

# *The Keys Of The Kingdom*

*March 2015 - Vol: 2 Number: 3*



***Published By: J.F. Miller***  
***Editors: J.F. Miller & C.B. Frock, Jr.***

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If you would like to be a guest writer for TKOK you may contact me at [jfmiller61@gmail.com](mailto:jfmiller61@gmail.com). To announce up coming events like Gospel Meetings, Lectures, Singing events etc... Just use the email link above to contact me. Please feel free to tell others and have them sign up for their copy today. Use this link to join the mailing list. [http://jfmiller.com/keys-of-the-kingdom/?page\\_id=1316](http://jfmiller.com/keys-of-the-kingdom/?page_id=1316) . May God Bless You. Jim and the Staff

# Voices from the Past

## *What Is "Autonomy"?*

**Ray Ferris**

Racine, Wis.

February, 1957

There is much being said in these troubled times in the church about autonomy. It is therefore in order that we study this word to determine its correct usage in regard to congregational relationships.

### **Etymology And Definition**

The word **autonomy** comes from a combination of two Greek words **autos** and **nomos** or **nemo**. These two words are defined, by Thayer as follows: **Au,tos** - "self, as used (in all persons, genders, numbers) to distinguish a person or thing from or contrast it with another, or to give him (it) emphatic prominence." **Nomos** -- "anything established, anything received by usage, a custom, usage, law; In the N. T. a command, law . . . The verb form of **nomos** is **nemo**, meaning to divide, distribute, apportion, dispense. Thus we see that the combination of these two words would mean self-usage, self-custom, self-division, self-distribution, etc., and finally self-law.

Both of these words -- **autos** and **nomos** -- are used many times in the scriptures but not one time are they ever, combined to form the word **autonomy**. Autonomy is then, not a term found in the scriptures, but a term coined by men to express a scriptural idea if properly understood. There is no harm in using a term that is not found in scripture, if it does not in itself violate the principles established by the Scriptures, or if it is not used in such a way as to violate scriptural principles. Notice that Thayer's definition brings out the thought that **nomos** is not necessarily something established by legislation, but often by usage and custom.

## **Cannot Be Used In Legislative Sense**

There is no place for this term in any discussion of congregational relationships except in the non-legislative sense. The head of the entire church is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18; and Eph. 5:23), and He is the head of every congregation of His people. He makes the laws, or rather He has made them. There is no church, no group of churches. nor group within any church that has legislative powers The word autonomy must never be used to mean self-law f rom the standpoint of legislation in matters of faith. It must rather express the idea of self-division, self-apportionment, and self-distribution in lawful ways of teaching and administering Christ's laws; self-custom, self-usage, and self-law only in matters where God has not given us His law, custom, usage, etc. As the word is so often used by brethren it expresses the right of self rule and self- ad ministration by a congregation of God's people with the understanding that Jesus Christ is our head and lawgiver. Our self-rule is to be with Him directing and with no outside interference. Our self-administration must be in harmony with His laws; not over someone else's affairs, nor allowing others to administer, manage, and rule our affairs.

## **Relation Of Decision To Autonomy**

Sometimes we hear people say that autonomy simply means the right to decide. When properly understood and used, autonomy carries with it the idea of administering the decisions made. This thought is inherent in the background of the word. It is true that decision is an essential element of autonomy. It is not correct to speak of decision as the essential element of autonomy. Even after decisions are made there yet remains as a part of our autonomy the administrative, or executive functions before congregational autonomy is complete; the apportioning, distributing, dispensing, etc., of nomos. No congregation has completely lost its autonomy as long, as it has opportunity to decide on anything. But, any congregation that gives to

another congregation, organization, or individual the right to make any decision for it, or to administer any decision it has made, has surrendered a portion of its autonomy.

### **A Clearer Term**

Another word that is often used in connection with these thoughts is independence. To most people in the church congregational independence expresses the idea involved more clearly. All can see the idea of complete self-dependence and operation separate and apart from any outside source. Just as our own nation once made a declaration of independence from one other nation in particular, and all countries in general, and we thus became completely responsible for ourselves, even so we can understand the principle of congregational independence and autonomy.

Even though we are independent as a nation we are not prohibited from cooperating with other nations. However, our independence demands that no other nation has the right to plan projects which they know to be impossible for them, and then expect us, and other nations, to support such projects. Likewise, independence demands that we do not make such plans ourselves and expect others to support them. However, two nations, or more, may resolve to help a nation that is in need. Let us suppose that we as a nation decide to help Hungary. Would it be likely that we would send our money and supplies to Russia? Why not? Human wisdom, and independence, demand that we keep control of our funds until they arrive at the place we have decided they should be used! The uproar that exists in the church now about autonomy, cooperation, independence, etc., is nothing to compare with the commotion that would result if our nation should embark upon such a course. If you do not like the illustration using Russia and Hungary, we could change it to helping Canada through England. The principle is identical, but the thought is not quite so horrible to us because these two countries are "friendly nations" to us and to each other. We can all remember when the Soviet Republic was an ally too!

However, there is a vast difference in these comparisons of nations and congregations. A nation has the right to make whatever laws would be necessary to make such a program **legal** (no law would ever make it wise); **no congregation has legislative power to make any law.** Therefore since God's pattern sets forth congregational autonomy and independence, men can never change this pattern with divine sanction! Just as reason demands that nations be free to help a nation in need (if two nations help a third nation they are cooperating), even so God has given congregations that privilege, but the pattern is for each congregation to remain independent and autonomous. Study the examples given in the scriptures and note the absence of any centralized control, distribution, division, etc. Every congregation remained independent.

### **Wisdom Of Autonomy**

God's word is reasonable, and His wisdom is far superior to ours. His ways may at times seem to some to be unwise or inexpedient, but "the foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men." 1 Cor. 1:25. See also Isa. 55:8-9. God's wisdom and man's foolishness were made manifest in the great apostasies of the past. When men tied many congregations together, whether by diocesan elderships or by ecclesiasticisms of centralized cooperative arrangements, the result was the same. When one congregation went into other departures of error the others nearly always followed. When God's pattern of congregational independence is followed there will be no reason or tendency for a whole group of churches to go astray just because one does. When God's plan is not followed there is great likelihood of mass digression. The closer the ties between the churches the greater the probability.

However, autonomy and independence are terms expressing the relationship between or among churches. They have no reference whatsoever to a congregation's or an individual's relationships to God

and Christ. There is no autonomy or independence involved there. We belong to Christ if we are Christians; He is our head and our lawgiver. Neither do these terms apply to the associations of members of a congregation with their elders. Those who worship and work in a congregation are to be in subjection to the elders, but sometimes people get autonomy and submission to elders somewhat mixed together. In a future article we will study this problem also, the Lord willing.

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**If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.**

# The Church and Compromise

**Jim Miller**

Gray, Maine

We have heard it many times: “We must compromise in order to get along and move forward.” This is a dangerous attitude that has led to much error in the church.

I have never read anywhere in the Scriptures where one must compromise the word for unity. It is inconsistent to compromise the doctrine given us in the Bible. Our God gave every word He wanted the apostles to utter in a consistent manner, and there were no contradictions in any of their teachings. God, through the Holy Spirit, made known to man all that He expected of us that we could be found faithful children, as reflected in the following passages:

*“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue...”* (2 Pet. 1:3).<sup>1</sup>

*“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine”* (2 Tim. 4:2).

Compromise allows error to slowly creep into our churches, and it becomes like leaven; Paul wrote, *“A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump”* (Gal. 5:9). Compromise then eats like a cancer, until it finally destroys everything from within.

Preachers of the Gospel have long fought against compromise. They understand the danger that awaits those who add to the word, or take away from it. It has been a spiritual fight all along, about which we were warned long ago. We read in Ephesians 6:12, *“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.”*

For too long we have sat in our pews afraid to open our mouths against the errors that others seek to push upon us. We neither want to be ridiculed for our stand for the truth, nor do we want to make waves, or be known as “boat rockers.” We seek to get along at all costs, but I am here to tell you that this has to end, and end now!

