLD?

Jesus came into the world to solve mankind's sin problem (Isa. 59:2; John 1:29; Mat. 18:11; Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Jam. 4:17; 1 John 3:4). He became a man (a human being—flesh, bone, and blood) to personally live as a man on the earth for Him to have experiential knowledge of living as a human being in the flesh (Isa. 53; John 1:1-14; Phi. 2:5-8; Heb. 4:15; 5:7-10; Acts 2:22-36; 20:28; Mat. 26:26-28; Acts 2:37-38, 41-42, 47; Rom. 5:6, 8, 14; 1 Cor. 15:1-8; Rom.

6:3-11, 17-18; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:21;). Although He was tempted in every point like as we are, He never committed even one sin, and, thus, He died sinless. This is the only way Jesus Christ's physical body could be offered as a sacrifice for our sins and His blood, shed for the remission of the same. In our Lord's life, suffering, and death He did what Deity had to do that man could not do for himself for man to be saved from sin.

The Work of the Church of Christ Is to Save Souls from Sin

As Christ came to save mankind from the consequences of sin and add the saved to His church, it is the duty of the saved (the church, His spiritual body) to make known the Gospel of Christ—God's power to save—to this sinful world (Acts 2:47; Eph. 5:30; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:15-16; Mat. 28:18-20). The church does this by **preaching the Gospel to the alien sinner** (alien sins are those sins committed by anyone who has matured to the point of knowing right from wrong and is thus responsible and accountable to God for one's actions—beginning with the first sin committed, which sin separated or alienated one from God—Gen. 3; 1 John 3:4; Jam. 4:17; Rom. 3:23; 5:14-21; 6:23), **edifying the brethren** (instructing them in Christian conduct and encouraging them to persevere), and engaging in **benevolent activities**, some examples of which we have previously noted (Mark 16:15-16; Rom. 1:16; 1 The. 5:11; Rom. 15:26).

To relieve people who are suffering from the consequences of the different kinds of disasters is one of the ways Christians can prove their love of and concern for those who suffer from the various calamities that are common to this world. Faithfully adhering to God's Word reveals the Christian's love of God's Word, one's own faithful adherence to it, and one's own respect for God's Will as set out in His Word (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25; 2 Pet. 1:1-12; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; 2 Tim. 2:15; John 12:48).

Unlike those who believe the *Social Gospel* (teaching that benevolent acts are the end within themselves when it comes to living the Christian life or serving God faithfully), the New Testament teaches that **benevolent acts are a means to an end**—the salvation of one's

soul from sin. Benevolent acts reveal to those who are suffering that there is a doctrine that teaches people to be concerned about the well-being of others, especially those who cannot provide for themselves. The result of such acts is this—that those assisted will seek to know why someone cared enough for them in their plight to help relieve them of their sufferings in this life. Hence, a door is opened to teach them the Gospel that can save their souls, giving them the hope of eternal life, long after their fleshly needs are no more and their bodies have returned to the earth (Rom. 8:24; Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58; Gen. 3:19).

Since the beginning of the Lord's church on the first Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2), Christians have shown their concern for all people, especially their brethren, who were in such terrible conditions they could not by themselves help themselves. Christians understand from the teaching of the New Testament that some of their faithful service to God is to practice "pure and undefiled religion," a part of which is to provide for the "orphans and widows in their affliction" (Jam. 1:27). Christians understand the meaning of the parable of the "Good Samaritan" and how it finds application in their faithful conduct toward helping relieve the hurt of others (Luke 10:29-37). They know that a part of doing good is to be involved in caring for the victims of the various disasters common to the world, especially the suffering of one's own brethren in the Lord (Gal. 6:10).

As previously noted, Christians respect the authority of God's Word in general and the New Testament of His Son in particular. That being the case, as is true of all things, Christians must do **what** Jesus said, in **the way** He said it, and **for the reason(s)** He said do it. In other words, if brethren are to be faithful to their Lord in all their beliefs and practices, they must have New Testament authority for every action, **including the benevolent activities of the Lord's church** (Col. 3:17).

If we understand the importance of having New Testament authority for the Lord's church to assemble for the worship of God on the first day of every week; if we can understand that we must

have New Testament authority for the five acts of worship in said worship assembly to worship God acceptably; if we can understand that we must have New Testament authority for the emblems that constitute the Lord's Supper and why Christians are to observe it only on the first day of the week in the worship assemblies of the churches; if we can understand the importance of New Testament authority for singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs and only singing them; then, we should be able to understand why we must have New Testament authority for any organization of Christians including the organization known as the "Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc." (CCDRE). Thus, we shall engage in the study the New Testament to see whether such an organization has New Testament authority to exist. As we study please keep in mind the essential matters covered previously in this chapter.

Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.

From the following quotation on their Internet website, we learn about this benevolent organization:

How Our Effort Works

The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort immediately responds to any major disaster in the continental United States by sending truckloads of emergency food, water, cleaning, and other supplies to disaster victims. We are a non-profit corporation, tax-exempt—state taxes and federal income tax under section 501(a) of the Internal Revenue Code as an organization described in section 501(c) (3). Only fifteen employees are paid in the entire organization. Unpaid volunteers are the secret to success of our organization.

Our History

The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort unofficially began operations in 1990. Since then, the organization has distributed more than \$106 million in emergency food and supplies in response to 301 disasters in 42 states. In 1994, the non-profit operations center located in Nashville, Tennessee was incorporated, and a large warehouse facility was purchased. Growth has been remarkable. For instance, in 1996 we shipped \$1.1 million in aid. Major disasters in 1999 caused us to respond with more than \$4.5 million in supplies. Tragedies in the past three years forced us to ship massive amounts

to several different types of disasters. We sent \$16,096,517.13 in 2005, \$14,800,207.71 in 2006, and \$6,042,596.03 in 2007.

Volunteers

Volunteers are the heart of this organization. The members of the board of directors and advisory board are all volunteers and receive no compensation. We also have volunteers working daily sorting and pre-packing relief supplies. When we load a truck, it is not unusual to see 300 volunteers show up to help.

Youth groups and Sunday school classes from throughout the Southeast have enjoyed working a day or two before seeing the Grand Ole Opry and other Nashville attractions.

Who Supports Us?

The Disaster Relief Effort is voluntarily supported by Churches of Christ, individuals, churches, corporations, and other non-profit agencies nationwide. In 2001, 1,041 congregations in 50 states and 2668 individuals or families from 50 states supported us financially. In addition, 37 leading corporations from across the country donated substantial amounts of product.

What Are the Advantages?

- Ready immediately to respond to emergencies with organized preparation, distribution, and follow-up
- On-site review of assistance
- Local churches help to distribute food, supplies, and funds
- Workable system for distribution to victims

Who Gets Help?

- Strict guidelines apply to type of disaster
- Advance team goes immediately to survey the situation
- Advance team aids in setting up distribution centers in disaster areas
- Advance team follows up to see that all areas are covered
- All cases are checked out, not an individual benevolent fund
- Anyone at site can receive assistance regardless of race, color, or creed

We are Cost Effective

More than 85% of every donated dollar goes directly to disaster victims, 86.82% to be precise. Expenses such as salaries, utilities, supplies, maintenance, depreciation, truck rentals, etc. amounted to only 13.18%. We are proud of this remarkable record and acknowledge that without our many volunteers this could not be possible.

Distribution of Supplies

Churches of Christ Disaster Relief only works through the local Church of Christ in the community or town, where the disaster has occurred. If there is no Church of Christ in the town, Disaster Relief will contact the nearest town that has a Church of Christ and ask for help. Supplies will be distributed by this congregation “in the name of the Lord” to anyone who has been affected by the disaster regardless of race, color, creed, or religion (“Disaster Relief Effort”).

WHAT IS AND WHAT IS NOT THE ISSUE

All other things being Scripturally equal, Christians are authorized by the New Testament to privately associate and cooperate in benevolence, evangelism, and worship. However, **that is not the question under consideration**. Furthermore, all other things being scripturally equal, the issue has nothing to do with Christians incorporating because civil law requires it. Such would be in complete harmony with Romans 13 for Christians to do. Neither is it a question of having a board of directors because a board of directors or trustees may be required by civil law. However, such New Testament authorization for Christians to privately associate for evangelistic and/or benevolent purposes **does not** constitute New Testament authority for anyone to apply “church of Christ” to any group of well-meaning and good intentioned Christians that come down the pike.

“Antis” (those who bind where God’s Word does not bind) think that the church (a God ordained institution) must become a home (another and different God ordained institution from the church) for Christians to Scripturally provide for the needs of orphans. Thus, one would have a “Church of Christ Home”—**an institution not found on the pages of the Bible**. A Scriptural home is found in the Bible. However a “Church of Christ Home” is not found therein.

THAT CHURCH OF CHRIST THING-A-MA-BOB

There is no such thing as a Church of Christ Family, in a Church of Christ House, on a Church of Christ Farm, running a Church of Christ Dairy, milking Church of Christ Cows, fed with Church of Christ grain and Church of Christ grass, from Church of Christ

Pastures and Fields, fenced with Church of Christ Wire, drinking Church of Christ Water from Church of Christ Ponds and Church of Christ Streams, giving Church of Christ Milk, to make Church of Christ Butter, to put on Church of Christ Bread, along with Church of Christ Jelly, to feed to Church of Christ Children (Orphans in a Church of Christ Legal Home) as they drink their Church of Christ Milk, and eat their Church of Christ eggs, from Church of Christ Hens, and Church of Christ Bacon from Church of Christ Pigs fed and fattened on Church of Christ slop.

The previous paragraph graphically illustrates what happens when people are ignorant of Bible information, do not know, or do not care how to ascertain Bible authority, or they just do not believe and/or respect what the Divine volume says. Indeed, we have all such characters in the church today. Thus, anything and everything may flow from a church composed of such *Christians*—and that is what has and is happening throughout the land with the church of our Lord today.

It should be noted that the “antis” start with two God ordained institutions—**the home** and **the church**. Their error is thinking that the church may not contribute to the support of a legal home—another God-ordained or authorized institution. CCDRE begins with the church (a God-ordained institution). They rightly conclude that Christians may associate with one another for evangelistic and benevolent purposes, incorporate, and have a board of trustees and/or directors to achieve legally non-profit organization status. They then make a sad attempt defending themselves by labeling their organization with a term the New Testament applies **only** to the institution of the saved, the Lord’s church. Now why do that, when such is totally uncalled for and is without New Testament precedent? It is as foreign to the New Testament as is “Church of Christ Slop for Church of Christ Pigs.” It is a misuse and abuse of a Scriptural term. Since such terms are meant to **describe the organizations to which they are applied**, I ask, where on the pages of the New Testament is such an organization as Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort,

Inc. of Nashville, Tennessee found? Answer: It is found in the same Scriptures that mention “Church of Christ Pigs.”

Church of Christ is one of the Scriptural terms that identifies the proper relationship of the church to her Head and Savior Jesus Christ and vice versa. It is **obligatory** on us to “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11) or do all things by the authority of Christ (Col. 3:17). Nowhere do “the oracles of God” apply *church of Christ* to any other institution or organization than the blood-bought body of Christ, the family and kingdom of God whether it is another organization of Christians or not. Yet, the “antis” want “Church of Christ Homes” and now those enamored with **CCDRE** contend for a “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.” organization. The people who designated their benevolent association of individual Christians as “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief; Inc.” are, for whatever reason, ignorant and/or disrespectful of the fundamental hermeneutical principles necessary for ascertaining Bible authority, which principles designates what institution is authorized by the New Testament to wear the descriptive term *church of Christ*.

COOPERATIVE EFFORTS FOUND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

Let us examine some of the cooperative efforts of the first century church as they are revealed on the pages of the New Testament.

1. Paul cooperated with those who assisted him (2 Tim. 4:9-12).

2. Phoebe is said to have “succoured many” (Rom. 16:1-2).

3. The household of Stephanas had “addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints” (1 Cor. 16:15). This is an example of a Christian family cooperating with persons in need.

4. The disciples determined according to each person’s ability to send “relief” to the brethren in Judea. This they did. Through Barnabas and Paul, the brethren sent their “relief” to the elders in Judea (Acts 11:27-30).

5. The churches of Macedonia, Achaia, Corinth, and Galatia cooperated in the collection recorded in 2 Corinthians 8-9.

6. In the matter of the letter that was sent out by the church at Jerusalem, other churches cooperated (Acts 15:19-31).

7. Aquila and Priscilla (husband and wife) cooperated in teaching Apollos (Acts 18:26).

What are some of the lessons we may deduce from these seven New Testament accounts of cooperation among and between the brethren of the first century?

1. There was cooperation between individuals (2 Tim. 4:9-12).

2. One individual and several other individuals cooperated (Rom. 16:1-2).

3. A Christian family cooperated with needy individuals (1 Cor. 16:15).

4. Churches and needy saints in Jerusalem cooperated (2 Cor. 8-9).

5. Different churches cooperated with one another (Acts 15:1-32).

6. A husband and wife cooperated with each other to teach another person the Gospel (Acts 18:26).

Question: **Where in the New Testament is the direct statement, example, or implication authorizing any of the previously enumerated cooperative efforts to be labeled “Church of Christ Whatever”?** Now we are down to where the “rubber meets the road.” Here is the real issue—simply because I find New Testament authorization for cooperation between and among Christians does not mean I have found authorization to stick *church of Christ* or *churches of Christ* on such cooperative efforts. Imagine labeling the benevolent work of Paul and Barnabas with other Christians as “Gentile Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort For Judea.” Or, how about: “Phoebe’s Church of Christ Succouring Ministry”? If the two preceding *ministries* will not do, what about the name “Church of Christ Team Ministry of Aquila and Priscilla”? **What is the difference in CCDRE and these “Church of Christ Ministries of The First Century”?** If the great thinkers, shakers, and movers in Nashville (or anywhere else) who came up with the CCDRE name had been in the first century A.D. church, that is exactly the kind of labeling they would have done. You say, “How do

you know they would?” Because that is exactly what they are doing and they would have conducted themselves in the same way if they had lived then—that is until Paul caught up with them and applied his rod of correction.

IS “CCDRE” THE LORD’S CHURCH?

Again, Christians (individually or collectively) may deliver goods or money to the elders of churches or to churches without elders that such may be distributed to relieve those suffering from various disasters (natural or otherwise). Individual Christians may help any person in need, especially Christians, as they have opportunity to do so (Gal. 6:10). Who is it among the brethren who oppose such conduct, “antis” in general notwithstanding? But **where is the New Testament authority for a group of Christians calling themselves “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.”?**

Efforts have been made in an attempt to justify calling a group of Christians who are dedicated to good works such as CCDRE by appealing to the fact that since it is Scriptural for churches, colleges operated by the brethren, other schools, and child services agencies operated by members of the church of Christ to incorporate, or appoint trustees for legal purposes, that said group of Christians who are dedicated to good works should be afforded the same right as the other organizations operated by members of the church. These brethren have taken one of the terms found in the New Testament that identifies the Lord’s institution of the saved and attached it to themselves and their work so people will associate their work with the church of Christ. There is no authority in the New Testament for some organization of Christians that admits it is not the church to use Scriptural terms that are only to be applied to the blood-bought body of Christ.

Surely, those who make such a feeble effort do not think that **CCDRE** is the Lord’s church. Is it comprised of Christians (as the New Testament defines and uses *Christian*)? As far as I know, **CCDRE** is comprised of Christians as the New Testament defines the term. Because it is made up of Christians, is it the church? People who make this effort know (or they should know) that it is not

necessarily the case. Are the defenders of CCDRE or anyone else willing to say that all organizations composed of Christians constitute the church? (What about a home where all family members are Christians—is it the church?) Those brethren who would attempt such a thing are operating from the following false premise: **“The Scriptures teach that organizations composed of Christians are organizations authorized by the New Testament to call themselves a “Church of Christ Something or Other.”** Remember those “Church of Christ Chickens.”

If CCDRE is the church, whether organized or unorganized, where does it get its New Testament authority to call itself “Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort, Inc.”? We are told that the name CCDRE identifies their benevolent work with the churches of Christ. Thus, I ask, **who authorized CCDRE to represent the churches of Christ and by what authority did they act?**

Is it Scriptural for five Christians to agree among themselves to start a food business and contribute the profits of that business to the church? Assuredly the New Testament authorizes them to do so. We have already noted that there was cooperation between individuals in the early church for the purpose of benefiting the church (2 Tim. 4:9; Rom. 16:1-2). Also, Peter reminded Ananias regarding his money: “Whiles it [their land] remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?” (Acts 5:4). Thus, all other things being Scripturally equal, the five Christians of our illustration may do with their money, as they will. (It is too bad that more brethren do not think this way regarding business matters benefiting the Lord’s church.) Another question—because the five persons of my illustration **are** Christians and have decided to contribute the profits of their company to the church, do they have Biblical authority to call the company: ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART? They most certainly do **not**. Why is this the case? Because *church of Christ* as it is defined and used in the Scriptures (along with other New Testament terms of like nature) is only applicable to designate the institution of the saved—that organization and that organization **alone**. Therefore, to refer to such an

institution as “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART” is to violate Peter’s inspired directive, “If any man speak, *let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Pet. 4:11). Simply put, there is no New Testament authority to call a food store operated by Christians with the profits going to the church: “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART.”

Contending for the Faith, of which I am the editor, is a privately owned and published paper. The owners engage in this work as a part of their personal work for the Lord in teaching and defending Bible truth as well as exposing and refuting errors and false teachers. However, it has **no** Biblical authority to label itself: “THE CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH CHURCH OF CHRIST JOURNAL.” As in my illustration of the “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART,” such would be an abuse and misuse of the descriptive term *church of Christ*. There is not a direct statement, example, or implication in the New Testament authorizing *church of Christ* to be used in the way it is used in the preceding two illustrations regarding the paper *Contending for the Faith* or “ACME CHURCH OF CHRIST FOOD MART,” and the same is true concerning CCDRE.

THE FALSE PREMISE FROM WHICH THEY REASON

Please mark the following statements “true” or “false.”

1. **True** or **False**—Any organization composed of Christians only that exists for the purpose of practicing benevolence is authorized by the New Testament to have as a part of its name *church of Christ*. (Major Premise)
2. **True** or **False**—CCDRE is an organization composed only of Christians existing for the purpose of practicing benevolence. (Minor Premise)
3. **True** or **False**—(Therefore), CCDRE is authorized by the New Testament to have as a part of its name *church of Christ*. (Conclusion)

The previous three-line syllogism sets out the reasoning that some defenders of CCDRE must do to conclude that they have New Testament authority for designating their benevolent organi-

zation as CCDRE. However, the first statement (major premise) of the three statements (syllogism) is false. There is not a direct statement, example, or implication in the New Testament giving us such authority. Thus, statement three (the conclusion) is false.

Now watch the previous reasoning *go to seed* as it is out in another syllogism.

Major Premise: Any organization composed of Christians only that exists for the purpose of serving God is authorized by the New Testament to have as a part of its name *church of Christ*.

Minor Premise: The David P. Brown home is composed of Christians only that exists for the purpose of serving God.

Conclusion: Therefore, the David P. Brown home is authorized by the New Testament to have as a part of its name *church of Christ* (David P. Brown Church of Christ Home).

Remember, those “Church of Christ Cows.” Such terminology comes from the same lame thinking and Biblical ignorance that causes sectarians in and out of the church to speak of “Church of Christ Churches.” We might as well have “Church of Christ Cows” and “Church of Christ Churches” as “Church of Christ Relief ‘Whatevers’”—one has as much New Testament usage and authorization as the other—and that is **none!**

AGAIN WHAT WE ARE NOT SAYING

We are not saying that a church of Christ must have elders and deacons before it can engage in benevolent and evangelistic activities. However, the church is the **only** institution that the New Testament authorizes to wear the descriptive term *church of Christ* because it is one of those Scriptural terms that refers to the institution to which Jesus adds all of those who are saved and bears all the other New Testament identifying marks of the same.

