

Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

Volume XXIX

2000

January

April

July

October

February

May

August

November

March

June

September

Defender



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RELIGIOUS FENCE STRADDLING

Roelf L. Ruffner

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD *be* God, follow him: but if Baal, *then* follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kin. 18:21).

Many years ago as a lad growing up in the deserts of southeastern New Mexico, I used to hunt lizards with my trusty BB gun. I climbed over, under, and between many a barbed wire fence in pursuit of my prey. One lesson I learned quickly—you **do not straddle a barbed wire fence!** If you ignored this rule you ended up with ripped britches, a painful behind, or both.

Many people in the religious world try to straddle the issue of baptism. It does not fit in with their Calvinistic doctrine of “faith only” salvation. Recently I obtained an audio tape of a Sunday morning sermon delivered by a Baptist minister in our area entitled, “Why Are Baptists So Extreme About Baptism? Matthew 28:18-20.” I was intrigued by this contradictory title. The speaker quickly assured his listeners that one did not have to be baptized (immersed in water) in order to be saved; a popular false doctrine, not just among Baptists. He also related the long-standing Baptist position that one did need to be baptized to obey the Lord and to join the Baptist denomination or “Yes, you need to be baptized—No, you don’t need to be baptized.” Half apologizing he told how he had struggled with this issue and had decided to stay with his denomination’s position. A mighty-barbed fence to straddle!

But being a New Testament Christian I do not care what the Baptist position is on baptism or even the “Church of Christ” position. They may be wrong. I want

to know the New Testament’s position on baptism. In the day of judgment I will not be judged by the *Baptist Manual* but the words of Christ (John 12:48). Here, in **a nutshell**, is the New Testament’s position on baptism:

1. You must be baptized in order to be saved. You are not saved before baptism. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21).

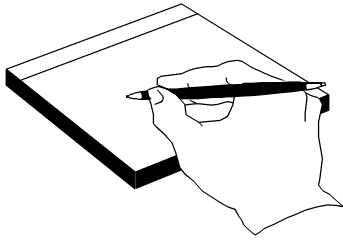
2. Baptism puts one into Christ. “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27).

3. We must be baptized for the right reason—for remission or forgiveness of sins. “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). See also Acts 19:1-5.

4. When we are baptized God adds us to His kingdom, the church of Christ. “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and *of* the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5). “They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls...And the Lord added to them day by day those that were saved” (Acts 2:41, 47—ASV).

It is obvious from these few passages that you
(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Fellowship

John, by inspiration of God wrote, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:3-7). Consider John's discussion relating to his recipients fellowship. In verse three, John says that they had fellowship "with us." That is they had fellowship with the apostles. John continues to say that the apostles have fellowship with God. Since the apostles have fellowship with God, and they have fellowship with the apostles, then they have fellowship with God. Initially, this is John's argument. He continues that only as they walk in the light can they have fellowship with God (vv. 6-7) and thus with the apostles.

I want to especially consider the initial discussion of fellowship as it relates to a modern day question. John's basic argument is: ① If the apostles (a person) has fellowship with God, and ② I have fellowship with them (the apostles or a person), then ③ I have fellowship with God. In this case, the apostles did have fellowship with God, but what if they did not. Would it not be correct to then argue: ① If a person does not have fellowship with God, and ② and I have fellowship with them, then ③ I do not have fellowship with God. If not, why not? I understand that there might be occasions where a person, because of sin within his heart that no one knows about, does not have fellowship with God

and we fellowship him. We would be in fellowship with that one based upon the knowledge which we possess, which would be that they are a faithful Christian and in fellowship with God having no way to see the condition of their heart. However, when we can know (through a person's actions or doctrine) that a person does not have fellowship with God and we fellowship him, then how can it be otherwise that we sever our fellowship with God. This, then, is guilt by fellowship (or association). Many will accept the initial statements, yet some will turn around and deny the reverse of John's argument.