It is our duty to God to stand on His word – to not give an inch – because if we

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

compromise, we condemn ourselves to the same fate as the denominations; will we compromise ourselves with them, right into hell?

How many times have you heard someone say, "I don't know, let me ask my preacher?" What they should be saying is this: "Let's look at the word of God, and see what He says about it." For too long we have forsaken study on our own, choosing to be told by someone else what God says about a matter. That, in itself, is compromise. We are admonished to study to make sure that what is taught is the truth, as it is written in Second Timothy 2:15, "*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*"

For too long we have allowed little things to creep in. Instead of "confrontation," we have chosen the path of "negotiation." In Matthew 15, the disciples of Christ wanted to compromise with the Pharisees. Notice Jesus' response: "*But he answered and said, 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*" (Mt. 15:13-14). With the phrase, "*let them alone,*" Christ was saying, "Do not negotiate or compromise!"

When we let our preachers and teachers water down God's word, so as not to offend, or when we allow game nights, and movie nights, take the place of the study of God's word, or many other such things that have crept in among us, we compromise. When we allow our preachers and teachers to teach a "Jesus, only," doctrine, ignoring the rest of the Scriptures, we compromise, and we place ourselves in serious danger of losing our very souls.

We must stop compromising and being afraid to step on people's toes. Recently, in conversation with friends, I made the point that for the Christian, the Bible is supposed to be our guide to living a righteous life. When we come together and assemble as the church, that same Bible is to be our guide, also.

It breaks my heart that there are some who think that just because God didn't say "thou shall not," that we can do all things that "we" deem good, rather than what the Scriptures plainly teach us. I believe God knew what he wanted from his children, and that He gave us everything that we needed in order to please Him without compromise.

God, through His Son and the apostles, gave us His word as our guide. In the over 2,000 years since then, we (man) have drifted farther and farther away from it, either adding to it, or taking away from it, those things that we do not like, and twisting His word so far out of proportion that it is a wonder there are

any true churches left. Yet, there still are true churches left. They are, however, few and far between. They are looked down upon because they still believe that one must do Bible things in Bible ways, and that one must still only speak where God has spoken. It is not enough for most people to worship God in the manner that He set forth, so they concoct doctrines, and twist Scripture, trying to make it justify their wants, rather than bringing their lives into subjection to what God wants. We were warned about this in Second Timothy 4:3-5, when Paul 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. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”*

It is the duty of every Christian to make sure that what goes on in our assemblies is Scriptural; that the funds collected are used properly; that the lessons being taught are not watered down, feel good, hogwash. It is every Christian's duty to stand firmly upon the word, and when some error tries to creep in, to stand up and oppose it, no matter what the cost. It is not until we decide that we are going to follow the Bible – and ONLY the Bible – that we are going to grow. We must respect the authority of the Scriptures. Jesus said, *“Thy word is truth”* (Jn. 17:17); Paul wrote, *“Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Col. 3:17); Peter wrote, *“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”* (1 Pet. 4:11). Let no man be honored *“above that which is written”* (1 Cor. 4:6). Likewise, we must also respect the silence of God. Where God did not speak, we have no authority to speak. We are to handle aright the word of truth. The word of God must be studied in context. We have preached this over and over to the denominational world for many years, and rightly so, but the instruction of Second Timothy 2:15 falls with equal weight upon us all. We must consider all that the Bible says on a subject. If more than one passage deals with a matter, then honest study requires that we regard the sum total of all that God has said about it before reaching a conclusion. We must get back to the simplicity of God's word; we must stop the compromise. We must put away from us the errors that have crept in among us. We must go back to doing things as God has commanded.

I implore all who are reading this to please get back to God's way, putting away from you all man made mockery and heresy, and stop compromising the word. The instructions are clear and simple; just open your Bible and read it. *“Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth”* (2 Tim. 2:15).

# Considering Matters of Indifference (Part 1)

## *“Essential vs. Indifferent”*

**Cloyd B. Frock, Jr.**  
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In his commentary on the New Testament, brother Burton Coffman noted the following:

“The unity of the church of Christ, and, to a degree, its uniformity, are necessary and commendable; but the ability of the Christian fellowship to survive in situations where strong differences of opinions tend to disrupt unity, it was required that specific instructions be given to the problem in order to contain, within the sacred fellowship, contradictory views, not on essential matters, but on indifferent matters.

“This problem has confronted the church of every generation, and divisions have occurred again and again over things of secondary, or even trivial, concern.”<sup>1</sup>

Beginning this month, we will be examining Romans 14 concerning such “matters of indifference”; our objective, this month, is to determine the difference between matters that are “essential,” and matters that are “indifferent,” concerning the faith. Let us begin, as always, by examining the Scriptures:

*Romans 14:1-12 “Receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things. [2] For one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables. [3] Let not him who eats despise him who does not eat, and let not him who does not eat judge him who eats; for God has received him. [4] Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand. [5] One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced in his own mind. [6] He who observes the day, observes it to the Lord; and he who does not observe the day, to the Lord he does not observe it. He who eats, eats*

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<sup>1</sup> Romans Overview - James Burton Coffman Commentaries on the Bible. (n.d.), from <http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/bcc/view.cgi?bk=44&ch=14>

*to the Lord, for he gives God thanks; and he who does not eat, to the Lord he does not eat, and gives God thanks. [7] For none of us lives to himself, and no one dies to himself. [8] For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. [9] For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living. [10] But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. [11] For it is written: "As I live, says the Lord, Every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall confess to God." [12] So then each of us shall give account of himself to God. [13] Therefore let us not judge one another anymore, but rather resolve this, not to put a stumbling block or a cause to fall in our brother's way. [14] I know and am convinced by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing unclean of itself; but to him who considers anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean. [15] Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died. [16] Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil; [17] for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. [18] For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. [19] Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another. [20] Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. All things indeed are pure, but it is evil for the man who eats with offense. [21] It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. [22] Do you have faith? Have it to yourself before God. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves. [23] But he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin."*<sup>2</sup>

## **Who's in Focus?**

As with every Bible study that we undertake, we must recognize the audience that the writer is addressing; in this case, Paul is addressing "...all who are in

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<sup>2</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

*Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints...*” (Rom. 1:7). Paul is, therefore, addressing Christians in this chapter – those who were already saved in the body of Christ, which is the church (Eph. 1:22-23). He does not have in view those who were unsaved, outside of the body of Christ.

### **First, which matters, matter?**

Let us state briefly and plainly: some issues matter, while other issues do not matter. What we must do, as faithful Christians, is recognize the difference, especially as they pertain to Paul's instructions here in Romans 14.

Notice, first, that nothing in this chapter – NOTHING – deals with matters that are inherently sinful (things that are always considered sinful, regardless of the context). For example, fornication is never, under any circumstance, an acceptable practice to God (Gal. 5:19), and is therefore considered “inherently” sinful.