It is not a matter of who gets the glory. Christians know that God gets the glory, but as noted previously, it is only when the church does **what** Jesus says, in the **way** He says it and **for the reason(s)** He says it. **When things are done without addition, subtraction, or alteration is God glorified, and only then.** Remember the plea of those men in America of around 200 years ago who sought to be

Christians as the Bible defines that term—“We will call Bible things by Bible names and do Bible things in Bible ways.” Clearly many in the church today have lost the desire those men had.

Another attempt to justify CCDRE is to parallel it with an institution already accepted. In this case it is AGAPE of Nashville, TN, primarily a child care organization operated by members of the church of Christ. The reasoning goes something like the following, “As ‘Agape’ describes some brethren who take care of needy children, so CCDRE informs people that it is the church of Christ that is helping people who have suffered from disasters.” For “Agape” and CCDRE to be parallel “Agape” would have to be called something to the effect of “AGAPE CHURCHES OF CHRIST CHILD CARE, INC.” What proves too much proves nothing.

If CCDRE were under the oversight of a certain eldership, or it was the work of a certain congregation, they could easily and Scripturally be known as “Disaster Relief Fund—a work of the ABC Church of Christ and supported by churches of Christ and interested Christians.” That arrangement is Scriptural, and everyone who is properly educated in the New Testament’s teaching on such matters knows it is. However, those who started and organized CCDRE chose to do their work as a group of Christians. They chose not to be a work of a particular congregation of God’s people. Indeed, as far as I know with all other things being Scripturally equal (and I am assuming everything else about them is in harmony with the Scriptures), they cooperate as individual Christians in the work of benevolence just as *Contending For The Faith* is a work of individual Christians to propagate and defend the Gospel. But, *CFTF* is not a “Church of Christ Paper” any more than Tennessee Orphan Home is “Tennessee Church of Christ Orphan Home” or a university operated by brethren is “ABC Church of Christ University,” etc. Every one of these organizations must meet certain civil laws that pertain to such organizations and, as already proved, such conduct is simply a matter of expediency or necessity as in the case of complying with the teaching of Romans 13. What is so difficult to comprehend about the Bible’s teaching on these matters?

WHO DOES CCDRE FELLOWSHIP AND WHO FELLOWSHIPS CCDRE?

Does CCDRE seriously attempt to determine the faithfulness of the congregations and individual brethren who support them before they accept or reject said support in whatever form that support takes? Knowing the rank apostasy of many congregations and individual brethren in the nation in general and Nashville, Tennessee, in particular, how do the powers that be at CCDRE determine that they are not accepting support from churches and individual brethren who basically are believing and practicing the beliefs of David Lipscomb University concerning denominationalism, mechanical instrumental music in the worship, etc.? Does CCDRE extend and receive fellowship from those who believe and act as does Rubel Shelly concerning the church of Christ and others of his persuasion regarding the Gospel, as well as who is and who is not a Christian, and the church in her work, organization, and worship? In fact, what does the CCDRE board believe when it comes to the Biblical doctrine of fellowship, who is and who is not a Christian, who is and who is not faithful to the Lord, and so on?

WE ARE NOT TEACHING WHAT MUST BE TAUGHT

With all due respect, somebody has failed to study the issues herein set out and discussed as they should have studied them—maybe they have not studied them at all. When the colleges operated by the brethren gave up teaching sound doctrine, to a great extent, we could depend on the preacher training schools to provide the fundamental teaching necessary to refute the spurious doctrines that are designed by the devil to lead people away from “sound speech, that cannot be condemned” (Tit. 2:8). However, in recent years the preacher training schools have turned to the course of least resistance and begun their own incremental departure from the whole truth of the Gospel. They have decided to sit in judgment on what sins and false doctrine the church can tolerate and which ones must be opposed. As is the case every time people decide to pursue that false philosophy, they end up embracing more and more error as they enter through the wide gate into the broad way that leads to

destruction. They have begun the trip that the colleges, operated by the brethren, took about forty or fifty years ago. Thus, for the most part, such schools of preaching are a hindrance rather than a help to the cause of Christ in dealing with the error of such organizations as CCDRE.

The material presented many years ago in debate with the “antis” by such men as Guy N. Woods, G. K. Wallace, Thomas B. Warren, and a host of others, along with their sermons, articles, tracts, and books on various issues provide the necessary hermeneutical tools and other information that permit one to see through what the defenders of CCDRE have failed to see. Those who make an effort to defend them are without excuse. Although not the only thing, we may be sure that bad reasoning and/or ignorance of the Bible will always destroy efforts for the unity for which Christ prayed and Paul commanded (John 17:20-21; 1 Cor. 1:10). However, faithful Christians must continue to adhere to the truth of God’s Word on everything, whether we are many in number or not. Numbers have never determined what is right and what is wrong. In so many cases recorded in the Bible, “the few” have been the ones in the right while the majority of people have been in the wrong. So, whether we are few or many in number, let us embrace the truth of God’s Word on all things, and all will be well with our souls when life’s little day has run its course (Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58). “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). We are only doing well in God’s sight when we are doing only what is authorized by the New Testament, leaving undone what is not authorized, and what is expressly forbidden.

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SPECIAL MINISTERS

Tim Cozad

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INTRODUCTION

In John F. Kennedy's inaugural address, held on January 20, 1961, he told the American public: "Ask not what your country can do for you—ask what you can do for your country." Sadly, the mindset of many Americans is just the opposite these days, they are asking the country, i.e., the government, to do more and more for them so they have to do less and less for themselves. This same mindset is also found in the church of Christ and actually has been present for decades. Many Christians are less willing to ask the leaders of the Lord's church what work they can be a part of and much more willing to ask what the Lord's church can do for them. *Service* is defined as, "the occupation or function of serving; the work performed by one that serves; contribution to the welfare of others" (*Webster's*). Christians are to be servants of Christ: "If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will *my* Father honour" (John 12:26). Yet, many, by their own actions, have changed the meaning of "service" to "serve us." Possibly that is the reason why there are so many "special ministers" in the church of Christ these days.

Denominations have for many years used a plurality of special ministers to perform a host of duties. There are for example youth ministers, female ministers, senior ministers, associate ministers, ministers for the single crowd, ministers for the married members, ministers for the elderly, public relations ministers, involvement ministers, praise ministers, bus ministers, educational ministers, en-

tainment ministers, and even ministers of the parking lot. Not to be left behind is the church of Christ that has gotten into the denominational act of having special ministers to organize specific works of the congregation. Of course one understands that if the denominations are doing something, it should be incorporated into the Lord's church, for the denominations would never do anything that would be unscriptural. That last statement of course is sarcastic on this writer's part, but many churches of Christ are quick to ape everything the denominations are doing, no longer wanting to be distinctive, separate from the false religions. They have chosen to forget Paul's inspired statement: "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11).

Perhaps, any discussion on the use and misuse of *minister* should begin with the actual Biblical definition and notice some examples of how the term was applied in the first century.

BIBLICAL DEFINITION OF A MINISTER

We find the first recorded account of *minister* being used in the New Testament in Matthew 20:26. Ten of the disciples of Jesus were angry with James and John over their ambitions to be first; Jesus simply defused the situation by stating to them the importance of ministering and servitude:

But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many (20:25-28).

Unlike the Gentile rulers who exercised dominion and authority over their subjects (many times in a harsh and tyrannical way), Jesus' disciples would have a more humble role. *Minister* in verse 26 comes from the Greek word *diakonos* which means, "a servant, attendant, minister, deacon" (Vine 410). Robertson writes:

This word may come from *dia* and *konis* (dust), to raise a dust by one's hurry, and so to minister. It is a general word for servant and

is used in a variety of ways including the technical sense of our “deacon” in Phil. 1:1. But it more frequently is applied to ministers of the Gospel (1 Cor. 3:5). The way to be “first” (*prōtos*), says Jesus, is to be your “servant” (*doulos*), “bond-servant” (Matt. 20:27). This is a complete reversal of popular opinion then and now.

Jesus set the perfect example for His disciples of what a true ministry should be. He accurately summarized His life when He said that He came not to be ministered to but to minister (*diakoneo*). How then could His disciples do any less? Boles wrote, “Jesus showed himself greatest of all by the greatest service, greatest sufferings, and greatest sacrifices of all. He is the example of greatness to his disciples. Jesus gave his life ‘a ransom for many’” (406). In the Lord’s kingdom, greatness is measured not by one’s position in life, but by service to God and ministering to others.

The great apostle Paul was chosen by Jesus to be a “minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee” (Acts 26:16). *Huperetes* is the Greek word for “minister” in this passage and can be defined in a number of ways:

a. properly an under rower, subordinate rower. b. any one who serves with his hands; a servant; in the N. T. of the officers and attendants of magistrates as—of the officer who executes penalties... of the attendants of a king...my servants, retinue, the soldiers I should have if I were a king...of the servants or officers of the Sanhedrin...of the attendant of a synagogue...of any one ministering or rendering service...c. any one who aids another in any work; an assistant: of a preacher of the gospel (Thayer 641-42).

Paul was a willing underrower, a subordinate of the Christ to carry His Gospel to the Jew and especially to the Greek.

To open their eyes, *and* to turn *them* from darkness to light, and *from* the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me (Acts 26:18).

Another use of *minister* is found in Romans 13:6: Paul wrote, “For for this cause pay ye tribute also: for they are God’s ministers, attending continually upon this very thing.” Paul is discussing the

importance of Christians being “subject unto the higher powers” (13:1), i.e., the civil governments, even to the point of paying them tribute or taxes. *Minister* in verse six comes from the Greek *leitourgos*, which refers to “a subordinate public administrator, and in this sense applied to magistrates (Rom. 13:6). It is applied also to our Lord (Heb. 8:2) and to Paul in relation to Christ (Rom. 15:16)” (Easton).

This in no way is an exhaustive study of *minister* as it is found in the New Testament, but it gives one an understanding of how it is used Scripturally, whether a minister is a deacon of the church, a preacher of the Gospel, or a Christian laboring for the Lord—all are to be ministers and servants of the Christ. Nowhere in the New Testament do we read of a “special minister” as the denominations and some churches of Christ use the term, which begs the question, why use them?

THE DANGER OF SPECIAL TITLES

Most understand what *special* means, whether it is someone or something that is special, exceptional, better, and even greater than someone or something else. This seems to have always been a problem in the pages of the Bible and also in the religious world. An illustration of this would be the Pharisees in Jesus’ day who thought they were special, better, and even greater than the other Jews. Jesus warned of their superior attitude:

But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi. But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren (Mat. 23:5-8).

Diotrephes is another example, as he was one “who who loveth to have the preeminence among them” (3 John 9). *Preeminence* is from the Greek word *philoproteuo* which means, “to love to be pre-eminent, to strive to be first” (Vine 482). Jesus taught the exact opposite: “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall

humble himself shall be exalted” (Mat. 23:11-12). Paul would later write:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. 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. 2:3-8).

As Christians, we should strive to have the same attitude that Jesus had and displayed, one that was not arrogant, haughty, wanting to have the preeminence, but an attitude that was full of humility and servitude and sacrifice. Jesus said, “For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Luke 14:11).

Even with multiple warnings there are those who still love to have special titles, such as Reverend, Father, Parson, Priest, and Doctor because it places them in a special or superior class within a congregation. Even within the Lord’s church this can be a problem, whether we realize it or not. There are some who like to be called “Doctor so-and-so, instead of brother so-and-so,” for the obvious reason of wanting to be recognized as special or superior. Another example is the title of minister referring to the preacher of a congregation. Although seemingly harmless, it could give the idea that he is the only minister within that congregation. An example of that are brethren introducing the preacher to those who are visiting as “the minister of this congregation.” Hopefully, he is not the only minister of that congregation. Again, when one understands the Biblical definition of *minister* and how it was used, it does not refer only to the preacher of the Gospel. One brother stated:

The Bible does not give any record of separate “clergy” and “laity” classes. There was no distinction or preference made between those who preached the gospel and those who did not. Therefore, no titles of honor were given to anyone in the New Testament church.

All Christians are priests (1 Pet. 2:5). Christ is our High Priest (Heb. 4:14). Thus the concept of a “clergy” class (made up of those who preach the gospel) set above other Christians arose centuries after the New Testament was completed (Buchanan 25).

THE MISUSE OF SPECIAL MINISTERS

With what has previously been mentioned in this chapter, the question must be asked once again: Why do even churches of Christ have so many ministers that have so many special duties? The Scriptures clearly point out the organization of the Lord’s church with Christ as the head of the church (Eph. 1:22), elders and deacons (Phi. 1:1), evangelists (Eph. 4:11), and members or saints (Phi. 1:1). Is that not enough? Evidently not with many today. Why would that be the case? One reason could be the church wanting to be like the denominations around them, no longer wanting to be separate and distinct (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Another reason or excuse might be simple laziness within the body of Christ. What elder or preacher has not received a phone call from someone asking what kind of program do you have for my children? When the answer is given that the congregation has a Bible class for them to attend and worship services for them to take part in, it is not enough. One preacher wrote:

On several occasions in recent years I have had those who profess to be members of the Lord’s church to visit the congregation and ask, “What do you have to offer?” Parents want to know what you can offer them, their teenagers, and their toddlers. They would like for me to say, “We offer a most exciting entertainment and recreational package. There are church softball and bowling teams for the adults. We have a professional youth minister who is *well paid* to see that the youth are always on the go—ski trips, river floats, and camp-outs (Weir 2-3).

Too many parents want someone else to take care of their children for them—the school system does, why not the church? That has led to the misuse of youth ministers.

Youth Ministers

This writer has to admit he sees nothing wrong with young people having youth ministers. He himself had two youth ministers in

his life—one of them was called “Dad” while the other youth minister was called “Mom.” They never thought once or even twice about someone else taking over their responsibility to raise their children (Gen. 18:19; Deu. 6:7; Eph. 6:4), but that seems to be passé with many parents today. The responsibility for child rearing today is often left to someone other than the parents. It begins with child care for the very young, then the responsibility is passed on to the school system in this country, and even to the ever-expanding government to raise their children for them. Remember the mindset of many Americans today, “Ask not what you can do for your country—ask what your country can do for you.”

Today, many congregations employ youth ministers, and we are not talking about adults, but a young person who is still a novice being put in charge of the youth of a congregation. This *youth minister’s* job is to basically baby-sit them, to keep them busy in all forms of entertainment and recreation, with possibly, not always, but possibly a little Bible teaching involved. There is nothing wrong with young or old being involved in wholesome entertainment or recreation, but it is not the work of the church. Unfortunately, the mindset of many Christians today is, “Ask not what you can do for the Lord’s church—ask what the church can do for you.” Passing the responsibility of raising children to a youth minister is shirking the responsibility God gave to parents: “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4).

If that was not bad enough, it gets worse when one realizes that many of these youth ministers come from liberal colleges. One youth minister in Cheyenne, Wyoming, openly professed that he believed that Christians were also found in the denominations, not just in the church that Christ died for, but in a man-made church. Where did this very young man learn this, and was he passing it on to the youth of that congregation? Well, he probably was passing it on for many of the so-called Christian colleges are teaching such false doctrines to their students, and then the students graduating from such colleges teach it to the congregation they go to.

Talk about the fox in the hen house! Jesus warned, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves” (Mat. 7:15).

Another concern facing the Lord’s church is that many of the youth rallies that these youth ministers are taking the youth of the congregation to participate in are fellowshipping liberal congregations, false teachers, and many of these rallies are simply denominational in nature. It is up to the elders of the church to watch for these dangers. Lynn Parker wrote:

Elders should not be bashful in finding out the doctrinal stance of men who are to be scheduled to preach in a meeting before the congregation, and certainly elders would want to know who is speaking to our young people, and what is being taught at youth rallies, devotionals, and other similar meetings (4).

Leaving the spiritual welfare of the young people to a young person, a novice, a babe in Christ themselves, is not wise. The shepherds of the congregation are the elders, not a youth minister. As Paul wrote, “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood” (Acts 20:28).

Minister Over the Ministers

One supposes that when a congregation has too many ministers, you would need someone to be in charge of all of them, not the elders of the congregation, but a special minister in charge of the rest. Hard to believe that could ever be the case, but it has been the case. Harrell Davidson wrote of it:

We heard one Texas preacher say that the various preachers where he was the pulpit preacher met once each week. He recalled that they had a “youth minister and a singles minister, a bus minister, an involvement minister, and a tape minister.” He said, “They all answer to me and I answer to the elders.” So we have a preacher over other preachers! Give me one passage for such goings on! What these folk need is one man in that pulpit preaching the Word and the rest will take care of itself. It took care of the matter in New Testament time. Is the Word any less powerful today? (104).

In Paul's letter to the Philippians, he begins with his usual greeting:

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ (Phi. 1:1).

A salutation was given to the saints or members along with the bishops/elders and deacons of that congregation. For some reason he forgot to mention the minister of the ministers. No, Paul did not forget to mention a minister of the ministers, for the Lord's church did not have any.

There are many more special ministers that could be mentioned in this section; suffice it to say it could fill up the entire book, but there is not enough room, and the instructions found in God's Word should be enough. God's Word is enough for the faithful child of God.

ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH

I mentioned previously how the Lord's church is to be organized. Christ is the head of the church followed by the elders and deacons of a congregation. Elders have a great task to perform in overseeing and feeding the flock of God (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2); watching over the saints of the congregation to keep the church pure. Members are to follow their faithful guidance:

Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that *is* unprofitable for you (Heb. 13:17).

The deacons of a congregation are also to be involved in the work of the church. One important task of the deacons would be carrying out the wishes of the eldership. One well remembers Moses setting up rulers to judge the people thereby helping him with his work so he would not be overburdened (Exo. 18:19-26). Recorded in Acts 6 is the event of the apostles setting up men to help the Grecian widows who were neglected. Seven men were chosen of "honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over

this business” (6:3). This was done so the apostles could continue with their work: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (6:4). Deacons are to be used in a similar way in the work of the church when the elders delegate a certain task to be performed. In that sense, deacons really are special ministers of a congregation. *Deacon* coming from the Greek *diakonos* refers to an attendant, minister or servant. The work they perform may seem a thankless job, but elderships and members alike are thankful for hard-working deacons and the work they perform.

CONCLUSION

The need for special ministers in the Lord’s church is simply a by-product of the denominations and their influence on the church. Actually, it is nothing more than brethren being more carnal in nature and less spiritual. When all the members of the church get involved with the work of the church, there is no need for having a multitude of special ministers. When Paul wrote, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58), he was not referring to just the elders, deacons, and preachers, but to all Christians. All members should have the attitude of being ministers or servants, not the carnal attitude of being served or ministered.

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GYMNASIUMS ("FAMILY LIFE CENTERS")

Tim Cozad

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INTRODUCTION

Innovation brings to mind something that is new, something that never was tried before, a change, in other words. In the sporting world change is usually good, whether it is creating a new strategy to score more points or establishing a different defense to hinder the scoring of points by one's opponent. This is also true in the business world and pretty much in every field of endeavor. Think of the wonderful improvements in the car industry, air travel, heating and cooling, and even the common appliances in the home. Change, in so many areas and in so many ways, is beneficial to mankind and as the saying goes, change is inevitable.