Years ago a preacher told me that he did not believe in guilt by association. Others have written articles attacking the idea of guilt by association. Yet, one of the definitions of fellowship is association. Thus, according to John's argument above, there is guilt by association (or fellowship). This same preacher has bragged that he will go anywhere to preach the gospel. Why not, if you do not believe in being guilty by your association (fellowship)? Yet, to give further evidence of this principle, again listen to John. "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

Policy Statement

All correspondence written to *Defender*, myself (Michael Hatcher), or to the elders at Bellview concerning anything in *Defender* is viewed as intended for publication unless otherwise stated. While it is not the practice of *Defender* to publish our correspondence, we reserve the right to publish such **without further permission being necessary** should the need or desire arise.

* * * * *

Occasionally we receive requests to reprint articles from *Defender*. It is our desire to get sound material into the hands of brethren. Thus, it is our policy to allow reproduction of any articles that should appear in this publication. However, honesty should demand that you give proper credit when reprinting an article. You should give the author credit for his work and we would appreciate your including that you got the article from this paper.

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). Does the bringing of this doctrine only mean **teaching** of something contrary to the doctrine of Christ or can it also apply to the **living** of something contrary to Christ’s doctrine? Surely it applies to both!

There are other passages which teach the same principle—guilt by association (or fellowship). “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). “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). “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:5). “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject” (Tit. 3:10). “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” (Rev. 18:4). How can these passages (along with others) be ignored by these brethren?

Those who hold the view that they will go anywhere to preach do not view their presence as fellowship. However, as a director of a lectureship program, we only ask those who are in fellowship with us. We would not knowingly ask anyone to speak on our lectureship who is not in fellowship with us. The only exception to that might be if we asked someone for the purpose of exposing what they are teaching. Even then we would try to word the advertisements in such a way

that everyone seeing it would know that we are not in fellowship with that one and we are exposing the false teacher. Certainly I would go into a denominational setting to **expose** the errors of that denominational group and teach the truth. However, that is a far cry from appearing on a lectureship program (or whatever they want to call it) **with** them (even if I am teaching the truth). Appearing at a denominational setting to expose them does not parallel with a preacher today appearing with those liberals who are no longer in fellowship with God. Would I be guilty of association (fellowship) by appearing on such a lectureship? If the express purpose is not to expose their error—Absolutely. Let us not lose our eternal reward because of associating (having fellowship) with those who are not in fellowship with God. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

cannot straddle the fence on baptism. Yet, in case you get the “high-horse” please read the closing words of a radio message delivered by one of “our own” preachers, Max Lucado, last year: “I want to encourage you to find a church, I want to encourage you to be baptized, I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But I don’t want you to do any of that **so that you can be saved**. I want you to do all that **because you are saved**” (Emphasis mine—RLR). Mr. Lucado is the pulpit minister for the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio and a popular author and speaker (for some). Please note his attempt at religious fence straddling! It sounds like warmed up Baptist doctrine. Compare them both with the words of the New Testament.

Friends, let us not be fence straddlers on baptism or any doctrine where the Bible speaks! In our age of compromise and easy religion let us seek the “narrow way” which leads to life eternal (Mat. 7:13-14). This way is not found in the *Baptist Manual* or in the teachings of their proteges but in the living truth of the New Testament. That truth will “make you free” from the barbed errors of denominationalism to serve the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ (John 8:31-32).

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25th Annual Bellview Lectures

Date: June 10-14, 2000

Sad Statements Of The Bible

Houston College of the Bible Lectures

Roman Catholicism

February 27 - March 1, 2000

David P. Brown, Lectureship Director

For more information: Church Office (281) 353-2707 or Fax (281) 288-3676

Sunday, February 27

9:30 AM	The New Testament Prediction Of The Apostasy	Ira Y. Rice, Jr.
10:30 AM	The Difference In The 1 st Century Church And The Catholic Church	Noah Hackworth
4:00 PM	History Of The Apostasy And The Catholic Church, AD 150-700	Paul Vaughn
5:00 PM	History Of The Catholic Church, AD 700-1500	Tracey Dugger
6:00 PM	History Of The Catholic Church, AD 1500 To The Present	Tom Wacaster