Notice, second, that nothing in this chapter – NOTHING – deals with matters that are instrumentally sinful (things that are considered sinful regarding the context in which they are done). For example, while it is not sinful to produce music for entertainment on a mechanical instrument, such as a piano, it IS sinful to produce music for worship on a mechanical instrument. We must not proceed any further in consideration of Romans 14 until we have understood this very important aspect of the text! In this regard, brother Robert Taylor wrote the following:

“Romans 14 is NOT a chapter that justifies digression from doctrinal truth. Romans 14 is NOT a chapter that condones ANY doctrinal falsehood. Romans 14 is NOT a chapter that treats as indifferent or inconsequential doctrinal deviations such as instrumental music and missionary societies. Romans 14 is NOT a chapter that justifies the social drinker in his infamous and iniquitous, his noxious and nefarious habit of imbibing the ‘waters of eternal destruction.’ Romans 14 is NOT a chapter that lends a syllable of support to the infallibility of the human conscience. Yet these, and many others, are some of the abuses, misuses, misunderstandings, misapprehensions and massive mishandlings made maliciously of this crystal clear chapter. If Romans 14 taught what men en masse have said it teaches explicitly or implicitly, it would stand in hopeless, hapless and helpless contradiction to the other

259 chapters in the New Testament and the other 1,188 chapters of the whole Bible. It would then be the proverbial fly in the ointment of the remnant of sacred writings - the book that ascends the ages and surpasses the sages.”<sup>3</sup>

Proceeding, therefore, we recognize that Paul was addressing issues that are considered neither inherently, nor instrumentally, sinful, leaving us with one final question for this segment:

### **Which matters, don't matter?**

Simply put, matters that “don't matter” consist of things that are always “right” to God, yet might be “wrong” to the individual. But, why might they be “wrong” for an individual if they are “right” with God? There are a couple of reasons:

1. Insufficient knowledge of the Scriptures;
2. Lack of personal conviction.

Paul wrote, “...one believes he may eat all things, but he who is weak eats only vegetables...Let each be fully convinced in his own mind” (Rom. 14:2, 5b), and then, “...he who doubts is condemned if he eats, because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Earlier in the book of Romans, Paul wrote, “...faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Now consider, for instance, a new convert to Christ, who was raised believing that to eat pork products was sin in the eyes of God, having never heard (or read for himself) God's word concerning the eating of such meats under our present dispensation. Were that man to violate his own conscience by eating pork, having never accurately heard (or read) God's word on the matter – *having never developed faith concerning the matter* – he would be sinning in the eyes of God by his eating, though such eating truly is a matter indifferent to God. Why? “...because he does not eat from faith; for whatever is not from faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23).

On the other hand, consider a maturing convert to Christ, also raised believing it wrong to eat pork products, but subsequently taught God's acceptance concerning the eating of such meats. If, even though he knows the truth, he continues to have a weak conscience in the matter of eating pork, then he, *himself*, must continue to abstain, because “...he who doubts is condemned if he

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<sup>3</sup> Taylor, Robert. *Studies in Romans*(Abilene, TX: Quality Publications), 1996. p. 241.

*eats...*” (Rom. 14:23). In other words, while he RECOGNIZES what the Bible teaches on a matter of liberty, his conscience remains uncomfortable exercising such liberty, thereby forbidding HIM from partaking. He, however, has NO RIGHT to bind HIS abstinence on anybody else. It is a matter squarely between him and God.

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# How “Social” Should the Gospel Be? \* (Part 2)\*\*

Jack Pinckert, Jr.

City, State

## Does the Bible Teach Us to Battle Social Injustice?

During His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, “*You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire*” (Mt. 5:21-22).<sup>1</sup>

Jesus addresses the Pharisees and shows that while they kept the letter of the law, their hearts were contrary to it. One may indeed not murder, but if he holds contempt for his brother, or even wishes some harm may befall him, how can he claim to be in the image of God? “[W]hoever is angry with his brother without cause” shows anger that leads men to commit outrageous acts over minor issues.

In The Social Principles of Jesus, Rauschenbusch contends that “Jesus demanded that the standards of social morality be raised to a new level.”<sup>2</sup> While Jesus was addressing the Pharisees, He was in no way advocating for a change of the entire class, as the use of personal pronouns shows (i.e., you, whoever). Rauschenbusch goes on to apply Jesus’ words to “the self-respect and sense of personal worth of men... in college communities” and “industrial communities.”<sup>3</sup> While social morality does need to be raised to God’s standards, this is done by the spreading of the gospel. The gospel affects individuals, and thereby society. It does not affect society, correcting the social morality, that they then turn to God.

In Luke 18:1-7 we read of the widow and the judge. In verse one we read that we are to pray and not lose heart. Rauschenbusch relates this to Matthew 6:5-13, where Jesus addresses the worldliness of prayer. Rauschenbusch relates that the widow “had no pull or vote” against the judge who was “untouched by religion

\* PUBLISHER’S NOTE: This article is being reprinted by permission of the author, Mr. Jack Pinckert, Jr., and was first published by the Florida School of Preaching Lectureship Committee (Do You Understand Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount? Ed. Brian R. Kenyon, Lakeland, FL. 2015.)

\*\* EDITOR’S NOTE: Due to space limitations, the editors have divided the original manuscript into two parts.

1 All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Rauschenbusch, Walter. *A Theology of the Social Gospel*. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com. Amazon Digital Services, Inc. 2013. *The Social Principles of Jesus*. New York City, NY.; The Woman’s Press, 1917.

3 Ibid.

and conscience.”<sup>4</sup> Rauschenbusch concludes that this account calls for action. He goes on to say that Jesus called for the same energy and determination that was put into prayer to be used for “straightening out the affairs of the world so that the wrongs of the righteous would be readdressed. A keen social consciousness about the condition of God’s people, coupled with ‘hunger and thirst for justice’ can turn prayer into action.”<sup>5</sup>

The accounts of Matthew 5:21-22 and Luke 18:1-7 do not show that the gospel is to be used to force the conversion of multitudes to the same way of thinking, thus eliminating social wrong. The gospel does not teach that we are to create the kingdom on earth, whereby all social injustices and inequalities are eliminated, allowing people then, and only then, to turn their attention to God. Jesus said, “*My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here*” (Jn. 18:36). As Jesus assured Pilate, then, that He was not a threat to the secular throne of the Caesars, and that His followers posed no threat of danger or civil unrest, so it is today.

One of the problems that the “Social Gospel” misses is that what is considered social injustice changes based on time and the location. What may be considered wrong in one culture, or one generation, may not be in another. God’s word, the Bible, never changes, nor does its method for converting and saving people; it is then through people that society changes, as Christians are to be the “*salt and light of the world*” (Mt. 5:13-14). As salt, Christians are the preserving factor of society. They change life as to make it more desirable, and by their actions cause a thirst in others to be like Christ. As light, Christians dispel the darkness in society, as each individual is transformed by the gospel. Even on the day of Pentecost, only three thousand were converted, by comparison to the two and a half million estimated to be in Jerusalem<sup>6</sup> – a relatively small number, and in no way likened to the social reform that the “Social Gospel” has aimed for.

One of the social injustices that the “Social Gospel” has sought to battle has been the problem of the poor. If the financial walls were to be broken down, it believes that the people would be free of woes, and would be able to seek Christ. In Matthew 26:6-11, however, we read of the account of the woman pouring expensive oil on Jesus’ head. Those in attendance became disturbed, and Jesus says, “*Why do you trouble the woman...For you have the poor with you*

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4 Rauschenbusch, Walter. A Theology of the Social Gospel. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com. Amazon Digital Services, Inc. 2013. *The Social Principles of Jesus*. New York City, NY.; The Woman’s Press, 1917.

5 Ibid.

6 Whiston, William. The Works of Josephus Complete and Unabridged. Peabody, MA.; Hendrickson Publishers, 1987. 588.

*always*” (Mt. 26:10, 11). Jesus was not suggesting that we should not aide the poor, but rather points out that every duty should be done in its proper place. None of the social schemes throughout history have ever eliminated poverty. Not to detract from the plight of the poor, but human nature being what it is will always cause some to disregard others, and for some to suffer the consequences. If it were possible here on earth for it to be different, Jesus would have said what we needed to do, and God would have included it among His other commands to us.

## **The Work of The Church**

Nowhere in the Bible do we read that the church ever responded to worldwide ignorance, hunger, or disease with a call to reform the government, change laws, revamp the education system, or create a better health care system. No, in the Bible we see faithful Christians enduring social injustices and not organizing to fight against them.

In Matthew 5:38-42, Jesus speaks of not resisting those who would do evil, of those who try to sue you for your tunic, and He says to give them your cloak, too. If one compels you to go a mile with them, then go two, and give to those who wish to borrow from you. According to the “Social Gospel,” once all were on a level playing field, then they would be able to focus their attention on Christ.