Nevertheless, changes or innovations that have been made in these areas just mentioned came about because these areas could be improved upon and needed to be improved upon to enhance the quality of life. However, one normally would not think of trying to improve upon something that cannot be improved upon, something that already is perfect, complete, flawless, or faultless. One such area is God's Holy Word.

The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul: The testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple (Psa.19:7).

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).

With God's Word being perfect or complete, it has the power to make one a man of God or a Christian, complete, and to thoroughly furnish him or equip him for all good works.

Why, then, would man endeavor to improve upon the Creator's Word, improve upon what cannot be improved upon? Does he really believe he knows better than God what is right for man, or is it simply he thinks he knows more than God? In either case man is wrong and sins when he tampers with God's Word (Deu. 4:2; Pro. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19). Strong warnings abound throughout the Scriptures admonishing man not to tamper with God's Word, and yet many, for thousands of years, have not heeded the warnings and brought in ungodly innovations. Nadab and Abihu brought strange or unauthorized fire into the worship (Lev. 10:1), the Jews brought in their traditions that made God's Word of no effect (Mat. 15:6), and today man brings in more modern innovations like the mechanical instrument of music or a gymnasium. Yes, many today continue to pervert the Gospel of Christ, but do so to their own destruction (Gal. 1:6-9). One such area where man has made damnable innovations into God's Word is in the area of church growth. The number of members attending in the Catholic Church, the denominations, and even the Lord's church (the church of Christ) has been dwindling for many years.

CHURCHES DWINDLING NUMBERS

For years the Lord's church has lamented the dwindling attendance in its worship services and Bible classes. Many congregations that have remained faithful to the Word of God are not only small in number but grey-headed as well. This situation is not only prominent in the church of Christ but in the false religions as well, as a number of studies can attest. In a September 30, 2011 article, Adelle M. Banks cited a number of statistics detailing not only the decline of attendance in America, but the aging of congregations. Some of the statistics that were mentioned:

1. American congregations have grown less healthy in the past decade, with fewer people in the pews and aging memberships, according to a new Hartford Seminary Study.

2. In the first decade of the 21st century, the median worship attendance at a typical congregation decreased, from 130 to 108.

3. The percentage of congregations with average weekend worship attendance of 100 or fewer inched up from 42 percent to 49 percent over the decade. More than a quarter of congregations had 50 or fewer people attending in 2010.

4. In many cases, congregations are seeing not only fewer people in their pews but older ones. At least one-third of members in more than half of mainline Protestant congregations are 65 or older.

Not only are congregations declining in attendance, but the number of individuals who are not affiliated with any religion is on the rise, according to another survey conducted in 2008. It stated:

The survey finds that the number of people who say they are unaffiliated with any particular faith today (16.1%) is more than double the number who say they were not affiliated with any particular religion as children. Among Americans ages 18-29, one-in-four say they are not currently affiliated with any particular religion ("U.S. Religious").

Christians of course know, without the help of surveys, that there has been a slow, but steady decline in religion for many years in this country. Not only is it difficult to reach the masses with the Word of God, but also the members of the Lord's church itself. Paul warned Timothy,

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

Sadly, many in the Lord's church, in trying to increase the attendance and to hold on to its own members, have turned to unscriptural innovations, many of which have come from the denominations. Increasingly, churches of Christ have turned to gymnasiums or as they like to refer to them, Family Life Centers, in an attempt to bring in new members and to keep its members from leaving, especially the young people. There was a time when the average

church of Christ believed: “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). Sadly the average congregation no longer believes in those words but have instead turned to fables and gymnasiums.

THE GYMNASIUM INNOVATION

For a number of years, denominations have been building large gymnasiums and referring to them as Family Life Centers. Truly, one can understand why they would want to call the building a Family Life Center instead of a gymnasium, but is that a fair description of the building? The old adage that you can “put lipstick on a pig, but it is still a pig” seems to ring true here as well. One can call a building a Family Life Center, but when you have a basketball court, a weight room, and a volleyball court, it is a gymnasium. Webster defines a gymnasium as: “a large room used for various indoor sports (as basketball or boxing) and usu. equipped with gymnastic apparatus.” Color this writer skeptical, but that sounds like one of their Family Life Centers. Also, what is interesting was the motive behind building these gymnasiums; it was not based upon the spiritual needs of the congregation, but it was based upon meeting the felt needs, the physical needs of their congregations. To their way of thinking, it would be a place for members to exercise, a roomier place to gather for their “Fall Festivals” and graduations; it was also a way to bring in visitors by way of exercise and entertainment. In spiritual matters, when man begins to think of doing things his way instead of God’s way, spiritual death is right around the corner. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Pro. 14:12; 16:25).

As one can imagine, the construction of these gymnasiums are very expensive; they can range from hundreds of thousands of dollars to more than a million dollars. A question should be posed at this point, where is the authority in God’s Word to build such a building for exercise and entertainment (Col. 3:17)? There is no authority, but neither is there authority for denominations to exist. Jesus stated, “Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not

planted, shall be rooted up" (Mat. 15:13). There is only one church that Jesus built, and that church was His (16:18), and it still holds true that there is only one body, not bodies (Eph. 4:4). That church today, which continues to follow Jesus' teachings without addition or subtraction (Rev. 22:18-19) and continues to have a "thus saith the Lord" for everything that is taught and practiced (Col. 3:17), is named after the Christ Himself and simply known as the church of Christ (Rom. 16:16).

Sadly, it has been proven to be true over the years that whenever the denominations would add a new innovation to keep or add new members to their rosters, it was and still is the case that many churches of Christ would follow suit whether or not these innovations were Scriptural (Col. 3:17). Yet, it was not that long ago that the Lord's church would not have thought twice about building a gymnasium, but that is no longer true, for many have. Brother Dub McClish lamented on this phenomenon:

My first work out of college in 1959 was to serve as one of the preachers with a large congregation. A nearby Methodist Church building had a gymnasium in its basement. One could have tortured the elders where I worked, and they would not have built such a building, correctly understanding there was no way to justify such use of the Lord's money. A few years ago that same congregation built its own gymnasium (5).

The Church of Christ is supposed to be separate from the world as Paul taught:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you (2 Cor. 6:14-17).

In the Restoration period of this country, many came out of the world and came out of denominations by obeying the simple Gospel of Christ instead of the doctrines of men. Today, many churches of Christ need to be restored all over again for they have wanted to be like the denominations around them instead of being separate. A number of years ago Tim Smith wrote:

We find in our day that many in the church would like to treat the church like a denomination. It seems as though they see no difference between that institution for which Jesus bled and died and some imposter who has set itself up in competition with the one of the Bible. We read of brethren setting up “missionary societies” like those that divided the brotherhood in the 1800s. We hear of “our preachers” joining “ministerial alliances” and speaking at and attending denominational gatherings. We read of the church (?) building gymnasiums and ball fields and joining sectarian sports leagues as though this were the work of the church. Have we reached a point where we really think that the precious blood of Jesus poured forth from His veins at Golgotha so that we may play games and have a big old time? (1).

Ungodly innovations have been the destruction of many congregations over the years and continues to be the case, as this lectureship points out. Too many churches of Christ today have no concept of the authority of the Scriptures and clearly have no idea what the real work of the church is, and, sadly, they do not want to know. Ignorance of God’s Word, willful or otherwise, has never been an excuse, as Hosea noted:

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: Because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: Seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children (4:6).

Paul would later write of that great and terrible Day of Judgment when the Lord would return

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (2 The. 1:8-9).

Brethren are being led astray, albeit willingly, by blind leaders, and the outcome will be as Jesus taught of the Pharisees and their followers: "Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch" (Mat. 15:14). They are like Israel of old, "In those days *there was* no king in Israel: every man did *that which was* right in his own eyes" (Jud. 21:25). There was a king over Israel at that time, Jehovah; they just chose not to accept Him and did what they wanted to do as so many Christians do today. When it comes to the authority of the Scriptures and the work of the church, Christians must have the attitude of Jeremiah who exclaimed, "O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *It is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23).

THE WORK OF THE LORD'S CHURCH

When one studies the twenty-seven books that make up the New Testament, it becomes very evident what is the work of the Lord's church. The work of the church as established in the Scriptures is that of saving souls, even as Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). This work is accomplished through edification or building up the saints (Eph. 4:11-16), benevolence or helping those in need (Gal. 6:10; Jam. 1:27), and in the preaching of the Gospel of Christ (Mat. 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:47). *Work* instead of "entertainment" or "recreation" is being used in this section for a reason. Work brings to mind exactly what it should bring to mind: exertion, labor, toil, a task that is expected to be performed. Entertainment or recreation, on the other hand, is the complete opposite of work and gives the idea of diverting one's attention away from work to being amused or as they say in the military, "R&R," which stands for "Rest and Relaxation." There is nothing inherently wrong with wholesome entertainment or recreation, but it is not a work of the Lord's church, as this writer's father still proclaims, "The Lord's church is not in the entertainment business." Amen!

Sadly, many who call themselves Christians have gone whole hog into the entertainment and recreation business. Brother B. C. Goodpasture warned of this danger more than sixty years ago:

For the church to turn aside from its divine work to furnish amusement and recreation is to pervert its mission. It is to degrade its mission. Amusement and recreation should stem from the home rather than the church. The church, like Nehemiah, has a great work to do; and it should not come down on the plains of Ono to amuse and entertain. As the church turns its attention to amusement and recreation, it will be shorn of its power as Samson was when his hair was cut. Only as the church becomes worldly; as it pillows its head on the lap of Delilah; will it want to turn from its wanted course to relatively unimportant matters. Imagine Paul selecting and training a group of brethren to compete in the Isthmian games! Of his work at Corinth he said: "For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (484).

Again, it simply comes down to Biblical authority (Col. 3:17) and whether man is willing to submit to God's authority. Too many today, and, yes, many brethren, will not submit themselves to God's authority and they demonstrate that "stiffnecked and rebellious" attitude by their actions, their deeds, their practices which include the ungodly innovations recorded in this book. When will brethren learn from the past rebellious attitudes of those who have come before? God admonished Judah: "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16). One can almost feel the steadfast refusal to obey in their words, the arrogance they demonstrated, and even the open animosity toward God and His Word. In the following verse (6:17), God admonished them to hearken to the watchmen or prophets He sent to them, but again notice the total refusal they had toward those wise admonitions: "We will not hearken." Judah, of course, was destroyed for their wicked and rebellious attitude toward God's Word. Will men learn? Will the Lord's church learn?

It is the height of arrogance and animosity toward God when the church of Christ builds a gymnasium and/or a baseball field out of

the church treasury? Where is the authority? None! Oh, they have excuses for doing these things, and some will say good intentions, but as the old saying goes, "The road to hell is paved with good intentions." When brethren take one dollar, much less a million, out of the church treasury to build a gymnasium for recreation and entertainment purposes, they sin and, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). The contribution is supposed to be used to accomplish the work of the church (1 Cor. 16:1-2), not recreation and entertainment. That work is spreading the precious Gospel of Christ to the world. Even the benevolent activity of the church is to be designed for the saving of souls. Instead of spending huge amounts of money on a gymnasium, why not use those funds in spreading the Good News of Christ throughout the world as the church at Philippi did with Paul (Phi. 4:10-18).

The church in the first century grew because the preaching of the cross, not by building gymnasiums, not through entertaining its members or the lost. The church grew by the power inherent in the Word of God. Paul did not come to the Corinthians with a gymnasium, but with the Gospel of Christ.

And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified (1 Cor. 2:1-2).

THE POWER OF GOD UNTO SALVATION

What is the true drawing power that encourages people to obey the Gospel of Christ and then remain faithful to it? One thing that it is not is a gymnasium or some other ungodly innovation. When a congregation tries to appeal to the physical needs and wants of man to trick them into attending, that congregation will have to continue with those ungodly innovations to keep those individuals attending, or they will leave. A case in point are the individuals who followed Jesus, not for His teaching, but for their own physical needs, as Jesus told them:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed (John 6:26-27).

Once again the question is asked: What is the true drawing power that encourages people to obey the Gospel of Christ and then remain faithful to it? It is, of course, the Gospel of Christ itself. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). The power of God unto salvation is the Gospel, and it is the only power by which man can be saved. Paul wrote, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). Too many, including brethren, are ashamed of the Gospel. They believe the preaching of the Gospel is foolishness; therefore, they reason man does not need it anymore. However, God's wisdom is greater than man's:

Where *is* the wise? where *is* the scribe? where *is* the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:20-24).

It is the Gospel of Christ that pricks a man's heart (Acts 2:37) and encourages him to ask, "What must I do to be saved?" (16:30). It is the Scriptures that tell him to believe in Jesus as the Son of God (John 8:24), to repent of his sins (Acts 17:30), to confess Jesus as the Son of God (8:37), and to be baptized for the remission of his sins (2:38). When the individual obeys God's plan of salvation, the Lord Himself will add the saved one to His church (2:47). Then they are to remain faithful to the Gospel call (1 Cor. 15:58).

CONCLUSION

Oh, how foolish of man to believe he knows better than God what man needs, and what will save man. Solomon stated, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, But the end thereof *are* the ways of death" (Pro. 14:12; 16:25). It is not what seems right, e.g., gymnasiums, but what is right according to God's Holy Word. There is no authority in God's Word for a congregation to build a gymnasium to induce man to attend. The Bible tells us what is to be the drawing power to save souls, and that is the Gospel of Christ (Mark 16:15-16). Anything else is unauthorized and therefore a sin; it will not save.

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KITCHENS IN THE BUILDING?

Jess Whitlock

Jess Whitlock grew up in Duncan, Oklahoma. He attended Oklahoma Christian College, Preston Road School of Preaching (under direction of the late Eldred Stevens). He also audited Elk City School of Preaching (W. R. Craig) and Westside School of Preaching (J. T. Marlin). He began preaching fulltime in 1970, serving congregations in Oklahoma and Texas. He has done radio work, debates, and 33 years in Christian camps. He has had articles in books, periodicals, and church bulletins. Jess is currently working with the Evant Church of Christ in Evant, Texas.

Jess and Terry were married in 2002. They have three daughters and four grandchildren.

One of my dad's favorite stories concerned a men's business meeting down at the Baptist church. One brother always objected to everything suggested. At one of the meetings, one brother said that several sisters wanted to buy a chandelier for the building. This man objected on three grounds: (1) he was sure that it would cost too much money, (2) he did not think the secretary could spell "chandelier," and (3) he did not think that they had anyone in the congregation who knew how to play one!

Whenever I hear someone say that they object to a congregation having a kitchen in the church building, I do not know why, but that story comes to my mind!

Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, has this under "the churches of Christ (non-institutional)":

they oppose the following practices...A church kitchen or "fellowship hall," as well as other forms of church-sponsored social activity...they say the language of 1 Corinthians 11:22-34 forbids the eating of a common meal as a work of the church.

Whoever authored the article gave the wrong context; it must include verses 17-34, with emphasis on verse 22!

Did you notice that the description said 1 Corinthians 11 "**forbids** the eating of a common meal as a work of the church?" (emphasis added). That is noteworthy since Acts 2:46 says, "And day

by day, continuing steadfastly with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread **at home**, they took their **food** with gladness and singleness of heart.”

The NASB has this: “they were taking their **meals** together with gladness and sincerity of heart.” The ASV (1901) and the NKJV both read, “food,” while the KJV reads “meat.” These fellowship meals are called “love feasts” in Jude 12. “The ‘love-feasts’ were meals common to the apostolic age at which the saints met from social, charitable, and humanitarian reasons” (Woods 395). Luke records, “Saul laid waste the **church**, entering into every **house**” (Acts 8:3). In 2 Timothy 4:19, Paul salutes “Prisca and Aquila... all the churches of the Gentiles...and the **church** that is in their **house**” (cf. Rom. 16:4; 1 Cor. 16:19). Paul also states, “Salute the brethren that are in Laodicea, and Nymphas, and the **church** that is in their **house**” (Col. 4:15). Over and over we are reminded that the early brethren frequently met in homes to worship God. The early church knew nothing of “church buildings” until the fourth century after Acts 2. Brother Dub McClish explains that

the concept of the church building evolved. By A.D. 397, the Council of Laodicea handed down a “church law” forbidding any to eat or spread tables “in the house of God” (i.e., the church building). Those today who oppose eating in the church building are not imitating the **apostolic** church, but the **apostate** church.

Brother Gary Summers is correct: “The complaint comes from a misinterpretation in 1 Corinthians 11:22, where Paul says, ‘What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?’” (*Spiritual Perspectives*).

CONSIDER THIS: A LOOK AT 1 CORINTHIANS 11

The subject matter of this context is the Lord’s Supper. Where did Christ go to institute His Supper?

Now on the first *day* of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying, **Where** wilt thou that we make ready for thee to eat the passover? And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Teacher saith, My time is at hand; I keep the passover at thy **house** with my disciples (Mat. 26:17-18).

In Luke 22:7ff the disciples are making ready to observe the Passover with Christ. Jesus said to them, “Behold, when ye are entered into the city, there shall meet you a man bearing a pitcher of water; follow him into the house whereinto he goeth” (22:10).

The very institution of the Lord’s Supper by the Lord Himself took place in a “house.” How can anyone **forbid** what the Lord and His disciples did? Paul penned in 1 Timothy 4:1-3 that, in the coming apostasy, certain ones would be “forbidding to marry, and command to abstain from meats.” So this business of “forbidding” what God has allowed and making commands (laws) where God has made none is really nothing new!

In 1 Corinthians 11:17-21 the apostle Paul clearly condemns the brethren at Corinth. They came together upon the first day of the week, as commanded (Acts 20:7). They came together to “break bread.” In Acts 20:8-10 notice the lights (lamps). Sunday was just another day of work to slaves: so it is likely that the Sunday service started at 6:00 in the evening.

Many Christians were slaves (1 Cor. 7:21-22; Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22; 1 Tim. 6:1; etc.). Eutychus fell asleep in this upper room window. The Greek word for *sleep* gives us our English word *hypnosis*. Eutychus was raised from death by the apostle Paul. They went back to the upper room (where they had worshipped earlier), and broke bread and ate (it is my conviction this was a common meal in the same place where worship had occurred earlier). They surely did not observe the Lord’s Supper twice on the same night. (Acts 2:42, 46 we have it first referring to the Supper of the Lord; then the next time it is a fellowship meal.)

In 1 Corinthians 11, brethren came together to observe the Lord’s Supper. However, there was something very wrong about what happened in Corinth. In a sermon outline, brother Dub Mowery noted three major errors addressed by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11: (1) Partaking of a common meal with the Lord’s Supper; (2) Some were selfish and not sharing their food; and (3) They failed to understand the nature and purpose of the Lord’s Supper. The problem in Corinth was that those brethren were attempting to combine a

common meal and the Supper of the Lord. In every congregation that I have ever attended, the Lord's Supper is observed during the hour of worship. When there is a fellowship dinner (love-feast), that time of sharing food together always takes place at some other time. Anybody who would rip 1 Corinthians 11:22 out of the context to argue against a church having a kitchen in the building is mishandling the text.

The abuse is identified by Paul:

When therefore ye assemble yourselves together, it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper: for in your eating each one taketh before *other* his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken (11:20-21).

At the Evant Church of Christ, if anyone leaves one of our fellowship meals hungry, he/she can only blame themselves. So, the problem that Paul dealt with in this context does not exist today! "What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not" (11:22).