Monday, February 28

9:00 AM	Standard Of Authority For The Catholic Church And For The Lord's Church	Kenneth Ratcliff
10:00 AM	False Miracles Of The Catholic Church	Roddy Covington
	The Role Of A Christian Woman (Ladies Class)	Tonne Williamson
11:00 AM	The Intolerance Of Roman Catholicism	Eddie Whitten
1:30 PM	The Confessional And Its Abuses	Jesse Whitlock
2:30 PM	The Seven Sacraments	Gary Summers
3:30 PM	The Worship Of The Catholic Church	Danny Douglas
	<i>DINNER BREAK</i>	
7:00 PM	Review Of Campbell-Purcell Debate	Tyler Young
8:00 PM	Catholic Forgeries And Propaganda: Errors In The Versions Of Scriptures	B. J. Clarke

Tuesday, February 29

9:00 AM	The Organization Of The Catholic Church	Johnnie Scaggs
10:00 AM	The Apocrypha: Is It Part Of The Bible?	David Watson
	New Testament Examples For Christian Women (Ladies Class)	Tonne Williamson
11:00 AM	Maryolatry	Daniel Denham
1:30 PM	The Catholic Doctrine Of The 10 Commandments And Their View Of The Old Testament	Barry Grider
2:30 PM	The All Sufficiency Of The Scriptures And Its Conflict With Catholic Doctrine	David Baker
3:30 PM	The Syllabus Of Errors Of Pius the 9 th	Jerry Murrell
	<i>DINNER BREAK</i>	
7:00 PM	Review Of The Conley-Luther-Narvaez Debate	Darrel Conley
8:00 PM	Was Peter The First Pope?	Tom Hicks

Wednesday, March 1

9:00 AM	The Catholic Doctrine Of Original Sin	Roelf Ruffner
10:00 AM	Priests, Bishops, Monks, Nuns, Synods And Councils Of The Catholic Church	Marvin Weir
11:00 AM	The Scandals Of Catholic History	Michael Light
1:30 PM	The Dogmatism Of The Catholic Church	Billy Bland
2:30 PM	The Celebration Of Mass And The Doctrine Of Transubstantiation	Randy Mabe
3:30 PM	Catholic Holidays, Rosary, Relics, Praying To The Saints	Royce Williamson
	<i>DINNER BREAK</i>	
7:00 PM	Review Of The Stevens-Bevers Debate	Lynn Parker
8:00 PM	The Catholic Doctrine Of Purgatory Versus What The Bible Teaches	Michael Hatcher

6:30 PM — Mon., Tue., Wed., CONGREGATIONAL SINGING

LUNCH PROVIDED FOR EVERYONE BY THE SPRING CONGREGATION EACH DAY AT NOON

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The Gospel Journal

This month is a very significant one in the Lord's church for many reasons, no doubt. One principal reason is the beginning of a major new paper: *The Gospel Journal*. It will be a 36 page monthly paper. The editorial aims of the new paper are:

- Exalt the biblical Godhead as mankind's only lawful ultimate head.
- Exalt the Bible as the only inerrant, inspired revelation from God.
- Advance that revealed Truth and thus the borders of the one church.
- Positively set forth the New Testament pattern for the church of Christ.
- Oppose and expose both doctrinal and practical error from all quarters.
- Serve as a strong counter-voice to the change agent forces in the church.
- Provide a source of edification for all, at every level of spiritual maturity.
- Serve as a major voice for spiritual Truth and biblical righteousness.
- Present all of the above to the reader each month in an attractive package.

Brother Dub McClish, an outstanding gospel preacher of Denton, Texas, gospel preacher with over forty years experience, a Bible scholar, and long-time director of the Annual Denton Lectures has been selected to serve as its editor. He is sound in the faith, not issue-driven, hobby rider, or extremist, but balanced

and objective. He is experienced in writing (having over 100 chapters in various books) and editing (editing the ADL Lectureship books). He travels extensively and is widely known and respected. He stands for the four-square for the truth.