Jesus could not have meant that the church, Christians, were to be meek, and to lend to all to their own hurt. We see that the early church did not operate in that way, so why should it today? Rauschenbusch holds that Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 6:19-24 are “fundamental and will explain other sayings which follow.”<sup>7</sup> He says, however, that in this passage, “Jesus felt the antagonism of private wealth and the kingdom of God so keenly that he set God and mammon over against each other, and warned us that we must choose between them.”<sup>8</sup> Is Jesus actually telling us that we have to choose between private wealth and God, or is He telling us that we have to prioritize one over the other? Do we allow wealth to come between us and God? God knows that we have needs, and that we are required to take care of our families (1 Tim. 5:8). Paul would later warn the Thessalonians, “*If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat*” (2 Thes. 3:10). In the context it was because they had misunderstandings, but it could also be said that they had gotten their priorities wrong.

Acts 2:44-45 has been used to advocate that the early Christians sold all of their

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7 Rauschenbusch, Walter. A Theology of the Social Gospel. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com. Amazon Digital Services, Inc. 2013. *The Social Principles of Jesus*. New York City, NY.; The Woman’s Press, 1917.

8 Ibid.

goods, that the proceeds might be put for the use of all, creating a type of socialism. The “Social Gospel” uses this as a case in point that, as Christians, there became no distinction between rich or poor. It then seeks to reverse this in order to establish that lack of distinction, so that people may then become Christians.

As we examine Acts 2, though, we see that this was an isolated case for a specific reason, which was not repeated. At that time, many had converted to Christianity on the day of Pentecost. As such, many of those new converts had stayed in Jerusalem, beyond what their financial means allowed. There were still mockers at that time (Acts 2:13), and to avoid the condemnation that might come, Christians came together as a community, and lent as needed the things required to provide for those converts (Acts 2:45). It is obvious that this did not become a practice of Christians, or of the church, as there is no evidence of such in the Bible. In Acts 2:46 we read, “*from house to house*,” indicating that they still had homes, and did not relinquish everything they owned.

In First Corinthians 16:1, “collections were ordered to be made for the poor; but, if there had been a community of goods in the church, there could have been no ground for such recommendations as these, as there could have been no such distinction as rich and poor, if every one, on entering the church, gave up all his goods to a common stock.”<sup>9</sup>

In Acts 5:4, we read of Ananias, who sold a portion of land that he owned. He then gave some of the proceeds from that land, claiming that he had given all. Peter makes it clear in verses 3 and 4 that the property, while Ananias had it, as well as the proceeds from selling it, was his.

As individuals, we may come together at certain times to fulfill needs in our communities, state, nation or even the world, but this is not the duty of the church. The duty of the church is not this activity, or that activity; it is not to get this person elected, or to protest against one vice or another. The work of the church has been, and remains, threefold:

1. Evangelism – to win souls to Christ.
2. Worship – to bring us into communion with God.
3. Instruction – Study of the Bible.

The changing that takes place is in us, individually, as the Holy Spirit works on us through God’s word. Robert F. Kennedy stated that, “Each time a man stands

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9 Clarke, Adam. “Adam Clarke Commentary.” Study Light.Org. 09 October 2014.  
<<http://www.studylight.org/commentaries/acc/view.cgi?bk=ac&ch=2#1>>

up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.” We could say that each time someone is converted to Christ they become a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17), and as such, they then live a life devoted to God (Mt. 5:16), and that each child of God, then, is that ripple, adding to the body of Christ, which sweeps down the mightiest of walls, oppression and resistance. The walls are not swept down to cause a massive wave.

## Conclusion

The “Social Gospel” advocates that if theology does not “adjust itself to modern environment and to meet its present tasks, it will die.”<sup>10</sup> God’s laws have consistently stayed the same and have survived. It has been man’s way that has consistently changed, been altered, disappeared, reappeared, and failed. It is far better to “*set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col. 3:2).

People who advocate the “Social Gospel” claim to be enlightened, and that the evolving of their practices only proves that they are learning and improving, moving closer and closer to the “kingdom on earth,” which they claim will then turn people to Christ, if it were in man, which it is not (Jer. 10:23; Pr. 14:12). Man only boasts of himself, and not of God, giving undue honor to the creation, and not the creator (Rom. 6:21-25). “[I]f local churches would simply focus on what God has commanded a local church to do— then there is no doubt that the world as a whole would see less social injustice, less poverty, and men showing more respect for each other and their rights. A by-product of people striving to live right.”<sup>11</sup>

Today, the “Social Gospel” continues. One of the ways that we see it is in “Political Correctness.” Political correctness is the “conforming to a belief that language and practices which could offend political sensibilities (as in matters of sex or race) should be eliminated.”<sup>12</sup> This is right in line with the “Social Gospel” that says that preaching on homosexuality, abortion, or any other mainstream topic is today’s version of those who oppressed children, women, and the poor during the industrial revolution, which spawned the “Social Gospel.”

As God has pointed out concerning those who teach another gospel, which is not another gospel, they “*bring on themselves swift destruction*” (2 Pet. 2:1). Jesus

10 Rauschenbusch, Walter. A Theology of the Social Gospel. [Kindle DX version]. Retrieved from Amazon.com. Amazon Digital Services, Inc. 2013. *The Social Principles of Jesus*. New York City, NY.; The Woman’s Press, 1917.

11 Walker, Steve. “The Social Gospel.” 09/20/14. <http://www.colonialchurchofchrist.org/socialgospel.pdf>.

12 Merriam-Webster. “Politically Correct.” Merriam-Webster.Com. 10 October 2014. <<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/politically%20correct>>

declared in closing His Sermon on the Mount that we would know [false teachers] by their fruits, and that those not bearing fruit they would be “*cut down and thrown into the fire*” (Mt. 7:19).

*“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil” (Ecc. 12:13-14).*

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# The Divine Nature: Three in One

**Scott D. Crawford**

Clay, Alabama

It is recognized that we, as human beings, have a depth of personality that is more than just skin deep. We recognize within ourselves the different parts of our internal dialogue that arise from memory, rational thought, and emotional tension. The balance between these three areas of our psyche is typically maintained by internal regulators, but when one area is out of whack...Well, problems can arise. The Bible also recognizes that people are more than simply a one dimensional being. In the Bible we find inspired statements that recognize the depth of a person's nature:

*“Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! [5] You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength” (Deut. 6:4-5).<sup>1</sup>*

*“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thes. 5:23).*

Both of these references show an acknowledgment of the complex nature of humans, making us a sum of many parts: heart, soul and strength, in one; spirit, soul and body, in the other. This isn't difficult for us to understand since we see this internal struggle every day.

Just as humans are recognized by the Scriptures to have a multi-layered nature, the Scriptures also recognize and affirm that the Divine Nature is also multi-layered. This is what we typically refer to as the “Godhead,” a term that has been used in a popular sense to represent the Divine essence as shared by three distinct Personalities.<sup>2</sup> The word “Godhead” comes from three Scriptural references in the King James Version: Acts 17:29; Romans 1:20; Colossians 2:9. Many of the recent translations (not all good translations, I agree) have correctly recognized the subtle differences in meaning between the Greek words used in these places<sup>3</sup>, and therefore we now have “the Divine nature” (Acts 17:29),

<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the New King James Version unless otherwise noted.

<sup>2</sup> Wayne Jackson, “What About the Terms “Godhead” and “Trinity”?” Christian Courier (1998-2015). <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/821-what-about-the-terms-godhead-and-trinity> (accessed February 4, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> James R. White, *The King James Only Controversy: Can You Trust Modern Translations?* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1995), 257-258.