Before anyone sets up a straw man from this verse against either a kitchen or a love-feast among brethren, allow us to ask a question or two. What, have ye not a refrigerator, bathrooms, running water, carpet or tile, lights, central heat and air? Almost every home of the brethren I have visited will contain all of those things. Paul did include drinking as well as eating in this context. If one cannot eat in the church building, what will you do with the mother feeding her baby crackers? What about a wedding shower or funeral meal? The late brother J.T. Marlin and I once visited a preacher of this persuasion in his office. When we walked in he was having a sack lunch in the building! That was a most interesting conversation that followed! J.T. commented, "It is mighty hard to be consistent with error!" If one is consistent, the only place to eat is your home. That eliminates restaurants, picnics, civic, and garden clubs. Plan on a short vacation, too!

From the erudite pen of Gary Summers:

When Paul visited Troas...the brethren met together to break bread (observe the Lord's Supper). Yet, he partook of a common meal while meeting with the church also (Acts 20:11) (*Spiritual Perspectives*).

Guy N. Woods observed:

These feasts [love-feasts—JW] are not to be identified in any way with the Lord's Supper; indeed when this supper was corrupted into such a meal, it occasioned a sharp rebuke from Paul (1 Cor. 11:17-34) (395).

CONSIDER THIS: A LOOK AT EXPEDIENCY

“All things are lawful for me; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful for me; but I will not be brought under the power of any” (1 Cor. 6:12). Again Paul writes, “All things are lawful; but not all things are expedient. All things are lawful; but not all things edify” (10:23). In the very following chapter Paul deals with the disorder surrounding the Lord's Table! Twice Paul wrote “all things are lawful.” Does that apply to stealing, drunkenness, and fornication? Not at all! The “all things are lawful” must apply to the category which he addresses. We know that God commands men to be baptized to be saved. For men to sprinkle and call it *baptism* is not an expedient. Why not? It is a violation of God's Law (Rom. 6:3-4; Col. 2:12). To obey God's law in immersion, a baptistery becomes an expedient. Nothing can be an expedient that is not first lawful.

We cannot set aside the authority of God's Word and deal with expediency, which indeed deals with those areas where God has spoken.

We have God's command to sing (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). Human judgment allows us the use of hymn books, printed papers, or PowerPoint presentations. An assembly on the first day of the week (Acts 2:42; 20:7) requires a place to meet. It may be a rented storefront, a house, a brush arbor, or a building. The command allows the expedient. Giving to God is commanded (1 Cor. 16:1-2). This requires some kind of container for the collection. Let us be careful in this arena. Do not confuse expediency with authority. First, we

must have God's authority; is it lawful? Then, we are ready to move into the realm of expediency.

We have noted numerous examples of New Testament Christians coming together in the first century to have meals together. Inspired writers refer to these as "love-feasts." We have seen that quite frequently these gatherings took place in the homes of Christians. We also noted that often they took place in the same area where worship had taken place earlier. Entire lectureship books have been written dealing with the subject of Christian Fellowship, but we must first and foremost have authority. The expediency enters into the realm of human judgment. Let us not attempt to change a church house into the Holy Temple of the first century (which it was—Mat. 24:15; Acts 6:13; 21:28). We simply must refrain from calling our church houses, meeting houses, or church buildings as the "church." When will my brethren learn that the church building is not "holy ground"? That which transpires therein, in worship, is holy!

CONSIDER THIS: ANOTHER BROTHERHOOD ISSUE?

Congregations of the Lord's people today must be made to understand that Biblical **unity** can never be attained as long as men attempt to justify division in the body of Christ by placing their trust in man-made doctrines and man-made laws rather than the infallible and inerrant Word of God! In Psalm 80:6 we read, "Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbors; And our enemies laugh among themselves." Look at the manifold divisions among the people of the Lord today. Do we really need to continue to add to this list? The religious world already mocks and ridicules the Truth simply because of our myriad disagreements and divisions. In John 17:20ff, our Lord prayed for unity among His followers. Certainly, we can see that Christ approves of unity and disapproves division among His body, which is His church! Paul warned, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another" (Gal. 5:15). The prophet Amos queried, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3—KJV).

Let us ever realize that when any brother makes binding on others his personal convictions as law, there will be factions (Rom. 2:8; 1 Cor. 11:19; 2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:20; Phi. 1:17). Also, when men treat matters of faith as optional (or mere personal opinion), there will be division (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 1:10; 11:18; Gal. 5:20). Therefore, we must distinguish between that which is optional and that which is obligatory!

Matters of faith were determined more than 2,000 years ago and are contained in the pages of Holy Writ (2 Tim. 3:16-17). It is just as sinful for a brother to attempt to legislate a law where God has made no law as it is to violate any of God's laws revealed in the New Testament.

Brethren, even elders do not have the authority to make laws in the sense that God has given us His law (Jam. 4:12). Brethren, even elders have no authority to make an obligatory matter to be optional, nor to make an optional matter obligatory! None of us has the right to add to, take from, or to change God's Divine Word (Deu. 4:2; Pro. 30:6; Gal. 1:8-9; Rev. 22:18-19).

Let us respect Bible authority in all areas. Let us never allow what God has condemned, and let us not condemn that which God allows! In 1 Timothy 4:1-3, the apostle Paul warns of a coming apostasy. Paul has clearly taught that one has the right to marry or to remain unmarried (1 Cor. 7:7-9) and that it is right to eat meat and not to eat meat (8:7-13). With his pen of divine inspiration, Paul tells of certain ones who would **forbid** marriage and who **commanded** to **abstain** from certain meats. Thereby, these apostates condemned what God had allowed and made laws where God had made no law! There are *lawmakers* today who cannot tell what to do in certain optional areas; but they can tell others quite forcefully **what not to do!**

Man is out of his place when he attempts to legislate in areas where God has not spoken. We have no right to go "beyond the things which are **written**" (4:6). Man dares not to speak for God (Deu. 4:2). Where the Word of God is silent, man must remain silent (Heb. 7:14). Let us reverently respect what God has said, and

respect what God has **not** said! Failure to do so inevitably results in “factions” and “divisions.”

Factions

Paul wrote, “lest by any means *there should be* strife, jealousy, wraths, factions” (2 Cor. 12:20). In the works of the flesh Paul includes: “strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions” (Gal. 5:20). Vine says of *eritheias*: “Denotes ambition, self-seeking, rivalry...it is derived not from *eris*, (strife) but from *erithos*, ‘a hireling’; hence the meaning of ‘seeking to win followers’...‘faction is the fruit of jealousy’” (220-221). Have you ever seen a brother politicking for the office of an elder? If so, then you have seen *eritheias*! In Titus 3:10 we are commanded: “A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse [avoid].” A man may know much of the Truth, and still be counted as a factious man. Let us avoid all such men.

Divisions

“I hear that divisions exist among you” (1 Cor. 11:18). Renn says:

schisma, a noun found eight times denoting “division” in the sense of “dispute, argument”...Paul exhorts the Corinthian congregation not to engage in “factional arguments or disputes” in 1 Cor. 1:10; 11:18; 12:25 (294).

It is not uncommon for division to follow factions, for factions to follow jealousies, and jealousies to follow after strife.

Again, Renn says, “*dichostasia*, a noun found in two places referring to ‘divisions’ in the sense of ‘quarreling, dissension’ in Rom. 16:17; Gal. 5:20” (294).

There are numerous Scriptures where we find two common words, “among you” in connection with factions and divisions in the Lord’s church. Let your fingers do the walkin’ and let your Bible do the talkin’. Turn to Acts 20:29-30, 1 Corinthians 11:18-19, and 2 Peter 2:1-2.

Acts 20:29—“after my departing **grievous wolves...among you**”

1 Corinthians 11:18—“I hear that **divisions** exist **among you**”

2 Peter 2:1—“there arose **false prophets** also **among the people**”

Acts 20:29—“enter in **among you**, not **sparing the flock**”

1 Corinthians 11:19—“there must also be **factions among you**” (heresies)

2 Peter 2:1—“as **among you**...there shall be **false teachers**”

Acts 20:30—“**among your own selves**...speaking **perverse things**”

In 2 Peter 2:2, we learn, “many shall follow their lascivious doings; by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be evil spoken of.” There were those false teachers of the first century that denied the Lord’s deity (1 John 4:15), and there were those who denied the Lord’s humanity (4:2). Brother Guy N. Woods wrote:

Reference to denying the Lord by Peter is significant, in the light of his own previous conduct...when Peter denied his Lord, the price of redemption had not been paid...the “way of Truth” was evil spoken of, i.e., reviled, blasphemed (164).

CONSIDER THIS: IN CLOSING

Surely, we can see the correlation between *among you* and the false prophets, the false teachers, and those who cause factions and divisions among the people of the Lord. Most of the time churches are disrupted from within and not from without. Whenever the “way of Truth” is evil spoken of today, nine times out of four it results because of factions and divisions among the Lord’s church!

Paul wrote, “For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you” (1 Cor. 11:19). Why does Paul say that factions **must** be “among you”? He says the reason is that the **approved** may be manifest “among you.” A brother is either approved of God or he is unapproved of God (2 Tim. 2:15). The approved will stand four-square with the Truth and against any departure from God’s Word. William Kirkpatrick asked in the old hymn, “Who Will Follow Jesus?”

Who will follow Jesus? Who will make reply, “I am on the Lord’s side; Master here am I”? Who will follow Jesus? Who will make reply, “I am on the Lord’s side; Master, here am I”?

Numerous times I heard the late brother W. S. Boyett challenge from the pulpit in closing remarks:

I had rather have been the soldier that drove the nails through the Savior’s hands, or the soldier who pierced the Savior’s side with that spear, than to be the brother who forced his personal opinions to cause division in the body of Christ...in any congregation of the Lord’s people.

Let the congregation say, “Amen!”

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DEDICATING BABIES

Danny Douglas

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This study will be devoted to the religious practice of “dedicating babies.” Under question will be whether or not Baby Dedication Ceremonies are necessary, and also, whether or not they are even Scriptural, in the light of Bible teaching.

WHAT ARE BABY DEDICATIONS?

While it is perfectly in order for the Lord’s people to announce the arrival of a new baby and to include the new child and his/her parents in the public prayers of the congregation, Baby Dedication Ceremonies go beyond that, as we shall show. This is a ceremony in which parents supposedly are dedicating their new infants unto God. The following information is presented from a denominational point of view as to the nature of these ceremonies on a website called, *gotquestions.org*:

In the majority of Protestant denominations that practice it, child Dedication is a symbolic ceremony undertaken by Christian parents soon after the birth of a child. Some churches perform these ceremonies en masse and have several couples and children participating at the same time. The rite is intended to be a public statement by the parents that they will train their children in the Christian faith and seek to instill that faith in them. The congregation often responds through responsive reading or some other method to affirm that they, as a church family, will also seek to encourage

the parents to bring up the child in the faith. There is no implied salvation in the ceremony, and it varies from church to church.

The example of Hannah dedicating Samuel to the Lord and that of Mary and Joseph presenting Jesus to God in the Temple are given as the rationale for Baby Dedications on the website: *voices.yahoo.com*:

That belief is the foundation of dedicating one's baby to God to receive blessing and guidance in rearing the child. The Old Testament reference of 1 Samuel 1:27-28 is often cited as a reference for baby dedication. In that portion of the scriptures, Hannah, in thanksgiving and appreciation of God answering her prayer to bear a child, vowed to lend her son, Samuel, back to God as long as he lived. A New Testament reference in Luke 2:21-22 describes Mary and Joseph going to Jerusalem to present Jesus to God.

While the example of Hannah's commitment to the Lord is indeed a worthy one, modern day Baby Dedications can in no way be paralleled to the action of this godly mother. For one thing, Hannah vowed to give her man-child to the Lord all the days of his life:

And she vowed a vow, and said, O LORD of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the LORD all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head (1 Sam. 1:11).

When Samuel finally arrived she did this very thing:

But Hannah went not up; for she said unto her husband, *I will not go up* until the child be weaned, and *then* I will bring him, that he may appear before the LORD, and there abide for ever... And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the LORD in Shiloh: and the child *was* young. And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. And she said, Oh my lord, *as* thy soul liveth, my lord, I *am* the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD hath given me my petition which I asked of him: Therefore also I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the LORD. And he worshipped the LORD there (1:22, 24-28).

Those involved in Baby Dedications do not give their children over to the care of a leader or leaders in the church. Thus, they are not following what Hannah did in detail. Today, if we would follow the example of Hannah, we should set a godly example before our children, and thoroughly teach them the Word of God. Included in this, would be an example by parents of commitment to Christ and sacrificial living unto Him. Simply having a Baby Dedication ceremony does not make parents like Hannah.

Furthermore, when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to the Temple to “present Him to the Lord,” this was in keeping with the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:1-8; Exo. 13:1-15). Today, we are not under the Old Law, under which both Jesus and Samuel were born, but we are bound under the New Testament (Covenant) of Christ, which is the Law of Christ (Heb. 7:22; 13:20-21; Mat. 26:28; Heb. 8:6-13; Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14; Rom. 7:1-4; 8:1-2; 1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:2; Jam. 1:25). To go back to the Law of Moses, for the purpose of introducing a religious ceremony into the church today, is indeed an unscriptural innovation.

Oh, how many members of the church today want to imitate the denominations! They are like Israel of old, who said to the godly Samuel: “now make us a king to judge us like all the nations” (1 Sam. 8:5). They wanted to be like the **nations** and many in the church want to like the **denominations**! It is noteworthy that churches of Christ who have adopted this practice basically follow the same format as the denominations. For example, the Central Church of Christ in Amarillo, Texas, on their website, presents the following format for their Baby Dedications.

Central Church of Christ (Amarillo, Texas) Baby Dedication

Minister: By virtue of your new life in Christ and the new lives you now hold in your hands, it is appropriate today to recommit yourselves to our Lord.

Parents: By the work of Christ, I am God’s child; by his blood, I am forgiven; by his Spirit, I am ready to serve.

M: The greatest joy awaits every child who loves the Lord our God with all their heart, mind, soul, and strength.

P: Lord, with my whole heart, we dedicate this child to you.

M: Children are to obey their parents. And parents are to raise their children to know the Lord.

P: We will feed and nurture our child in the training and instruction of the Lord.

M: Deuteronomy 6 says, as you sit at home, when you travel down the road, when you go to bed at night, and when you rise up in the morning, you must find ways to tell your children the praiseworthy deeds the Lord has done.

P: Lord, in my daily living, I dedicate this child to you.

M: As your child grows, your faith will, in large measure, influence the way he or she comes to know the God in whom we live and move and have our being.

P: Lord, through my example and integrity, I dedicate this child to you.

(Parents turn and face the congregation)

M: In him, we are your spiritual and eternal family.

Congregation: We, the Body of Christ, stand by you today and always.

M: Parents, be wise in the way you live and in the way you love. Lean on each other and lean on the Body of Christ that the work of God may become visible in your child's life.

C: We will help teach your child, by word and by deed, to become a disciple of Jesus, and to find their place in his mission today.

M: Friends, you are not alone in this glorious work of Christian parenting.

C: We will pray for you and encourage you. We will do all in our power to help you raise your child in the goodness and knowledge of the Lord.

M: prayer of thanksgiving and blessing.

This practice, though unauthorized, has caught on with many claiming to be churches of Christ. For example, this advertisement is found on the website of the Eastside Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, Colorado:

Baby Dedication

Eastside's Baby Dedication will be taking place on Sunday, May 13th (Mother's Day). We will be praying over all babies born January 2011-May 2012.

Furthermore, the First Colony Church of Christ, Sugar Land, Texas, makes the subsequent announcement on their website:

Baby Dedication

Sunday, November 04, 2012
 Group: Children

Baby Dedication

(formerly New Life Celebration) is a ceremony in which believing parents, and sometimes entire families, make a commitment before the Lord and our First Colony family to submit their child to God's will and to raise their child according to God's Word & God's ways. Christian parents who dedicate a child are making a promise to the Lord to do everything within their power to raise their child in a godly way, prayerfully until he or she can make a decision on his or her own to follow God. Parents who make this vow of commitment are instructed to raise their child in the ways of God, and not according to their own ways.

Then, the online bulletin of the Oak Harbor Church of Christ, Oak Harbor, Washington, presents this new item:

Baby Dedication: Patrick and Katie Kazmierczak shared a precious moment with our congregation on Sunday, Dec 4th when their new son Gabriel Allen Kazmierczak was dedicated to the Lord.

BABY DEDICATION—A COVENANT?

There are those who hold to the commitment stated during the Baby Dedication as a covenant between the parent(s) and God. For example, the Westlake Church of God, Indianapolis, Indiana, even has an application to be filled out by parents who are potential candidates for Baby Dedications. (Does this mean that those who do not fill out this form cannot dedicate their babies to God?) A statement on the application reads:

Baby/Child Dedication is the practice of Christian parents presenting their child to God in an act of dedicating themselves to raise the child in the Christian faith; and asking for God's blessing upon the child. Baby/Child Dedication is a holy covenant between the parents and God.

Where in the Scripture is the authorization for man initiating a covenant with God? There is no such authorization. Wayne Jackson aptly points out:

The very substance of this "covenant" argument, it would appear, reflects a misunderstanding of the "covenant" concept, as set forth

in the Scriptures. Here are some facts to be considered before we embark on a covenant-making frenzy.

- The Bible speaks of social and political covenants between people and nations (cf. Gen. 21:27; 31:44-46; Josh. 9:6-16). Human covenants are bilateral, i.e., both parties appoint, and mutually agree upon, the terms. It represents a give-and-take proposition.
- Another type of covenant, however, was unilateral. In this format, a superior party made a covenant with an inferior. Because of the unequal relationship, the superior party exclusively set the conditions. With reference to the *spiritual* covenants of the Scriptures, God himself initiated them, and he set the terms (see Baur, Danker, Arndt, Gingrich, *Greek-English Lexicon*, Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000, p. 228).

Here is the intriguing question. Are men empowered with the right to initiate covenants with God in which they invent religious ceremonies or institutions that have no basis in established authority? Consider, for example, the Lord's covenants with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Israel, David, etc. Those nobles of old were not permitted to be innovative in such relationships (cf. Lev. 10:1ff). (Note: When Josiah was described as having "made a covenant before Jehovah" (2 Kgs. 23), the meaning simply is that he was "confirming" the covenant previously given by the Lord (see v. 3). A similar situation obtained in 2 Kings 11:17ff.)

RELEVANT QUESTIONS REGARDING BABY DEDICATION CEREMONIES

Here are some questions that need to be asked of those involved in the popular religious practice of Baby Dedications.

1. If this is an important work for Christians to perform, why do we find no precedent of it in the New Testament?

2. Is it necessary to perform a ceremony to God whenever we decide to be dedicated to God in a certain area of life? For example, when we obey the command to give as we have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2), do we need to have a *Giving as One Has Prospered Ceremony*? What about when a man decides to dedicate his life to preaching the Gospel, does there need to be a *Preacher Dedication* ceremony? Or, when a godly woman decides to dedicate her

life to teaching children's Bible classes, should there be a *Teacher Dedication*?

3. Is not the everlasting covenant of Jesus Christ, the New Testament, which God gave and which is made possible by the blood of Christ (Mat. 26:28; Heb. 13:20-21), the only covenant that we are bound to as far as our relationship to God is concerned? Moreover, is the New Covenant of Christ not all-sufficient, and comprehensive, covering every area of life?

4. Does man have the Scriptural authority to initiate covenants with God?

5. What is the meaning of baptism into Christ? When one comes forth and makes the good confession (1 Tim. 6:12; Acts 8:37), and goes into the water to be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 8:38-39), is this not the dedication of the whole person unto God? At this point a person becomes a new creature and all things are become new (2 Cor. 5:17). Henceforth, his life is dedicated unto the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is the implication of Paul's words to the Roman Christians:

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness of his* resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin (Rom. 6:3-6).