Brother Tim Nichols was selected to serve as the associate editor. He likewise has an unwavering dedication to God and His Word. He possesses a keen mind and has demonstrated spiritual balance. He has written extensively for periodicals, and chapters in various lectureship books. He has served as evangelist with the Lord's church in Keyser, WV, since 1983. These men will make a great editorial team.

The Gospel Journal is a non-profit organization governed by a board of directors. The five men on the board are: Curtis A. Cates (President), Joseph Meador (Vice President), Kenneth E. Ratcliff (Treasurer/Business Manager), Michael Hatcher (Secretary), and Tommy Hicks.

All are encouraged to subscribe and do so for others. All will profit greatly by subscribing to and reading *The Gospel Journal*. One year subscriptions are \$16.00, two years \$30.00; congregations can subscribe for the congregation for \$14.00 each. Bundles of 10 or more to one address is \$15.00 each and clubs of 10 or more (prepaid) are \$14.00 each. Please send subscriptions to *The Gospel Journal*, PO Box 219, Cibolo, TX 78108-0219. If you have not subscribed then do so today (do not put it off). MH

This And That

We express our appreciation to all those who have supported us through the years. We especially thank those who have helped financially. *Defender* is sent free to those in the United States, but it is a heavy financial burden upon the Bellview congregation. We have every intention of keeping *Defender* free, we do appreciate those who see the need of financially helping up out to help offset the expenses of the paper.

I want to thank those who have written articles for us. It takes a great deal of time and effort to sit down and write, and we are honored when you send us the articles. Without your help, this work would not be what it is today.

We also thank those who write encouraging us with your kind remarks. It is easy to become discouraged,

therefore, you are of a great help in keeping us going. We even appreciate those who might disagree with us concerning some point. We thank you for taking the time out to write and explain why you disagree.

I want to encourage everyone to come to the Annual Bellview Lectures this year. We will have lessons covering a variety of subjects. It is always a good time of the year. Additionally, we have printed a book each year since 1988. One of those books has already sold out. Several other years are on the verge of selling out. If you want previous years and do not have one, now is the time to buy, before they are all gone.

If you are online, please visit our web site (see page 1) and also see our lectureship from last year on *Worldliness* at: www.lscoc.com. MH

BAPTIST LUCADO AND LOYALTY

Gary Summers

What is it about some people that inspires such loyalty? Moses, as God's spokesman led the people out of Egyptian bondage, for which they had cried for deliverance. He led them through the Red Sea, and the nation rejoiced at the death of their enemies. But when it came time to enter into the Promised Land, the people became frightened. Instead of reasoning: "Moses is a trustworthy man of God who has already done a lot for us; let us follow him," they determined to stone him.

Joash had been saved by Jehoiada the priest and his wife; they kept him safe for six years and saw to it that he was placed upon the throne. All of these bold and courageous acts ought to merit a measure of loyalty, but Joash commanded that the priest's son (who was a prophet of the Lord) be put to death.

Jesus did many marvelous things in the presence of his countrymen, but the people allowed themselves to be incited to crucify Him; even His disciples fled.

How is it, then, that false teachers like Rubel Shelly and Max Lucado inspire such loyalty? About fifteen years ago, when astute brethren noticed the Shelly shift to the left, some absolutely refused to acknowledge it. Even five or more years later some were still mumbling: "He was taken out of context."

The same is now true of Max Lucado. No matter what he says or does, his defenders are Legion. About 75% of all feedback from the numerous articles Pearl Street has on its Website comes from people taking issue with the articles about liberal, Max Lucado.

Moses and Jesus were both deserted, but Shelly and Lucado have a loyal and loud (albeit inarticulate) gaggle of followers, who occasionally honk at us when they feel threatened. Many of them try misapplying Matthew 18:15-17. "Did you talk to Max first before you criticized him? He's soooo accessible." Right! To his fawning fans he may be (although even that is doubtful), but faithful brethren have never been permitted near him. The passage cited, however, is one which deals with private, personal offenses—not someone who sells hundreds of thousands of books and broadcasts over the radio.

Speaking of which, there is a transcript of a message from a program aired in December 1997, which is currently being circulated through the brotherhood. Max concludes his main message by encouraging his listeners to pray with these words:

Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins. I give you my tears. I give you my fears. I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you Father to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.