“divine nature” (Rom. 1:20), and “Deity” (Col. 2:9). The term applied to this by many Theological Scholars is “Trinity.” On a historical note, Theophilus of Antioch is considered the first to use the term “trinity,” or “triad,”<sup>4</sup> which was further popularized in the writings of Tertullian in early patristic literature.<sup>5</sup> All trustworthy Biblical scholars agree, because it cannot be denied, that the term “Trinity” is nowhere found in the Scriptures. Yet, as with many theological terms, the word “Trinity” does give us a common verbiage to express a Biblical ideal.

Whatever term we use – Godhead, Trinity, or Divine Nature (which will be the preferred nomenclature in the remainder of this article) – we are speaking about a concept adequately defined for us in Scripture: three in one.

### **There is Only One God**

The Scriptures emphatically state that there is only one God. The Old Testament writers repeatedly present the idea of monotheism. As we have already seen in the Shema, quoted above, “*The Lord our God, the Lord is one!*” (Deut. 6:4). When declaring the difference between the dead idols and the living Lord, the Lord speaks through Isaiah, saying, “*For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me*” (Isa. 46:9). The prophets Joel and Malachi also show that there is no other God, and that God is one (Joel 2:27; Mal. 2:10). The New Testament writers also reinforce the idea that there is only one God. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all present Jesus saying the greatest commandment is to love the one God with all one's heart, soul, mind, and strength (Mt. 22:37; Mk. 12:29-30; Lk. 10:27). Paul, a favored instrument of the Holy Spirit, makes reference to the one God (Rom. 3:30; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5). James also wrote, “*You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!*” (Jas. 2:19). All of these Scriptures point to the fact that there is only one God, and that God is one! This truth is understood and recognized by all who claim to be monotheistic worshipers of the God of the Bible.

### **The Divine Nature is Three in One**

We also recognize that the Scriptures speak of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as a single unit in several places. The first place we see such a reference is the Creation event, giving some very telling information concerning the Divine Nature.

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4 Nathan Busenitz, “Did Constantine Invent the Trinity? The doctrine of the Trinity in the writings of the early church fathers.” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 24, no. 2 (2013). ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 4, 2015), 223.

5 Diarmaid MacCullough, *Christianity: The First Three Thousand Years* (New York: Viking Penguin, 2010), 145.

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (Gen. 1:1-2).*

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God” (Jn. 1:1-2).*

Three distinct aspects of the Divine Nature are recorded for us as being present during creation: God, the Spirit of God, and the Word. The only difficulty that might arise is equating Jesus with *“the Word,”* as expressed by John. Space does not allow an adequate examination of this consideration, but for quick reference regarding Jesus as *the Word*, please study John 1:14; First John 1:1-3; and, Revelation 19:13.

The next great event that places the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the same place, acting as a single unit, is the baptism of Jesus (Mt. 3:13-17; Mk. 1:9-11; Lk. 3:21-22). After Jesus is baptized, the heavens open, the Spirit of God comes down as a dove, and a voice declares, *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”*

The next time the Divine Nature is highlighted is during the Great Commission, after the resurrection of Jesus, when Jesus not only tells us He has been given all authority, but also tells of the authority by which a person is to be baptized: *“in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Mt. 28:19). This we still do to this day.

As we go deeper into the writings of the New Testament, we find that two of the apostles preeminent in Acts – Paul and Peter – are both recognizing the Father, Son, and Spirit as a single unit. When Paul is closing the epistle to the Corinthians, he makes this statement: *“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen”* (2 Cor. 13:14). No more succinct comment on the Divine Nature, as being three in one, could have been presented. Paul places each member of the Divine Nature on a similar level to the other, but with different expressions within that nature. Each member of the Corinthian congregation is encouraged through this beautiful doxology. Likewise, Peter also makes note of the Divine Nature when he wrote, *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit”* (1 Pet. 3:18).

No more compelling explanation of this passage regarding the Divine Nature could be devised than that spoken by James Burton Coffman:

“But, did not Christ declare that he himself would raise himself up from the grave (John 10:17)? Yes, indeed; but there are hundreds of examples in the New Testament where something done by one member of the Godhead is attributed to another member of it. The resurrection of Christ is also ascribed to the Father (1 Corinthians 6:14; 2 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 1:20), thus being ascribed to all three, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.”<sup>6</sup>

As Coffman indicates, it is out of a seeming contradiction that Peter makes a statement regarding the oneness of the Divine Nature. Beautiful! And make no mistake – it is the Holy Spirit which speaks to us via the pen of both Paul and Peter.

### **Three Individuals Identified as God**

So far we have seen that there is only one God; that the Scriptures speak of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit as being a unified force; and, now, we want to see that each individual of that unified force is identified as God. We often refer to God, the one true God, but we should also remember that the word “God” suggests the quality, or nature, of being divine.

“The word 'God' is not the name of a personality; it is the name of a nature, a quality of being.”<sup>7</sup>

Following this understanding, we find that the Father is identified as God. In the prayer of Jesus we find these words:

*“Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You, [2] as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him. [3] And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent’” (Jn. 17:1-3).*

Notice that Jesus recognizes the Father as “*the only true God.*” This truth was also revealed by the Holy Spirit through Paul when he recognized “*the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 1:3), and later when Paul noted that every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord “*to the*

6 James Burton Coffman, “Commentary on 1 Peter 3”. Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament (1983-1999). <http://classic.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?book=1pe&chapter=003> (Accessed February 24, 2015).

7 Wayne Jackson, “The Biblical Doctrine of the Godhead” Christian Courier (1998-2015). <https://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1488-biblical-doctrine-of-the-godhead> (accessed February 4, 2015).

*glory of God the Father*” (Phil. 2:11). Peter also joins the chorus of recognition when he tells those pilgrims they were “*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*” (1 Pet. 1:2).

We find that the Son is identified as God. In John 1:1, the Word was not only with God, but “*the Word was God.*” We find in Second Corinthians 4:4, we read that the Christ is the “*image of God,*” and in Philippians 2:6, Christ Jesus was in “*the form of God.*” Peter also made the connection that Jesus Christ is God:

*“Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ”* (2 Pet. 1:1).

The Hebrew writer chimes in, quoting Psalm 45:6, as an indication of the Divine Nature of Jesus:

*“...But to the Son He says: 'Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your kingdom'”*  
(Heb. 1:8).

If this were not enough, we also have the very testimony of our Lord Jesus:

*“Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM'”* (Jn. 8:58).

We might not recognize this reference by Jesus immediately, but the Jews of the time certainly went straightaway to Moses and the burning bush, where God said to Moses, “*I AM WHO I AM...Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'*” (Ex. 3:14). We know those Jews recognized this reference because John tells us they took up stones to cast at Jesus – to kill Him. Although there are many today who deny that Jesus is God, the Jews of the time knew exactly what Jesus was claiming!

Finally, we see that the Holy Spirit is also identified as God. Look first at the episode in Acts where Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of land, brought the money to the apostles, but then lied about the amount that they had received. They thought they could keep the truth from the apostles:

*“...But Peter said, 'Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to*

*the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself? [4] While it remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control? Why have you conceived this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God” (Acts 5:3-4).*

Notice carefully that Peter says they lied to the Holy Spirit, but then that they had lied to God. Perhaps Ananias didn't think he was lying to God, but only to the apostles and the church. However, since the apostles were filled with the Spirit of God, and the church is the temple of God, when Ananias lied to these he lied to God Himself!<sup>8</sup> We can also see that the Holy Spirit possesses the attributes of God. For example:

- We are told that God formed man (Gen. 2:7); Elihu tells Job that the Spirit of God made him (Job 33:4).
- We are told that there are no secret places and that no one can hide from God (Jer. 23:24); David also notes that he could not flee the Spirit of God (Ps. 139:7).
- We are told that God's understanding – His knowledge – has no limits (Ps. 147:5); Jesus tells the apostles that the Holy Spirit will teach them all things (Jn. 14:26).
- We find that the Lord can be grieved (Ps. 78:40); Paul reminds us that through our actions we can grieve the Holy Spirit (Eph. 4:30).