Having put on Christ, one is henceforth dead to sin and is to be altogether dedicated unto God in the life that he lives. There is no doubt about this. Indeed, this would include the bringing up of children in the Lord and, among other things, the sacrifice and dedication of our talents, finances, time, and energy for Christ!

Indeed, there are those who are confused about what becoming a Christian really means. It necessarily means that one will do all that he can to provide the example and instruction for his family that will help them to follow Christ and go to heaven. However, there

are those who believe that a vow of commitment needs to be made upon the birth of a child. Consider this example from the website, *Christianity.about.com*:

A Baby Dedication is a ceremony in which believing parents, and sometimes entire families, make a commitment before the Lord to submit a child to God's will and to raise that child according to God's Word and God's ways.... Christian parents who dedicate a child are making a promise to the Lord to do everything within their power to raise the child in a godly way, prayerfully until he or she can make a decision on his or her own to follow God. Parents who make this vow of commitment are instructed to raise the child in the ways of God, and not according to their own ways. Some of the responsibilities include teaching and training the child in God's Word, demonstrating an example of godliness, disciplining according to God's ways, and praying earnestly for the child (Fairchild).

This statement implies that because of the Baby Dedication ceremony and a vow of commitment therein, Christian parents are going to raise their child in the ways of God. If one is a true disciple of the Lord, should not this commitment have been already made? Truly, this is the case in view of the Lord's teaching on discipleship: "If any *man* will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me" (Luke 9:23).

Furthermore, dedication to God is something that each person must decide. This is one of the flaws of the unscriptural practice of infant baptism. One makes the decision for the child, instead of the person making their own decision which an infant or little child is incapable of doing (Acts 8:12). They have no sins to wash away or be remitted, anyway (22:16; 2:38; Mat. 26:28; Rev. 1:5).

In Baby Dedications, the same is true. The parents cannot commit the child's soul to God because: (1) the infant already belongs to God, and (2) when he/she reaches the age of accountability, he will have to make that decision for himself anyway. One person cannot obey the Gospel for another, but each and every person must give an account of himself unto God (Rom. 14:12). It is a serious matter that is up to the individual for each person to decide (Rev. 22:17; Luke 9:23).

The parent can, though, so teach and exemplify the Christian life so it will give every encouragement to the child to obey Christ and go to Heaven. Godly living does indeed lead others to glorify God, as Jesus taught: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Mat. 5:16). Moreover, Peter taught that the right kind of living will lead others to obey Christ and therefore glorify God in the Judgment:

Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by *your* good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation (1 Pet. 2:12).

LITTLE CHILDREN ALREADY BELONG TO GOD

The fact that all infants and little children belong to God is plainly taught in the Bible. During the earthly ministry of our Lord, He taught the need for one to become as a little child to enter into the kingdom. Luke records:

And they brought unto him also infants, that he would touch them: but when *his* disciples saw *it*, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them *unto him*, and said, Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein (Luke 18:15-17).

Therefore, there is no need to dedicate the baby to God in that he belongs to God already. If a person passes from this life while in infancy, there is no doubt about the destination of his soul, for he will go to be with God. There will be a multitude of souls in heaven who passed from this life as little children.

Indeed, the purity and humility of a child is needed in all of us. Jesus taught that one cannot enter into the kingdom, unless he becomes as a little child:

At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, 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 (Mat. 18:1-4).

Truly, more meekness, sincerity, and humility are needed among the people of God. In the midst of the problems in the church at Corinth, Paul taught the brethren: “Brethren, be not children in understanding; howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men” (1 Cor. 14:20). One of the great needs at Corinth, as well as in many congregations today, is for the members to grow up and be mature in understanding, but to be without malice in heart. There is a need to put away malice and every evil disposition and to have this Christ-like love and disposition:

Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And 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. 4:31–5:2).

IMPLICATIONS

When people adopt a religious ceremony, such as baby dedications, they ought to think seriously of the implications thereof in light of the Scriptures. The practice of baby dedication implies various things that ought not to be implied!

Since Baby Dedications are not found in the New Testament, this practice implies that more is needed than what has already been given in the Scriptures. Certainly, this is not the case:

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

God has given us all things that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3).

Moreover, it implies that we need more to do when we assemble together. Therefore, the study of the Scriptures and the Worship of God as laid down in God’s Word are not sufficient. The church of

the Lord and her worship is designed to help all souls to be dedicated to God's service and to go to heaven. The singing, the preaching, the praying, the giving, and the Lord's Supper have all been given according to the New Testament pattern to provide what we need as souls striving to make it to heaven. These things are all authorized and binding upon Christians to practice and teach (Eph. 5:19; Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:23-29; 16:1-2).

God has planned and purposed the church in such a way that we do not need to add ceremonies to make us more complete spiritually (Eph. 3:8-12). God has already designed His church and plan in such a way that it will benefit all who assemble together. Rather than adding ceremonies not found in the New Testament, we need to emphasize and concentrate on holding firmly to the pattern that God has given, as Paul declared: "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13).

CONCLUSION

Baby Dedications are neither Scripturally authorized or necessary. We are to do all in "the name of the Lord Jesus" (Col. 3:17) Who has all authority in heaven and on earth (Mat. 28:18). There is absolutely no authority in the New Testament for this practice, nor do Baby Dedications serve any real Scriptural purpose.

Yet, there are certain principles that are both necessary and authorized when it comes to our children. If we want our children to be faithful to the Lord, we need to set before them a godly example. This will do more for their dedication than any man-made ceremony performed while they were infants. "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

We need to thoroughly saturate them with a knowledge and love of the Scriptures. This is what Timothy's mother and grandmother did:

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also.... And that from a child thou

hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

Daily devotion to the Scriptures will produce the proper faith in God (Rom. 10:17). Moses taught the principle of instilling into the hearts of children love for God and His holy Word:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God *is* one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates (Deu. 6:4-9).

Paul said, “And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). This teaching needs to begin as soon as the child is born into the world, as children begin to learn at the earliest of ages. If we build our homes according to God’s pattern, then God will be the Builder of our house (Psa. 127:1). He is the only true foundation: “For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Let us be like Joshua, who said: “as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Jos. 24:15). These principles will help our precious children dedicate themselves to Christ!

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HOUSE CHURCH CONCEPT

Lynn Parker

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Not everyone's "house church" is the same, so our review of the concept here may apply to some parties and not to others. This is a case "where the shoe fits." The House Church concept is a loosely-defined approach to religion that says smaller is better. It clamors for less organization and more spontaneity. It says no church buildings, no staff members (like secretaries) and get this—no youth ministers (well, even the house church people can come up with one good idea in the midst of their many errors)! All the men take turns preaching, and the sermons are composed of an informal reading of Scripture, followed by some comments and an exchange of ideas. That means no preachers and **no sermons!** The house church says that it will not be a growing congregation—that is, when one house church gets too big, it just begins another house church. There are no church treasuries in the house church. In the house church, the Lord's Supper is taken in connection with a common meal. Children are encouraged to partake of the Lord's Supper as well. There is no name for the church and it seems like in at least some cases, every man gets to be an elder. There does not seem to be much emphasis on doing all things by Divine authority and there does seem to be a tendency to assume what needs to be proven (for example, some proponents of the house church are dogmatic when they say that the early church met in homes and that is **the** pattern for the church in all ages).

Before we go even a step farther, I will state up front that faithful, studious brethren are not opposed to brothers and sisters visiting with one another in someone's home. We are not opposed to studying the Bible together with a handful of people or with a large number of folks. We are not opposed to eating a meal together, encouraging and exhorting one another, and praying together. When I was a boy, I fondly remember that brethren from the congregation would sometimes come over to our home and we would sing Gospel hymns and songs. So we are not opposed to these things but rather endorse them.

In fact, the house church movement may very well be the fad of the moment. Some "11.5 million American adults—a full five percent—say they attend a house church or simple church, which is not associated in any way with a local, congregational type of church" ("House Church"). Some are seeking house churches because they are tired of tradition, others because they are tired of organized religion. Some feel that the Lord's church is steeped in tired, worn-out practices that lack warmth, depth, intimacy, unity, and excitement. The house church, to them, is just the ticket to return their interest and enthusiasm for religion.

John Mark Hicks, false teacher associated with David Lipscomb University, wrote a book titled, *Come To The Table*, that has had no small influence in this arena. Lagard Smith (another false teacher) is the author of *Radical Restoration*, a book which, according to reviews, calls for house churches as one significant ingredient to restoring primitive, New Testament Christianity. Smith seems to be a poster child among liberal churches of Christ that want to break with tradition and contribute to this movement. Speaking to York College students, Smith described his concept of a house church:

And what do we do on Sunday morning? What do we do on Sunday morning in a building like this? What do we do? We come in and we have a ritual that for most congregations lasts an hour. Go over an hour and the preacher is in trouble! In fact, it's scripted most of the time, because you have a little piece of paper that says we'll sing this song and then we'll have this prayer. We'll have the Lord's Supper, and then we'll have the sermon. In most congrega-

tions, it's scripted. In fact in any congregation that's large enough to have two Sunday morning worship services, you're a slave to the clock, because the first service has to get out so you can have the Bible classes followed by the next one, or vice-versa.

And we watch the clock! We sing, "Take Time To Be Holy," but we watch the clock! We do not take time to be Holy! And I'll guarantee you, on Sunday mornings, in Nashville, Tennessee, when the Titans play, there are special services for people to go to in the morning so they won't be missing out on going to the stadium for the game. ["Eeeek!"—noise] Exactly!—the same way I feel! [laughter] Alright,—let me bring this to a bottom line for you. The bottom line is that we have a rich history of Restoration thinking, and I think it's the right thinking. But, I do happen to agree with my cousin that things have gone woefully awry. But, I don't think it's because we're trying to incorporate first-century forms in a 21st Century culture and it doesn't work. I think that we are very much 21st-Century-form people who have not restored first-century Christianity in its primitive purity.

What would it be like if we did? Now, that's the scary part! I've got preachers in here that are gettin' real nervous! And they should! And elders, and they should! We all ought to be nervous. Everyone of us, because, I tell you what: If we really went back to the Bible... Just suppose today...suppose you had a group of Christians who did not have a building at all, period! At least not one they owned—that they had a vested interest in—that 75% of the budget is going to maintain! Suppose they just have rented facilities,—bare minimum amount for a small group to meet together? Suppose there's no building? Suppose there was no name of the congregation like "The First and Broadway Church of Christ"? Suppose there was just no name at all! No sign! No yellow pages! Suppose there was no preacher in the pulpit? Because we don't have a pulpit! Suppose it was a mutual ministry of the men, all of whom would rotate, taking turns to participate, to lead the worship, and because of that, they flex their muscles and they grew instead of being a spectator like at a football game! What if all the men took responsibility for sharing that? What if we had a group of men that were so spiritually mature that when we started looking around for elders we didn't have to say, "Oh, well,... nah,...nah,...nah,..." We just say, "Wow, we've got so many elders here,...you do it,...you do it,...you do it,...because you've all grown, you've all exercised, you know how

to teach the Word, and you have a passion for God!" "You're not just a spectator, you're a participant!"

And what if we didn't have youth ministers? (I know I'm on thin ice.) But what if we didn't have youth ministers and youth programs? Suppose that we had parents who reclaimed the responsibility of bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord? (I know some of them don't have parents and I know all the arguments, but that is atypical.) Most people have parents and in the church, the parents have "opted out" and allowed other people to do the work they ought to be doing. What if we had the parents taking care of them and not the programs, not other programs, not even good programs!

No programs! No ministries!...none!...period! No budget!...

I don't know,...but what if we had a group that did that,—we didn't have any externals....

I'm telling you, we are so distracted by the "business of the church" that we are not about our Father's business! What I'm talking about today is not a "tweak". It's not an adjustment. It's not a "re-formation" of the churches of Christ. It's not a "contemporary idea". What I'm talking to you about is "radical restoration"! If we-claim-to-be-like-first-century-Christians, we-have-to-be-like-first-century-Christians! We are NOT like first-century-Christians! Something's wrong! Radically, dramatically! Revolutionarily wrong! Fundamentally wrong!

Because, you see, what I'm talking about here are small congregations that are like the "stealth bomber". You can't see them! They're stealth! No building! No sign! No yellow pages! They may not even know the other people in town in a large city. May not know where they meet. All you've got is something happening—a movement that's taking place! This little organism is growing and then, when it gets to the point (I don't know what that point is number-wise) where it's no longer intimate, and interactive, and mutually participatory, and mutually accountable,—when it's no longer able to be that because of sheer size, and you start to think, "Well, it's got to be organized in some way". But instead of building bigger buildings and having "church growth" (which is the latest mantra), you still want church growth, but you "clone", you clone, you clone, you "grow" and "clone",—you "grow and clone", you "grow and clone"!

You know if all these congregations were “stealth congregations”, one of the most interesting things is: congregational independence and autonomy would be maintained in a way we talk about, but don’t exercise. And there would be no room,—praise God!—no room for “brotherhood police”! They wouldn’t even know where to find you to send their bulletins to you! [laughter,—applause] The older people appreciated that. You don’t understand, yet.

I don’t know how to end this thing because it goes on and on! There’s just too many things to think about! I will tell you this, in the last month, a few of us have gotten together to see,—could it work? Could it work? It worked beautifully! We met in sort of the social room of a condominium association,—a club house. It didn’t cost us any money. One of the couples in our group lived there and we used it for free. Might not always be the case. We sang songs that were certain to fit with the text for the day. We read the words that tied together the lyrics of what we were singing, with the lesson that we were about. Men read the scriptures and when they read the scriptures,—at the end of the reading the scriptures—they commented on it. They talked about: “What does this mean for us?” The lesson moved, not to an invitation song, because that signals to everybody strange things about evangelism. It’s a time for Christians. (If there are non-Christians there, let’s do things decently and in order so that we don’t run them away, but it’s not for them by and large.... We led into the Lord’s Supper, and we took time around the table. Time! I understand that something like that is happening on this campus. “Time around the table”. We waited for each other to pass the cup around. Nobody drank, because the Lord’s Supper is not an individual thing, it’s a communal thing. And when it was all around we took it together to remind ourselves that we were all in the same vertical relationship, and therefore we are all in the same horizontal relationship. And then we had time for prayer, not “prayers intermixed with songs”. We had time for prayer! And then we had time to discuss the lesson for the day, participate in the ideas, exchange, disagree, share a thought. And then we took just a few minutes to say: “Are there some needs out there that we need to meet financially?” And we talked about how we might meet some needs, and finally, we decided, “Here’s an urgent need...let’s meet it”, We collected money, and deputized one of us: “Take the money over there and meet that need.” The first time, it lasted for an hour and a half. Nobody was looking at the clock, but afterwards we said, “Well, how long did we go?” “An hour and a half”. Next time, afterwards, we looked back and thought, “Well,

we went 2 hours today.” We weren’t watching the clock! Have you ever gone on a date and said to a date, “Okay, I want to take you out Friday night, and—by the way—that’ll be between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. You’ve got between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m. You’ve got my full attention between 8:00 and 9:00 p.m.,—that’s our date.” I’m telling you guys, that’s not going to make a great impression! When you’re in love, “Time flies”, and you have no idea! Isn’t that the same excuse you gave your parents? “Well, time just went by! I didn’t realize I was supposed to be in at 2:00 in the morning!” [laughter] Time flies when you’re passionate! How can our worship be anything less? First-century Christians worshipped radically different from how we worship. Let’s not kid ourselves any longer that “We are the restored New Testament church in faith and practice”! It is so radically different from what we do, we have to step back and say, “Wow!”

One brother responded to the notion that you must meet in the house if you are to be the church of the New Testament:

1. The early Jerusalem church initially met somewhere within the confines of the temple complex, which encompassed a very large area—approximately 20 acres. It has been observed that the “court of the Gentiles” was very commodious, capable of accommodating some 200,000 people (Harrison, p. 64). These meetings may have involved several different groups as the church expanded. Nonetheless, initially at least—before Jewish hostility was aroused, the outer court area was their meeting place (cf. Acts 2:46). These “first fruits” of the faith quite obviously were not required to segregate into scores of small “house churches” for the purpose of engaging in worship on the Lord’s day.

In spite of this clear precedent in the book of Acts, one writer, in defense of the “house church” position, declares that “the New Testament Church began as a small group house church (Col. 4:15), and it remained so until the middle or end of the third century.” This claim, quite frankly, is ludicrous.

First of all, the church did not begin as a small unit in someone’s house. There was a minimum of 3,000 disciples in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:41). There could have been many more than 3,000 if those baptized under John’s ministry (Matthew 3:5-6), as well as those prepared by the Lord and his men (John 4:1-2), were not included in this figure (cf. Alexander, p. 89). Moreover, they all “were together,” at least for a while, as

reflected by the imperfect tense verb, *esan* (“were”), in Acts 2:44. Obviously they had not been taught that such a large group nullified the “family environment.”

2. The early disciples did meet in homes at times. Of this there is no doubt (1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15). But there is not the slightest evidence that this arrangement constituted a “binding pattern.”
3. In some instances, Christians may have employed a borrowed or rented facility. Such a circumstance likely was the case relative to their daily meetings in the school of Tyrannus (Acts 19:9), which appears to have included Sundays as well as weekdays. To argue, as some “house church” advocates have done, that this was merely a temporary arrangement (two years) is hardly convincing. Scripture does not sanction “digression” as a preparation for practicing truth. Aside from that, those in that region who were converted to Christ surely had houses that, on occasion, accommodated worship assemblies, and yet a public facility was also used. The point is this: house-worship was not a *binding, exclusive* pattern....
6. The “house church” theory would suggest that no congregation could grow larger than that which can be accommodated in a private home. How large does a “family” have to be before it violates this humanly imposed, “growth limit” law? Moreover, if the “family” analogy is to be pressed as a binding pattern, as our friends of the “house church” persuasion contend, since a family dwells in a “house” each day, why not insist that all local church members must reside within the same structure on a sustained basis? One cannot but be reminded of the old axiom, “what proves too much, proves nothing.”
7. Finally, we must address this matter. Advocates of the “house church” theory allege that there is no example of “literary evidence nor archaeological indication” of a “church building” prior to the time of Constantine. Two things must be said in response to this allegation. First, if a building is a mere expediency, it does not matter *when* such facilities were first employed as places of worship. There are many expedients that have developed over the centuries that do not violate the scriptural authority principle, e.g., methods of disseminating the gospel (via radio, television, and the Internet)... (Jackson).

A hallmark of the house church concept is the revision of the Lord's Supper from the current practice to a drastically different one. Although he is in sympathy with the house church concept, J. Stephen Sandifer is the preacher for the Southwest Central Church of Christ in Houston. Sandifer delivered a lesson at the 2003 Abilene Lectures titled, "Pinch And Sip In Silence." Among other things, he described the practice of altering the Lord's Supper:

Save the supper to the end of the service. Set up tables around the building with bread and juice on them. Ask people to move to those tables and serve one another, sharing verbally something good the Lord has done for them. (Use pita bread and paper cups of juice for emphasis)... Do anything to break the silence and emphasize community and joy instead of individuality.... Assign things for people to say as they eat:

...Pass the bread to the person next to you and say aloud, "This is the body of Christ."

... "I am glad that we are part of the body of Christ and members one of another."

... "Jesus loves you. He came to earth, lived, died, and was raised because you are special."

... "Tell your neighbor something that God has done for you for which you are thankful today."

If you are having a mission emphasis Sunday, rearrange your service and communion to reflect the practices of a foreign mission area. (In our case, that meant buying some real wine to serve and using 8 large goblets instead of individual cups.) This assumes that the foreign service is not a transplanted American service.