Can one of Max's devotees explain what is different between that *invitation* and one used by Billy Graham or any other Baptist or denominationalist on radio or television? Following a brief commercial message, the announcer states: "Now, Max Lucado returns with a special word for those who received the gift of salvation just moments ago in prayer." So, yes, the prayer was intended to be one that brought salvation. Saul of Tarsus could not be saved by prayer only, nor Cornelius. But apparently Max thinks that his listeners can be saved by just saying those words. He continues:

Today is the first day you've ever prayed a prayer like that. Could you do me a favor? Could you write me a letter? I don't have anything I am going to ask from you. I do have a letter I would like to send to you. I'd like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church. I want to encourage you to be baptized. I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved. You see, your father has a great life planned for you, and I want to tell you about it. Give us a call, or drop me a note. And, thanks my friend, for making the greatest decision of your life.

A few observations are in order. Notice first that Max seems quite fond of the personal pronouns *I* and *me*, with there being eleven usages of the former and three of the latter. Second, if I think I am saved by praying this prayer, the obvious question is: "Why do I need to read the Bible? God has a wonderful plan for my life? Hey, I think my life is pretty good already. Thanks for salvation, Lord, but I will take over from here."

The most important thing about this paragraph, however, is that it is clearly Baptist doctrine. You should be baptized—but not in order to be saved. Max wants you to be baptized because you are saved! For over 150 years faithful brethren have debated this issue with Baptists: Is baptism *in order to be saved* or *because you are saved*?

For those who are as confused as Max, churches of Christ have always taken the Bible position: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Baptists

have attempted (unsuccessfully) to argue that *for* means “because of.” Not only is the weight of scholarly evidence against them, but Matthew 26:28 (if this same suggestion were applied there) would have Jesus shedding His blood because our sins had already been forgiven.

Paul teaches that there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Which is it? Does it include baptism or does it not? It certainly did for Saul. After Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he believed and knew that Jesus is Lord. How simple it would have been for him to pray: “Father I give my heart to you...I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins.” If Baptist/Lucado doctrine were correct, Saul would have been saved right there on the road to Damascus.

Saul fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9, 11). He was not, however, saved as a result of those two heartfelt actions, as worthy as they are. Ananias said to him: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Saul, even after praying and fasting for three days, still had all of his sins, which needed to be washed away by the blood of Jesus (Rev. 1:5) in baptism. Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus—nor by prayer. It is in the act of baptism that sins are removed.

Lucado is teaching a different *gospel*. Being saved **without** and **before** baptism is not the same as saved **at the point of** and **during** baptism. Even Max’s loyal followers should be able to see that point. One is the true gospel; one is a false gospel. Max is teaching the **false** gospel; churches of Christ for the past 150 years have taught and defended the truth. Max has been unwilling to defend in debate anything he believes.

If Lucado is teaching a false gospel (and he is), then the Word of God says he is accursed. In fact, anyone who teaches a false gospel is accursed. Why? So many who teach that doctrine are such moral people. True,

and we admire the moral stands taken by religion people, but a false gospel cannot save anyone.

There is nothing worse than assuring someone that he is saved when he is, in fact, still lost in his sins. The false gospel is from the devil, who wants people to be lost. What better way of deluding people than by trying to convince them, they are saved when they have never obeyed the gospel? “Oh, I know I’m saved; I could not be mistaken about such a feeling. I was filled with warmth, and the love of God flooded my soul.”

But where did such an idea (that salvation would be experienced that way) come from? Is that what Peter told the multitude on Pentecost to expect? Is that what Paul told Ananias had happened to him? “You’ve made the trip for nothing, Ananias. I accepted Jesus as my Savior while you were on your way, and my heart is overflowing with emotion.” Paul may have been filled with emotion all right, as he pondered his former persecution of the church, but he was baptized to wash his sins away (Acts 22:16).

If the Bible is right, there is one gospel. If there is one gospel, all others are wrong. Those who are teaching the false gospels (such as lax Max) are accursed. How do such men command such loyalty when those devoted to the truth are maligned and rejected?