We can also see in passages such as First Corinthians 2:10-11; Second Corinthians 3:18; Hebrews 9:14; Second Thessalonians 2:13; and, First Peter 1:10-11, attributes of the Spirit are also equated with the attributes of the Divine Nature.

Each individual personality within the Divine Nature is attributed with characteristics that we typically associate with God – the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

### **So What Does This Matter?**

The first and most enduring reason this discussion of the Divine Nature matters is because the Scriptures teach these truths. Some naysayers refuse these truths on the basis that the Scriptures never make the explicit statement that “God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one and the same.” This may be true, but as we

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<sup>8</sup> David L. Roper, Truth for Today Commentary: an Exegesis & Application of the Holy Scriptures Acts 1-14 (Searcy: Resource Publications, 2001), 183.

have witnessed, the revelation of the Divine Nature is often revealed in Scriptures with a discussion of an unrelated topic: the Creation, the authority for baptism, the deity of Christ, the attributes of the Holy Spirit, etc. These truths about the Divine Nature are taught by the apostles and other writers of the New Testament by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, even though some continue to claim the “doctrine of the Trinity was an invention of Emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicaea.”<sup>9</sup> Accusations such as these only highlight poor Biblical scholarship and exegesis.

Further, even though we prefer to speak of the Divine Nature, what has been termed the “Doctrine of the Trinity” does act as a profitable diagnosis tool that has identified “ancient heresies, modern distorted zeal, and liberal theology,”<sup>10</sup> which have destroyed individual lives and caused divisions among the saints. Early on, Arianism denied the full deity of Christ, which was a motivating factor in calling the Council of Nicaea in AD 325.<sup>11</sup> In the 1500s, the Socinians launched off the Arian fallacy, and denied not only the deity of the Son, but also the personality of the Holy Spirit.<sup>12</sup> We can even come forward to the present day, noting that the Jehovah’s Witnesses deny the Divine Nature as presented in the Scriptures in all of their writings.<sup>13</sup>

From the beginning, and down through history, Christians have used what is described as the “Doctrine of the Trinity” as a litmus test, a bird in a mine, to help recognize heresies and confront error. Although we certainly would have desired those at the Council of Nicaea to choose a more Biblically grounded term when describing the Divine Nature, we are nevertheless thankful to that group of men for their diligence in facing those early heretics who sought to deny, deflate, and destroy the role of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

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9 Nathan Busenitz, “Did Constantine Invent the Trinity? The doctrine of the Trinity in the writings of the early church fathers.” *Master’s Seminary Journal* 24, no. 2 (2013). ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 4, 2015), 217.

10 Thomas K. Johnson, “Why is the Trinity so Difficult and so Important?.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 38, no. 2 (2014). ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost (accessed February 6, 2015), 102.

11 Jesse Lyman Hurlbut, *The Story of the Christian Church* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1954), 86.

12 Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demarest, *Integrative Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 1:252.

13 Jan Karel Van Baalen, *The Chaos of Cults: a study in present-day isms* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1962), 268.

# The Issue of Homosexuality (Part 3)

**Tim Bench**

Abilene, Texas

## **New Testament teachings concerning this issue.**

As we conclude our examination of this issue, let us notice what is taught in the New Testament concerning this issue. Indeed, the New Testament is equally direct about homosexuality.

*“Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 6:9-10).<sup>1</sup>*

*“For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.” (Rom. 1:26-28).*

*“For whoremongers that defile themselves with mankind...” (1 Tim. 10).*

*“Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of the eternal fire” (Jude 1:7).*

Note here that Jude 1:7 directly mentions “fornication” and “strange flesh,” but makes no mention of the “lack of hospitality.”

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

Our society now largely “accepts” what has been regarded generally as the most egregious sin imaginable for centuries. Here are actual quotes from podiums and from churches and celebrities nationwide:

“I want God's gay and lesbian children to know of God's unconditional love and acceptance of them as well. We cannot find any condemnation in scripture for committed monogamous same-sex relationships” (*Reverend Charles Coppinger, Chaplain of the Arizona Legislature in a letter to legislators, November 7, 2000*).

“The half-dozen biblical references to homosexuality do not reflect what we understand today about loving relationships. This is an identity, not a sin” (*Reverend Dan Johnson, Good Samaritan United Methodist Church in Edina, MN*).

“Homosexuality and sodomy are not ethical sins. No one is being hurt, no one is being cheated, nobody's rights are being infringed upon. Homosexuality is a religious sin, analogous to other Biblical prohibitions, like not eating the carcass of a dead animal, or not sleeping with a woman during her menstrual cycle” (*American Orthodox Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, www.religioustolerance.org*).

“In reality, there are no biblical literalists, only selective literalists. By abolishing slavery and ordaining women, millions of Protestants have gone far beyond biblical literalism. It's time we did the same for homophobia” (*William Sloane Coffin, former chaplain of Yale University, peace activist, and leading liberal clergy person*).

“I think Jesus was a compassionate, super-intelligent gay man who understood human problems. On the cross, he forgave the people who crucified him. Jesus wanted us to be loving and forgiving. I don't know what makes people so cruel. Try being a gay woman in the Middle East -- you're as good as dead...

“Religion promotes hatred and spite against gays...From my point of view, I would ban religion completely” (*Elton John, Parade magazine interview, 2006*).

"Homosexuality was well known in the ancient world, well before Christ was born and Jesus never said a word about homosexuality. In all of his teachings about multiple things -- he never said that gay people should be condemned. I personally think it is very fine for gay people to be married in civil ceremonies" (*Jimmy Carter, 3-20-2012, Huffington Post*).

**Homosexuality is condemned in both the Old and the New Testaments; this is beyond dispute. It is an immoral behavior that will lead one who is unrepentant directly to Hell – not because any of us here, today, say so, but because the Bible explicitly says so. Man’s opinions, and his “evolving” sense of morality, do not override the Bible. Would your congregation “accept” an unrepentant bank robber, philanderer, drunkard, or murderer into its midst? Of course not. The very thought of doing so is ludicrous, yet these are the very sins which are listed alongside homosexuality in First Corinthians 6. Homosexuality is as vile as adultery or murder or theft, and those churches which “accept” unrepentant homosexuals simply ignore and defy what the Bible very specifically says, to their eternal peril.**

"There is nothing said in the whole Bible that is favorable toward homosexuality; every passage in both the Old and New Testaments that addresses the practice condemns it", from "What Does the Bible Say About Homosexuality" (*David Stewart, Stewart Publications, Searcy, Arkansas, page 63*).

"The vice of the Sodomites is an unparalleled enormity. It departs from the natural passion and desire, planted into nature by God, according to which the male has a passionate desire for the female. Sodomy craves what is entirely contrary to nature. Whence comes this perversion? Without a doubt it comes from the devil." (*Martin Luther, from "What Luther Says" by Ewald Plass, page 134*).

"Those of us who are still sane in this matter are called bigoted, prejudiced, and homophobic. The good guys are now the bad guys, and the bad guys are the good guys. God said the day would come when evil would be called good and good would be called evil (reference to Isaiah 5:20)..." (*John W. Barcus, page 832, 2004 MSOP Lectureships*).

Condemning homosexuality as sinful will inevitably get you branded as “intolerant,” “legalistic,” or, “hateful.” Yet, I pose this question for all readers: what could POSSIBLY be MORE loving than attempting to get an erring person to repent from their sin, to follow Biblical decrees, and attempt to save them from losing their soul, whether it be homosexuality, adultery, fornication, or ANY sexual sin? Speaking truth is not “hate.” It is the very definition of “love,” but deaf ears will often reject the message.

“Jesus never said anything about homosexuality!” has become an increasingly common refrain from those wishing to justify gay and lesbian behavior. Matthew 19:4-6 clearly stipulates that marriage (as per Jesus Himself) is the union of one man and one woman. Two members of the same gender do not meet this prerequisite. Sexual acts outside this union, including adultery, incest, fornication, pedophilia, or homosexuality, would be thus forbidden as sinful. Jesus made simple explanations about what WAS acceptable to God, and everything OUTSIDE those parameters was thus NOT acceptable. This would preclude the necessity of having to individually list dozens upon dozens of excluded acts, which is seemingly what some in modern society demand.