The truth is that the Lord's Supper was **not** part of a common meal. Luke records, "And the cup in like manner **after supper**, saying, This cup is the new covenant in my blood, *even* that which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20). And 1 Corinthians 11:17ff refutes the idea of the common meal mixed with the Lord's Supper.

Spontaneity may be a nice synonym for chaos in the house church movement. Paul commanded, "But let all things be done decently and in order" (14:40).

Faithful brethren and congregations recognize God's pattern for each congregation having qualified elders that oversee the congregation (Phi. 1:1; Tit. 1:5ff; Acts 14:23; 1 Tim. 3:1ff). There is no Bible authority for one eldership overseeing more than its own, autonomous congregation.

On we could go with the various *flavors* of the house church concept; this was certainly not meant to be exhaustive in answering every error of the house church movement, and the movement itself is shifting and evolving; it is not static. It seems that really the house church concept is a conglomeration of emotionalism, denominationalism, lack of respect for authority, ignorance of how Bible authority is ascertained, and the social Gospel rolled into a mess and re-labeled for an unwitting generation. There is really nothing new with the house church movement. All of its various errors have been seen and refuted before. Be forewarned—it is the latest form of pious-looking liberalism, it is attractive to the unlearned and the rebellious, and it must be exposed.

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ECUMENISM

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According to certain professed members of the Lord's church today, one who does not possess an ecumenical mindset is radical and biased. Indeed, ecumenism, or the ecumenical movement, has become popular with many in the church. *The Free Dictionary* online states that Ecumenism is: "1. A movement promoting unity among Christian churches or denominations. 2. A movement promoting worldwide unity among religions through greater cooperation and improved understanding." (We are careful to note that *Christian*, as used in this definition is according to common, worldly usage and not in the Biblical sense.)

This source also gives "inclusive" as a synonym for *ecumenical*. Indeed, inclusiveness and tolerance are keywords in the current thinking of many religionists. Yet God will not tolerate, or approve, those things which are contrary to His Word. Therefore, we must, by the Scriptures, test or "prove all things," and then, that which is proven to be in accordance with the will of God, we are to "hold fast" (i.e., hold firmly) (1 The. 5:21; 1 Cor. 14:37; Acts 17:11). The reason is plain: "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10:17-18). Therefore, we want only to be approved of the Lord, and commended by Him, but we cannot be acceptable to God if we insist on accepting those things which He

refuses! In this study we will consider the nature of ecumenism and the view of God toward it by looking into His Word.

IS ECUMENISM THE UNITY FOR WHICH JESUS PRAYED?

Jesus Christ was and is concerned about oneness among His followers. He prayed:

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me (John 17:20-23).

Is the oneness for which Jesus prayed the same kind of *unity* that is promoted by ecumenism? The answer is: **No!** Ecumenism seeks not to dissolve man-made religious bodies and doctrines in preference for the truth, but to find common ground and agreement with them, despite their distinctions in doctrine and practice, and in spite of their disagreement with Biblical teaching itself. This is not true unity.

God does not allow for inclusiveness when it comes to man-made doctrines and the religious bodies and systems of men. This is made abundantly clear from the Lord's address to the church in Pergamos, whom He rebuked for tolerating certain ones who were involved in error. After commending the congregation for the good, Jesus went on to point out the sin of tolerating evil in their midst and demanded that they repent:

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth (Rev. 2:14-16).

In like manner, He rebuked the church at Thyatira also for their toleration of Jezebel and her influence among them:

I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last *to be* more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols (2:19-20).

If the kind of unity for which Jesus had prayed in John 17 had been “unity in diversity,” then certainly He would not have rebuked the toleration of which the Pergamum and Thyatiran Christians were guilty; He would have commended it! In fact, He earlier had commended the Ephesian brethren for their refusal to “bear them which are evil” (2:2)!

Furthermore, the fact that ecumenism is not the oneness for which Jesus prayed is clearly seen because ecumenism does promote “unity in diversity,” but the oneness for which He prayed had the Word of God at the very foundation. In his prayer, Jesus calls it “their word” (John 17:20) because it was the Word preached by the apostles (as guided by the Spirit), for whom He had been praying specifically (17:6-19). One who has not been taught the pure “doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9; i.e., the “apostles’ doctrine”—Acts 2:42) but only the doctrines of men (Mat. 15:9; Tit. 1:14) cannot be in unity with God because he has not heard, believed, and obeyed the Word of Christ. “So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Upon hearing and believing the Gospel, without admixture of error, one is ready to repent, confess Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and then be baptized into Christ (cf. 10:17; 1:16; Acts 18:8; 2:38; 8:32-39; 16:31-34). It is not until he puts on Christ in baptism, that one comes into unity and fellowship with God (Gal. 3:27; Heb. 5:8-9; Rom. 6:3-5, 17).

Hence, the prayer of Jesus has reference to true believers, who have obeyed only the Word of God. One cannot have Biblical unity with followers of Roman Catholicism, Islam, denominations, or any other false religion because God is not in fellowship with darkness. Hence, we are forbidden to have fellowship with anybody or anything that is not in fellowship with God (2 Cor. 6:14-17). Therefore, those in error do not have unity with God and, therefore,

cannot be in unity with those who do have unity with God. John taught this principle clearly:

This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:5-7).

Members of the Lord's church are in fellowship with God through His Son: "God *is* faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (1 Cor. 1:9; cf. 1:2).

Various religious bodies (including erring churches of Christ) who are involved in ecumenism may have union with various religious bodies, but, like those at Babel, they are not in unity with God (Gen. 11:1-9). Thus, they are not with Christ but are working against Him: "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Mat. 12:30).

The unity for which Jesus prayed is the "unity of the Spirit." Paul enjoined upon Christians to be diligent in keeping this unity when he said: "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). True oneness exists where souls are in subjection to "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (6:17).

Another reason that ecumenism cannot be Biblical unity is because "the unity of the Spirit" is based upon the seven ones: "*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all" (4:4-6). Those of the ecumenical movement would overlook their differences with others and with God's teaching to have oneness among bodies—which exist apart from and contrary to the teaching of the Lord.

GOD'S WORD VERSUS THE SPIRIT OF ECUMENISM

The ecumenical movement is said to be: "of or relating to the international movement initiated among non-Catholic Churches in 1910 aimed at Christian unity: embodied, since 1937, in the World Council of Churches" ("Ecumenical"). The fact that denominations

are involved in this, in itself shows that ecumenism is flawed, because denominationalism by its very nature is divisive and contrary to the New Testament.

The danger of the spirit of ecumenism existed long before the 1900s in that, God warned the children of Israel against becoming united with those whose religion was contrary to that of the true and living God. The fact that Jehovah God warned them against intermarriage with the people of Canaan and instructed them to destroy all that pertained to their false religion, shows that from antiquity the temptation to unite with transgressors existed. Warning against ancient “ecumenism,” God declared:

When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou; And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, *and* utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them: Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son. For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly. But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire. For thou *art* a holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that *are* upon the face of the earth (Deu. 7:1-6).

God warned Israel not to be like the other nations:

After the doings of the land of Egypt, wherein ye dwelt, shall ye not do: and after the doings of the land of Canaan, whither I bring you, shall ye not do: neither shall ye walk in their ordinances. Ye shall do my judgments, and keep mine ordinances, to walk therein: I *am* the LORD your God (Lev. 18:3-4).

As Israel of old could not continue on as God’s special people if they became like the heathen nations round about them, likewise,

those of the Lord's people today who become like the world will not be accepted of God (Jam. 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17).

If the church, the Israel of God today (Gal. 6:16), becomes joined with Roman Catholicism, Protestant denominationalism, or any other false religion, it will have the same spiritual consequences as Israel joining with the idolatrous Canaanites! Only those who do not appreciate the distinctiveness of the church of Christ deny this.

There is only "one body" that belongs to Jesus Christ (Eph. 4:4), and that is His church (Eph. 1:22-23; 5:23; Col. 1:18; Mat. 16:18). This excludes all other religious bodies. Such an "exclusive" spirit is repulsive to ecumenists, who seek to embrace a multiplicity of religious bodies. Yet, if we would go to Heaven, we must be possessed of the word of Christ and not the "ecumenical spirit"!

All false religion is based on false doctrine. This includes those who profess to know Jesus Christ, but only render lip service to Him in that they follow the doctrines of men and do not obey God (Luke 6:46). According to the apostle John, one cannot have God if he does not abide in the doctrine of Christ. In fact, those who bring a teaching contrary to the doctrine of Christ are to be shunned:

Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: for he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (2 John 9-11).

God demands in both the Old and New Testaments that His people deal severely with any person(s) who would turn their souls away from Him and His teaching. God demanded that any prophet, family member, city, or person among the Israelites who would attempt to turn them away from Him was to be destroyed (Deu. 13:1-18).

In the New Testament, God gives stern warnings against false teachers and false doctrine and how to deal with them. So far from seeking unity among those who persist in error and refuse to repent

is the principle of marking and withdrawing from such people. Paul declares:

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple (Rom. 16:17-18).

Furthermore, Paul states concerning those who would refuse sound doctrine and teach otherwise:

If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, *even* the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but dotting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself (1 Tim. 6:3-5).

Often, these leavening influences within the body of Christ are those seeking to promote “unity in diversity” under the guise of love. Yet, darkness is to be exposed, reproved, and refuted. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11; cf. 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Tit. 1:9-16). Those of the ecumenical movement would not appreciate these words but would seek unity with darkness!

Note the severe warning that Paul gave to the church at Corinth:

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in *them*; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean *thing*; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty (2 Cor. 6:14-18).

Fellowship, communion, and agreement describe what the ecumenical movement is all about, and that is to have agreement and

fellowship with those who are in darkness. Yet God will not accept those who so do as those who would belong to God should make a complete separation from darkness.

God warned the seven churches of Asia against those in their day:

And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, That ye be not partakers of her sins, And that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, And God hath remembered her iniquities (Rev. 18:4-5).

In like manner today, Christians are not to be partakers of worldliness or of the religions which are of the world and not after Christ!

ECUMENICAL EFFORTS AMONG CHURCHES OF CHRIST

It is becoming increasingly popular to promote the image of churches of Christ as tolerant of other religious bodies. The effort to promote “good will” and a spirit of cooperation among so-called believers in Jesus is seen by many as the spirit of Christ. Yet such efforts are contrary to the spirit of our Lord, Who declared of those who would follow their own way rather than the will of God:

But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men....Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Mat. 15:9, 13-14).

Rather than seeking unity with those who refuse to obey the truth, we are to: “Let them alone”!

Cooperative efforts between churches of Christ and other religious bodies highlight the movement toward ecumenism. The swapping of pulpits, joint activities in social or moral causes, joint worship services, common memberships in ministerial alliances and “clergy” associations, and “unity” meetings are prime examples of promoting ecumenism among brethren.

In the past thirty years, there has been a push to bring unity between churches of Christ and the Christian Church by way of “unity” meetings. One such effort was the *Restoration Summit*, when one hundred representatives from churches of Christ met with one hundred representatives of the Christian Church on the campus of

Ozark Christian College, in Joplin, Missouri, on August 7-9, 1984 (Willis). A similar effort had taken place on May 3, 1939, in a meeting between churches of Christ and the Christian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. However, that “unity” effort was dampened by a powerful speech delivered by brother H. Leo Boles. His speech had been printed in tract form (titled: *The Way of Unity Between “Christian Churches” and Churches of Christ*), and made available to those at the 1984 *Restoration Summit*, but Alan Cloyd, one of the leaders and chief instigators of the *Summit*, disposed of it. What a horrible thing to deprive these souls of much needed and valuable teaching material! Evidently, Cloyd was more concerned with his own agenda than with the truth. The following is an excerpt from brother Boles’ powerful speech, in opposition to such “unity” efforts:

There is but one pathway to unity among God’s people; there is but one rule that can make us one in Christ Jesus; only one way that can bring salvation to the world. All must exalt the supremacy of the word of God and keep opinions private; no one should propagate his opinions in ‘the areas of silence,’ but acknowledge the leadership of Christ and love each other as brethren in order to enjoy Christian unity. So let each one lay aside all opinions, ways, inventions, devices, practices, organizations, creeds, confessions, names, manner of work, except those plainly presented and clearly required in the New Testament. Let all determine to do nothing in religion, save that plainly taught in the scripture and ask his brother to accept nothing that God has not required. Let all do faithfully just what God has required, and let all do this in the way approved by God, and unity is the inevitable result and no “conference” or “unity meeting” is needed. This will reduce all religious worship and service to its original divine simplicity and purity, and will restore to it its original efficacy and power to save. In this simplicity and purity of worship, and in perfect harmony with the will of God, the richest blessings of God will be ours. Faith unites men to God and one another; opinions sever them from God and one another; opinions are the occasions of endless strife and bitterness. Brethren, let us not be deceived; let us not have a misguided zeal for unity that blinds us to the only way which leads to God and unity (This speech may be read in its entirety at: www.therestorationmovement.com).

Brother Guy N. Woods, editor of the *Gospel Advocate* at the time, opposed the 1984 *Restoration Summit*, in *Gospel Advocate*, which eventually led to his dismissal from the editorship by the publisher Neil Anderson in mid-1985 (Davidson 177). Before that, however, brother Woods wrote to Alan Cloyd, questioning him regarding the disposal of the tracts, to which Cloyd replied:

“I did in fact remove the tracts in question. They were uninvited materials which were not appreciated. Brother Boles’ language is abusive and crude. I did not feel that these tracts would be in the interest of the meeting” (*Gospel Advocate* [4 October 1984], p. 580) (Willis).

Sadly, the attitude of Alan Cloyd toward faithful men of God, like H. Leo Boles and Guy N. Woods, and their sound teaching is characteristic of many today. They do not love and appreciate the truth of God. The apostle Paul warned of situation. After charging young Timothy to “Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), he wrote:

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (4:3-4).

Even some well-known brethren, who do not agree with the use of mechanical instrumental music in worship embrace the idea that those of the Christian Church denomination are our brethren; they express an ecumenical spirit. In a 2006 interview with *The Christian Chronicle*, Phil Sanders stated:

There are likely some societal and moral efforts where estranged brethren can find some common ground. We could fight against the dangers of immoral behavior or the secularizing of America together. There may be some relief and charitable efforts comprised of people from many faiths working together.

Sanders, speaker on the television broadcast, *In Search of the Lord’s Way*, and writer in the periodical *The Spiritual Sword*, also stated in this interview:

A century of disruption in fellowship means many members of both groups know little about the other. It has not been important

to them, because they are unaware. Leaders and members need to know their history and heritage, the good and the bad.

How do we win our brothers back (Prov. 18:19)? We will not do this by ignoring each other. We will win some brothers back the way we lost them, one at a time. We must talk at some point and pray at some point. This is not the time for name-calling but rather for calling on his name. We treat our brothers as brothers, even when there is a disruption in fellowship (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

One sister in the Christian Church I taught about musical instruments had never heard the reasons why we don't use them. Once she learned the reasons, she gladly embraced the truth. We didn't re-baptize her. We embraced her on her repentance.

Sanders had previously stated in the interview:

I can only speak for myself here. I believe baptized believers in the Independent Christian Church are my brethren, since everyone who is scripturally born of water and the Spirit is a child of God.

The kind of teaching expressed above prevented the lady mentioned from being taught the truth and baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). How sad it is that a *Gospel* preacher would think that a person may be taught and converted properly ("born of water and the Spirit") by those who have a corrupt view of worship and Bible authority. It is important to realize that knowing the Scriptural mode and purpose of baptism is not the only understanding required for one to be born again and become brethren in Christ. One must be taught properly the Word of God, which is the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), regarding other matters such as the "kingdom of God," the church of Christ, and the "name of Jesus Christ," and His authority (Acts 8:12; cf. Mat. 28:18-20; Col. 3:17).

Those who refuse to obey the true Gospel and do not respect the authority of the Scriptures are **not** our brethren. Nadab and Abihu lacked respect for the Word God. They "offered strange fire before the LORD," and they were devoured by "fire from the LORD," for this action (Lev. 10:1-2). Those like them today do not need a "pat on the back," but a call to repentance!

CONCLUSION

Ecumenism is without Biblical authority. To seek unity with those in religious error is to compromise the truth. If we compromise with error, we have gone onward from the doctrine of Christ and “have not God” (2 John 9). Thus, we need the spirit of Paul and not the “ecumenical spirit.” He refused to compromise with the Judaizers, of whom he stated:

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

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FELLOWSHIP

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An article in the January 2013 *Defender*, written by Roelf L. Ruffner, Sr., titled, “Report on a Meeting,” provided an up close and informative look at what the Lord’s church is dealing with on the “fellowship” front. He caught sight of an announcement for a “unity” discussion near his home in Tennessee. The presenter of the program was a “preacher” for the Maury Hills Church of Christ (Maury Hills Church), who also sat on the board of a nearby Lutheran school (so you can immediately infer/extrapolate and understand his ulterior motives). The thrust of the article about this experience (which we encourage you to read, as we are not covering the article here) had two main elements that are simply replicated (the same) **everywhere** today: (1) the headlong rush by many *brethren* to create a new unifying cause with denominations to present the church as nothing more than the same, and (2) the inability of those same *brethren* to defend, even to the slightest degree, the facts or Biblical authority for what they are intending to foist on an either uninformed or ignorant audience. Brother Ruffner’s article ended with a tone of sadness (though he did gain the opportunity to offer a counter argument, for which we are thankful), as he realized that no matter what amount of truth you bring forth, dishonesty in the brotherhood is no different from that in politics (actually, it is quite similar).

For the last several years the hot topic that has been discussed, written about, and a part of many lectureships is fellowship. One of the most beautiful relationships that the Lord designed for the

church has again become the most contentious of Biblical subjects. We might ask ourselves how this came to be, but rather than just ask the question, we intend to look at what Biblical fellowship is supposed to be, and whether that definition is what really poses the problem in the brotherhood today. If we address it this way, we might better understand what Biblical fellowship should be and whether we comply with that standard or have gone about to establish our own righteousness.

Our focus will be on the more recent efforts and oddities that brethren have engaged in that attempt to stretch the boundaries and definitions of fellowship according to the Biblical model and principle. The Scriptures define the fellowship that we are to have with one another in correlation with that which the Father has with the Son, and that to be His children we must be in fellowship with Him and His Son. Changes in this requirement would only be the privilege of God Himself. Man cannot determine (innovate) who one can or cannot fellowship with (be in fellowship with) based on a man-made theology, philosophy, or refusal to abide by the Scriptures. The concept of fellowship in the Bible is inextricable from truth. It is also impossible to separate it from the right relationship we are to have with God (1 John 1:3). This relationship is described/prescribed in the Scriptures as a fellowship that we are called into by God and through the Gospel (1 Cor. 1:9). This being said, we want to explore the nature of this fellowship as it is currently being discussed and practiced in the brotherhood, examining issues that could, if allowed to continue unresolved, cause some to lose their souls.

WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP?

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you; but *that* ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

These verses are among the most often mentioned or quoted when the discussion of fellowship arises. The reason for this is clear enough, the brethren in Corinth were divided over a number of issues and some from Chloe's household had come not with gossip, but credible information about this situation for the apostle. Paul, in response, after an opening salutation, makes an immediate transition to the body of the letter proper. This particular "request formula" occurs commonly in antiquity. Paul already used the formula in 1 Thessalonians (4:1, 10; 5:14); it will appear again in 1 Corinthians 4:16 and 16:15. The use of the vocative ("brothers") and the accompanying authorizing prepositional phrase ("in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ") indicate that for Paul, it belongs more to the *official* category than to the simple request formula. Here Paul is appealing to them with his full apostolic authority. We must remember, however, that this is still presented as an appeal (rather than a demand, for reasons that will appear better suited). Paul urges them as "brothers [and sisters]" to conform their behavior to the Gospel, not as law (which he surely had the authority as an apostle to command) but as a response to the grace that is in Christ. Therefore, the appeal is made "in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 2 The. 3:6). Paul was making them aware (through the art of persuasion, perhaps) by way of remembrance that they still belong to Christ, and that His authority is supreme.