Paul had a difficult time understanding that concept, too. He wrote to the Corinthians: “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*” (2 Cor. 11:4). Those who gladly put up with Rubel and Max (and their multitude of errors, including a “different gospel”) have demonstrated that they no more honor the Truth than those in Corinth, who were willing to submit to frauds and challenge the inspired apostle Paul. Some things never change.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

**Write For Your
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Pensacola, FL 32526**

Defender



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ABOUT FACE!

Al Brown

“About face!” is a command a drill sergeant in the military gives. As a result, the formation of men abruptly turns around and goes in the opposite direction. Something similar to this has occurred in the religious world, although the execution of it took place over a rather extended period of time.

Two hundred years ago nearly all religious groups included the following statement in their creeds: “We believe the Scriptures to be a sufficient rule of faith and practice.” They never believed or practiced it although they paid lip service to it. Then, a thing called liberalism began. It took many forms, but the final result was an even greater decay of faith in the denominational world that the Bible was God’s verbally inspired, authoritative Word and the guideline by which men were to live.

The success of liberalism is easily discerned by noting that over 75% of the clergy, by their own admission, and an increasing majority of the laity, do not believe in the inspiration and inerrancy of the Bible, or that it is an adequate, authoritative guide for man in our complex, modern society. They have, for all practical purposes, rejected the religion of Christ.

Christianity is a revealed religion. That is, what one is to believe and practice is revealed in the Scriptures. Those who embrace it are not allowed to use their own judgment in determining what they will believe and practice. Nothing is more clearly and forcefully taught than this. Jesus said, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21).

Those who rejected this concept were themselves

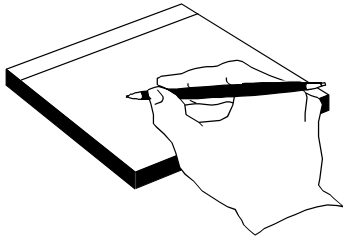
rejected in the initial stages of the church when the apostles guided the church through divine inspiration. The apostle Paul informed man that no deviation from the doctrine and commandments of the Bible will be tolerated when he wrote, “Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them that are causing the divisions and occasions of stumbling, contrary to the doctrine which ye learned: and turn away from them” (Rom. 16:17). Jesus said, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day” (John 12:48). No wonder Paul taught, “Now I beseech you, brethren, through the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that* ye all speak the same thing and *that* there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfected together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). Jesus said to the apostles: “He that heareth you heareth me; and he that rejecteth you rejecteth me; and he that rejecteth me rejecteth him that sent me” (Luke 10:16).

The denominational clergy and laity absolutely refuse to accept the above teaching from God’s Word. This is expected since they think biblical facts and miracles are myths. They call the works and doctrine of the One in whom they claim to believe mere traditions of a superstitious, male-dominated era two thousand years ago. They sneer in contempt at the teaching of His apostles who guided the church in her formative years.

They ridicule the apostles’ claim that they were miraculously guided by the Holy Spirit in what they wrote and spoke. Jesus’ promise to the apostles in John 16:13 is utterly ignored or rejected: “Howbeit when he,

(Continued on Page 3)

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Liberals

For years liberals have played word games with people to try and hide their true beliefs. A faithful man might ask a liberal: “Do you believe the Bible is inspired?” The liberal will readily respond with a positive answer. However, the liberal does not mean the same thing the faithful man means. We learned that the liberal will say yes, but he might mean that the Bible is inspired just like any other work is inspired. He has no thought or feeling that the Bible has been inspired by God. He has played a word game with the faithful man, so his liberalism will not be known to others. So the faithful man must go deeper and he asks him: “Do you believe the Bible is inspired of God?” Again a liberal will readily give a positive answer, that he believes the Bible is inspired of God. But again he does not mean what the faithful man means; he is playing word games. The liberal means that the overall teaching of the Bible is inspired, but will also affirm that the writers of the Bible made mistakes and errors because they were writing from their own memory and words. The only thing which they believe is inspired of God is the overall teaching which one finds in the Bible.