Today, whom will you follow? Will the Bible serve as your guide, or will pop culture? Will politicians, and their threats of arrest, charging you with a “hate crime,” cause you to withdraw into a corner like a moral coward, or will you be emboldened to stand firm for the gospel, even in the face of government opposition? “Oh, that could NEVER happen in small town America,” you might say. No one expected it to arrive in Houston, Texas, either, did they?

Will you follow the whims of man, or will you follow the will of God? Which force will rule you: the media or the Master? Are your values shaped and formed and molded by the Holy Book, or by what the “society” of a largely tepid and unholy world dictate? And, perhaps most importantly, as the pressures on churches escalate, as freedom of speech, even from a PULPIT, is threatened by subpoenas and court orders and lesbian mayors, where will you stand when the inevitable day comes, when the decision about whom you will serve arrives at your doorstep, literally? Will it be God or man? Where is your allegiance?

If your total and complete allegiance to God has weakened in these increasingly politically-correct days, or if your belief system has been affected by the relentless assault by mass media, you are not alone. Biblical laws are under attack, as is the blessed “Book” which guides our lives.

# What is the Gift of the Holy Spirit (Part 7)

**Doug Post**

Vernon, Connecticut

## Understanding Pneuma Hagion (“Spirit Holy”) in the New Testament

In his book, *Word Studies on the Holy Spirit*, Bullinger deals with every occurrence of pneuma (translated “spirit”) in the New Testament. Although one must be aware of his Calvinistic leanings, Bullinger’s scholarship may be distinguished from his Calvinistic commentary. Though it also seems that Bullinger erroneously believed that miraculous gifts had not ceased, his scholarship regarding his word studies is not influenced thereby. Distinguishing scholarship from theological error is common in the use of denominational scholars (e.g., the well-known Baptist Greek scholar, A. T. Robertson). For the Christian, making this distinction is a “rule of thumb” in the use of conservative denominational scholars’ works. In noting every appearance of pneuma hagion (“spirit holy”) Bullinger writes:

“When we have examined all the fifty passages where this expression (pneuma hagion) occurs, we shall find this to be the general result, that it is never used in the sense in which (to pneuma to hagion) 'the pneuma the holy' is used: that is to say, it is never used of the Holy Spirit, but always of what He does; it is never used of the Giver, but always of His gift and operations. A careful study of all the fifty occurrences of pneuma hagion establishes the fact that this is the uniform usage of the expression.”<sup>1</sup>

**Bullinger continues:**

“But, however we may mention pneuma hagion, there is one thing certain: **it never means the Holy Spirit himself**, but always His Divine 'power' as put forth and manifested in various ways and operations, and in His bestowal of spiritual 'gift' or powers as described in 1 Cor. xii. 7, 11”<sup>2</sup> [emp.—DP].

**Bullinger goes on to say:**

“We have it, here, on divine Authority, that 'power from on high' is to be taken as the equivalent of the Greek, pneuma hagion, whenever we meet with it. This 'power' may be

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<sup>1</sup> Bullinger, E. W. *Word Studies on the Holy Spirit*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1985. 26.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* 28-29.

manifested in different forms. It may be 'power' for service, for speech, for miracles, for wisdom and knowledge, for teaching, or for whatever it may be needed. It may sometimes be well rendered 'Divine power,' or 'spiritual power,' or 'spiritual gift.'"<sup>3</sup>

### In the footnotes of the preceding quotation Bullinger writes:

"It is interesting to note that, in this very Gospel, Luke claims to have this 'power.' In Luke i. 3 he says that he had perfect understanding of these things 'from above.' Not 'from the very first' (A.V.), or 'from the first' (R.V.). The Greek here is ἄνωθεν (anōthen) from above, and should be so rendered, as it is in Jas. i. 17: 'Every good gift and every perfect gift cometh down from above' (not 'from the first.') Jas. iii. 15: 'This wisdom descendeth not from above.' 17: 'The wisdom that is from above.' John iii. 3, 7: 'Ye must be born from above' (see margin). The A.V. renders it 'again'; the R.V. 'anew.' Both Versions have 'from above' in the margin. Luke xxiv. 49 expresses the same truth, though another word is used to describe it. So, in ch. i. 3, Luke had his 'understanding' from above, and that is why it was 'perfect.'"<sup>4</sup>

### Bullinger concludes:

"From all that has been said of pneuma hagion it will be seen that the usage of the expression marks it off very distinctly from the Holy Spirit; and thus distinguishes the gift from the Giver. As, however, in most of the passages the Translators and Revisers have taken liberty of inserting the definite article, 'the'; and used capital letters; it has been, and is, generally believed to refer to the Holy Spirit. The importance of our work will be at once seen: as it will enable the ordinary English reader to distinguish not only what pneuma means in all its 385 occurrences, but what pneuma hagion means in the fifty places where we meet with this expression. ....How does all this affect what is spoken of, theologically, as the 'indwelling of the Holy Spirit'? The answer is that the difficulty is partly of our own creating; from our not carefully noting the exact language of Scripture; partly from our clinging to 'tradition'; and partly from the failure of human terminology when used of Divine truths."<sup>5</sup>

3 Bullinger, E. W. Word Studies on the Holy Spirit. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Kregel Publications, 1985. 28.

4 Ibid, 29.

5 Ibid, 36.

# ***Travel directory of churches of Christ***

*Since we cannot attest to the soundness of any given assembly, we suggest you call ahead and speak with the Elders or Preacher.*

**Remember: always make plans to worship God, even on vacation, or just out-of-town for the weekend.**

## ***Alabama***

**Montevallo Church of Christ:** 830 Vine St, Montevallo, AL. 35115

Sunday Bible Class: 10 AM \*\*\*Morning Service: 11 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 6 PM\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Class: 7 PM\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 205.665.7579 \*\*\***Preacher: Ray Brunner; Scott Crawford; & John Hutchinson**

**East Huntsville church of Christ:** 801 Humes Ave Huntsville, AL. 35801

Sunday Bible Study: 9:00 am\*\*\*Sunday Worship: 10 am & 1 pm\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Study: 7:00 pm  
[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 256.534.4001\*\*\***Preacher: Bill Cantrell**

**Riverchase Church of Christ:** 1868 Montgomery Hwy, Birmingham, AL 35244

Sunday Bible Class: 9:30 AM\*\*\*Morning Service: 8:30 & 10:30\*\*\*Evening Service: 6 PM\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Class: 7 PM\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 205.988.5808\*\*\***Preacher: Dewayne Spivey**

**Roebuck Parkway Church of Christ:** 400 Roebuck Pkwy, Birmingham, AL 35206

Sunday Bible Class: 9 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 10 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 5 PM\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Class: 7 PM\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 205.833.1400\*\*\***Preacher: Jason Moon**

**Austinville Church of Christ:** 2833 Danville Rd. SW Decatur, AL 35603

Sunday Bible Class: 9:30 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 10:30 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 5:30 PM\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Class: 7 PM\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone 256.353.4256\*\*\***Preacher: Mark N. Posey**

## ***Arkansas***

**Letona Church of Christ:** P.O. box 141 Letona, Arkansas 72085

Sunday Bible Study: 10 am\*\*\*Sunday Worship: 11 Am\*\*\*Sunday Evening: 5 pm\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Study: 6 pm\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 501.230.1201\*\*\***Preachers: Sid Scudder, Jack Meredith**

**Newton Street church of Christ:** 412 Newton Street Paragould, AR. 72450

Sunday am Bible Study - 9:15\*\*\*Sunday Morning Worship - 10:00\*\*\*Sunday Evening Worship - 5:00  
Wednesday Bible Study – 6:30\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone 870.378.5551\*\*\***Preacher: Joshua Dement**