It is also noteworthy that the apostle uses *same* three times in this exhortation. The Greek term, *autos*, means that which is identical, and it becomes more apparent reading through the epistle that there are many areas where the brethren's thinking is not the same and is, in fact, the cause of divisions (or schisms—the Greek term). The entire nature of these divisions has been speculated upon, and often commentators refuse to see any of this as having any doctrinal component (which would immediately cast a disparaging perspective on, and credibility for, denominationalism). It is not within our purview to know (or determine) the specific sources of these animosities, but rather to understand that sectarianism is sinful and undermining to the unity that the Lord prayed for in John 17. It is enough to say that

whatever had caused these schisms were not acceptable to the Lord, nor were they acceptable to the apostle. His encouragement is “to speak the same thing” and “to be of the same mind and same judgment.” What did that mean then, and what does it mean for us now?

If we might backtrack a moment to the preceding verse (1 Cor. 1:9), it might be illuminating to see a point of reference from the apostle’s viewpoint (and God’s inspiration). Paul reminded the brethren that they had been “called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.” This calling was through the Gospel (2 The. 2:14), and obedience to that “form of doctrine” (Rom. 6:17), placed one in fellowship with Jesus and the Father (1 John 1:3). This unbreakable bond of unity/fellowship (John 17) rests on truth (the truth of the Gospel), and any deviations from it breaks the bond of fellowship one can have with the Father and/or the Son, which is why what Paul says in those following verses is of such demanding importance for us today. In other words, truth creates, develops, and strengthens unity; it is not at its expense.

The problems are, therefore, intellectual in part and the result of diverse viewpoints. One should not make the mistake of mere political maneuvering as culprit, but, rather clearly, matters of doctrine are at the very heart of the issue. Though none of the main commentaries suggests it, “the same thing” he expects them to speak may be “the message of the cross” (1 Cor. 1:18—NKJV), the “message of wisdom” that Paul “speaks...among the mature” (2:6—NKJV). If they did this, it would solve/dissolve their problems of division, as the following chapters demonstrate, for the cross of Christ levels everyone on the playing field, excluding boasting in human leaders, and then elevates everyone to a point of legitimate boasting in God.

However, Paul’s use of the particular verb in question suggests a more specific answer to the question: what is “the same thing” they are all supposed “to speak”? Apart from 1 Corinthians 1:10, “to say” appears only four more times in the unit: twice in 1:12 and once each in 1:15 and 3:4. In the two cases of the Corinthians “saying” something, it is the different ‘party slogans’ that they say: “One of you says, ‘I follow Paul’; another, ‘I follow Apollos’; an-

other, ‘I follow Cephas’” (1:12); “For when one says, ‘I follow Paul,’ and another, ‘I follow Apollos,’” (3:4). Plainly, the different things the Corinthians are “saying” concerns their inappropriate allegiances to human leaders. Paul wants them to stop saying these **different** things and instead to “speak the same thing.” Thus “that they all say the same thing” though interpretive, can thus be validated exegetically. Depending on how the fourth slogan (in 1:12) is understood, “the same thing” Paul wants them to “say” may well be “I implicitly follow Christ.” In 3:23 he says as much: “you [plural] *are* Christ’s” (NKJV). A similar thought can be found in the Romans (15:6) epistle when Paul wrote, “that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God.” The critical importance of Christians understanding and espousing God (among ourselves and to others) with a collective unanimity is exactly what the Lord prayed for throughout John 17, and is one of the germinal tenets of the New Testament that cannot be disputed. In practice, men have made this difficult only as a result of selfishness and pride, but the intents of the Lord are clear and possible.

WHAT IS FELLOWSHIP TODAY IN THE MINDS OF THE INNOVATORS?

What could Paul have in mind when he wrote to the brethren in Corinth to be of the “same mind and same judgment”? Is there any correlation to speaking the same thing? Those who say the same things are allies, brethren, in fellowship. Simply put, **they agree with one another on matters of doctrine**. To speak with one voice denotes **a state of unity** desired by the Lord, as reflective of His prayer in John 17, mentioned previously.

Some in the brotherhood today have attempted to take it upon themselves to change this fellowship as given in Scripture by innovating or initiating **new ideas** of their own (hence not from the Bible, meaning without Bible authority). Is there a way that we can find this privileged arrogance to integrate/be incorporated into the working of the church on any level? As Paul said in Romans 6, “God forbid!” that we might compromise the Word of God and heed the pomposity of ignorance and unmeasurable imperiousness! What ex-

amples are there in the brotherhood today that reflect the efforts of error to overwhelm the brethren with sly, clever words and charismatic meanderings? One might even ask the question as to whether they any longer are brethren, as they have forsaken the Scriptural way of worshipping the Lord, and teaching His Gospel.

We do not agree with those brethren (?), like John Mark Hicks, who in his recent book, *Come To The Table*, stated, that the Lord's Supper is just a common meal that can be eaten anytime and is not bound by Biblical reference to the first day of the week in Acts 20:7. Hicks completely dismisses what the Lord proscribed at the Supper's institution in Luke 22:14-20 and allows women or children to serve and partake of it; thus, there is no reverence here, only exuberance. We cannot speak the same thing. Neither do we agree with Hicks that the meal at Emmaus was the beginning of the church (before Pentecost!), the first "Lord's Supper," the first Easter (!), nor any other cockamamie idea he proposed (which are all ideas regurgitated from denominational thinking he received in seminary).

Since faithful brethren do not see the Independent Christian Church as "our brethren" (like Phil Sanders) who do not need to be Biblically baptized, because "we" (presumably meaning that somehow the churches of Christ and the Independent Christian Church are linked together) preach the same Gospel, we cannot all be speaking the same thing. Now Sanders seems to speak from both sides of his mouth when he made the comment in a 2006 *Christian Chronicle* interview that

baptized believers in the Independent Christian Church are my brethren, since everyone who is scripturally born of water and the Spirit is a child of God. I love my brethren, but I grieve that they have clung to an unscriptural practice. I wish we could find biblical and hermeneutical unity once again.

Yet, he writes in the December 8, 2009 issue of the *Forest Hill News* (the bulletin for the congregation that is also the hand holder for the Memphis School of Preaching) an article that is addressing the Disciples of Christ call for a "Great Communion" (which was to include the Independent Christian Church):

Churches of Christ more than a century ago came to be estranged from the Disciples of Christ and the Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ over the use of instrumental music in Christian worship and the missionary societies. The Independent Christian Churches/Churches of Christ pulled away more recently from the Disciples of Christ over open fellowship (the sprinkling of infants for baptism) and the abusive control of the missionary society (for a detailed study, see *Choate*, pp. 161-205).

For churches of Christ, the refusal to use instruments in worship and the denial of sprinkling infants for baptism is not just opinion. They base their beliefs on God's Holy Word and regard human innovations such as instrumental music and sprinkling infants as sinful practices. The Disciples of Christ point to Thomas and Alexander Campbell and Barton W. Stone as their leaders, but they have far removed themselves from the beliefs and practices of the Campbells and Stone.

To fellowship the Disciples of Christ, churches of Christ would have to set aside the teaching of the Word of God in exchange for a human tradition (Matt. 15:8-13), violate their consciences (Rom. 14:23), and recognize as brethren those who have never scripturally come to Christ. Surely such action flies in the face of God.

To fellowship and support those who teach and practice false doctrines means that one participates in his evil deeds (2 John 10-11). When someone practices sin, Christians should mourn not celebrate (1 Cor. 5:1-2). When those who speak and act contrary to the apostolic doctrine continue in their practices, faithful Christians have no option but to warn, mark and withdraw from them (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11).

Those who set aside their faith and violate their consciences to support those in error break their fellowship with God. Unity with others hold little value to the person who loses his relationship with the Father and the Son (1-2).

Note how he tippy-toes around (and pines for) the Independent Christian Church as he manages to completely chastise the Disciples as errant. We wrote numerous articles about Sanders and his views, and even had some nearby (Bay Area) brethren accuse us of being too harsh with Sanders, but we cannot say if any of them (articles) had any effect on his overall tone regarding the Independent Christian Church. He did say in his 2006 interview that they accepted a

lady into their fellowship without baptizing her into Christ (as she had already been *baptized* in the Independent Christian Church!). That is innovation in fellowship for you. We need not concern ourselves any longer with whether or not a person has been baptized into Christ for the forgiveness of sins and understood, “Unto what then were ye baptized?” (Acts 19:3). This may have seemed to some a redemptive moment for Sanders, and a way to clear their own conscience of what was clearly action in need of repentance. Perhaps the brethren who still support Sanders through *In Search of the Lord’s Way* were hoping that no one was really reading or aware of just where he stands on this *little* fellowship issue. These are innovations we can do without, as enlarging our fellowship circle with error is not pleasing to the Lord and will certainly lead one to everlasting persecution. We draw attention to Sanders not only because what he is doing is errant, but also because he is so prominently utilized in certain areas of the brotherhood. He speaks at lectureships, universities, and encampments where there are usually large audiences that likely have little knowledge of any of these issues.

Because we cannot accept the practice of reaffirmation/re-election of elders as an expedient option (like Dave Miller, the Memphis School of Preaching, and all who fellowship those errant unrepentant varmints), we cannot speak the same thing as those who support, condone, invite him to speak, or fellowship with those who do. When there are some who feel that fellowship is an unimportant issue (anyone accepting fellowship with brethren like Phil Sanders, who participated at least twice in a Sunset Workshop, despite their false teaching on divorce and remarriage), we cannot speak the same thing. Since we do not agree with the notion of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit or Holy Spirit baptism (like Mac Deaver and the Bear Valley School of Preaching staff that accept him), we cannot speak the same thing or be thought as being in fellowship with those who do agree with such notions.

We are also seeing a new (or rather, refashioned and rationalized) idea being explored and (because of the people involved) embraced: praying directly to Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This posse’s mindset

has adopted the idea that somehow one can skip around the teaching of the New Testament, and the pronouncements of Jesus Himself and start praying to the Holy Spirit—even during the Lord’s Supper! Do we actually see anyone in the Word of God that is praying to the Holy Spirit? When we are not saying the same thing (and not using the Scriptures to authorize the things being said), we cannot be in fellowship with each other!

Same mind and same judgment: these two characteristics of Christian fellowship are also emphasized by Paul, and for good reason—one cannot be a true disciple of the Lord and be of a different mind or judgment on matters of doctrine, and be in fellowship with God. We continue to speak of matters of doctrine because it is our obedience to the doctrine (learned through direct statements, apostolic examples, and implications) that enforces our relationship to Christ. This relationship, or fellowship, is what insures salvation.

MEMPHIS IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away *their* ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

The institution that has put itself into the center of today’s fellowship debacle is the Memphis School of Preaching. The most prominent voice of that organization today is Barry Grider (who preaches for the Forest Hill congregation). The general idea of their very clever, divisive approach to fellowship is to completely stifle, smother, and annihilate the voices and influence of the remaining conservative churches of Christ (that have challenged them and called into question their actions and motives regarding this Biblical issue of grave importance through bulletins and numerous periodicals) and embrace in their newly enlarged circle of fellowship those who have no Biblical principles they steadfastly hold dear. There is not time or space to cover the undeniable villainy at work here, but one can decipher from the actions, statements, and lectureships emanating

from these pontificators that, as change agents (whom many of these brethren fought against), they have superseded what one might have imagined possible in the move away from doctrine. Memphis has embraced error in a way unimaginable ten years ago, and this has wrought irrevocable damage in the church as a once believed (and honored) pristine reputation is now revealed as a sullied and arrogant “woman of the streets,” willing to offer herself to anyone who will accept an invitation. This is a philosophical shift that determined the truth was no longer worth defending, and the question of why is not difficult to understand—money! Time does not allow us to unfold every episode of departure from truth, or reality, but they have vilified those of the brotherhood (referred to as “toxic”) who attempted to unmask/uncloak the unrepentant doctrinal positions of Dave Miller (Director of Apologetics Press) that many of them had previously debunked as rank and unscriptural! Now we find Curtis Cates, Keith Mosher, Garland Elkins, and others acquiesce, in shame, with a direction unintended when this debate began.

The belief, as Grider sees it, is that the conservative churches will shrink/shrivel and go away. This dismissal is, in actuality, an admission of fear. A fear of being questioned, or found wanting on the basis of Scriptural authority, which is why there have been no defenders of these actions taken by Memphis or those with whom they continue to extend fellowship. Is it not odd that not one of the brethren who support Dave Miller is willing or apparently capable of accepting the offers to discuss the monumental shift in brotherhood affairs? Recently, Michael Hatcher has offered numerous times for “notable” brethren to come forth in Miller’s defense, and received only deafening silence. Silence is the methodology of the errant, the impostor, and the sinful (in this case).

The sadness in all of this with regard to Memphis/Forest Hill is that at a critical juncture they could have been an enormous force for good. The men within that institution could have been pivotal in removing any support for Dave Miller during the early days of the Apologetics two-step (removal of Bert Thompson and elevating of Dave Miller to “interim director”), but the spineless jellyfish cow-

ered in the face of financial loss, revealed the tattered colors of cowardice, and took a populist (ignorant) stance. Some of the brethren said that Miller had, in fact repented (which Miller himself denied). Some of these brethren said that there was nothing to be repented of, though there was not authority in the Bible for such actions, taken twice at Brown Trial. Some said they did not agree with what Miller did, but it was not worth splitting the church over (which literally means that there is no sin that is worth splitting the church over). Others said that they did not agree with Miller on the re-evaluation/re-affirmation of elders, but that they would support him anyway. This unfolding of events (creating the multiple personality defense) has generated the “era of innovation” in which we now live. Spewed forth was a *new* philosophy to “go along to get along.” Though not a new mindset in the world, it had become the disgusting mantle upon which Memphis would now rest its laurels.

Is this revolutionary? Not at all! Many institutions that had formerly been stalwarts of faith have dissolved into pabulum and mush on matters of doctrine, and in defense of doctrinal purity. Their hopes of being fashionable, trendy, or innovative have illustrated how deprived of actual intellectual integrity they are. Unfortunately, their pleasing men are not at all pleasing to the Lord.

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NO ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

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 Northpoint Church of Christ, Denton, Texas, in September 2005, for which he preaches (gratis) when he is not traveling.

Dub and his late wife Lavonne (James) have three children (Bronwen, Hal, and Andy), seven grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

INTRODUCTION

Hell has fallen on hard times. The most frequent reference to it nowadays is as a term of cursing, swearing, or intensification of expression. Others use it in a weak attempt at levity: “I want to go to Hell; after all, that’s where all my friends will be.” Many moderns have tried to take the murky-gray road of claiming—at the same time—to believe in the existence of Hell, but professing to know of no one who does anything sufficiently evil to go there. It is historically demonstrable that outright denial of Hell to any great degree, or its companion, loss of belief in Hell, are phenomena of relatively recent times. How has this come about?¹

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DECONSTRUCTION OF HELL

For sixteen centuries the doctrine of eternal punishment of the wicked at the hands of a just God was a matter of certain conviction almost universally throughout Christendom. In fact, this was the

prevailing view even in the intertestamental period which preceded Christ and His doctrine:

Everlasting punishment of the wicked was and always will be the orthodox theory. It was held by the Jews at the time of Christ, with the exception of the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection (Schaff 2:606-07).

The only significant voice among the ancients who dissented from the orthodox view of Hell was Origen (A.D. third century), later condemned (rightly, in this case) by two ecumenical councils for his heresy. However, with the approach of the Renaissance, man's emphasis shifted from theo-centric to anthro-po-centric. Humanism, with man at its center as the be-all, do-all, and end-all, began to displace God. The farther man moved himself up, the farther he pushed God down. Man was so valuable and so precious, even to the "theistic" humanist, that he could not abide the thought of eternal punishment or retribution or of a sin serious enough to warrant it.

From the sixteenth century on, God's judgment was a constant target for attack by humanists both within and outside the church. Hell and humanism didn't mix; they can't mix and never will mix. It just won't do to have highly exalted man experiencing the torments of hell eternally. First, it is presumed that the precious creature couldn't possibly do anything bad enough to warrant such punishment. And even more significantly, the humanists are convinced that God could not bear the eternal loss of even one of these marvelous man-creatures (Braun 35-36).

Certain radical liberal theologians have become outspoken deniers of Hell and have influenced other clerics. A good example of such blasphemy is from the pen of the late John A.T. Robinson, Bishop of the Church of England. As long ago as 1949 he wrote:

Christ, in Origen's old words, remains on the Cross as long as one sinner remains in hell. That is not speculation; it is a statement grounded in the very necessity of God's nature. In a universe of love, there can be no heaven which tolerates a chamber of horrors, no hell for any which does not at the same time make it hell for God. He cannot endure that—for that would be the final mockery of His nature—and He will not ("Universalism" 155).

Only eighteen years later he wrote as though the destruction of Hell had already been fully accomplished:

There are still a few who would like to bring back hell, as some want to bring back birching and hanging. They are usually the same types who wish to purge Britain of horror comics, sex, and violence (*But That* 69).

Another of Robinson's ilk was Emil Brunner, a Swiss theologian:

That is the revealed will of God and the plan for the world which He discloses, a plan of universal salvation, of gathering all things into Christ. We hear not one word in the Bible of a dual plan, a plan of salvation and its polar opposite. The will of God has but one point, it is unambiguous and positive. It has one aim, not two (182).

Obviously, Brunner read the Sacred Text through tinted or dirty glasses. Aside from the insistent Biblical theme of judgment against and eternal punishment for impenitent transgressors of God's will, the very existence of a **plan of salvation** necessarily implies "its polar opposite"—damnation. The will of God is "unambiguous and positive" all right, but about the **existence** (rather than non-existence) of a final Judgment and of eternal retribution for sin in a place called "Hell."

As is often the case, those who were once considered radicals have gradually become almost mainstream, and the abnormal has increasingly become *normal*. The seminaries have for a century or more been filled with professors who are theological liberals and modernists of the rankest sort, most of whom have no stomach for (among other things) anything unpleasant, "negative," or foreboding connected with their brand of religion, their treatment of the Bible, and their concept of God. This posture, as a primary assumption, all but categorically ignores Divine Justice and its necessary implication, Divinely-administered eternal punishment for unfor-given sin.

These schools have turned out tens of thousands of infidel ecclesiastics who have spewed out their message of unbelief week after week in denominational pulpits across the land. At the heart of their

theology is an over- (and pseudo-) emphasis on the love, grace, mercy, kindness, and longsuffering of God. They have accompanied this lopsided and perverted message with a drastic **de**-emphasis (if not total avoidance and denial) of the balancing traits of God's justice, law, wrath against sin, and the corollary implication of these verities—Hell as retribution for impenitent sinners. Seminaries—and the pulpits they have staffed—have so watered down the Biblical “orthodoxy” of centuries that even so-called “evangelical” churches nowadays are freely accepting such things as divorce and remarriage for any cause, recreational sex, social drinking, and even homosexual behavior as compatible with a “Christian lifestyle” and the hope of Heaven.