## ***California***

## ***Colorado***

## ***Connecticut***

**Tolland County Church Of Christ:** 24 Hyde Ave (Rt.30) P.O. Box 3201 Vernon, CT 06066

Sunday Bible Class: 9 A.M.\*\*\*Morning Service: 10 A.M.\*\*\* Evening Service: 12:45 P.M.\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Class: 7 P.M.\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone 860.810.9833\*\*\***Preacher: Douglas Post**

## ***Florida***

**Bellview Church of Christ:** 4850 Saufley Field Road Pensacola, Florida 32526

Sunday Bible Class 9:00 A.M.\*\*\*Morning Service: 10:00 A.M.\*\*\* Evening Service: 6:00 P.M.\*\*\*  
Wednesday: Bible Class 7 P.M.\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 850.455.7595\*\*\***Preacher: Michael Hatcher**

**Freeport Church of Christ:** 17003 Highway 331 SouthPO Box 66 Freeport, Florida 32439

Sunday: Bible Study: 9:00 am\*\*\* Sunday Worship: 11am\*\*\*Evening Service: 6pm\*\*\*Wednesday Bible study: 7pm\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 850.835.4640\*\*\***Preacher: Eric Farrior**

**College Avenue church of Christ:** 337 DeFuniak Springs, FL. 32435

Sunday Bible Class: 9 am\*\*\*Sunday Morning Worship 10 am\*\*\* Sunday Evening 6 pm\*\*\*Wednesday Bible study 6 pm\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*850-892-5384\*\*\***Preacher:Robert Alexander**

**Midway church of Christ:** 7226 Tamiami Tr. Sarasota Fl. 34243

Sunday: Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.\*\*\*Morning Service: 10:30 A.M.\*\*\*Evening Service: 6:00 P.M.\*\*\*Tuesday:  
Ladies Class: 10:00 A.M.\*\*\*Wednesday: Bible Class 7 P.M.\*\*\*No Website at this time\*\*\*Phone: 941-355-  
6785\*\*\***Preacher: Jack Pinckert Jr.**

### ***Georgia***

**Hartley Bridge Road church of Christ:** 3465 Hartley Bridge Road, Macon, GA. 31216

Sunday Bible Class 10 AM\*\*\*Sunday Worship 11 AM\*\*\*Sunday Evening 6 PM\*\*\* [Church Website Click Here](#) \*\*\*Phone: 478.781.1818\*\*\***Preacher: Steve Waller**

### ***Kansas***

**Parsons church of Christ:** 2900 Briggs Ave., Parsons, Kansas 67357

Sunday Bible Class: 9:45 AM\*\*\*Morning Service: 10:45 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 6:00 PM\*\*\*Wednesday  
Bible Class: 7:00 PM\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 620-421-1497\*\*\***Preacher: Cloyd “Ben” Frock, Jr.**

### ***Kentucky***

**Mt Moriah church of Christ:** 181 Mt. Moriah Rd. Dunmor KY 42339

Sunday Bible Study: 9 AM\*\*\*Morning Service 10 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 6 PM\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Study:  
6PM\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 270.934.2007\*\*\***Preacher: Rick Shutt**

**Sturgis church of Christ:** 801 N. Monroe St. Sturgis, KY 42459

Sunday Bible Class: 10:00 AM\*\*\*Morning Service: 11:00 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 6:00 PM\*\*\*Wednesday  
Bible Class: 6:00 PM\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: (270) 333-4371\*\*\***Preacher: Audie  
Cherry**

### ***Maine***

**Gray Church of Christ:** 13 Liberty Ave, Gray Maine, 04039

Sunday Bible Class: 10 A.M.\*\*\*Morning Service: 11 A.M.\*\*\*Evening Service: 6 PM\*\*\*Thursday Bible Class:  
6 P.M.\*\*\*No Website yet\*\*\*Phone: 207.299.0454\*\*\***Preacher: James Miller**

### ***Michigan***

**Ridge Road Church of Christ:** 1770 Ridge Road; Ypsilanti, MI 48198;

Sunday Bible Study 10:00 a.m.\*\*\* Morning Worship 11:00 a.m.\*\*\*Evening Worship 6:00 p.m.\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Study 7:30 p.m.\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone 734-485-293  
**Preacher: Leonard J. Whit**

### ***Nebraska***

**Kearney church of Christ** 1004 East 16th St. PO BOX 643 Kearney NE 68848

Sunday Bible Class 9:30 a.m.\*\*\* Sunday Worship 10:30 a.m.\*\*\* Wednesday Bible Class 7:00 p.m.  
[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 308.240.4622\*\*\***Preacher:John Shafer**

### ***North Carolina***

**Eden church of Christ:** 250 the boulevard, Eden NC 27288

Sunday Morning Bible class 9am\*\*\*Sunday Worship 10am\*\*\*No evening service\*\*\*Thursday Bible class 7pm\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 276-340-2653\*\*\***Preacher: James Oldfield**

### ***Ohio***

**Wolf Creek church of Christ:** Malta, OH (Rt. 78-West of town)

Sunday Morning Bible Class 9:45\*\*\*Morning Worship, 10:30 AM\*\*\*Evening Worship 7:00PM\*\*\*  
Wednesday Bible class 7:00PM\*\*\*No Website\*\*\*Phone: 740-962-3363\*\*\***No regular preacher**

### ***Tennessee***

**Sevierville Church of Christ:** 208 Hicks Dr, Sevierville, TN 37862

Sunday Bible Class: 9 AM\*\*\*Morning Service: 10 AM\*\*\*Evening Service: 6 PM\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Study: 7 PM\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 865.453.8009\*\*\***Preacher: John Daniels**

**Cullom church of Christ:** Hwy 84 & Collins Cove Rd, Livingston, TN 38570,

Sunday Bible Study 9am\*\*\*Worship 10 am\*\*\*Sunday Evening 6pm\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Study 6pm\*\*\*  
[Chuech Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*No phone\*\*\***William H. Sowder Sr.**

**Central Church of Christ:** 112 Hay Long Avenue Mt. Pleasant, TN 38474

Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 AM\*\*\*Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM\*\*\*Sunday Evening: 6:00 AM\*\*\*Wednesday Study: 6:30 PM\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone Number: (931) 325-3040\*\*\***Preacher: Danny Douglas**

***Texas***

**Oldham Lane Church of Christ:** 5049 Oldham Lane, Abilene Texas,

Sunday Bible Class: 9 A.M.\*\*\*Morning Service: 10 A.M.\*\*\*Evening Service: 6 P.M.\*\*\*Wednesday Bible Class: 7 P.M.\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 325-695-0055\*\*\***Preacher: Chris McCurley**

**Northpoint Church of Christ:** 908 Imperial Dr. Denton, TX 76209

Sunday Bible Class 9:30 AM\*\*\*Sunday Worship 10:30 AM\*\*\*Sunday Evening 1:00 PM\*\*\*Wednesday B.C./Worship 7:00 PM\*\*\*Scripture Cache [www.scripturecache.com](http://www.scripturecache.com)\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\* Phone: 940.387.1429\*\*\***Preacher: Dub McClish**

**Central Church of Christ:** 507 Park Ave. Weatherford, Texas 76086

Sunday Bible Study: 9:30 AM\*\*\* Sunday Worship: 10:30 AM\*\*\* Wednesday Study: 4:30 PM\*\*\* No Website\*\*\*Phone 817.304.3615\*\*\***No formal preacher: David Calvert**

**Leonard church of Christ:** 204 East Fannin St. Leonard, TX. 75452

Sunday AM B/S- 9:00-9:40\*\*\*Sunday AM Worship- 9:45\*\*\*Sunday PM Worship- 6:00\*\*\*Wed. Bible study- 7:00\*\*\*[Church Website Click Here](#)\*\*\*Phone: 903.587.2229\*\*\***Preacher: Bob Lewis**