This Modernism was bad enough, but it inevitably led to the deadlier philosophy of Postmodernism, which eschews facts and evidence, allowing each man's feelings/opinions to determine “truth” (at least for him). In turn, even more recently, Postmodernism has spawned the “Emerging Church” ideology, which, while still claiming to be a “Christian” movement, is hardly more than a new version of Universalism. (Informed readers understand that, by definition, Universalism demands the denial of eternal punishment for sinful men in its advocacy of their universal salvation.) While the Emerging Church approach is all the rage in current theology, few schemes could be more anti-Biblical or anti-Christian.

The Humanism produced by the Renaissance has spawned at least five distinct schools of Hell-denial:

1. **Universalism**—Hell could not exist as an eternal state because God is too loving and benevolent to allow anyone to suffer forever in such a place. Therefore, all will be saved regardless of belief or behavior.
2. **Annihilationism/Extinctionism**—The wicked cease to exist at death (or soon following the Judgment, after a brief period of torment).
3. **Atheistic Humanism**—Mankind is the ultimate form of life. Since God does not exist, moral absolutes, accountability, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell do not exist.

4. **Liberalism/Modernism**—While Hell may exist, no sin is bad enough nor sinner wicked enough to deserve it (a *lite* version of Universalism).
5. **New Ageism**—Lack of or low self-esteem is the root of all human problems. The Biblical worldview is responsible for this failure. To the New Ager, “acknowledging oneself as a sinner destroys a human being. His solution to this is simply to define sin out of existence and declare man sinless” (Michaelson 289). This tactic, of course, also defines Hell out of existence. One can see some common threads between Postmodernism, Emerging Churchism, and New Ageism.

NO-HELL INNOVATORS “AMONG US”

Among those still claiming membership in the church of Christ, I am aware of only one who has gone on record in modern times as a full-fledged Universalist: Richard Beck, Professor and Psychology Department Chairman at Abilene Christian University, blatantly lays out his convictions on his blog. (Are any still in denial about the utter apostasy of those in charge of this institution?)

However, a few (but apparently growing number) have imbibed its first cousin—the annihilation/extinction dogma—in recent years. The *pioneer* in this respect is Edward Fudge, an elder in the historically apostate Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston, Texas. In a 1982 *ten-pound* tome, *The Fire that Consumes*, he argues that the wicked will only be punished temporarily following the Judgment, after which they will be subject to “total, everlasting extinction” (425, 435-36). John Clayton, who has circulated widely among the Lord’s people lecturing on apologetics for more than three decades (in spite of his being repeatedly exposed as a “theistic evolutionist”), has excitedly endorsed Fudge’s book (20). Al Pickering, who gained moderate notoriety among brethren with his “Sharpening the Sword” Seminars, is an ardent advocate of the Fudge contention (Jackson “Changing Attitudes” 66). He has since made total shipwreck of the faith and works among various denom-

inations, but principally Independent Christian Churches, in the Dallas/Fort Worth, Texas, area.

F. LaGard Smith (at one time a “Scholar in Residence” at Lipscomb University, but currently a “Visiting Professor” at Faulkner University’s Jones School of Law) first voiced his denial of eternal punishment at the 1988 Pepperdine University Lectures (Jackson “Eternal Punishment”). In 2003, he (as did Fudge) devoted a book to the subject (*After Life*). The late Homer Hailey, longtime teacher at Abilene Christian University and Florida College, advocated his extinction views in a booklet published in 2003 after his death in 2000 (*God’s Judgements* [sic]). Other *lesser lights* (e.g., Stephen Clark Goad) have also joined the “no-Hell” chorus.

Moreover, the number of brethren is already many and is ever increasing, who, in their loose and latitudinarian approach to grace, baptism, the identity of the church, fellowship, worship, the nature of God, and Biblical authority in general are *de facto*—if not *de jure*—universalists and annihilationists. By this I mean that these brethren will hardly identify any doctrine as heresy or any practice as sinful (e.g., allowing that God will make “exceptions” to His plan of salvation to save unbaptized “believers”). These will not oppose or expose any teacher or preacher as false or his/her doctrine as damnable, regardless of how foreign or contrary to Gospel Truth it may be. Furthermore, they do not want anyone else to expose them. They wittingly embrace in their fellowship those who are not in fellowship with God and shun those of us who expose their errors. They have found ways of contorting the Scriptures and redefining ordinary words so as to grant approval to adulterers and drunkards and to heretics of every stripe and hue.

Shall we surrender the existence of Hell to the infidels, the skeptics, and the liberals? Without question, the denial or at least the mitigation of Hell is very appealing. If we are guided by human lust and selfish indulgence alone, who could not be attracted to the doctrine that there is no such thing as consequential sin, no ultimate accountability for behavior, no code of conduct imposed by a Supreme Being/Creator, and no final, inescapable, horrible retribu-

tion for rebellion against His law? Undeniably, multiplied millions, in one way or another, have dismissed the reality of Hell.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY ABOUT HELL?

I will come back to this later, but I will raise another proposition right now: One cannot deny the existence of eternal, punitive Hell without denying Christ Himself. Thus, the crucial issue concerning belief in Hell is the even larger issue—**belief in the Christ Himself!**

In the face of all of the denials of Hell, there still remains the stubborn, nagging, undeniable fact that Jesus had much to say about Hell and eternal punishment. In fact, He said much more about Hell than He did about Heaven. When correctly perceived, every warning about the Judgment, every prohibition of evil, every encouragement to righteousness, and every declaration about sin has the concept of eternal damnation behind it and embedded in it. Otherwise, they are meaningless, empty words. In fact, the necessity of Jesus' earthly sojourn and the purpose of His coming are rendered vain and unnecessary apart from the reality of the eternal damnation of the souls of men because of their sins. Indeed, setting aside the plain teaching of Jesus about Hell for the moment, the coming of the Christ from Heaven to earth and the sacrifice of Himself upon the cross for the sins of mankind are the ultimate arguments for the reality of eternal damnation—Hell itself! Now, let us survey the teaching of Jesus about Hell.

Man Has an Ever-Living Soul

For there to be a Hell for man, he must survive death; in other words, he must have/be a soul that does not perish when his body dies. Jesus taught unequivocally that man is more than flesh and blood: "And be not afraid of them that kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell" (Mat. 10:28; cf. 16:26).

There Is a Realm in the World of Spirits Called "Hell"

Jesus clearly referred to Hell in Matthew 10:28, quoted above, in such a way as to indicate His fullest confidence in its reality. He threatened "the hell of fire" for those who pronounce, *thou fool*,

upon their fellows (5:22). He referred to Hell as a real entity and place into which the body would be “cast down” as retribution for sin (5:29-30). One who causes another to sin will be cast into “the hell of fire” (18:9). The Lord referred to Hell as the final abode of the wicked no less than eleven times.

What is Hell, as referred to by Jesus? What did He mean by the term? Although space forbids a thorough word study, a brief definition is appropriate here. Note first that the King James Version often uses *Hell* when, in fact, “hades” is the correct term (from the Greek, *hades*, meaning “unseen,” referring to the unseen realm of the dead, i.e., departed spirits; e.g., Mat. 16:18; Acts 2:27). Our English word, *Hell*, correctly translates *gehenna*, which appears twelve times in the Greek New Testament (eleven of which the Lord employed, James using the remaining one).

Gehenna derived from the Valley of Hinnom (also, “the valley of the Sons of Hinnom”), a valley Jerusalem overlooks to its south, first mentioned in Nehemiah 11:30. Historically speaking, it was the site where idolatrous Jews burned their children in homage to the pagan god Molech (2 Chr. 28:3; 33:6). Josiah, the righteous restorer king of Judah, caused this practice to cease, and the valley thenceforth became a place of abomination and abhorrence—the dump ground for the city. As early as the second century B.C., uninspired Jewish literature used *gehenna* as a figure to refer to final, eternal punishment of sinners. The Son of God applied this word in the very same way, using the name of the literal valley to refer to the place of ultimate abomination and abhorrence beyond the Judgment.

Hell Is Awful and Dreadful Beyond Imagination

1. Jesus attached the original imagery of the fires of Molech worship in Gehenna to eternal Hell as a place of fire. He twice called it “the hell of fire” (Mat. 5:22; 18:9). He twice referred to it as “the furnace of fire” into which the evil will be cast after the Judgment (13:42, 50). He twice called it a place of “unquenchable fire” (Mark 9:43, 47-48). We correctly identify the Hell the Lord thus describes with “the lake of fire and brimstone” and “the lake of fire” into which the devil, the beast, the false prophet, and all those not found

written in the book of life were cast for eternal torment (Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8). John appropriately called it a “baptism” (dipping, plunging, overwhelming) in unquenchable fire (Mat. 3:11-12).

2. Additionally, the Lord intensified His description by labeling it as a place “where their worm dieth not” (Mark 9:47-48). The depiction is one of maggots eating living flesh. Though obviously figurative language (there is no flesh in the realm of spirits), the figure portrays terrible agony and pain.

3. Jesus described Hell as a place where those cast would be “destroyed” (Mat. 10:28). The annihilationists/extinctionists argue that this passage supports their contention that *destroyed* equals *annihilated*. However, even the simplest Greek word study proves otherwise. *Destroyed* translates *apollumi*, found in numerous passages in which *annihilation* cannot possibly be its meaning. For example, it is rendered “burst” (9:17), “lost” (Luke 15:4-9), and “perish” (15:17). Neither these nor numerous other such passages can bear the idea of annihilation or non-existence as the meaning of *apollumi*. Joseph Henry Thayer, the renowned Greek authority, was a Unitarian who did not believe in eternal punishment, yet his knowledge of the meaning of *apollumi* (and honesty) forced him to define this word as “to be delivered up to eternal misery” (36). Robert Morey concluded:

In every instance where the word *apollumi* is found in the New Testament, something other than annihilation is being described. Indeed, there isn't a single instance in the New Testament where *apollumi* means annihilation in the strict meaning of the word (90).

The idea of being “destroyed” in Hell is that one will suffer utter, irreclaimable loss, and he will do so forever. Jesus also used the noun form of this word in reference to Hell (Mat. 7:13).

4. Jesus referred to Hell as a place of “eternal punishment” (25:46). *Punishment* (*kolasis* in Greek) means torment, torture, suffering, chastisement (cf. Luke 16:23, 28; Rev. 14:10-11).

5. The Hell which Jesus believed in and described is a place of separation from God, Christ, and the redeemed—banishment from Heaven. The lost are “cast into hell” (Mat. 5:29). Jesus will

say, “Depart from me,” to the lost at the Judgment (7:23). He taught that Hell is a place of “outer darkness” (8:12, etc.). At the Judgment, He will say to impenitent sinners, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into the eternal fire” (25:41). He said that the wicked would see themselves “cast forth without” the eternal kingdom of God (i.e., Heaven) (Luke 13:28). Similarly, Paul wrote that the lost will be banished eternally “from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might” (2 The. 1:9). Just as evil men are those now “having no hope and without God in the world” (Eph. 2:12), if they do not repent they will find themselves hopeless and without God in the eternal realm (Rev. 22:15).

6. The Lord teaches that Hell is a place where one will be inescapably confined with Satan and all of the evil men and women of all time. While the fire of Hell was “prepared for the devil and his angels” at the Judgment, the lost will be consigned to the same place (Mat. 25:41). John echoed this same doctrine (Rev. 20:10, 15; 21:8). Imagine being imprisoned forever with the most evil men and women of all time with no relief or hope of escape!

Hell Is Everlasting, Eternal, Forever

Jesus not only teaches the **reality** of Hell, but the **eternality** of it. However long Heaven lasts, so long lasts Hell. To conclude His description of the Final Judgment, He said, “and these shall go away into eternal punishment: but the righteous into eternal life” (Mat. 25:46).

The *no-Hell* heresy made a much earlier appearance among the Lord’s people than in the twentieth century, as recorded previously. In 1846, Jesse B. Ferguson, a brilliant, eloquent, and influential young preacher, moved to Nashville, Tennessee. Some six years thereafter, he began teaching various errors that led to his complete abandonment of the faith. Among these errors was his denial that the wicked will be punished after death and the Judgment (West 264). Various godly men withstood this grievous error and reclaimed as many as possible who fell prey to it. Ben Franklin was one of the most widely known and respected preachers of that era, and the following statement from him exemplifies the vigor with

which faithful men withstood Ferguson's error and its influence. Note his comments on the Lord's words in Matthew 25:46, directly addressing Ferguson's heresy:

Everlasting and eternal [KJV] are from the same [word] in the original. "Everlasting punishment," and not everlasting annihilation, nor everlasting extinction of being, nor everlasting non-existence, is what the Lord threatens.... At the same time the righteous enter into "life eternal," the wicked "go away into everlasting punishment."... The same word used by the Lord, in the same sentence to express the duration of the life of the saints is used to express the duration of the punishment of the wicked. It is as likely that the life of the saints shall terminate, as that the punishment of the wicked shall cease. There is no word in any language that more certainly expresses unlimited duration than this word, *aionion*. It is used to express the duration of the life of the saints, the praises of God, and even the existence of God (279).

As Franklin did in the nineteenth century, so must we forcefully expose, oppose, and refute this damnable doctrine in the twenty-first century.

The fire of Hell is "unquenchable" fire (Mat. 3:12; Mark 9:43, 48). The "eternal fire" Jesus mentioned in Matthew 18:8, He identifies as the "hell of fire" in verse 9. Paul continued this thought by describing the damnation of those who "know not God, and... obey not the gospel" as "eternal destruction" (2 The. 1:8-9). John wrote that the lake of fire and brimstone is characterized by torment "day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). No one can believe the words of Jesus and believe in the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory or any other concept of **temporary**, much less of non-existent punishment in the realm of spirits!

Jesus Tells Us the Populace of Hell

1. Self-righteous, pride-filled, egotistic persons who deprecate others as lower and less worthy than themselves:

but I say unto you, that every one who is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of the hell of fire (Mat. 5:22).

2. Those who are unwilling to sacrifice whatever causes them to sin or keeps them from serving God (5:27-30).

3. Those who confess Christ, but will not obey God, even though they claim to work by the authority of Christ:

Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy by thy name, and by thy name cast out demons, and by thy name do many mighty works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity (7:21-23).

4. Those who reject the messengers, and the message, of Christ (10:14-15).

5. Those who persist in unbelief in the face of overwhelming evidence of the authenticity of the Christ (11:20-24).

6. False teachers and their followers (15:13-14).

7. Those who are hypocrites, who profess one thing and practice another (23:13-36).

8. The wicked, careless, neglectful, wasteful, murmuring, blaspheming, lazy persons, as depicted in various parables (Mat. 24:45-25:30; Luke 19:12-27).

9. Those who are selfish, stingy, cold, unkind, uncompassionate, and unsympathetic (Mat. 25:41-46).

Other inspired writers also define the populace of Hell: Paul listed the full gamut of wickedness, evil, immorality, worldliness, and unrighteousness, which constitute the gratifications of the “lusts of the flesh,” and said that those who behave in such ways (whether Christians or alien sinners) are Hell-bound (Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21). He also mentioned as future residents of Hell the “lawless one,” those who receive not the love of the Truth, those who make “shipwreck concerning the faith,” those who succumb to the deceitfulness of riches, and those who are heretics or factious (2 The. 2:4-12; 1 Tim. 1:19-20; 6:9-10; Tit. 3:10-11).

Peter identified **brethren** who are false teachers, who themselves are overtaken by evil and who entice others to follow their wicked

doctrines and practices, as those who will be lost in Hell (2 Pet. 2:1-22).

John consigned not only Satan, the beast, and the false prophet to Hell, but also all men who had followed them in wickedness, evil, and immorality of all sorts and whose names are therefore not written in the book of life (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 15; 21:8; 22:15).

Surely, he who says his pleasure in fleshly lusts in this earthly life is worth being confined to eternal Hell knows not what he says!

CONCLUSION

There you have it—straight from the mouth of the Only Begotten of the Father, Jesus the Christ, and His inspired apostles. After quoting several passages in which the Lord set forth the doctrine of Hell as a place of eternal punishment for the ungodly, Braun queried and observed:

Does any question remain as to whether or not Jesus declared the eternal punishment of the wicked? All the authority of the almighty God is present in the Words He spoke about hell. Jesus had more to say about hell than any other speaker or writer in the Bible. If He was mistaken in what He said, then the almighty, eternal, and everlasting God was mistaken. And that is not the case. Indeed, if it comes to a disagreement: “Let God be true and every man a liar.”... What more could Jesus have said? There is absolutely no way the clear impact of His words can be brushed aside, and the assertion made that there is no eternal doom for the ungodly, unless of course, we join the critics who arbitrarily determine that Jesus didn’t really say these things at all.... Those who maintain Jesus did not utter these severe sayings about hell are like gamblers playing a game they will surely lose.... Jesus, the One who is coming again to judge the living and the dead, expressed Himself clearly and without room for doubt about it. The rest of the New Testament writers followed His lead to the letter. Retribution for the ungodly is eternal, without end (146, 163).

Men must make their choice between the annihilationists, the liberal theologians, the Humanists, the Universalists, the New Agers, the Emergers, and all other “no-Hell” advocates on the one hand and the Son of God on the other. **None can be taken seriously, therefore, who question and/or deny that He taught the**

reality of Hell as a place of eternal punishment for the wicked.

Those who reject this teaching of His also thereby reject Him as the Son of God and the Savior of mankind (John 12:48).

Michaelsen, after quoting from various New Agers and their totally subjective denials of the existence of the devil, sin, and Hell, drew the following incisive conclusion:

If hell is **not** a literal reality then Jesus was indeed a fool for going to the cross: The whole reason He did so was in order to save us from that place of eternal torment and separation from God. “Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life” (John 5:24). “I said therefore to you, that you shall die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you shall die in your sins” (John 8:24) (299).

Heaven and Hell stand or fall together—in reality and in duration. If Heaven is real and eternal, so is Hell. If Hell is denied, so must Heaven be. They are both as real as the God Who made us and Who gave us the inspired revelation concerning Himself, His Son, and their marvelous plan of salvation. In His great mercy this same God has warned us of Satan, sin, the Judgment, and Hell. God sent His Son into our world in the flesh that we might have a road through otherwise impassable territory to Heaven and to God (John 1:1-2, 14; 3:16; Phi. 2:5-8).

Jesus, the Christ of God, is Himself that road and the only road that leads to God and Heaven (John 14:6). If we walk on that narrow, admittedly difficult way, it leads to life (Mat. 7:14). If we reject the Christ and His way, we have chosen the road (which actually includes countless other roads of human invention) that leads ultimately to Hell (7:13). Jesus’ own simple summary of entering that road to Heaven is as follows: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that disbelieveth shall be condemned” (Mark 16:16).

The picture of Hell in the words of Jesus is so frighteningly, horribly, terribly unimaginable that He boldly challenges all men to make whatever sacrifice is necessary to escape its horrors (Mat.

5:29-30; 6:19-25, 33; 8:18-22; 10:28, 37-38; 13:44-45; 16:24-26; 19:21-22; et al). Surely, this is the course of wisdom!

God's faithful people must be ever vigilant against those who seek to fasten the *no-Hell* doctrinal innovation upon the church.

ENDNOTE

¹For this chapter I borrowed heavily from a MS I wrote in 1992. "What Jesus Says About Hell." *Whatever Happened to Heaven and Hell?* Ed. Terry M. Hightower. San Antonio, TX: Shenandoah Church of Christ, 1993. 102-112.

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The Bible tells us to follow the pattern of sound words God gave us regarding the church (2 Tim. 1:13; Heb. 8:5). Some have brought various innovations into the Lord's church, thus deviating from this pattern and defying God's Word. We have a duty to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

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