Liberals find out very quickly how to hide what they really believe and deceive others into thinking they believe one thing when in reality they believe something else. To find out what these liberals really mean, because they will not tell you, you must ask the right questions. But you also must ask those right questions in the right way. Then and only then will you start learning what liberals really believe. For example, with the question on inspiration, one would have to ask something along this line: “Do you believe the Bible is plenary, verbally, inspired of God.”

One would think that this would be the end of the matter. However, sadly it is not. Even after nailing the

liberal down as to his true belief he will return to the safer terminology to appear to be sound. He will then loudly proclaim how that he has been misrepresented, taken out of context, etc., etc. The liberal will play the martyr to the hilt, to divert attention away from his doctrine and attack the faithful man. He will repeatedly state his faithfulness, and recall all the good he has done through the years.

The liberal not only proclaims his faithfulness and becomes indignant that any would challenge his faithfulness, but he also goes on the attack. They begin telling everyone about how those who are “pursuing meanness, viciousness, and partyism.”¹ How that the faithful man is causing “strife.” They will speak of “*ad hoc* committee[s]” who are “a cartel of radicals” who want to “filter all that is done or taught in the church.” They will accuse faithful men of being “extremist” and of “dogmatism” and “tyranny” because they have dared to challenge the liberal. The liberals will charge the faithful as being a “cabal of radicals on the right” and of being “blustering prima donnas” and how they will refuse to “acquiesce before radicalism’s tyranny.” They are going to refuse to allow these faithful men who have been slandered to “control” the teaching they are doing. With many their proclamations sound convincing and that we must not let others “control” us. They do a very commendable job of turning from the false doctrine which they have introduced and taught to an attack upon faithful men who are trying to hold the line on truth.

They ignore that fact that we are to remain faithful to the Truth. Are we to allow someone to come along introduce and teach false doctrine and lay our sword down? Why, someone might think that we are such as above. In reality, we are to watch, and when false doctrine does rear its ugly head, then we are to expose it. We are to hold to the faith, “Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19). “Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;...If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained” (1 Tim. 4:1, 6). “This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come....Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away” (2 Tim. 3:1, 5). “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). “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself” (Tit. 3:10-11). Let the liberals howl, call names, and use all the pejorative language they wish, and let the faithful continue to “earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). MH

¹All quotes are from: Lindell Mitchell, “One People,” *Firm Foundation* (January 2000).

(Continued from Page 1)

the Spirit of truth, is come, he shall guide you into all the truth.” Paul’s claim for inspiration in what he spoke and wrote is explained away: “And for this cause we also thank God without ceasing, that, when ye received from us the word of the message, *even the word* of God, ye accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which also worketh in you that believe” (1 The. 2:13).

The greatest claim for verbal inspiration is summarily dismissed: “For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man, which is in him? even so the things of God none knoweth, save the Spirit of God. But we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that were freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Spirit teacheth; combining spiritual things with spiritual *words*” (1 Cor. 2:11-13).

The Lord declared that His Word would never pass away (Mat. 24:35) and men would be judged by it at the last day (John 12:48). Although they reject most of what Christ and His apostles taught, these sectarians continue to call themselves “Christians.” How hypocritical! Finding such infidelity in the sectarian world is heartbreaking. It is even more tragic when countless false teachers in the church of Christ are doing the same thing. Modern-day religious leaders—in and out of the body of Christ—who reject the doctrines of Christ are blindly leading those gullible enough to follow them straight into torment! This is cause for weeping!

In reference to these wolves in sheep’s clothing in

the kingdom of God, it does seem that consistency would require these false teachers and infidels among us to believe in and live by what Christ and His apostles taught, or stop calling themselves Christians. We call on Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Lynn Anderson, Marvin Phillips, and others of like sectarian affinity, to either repent or muster up what little courage and honesty may remain and join whatever denomination will have them.

Of course, the sectarian clergy may not be too wild about having them compete for denominational pulpits. They would have to out-do these professional “felt-needers” which would be no small task. Oh well, they probably do not need to worry too much about it. I doubt if our heretics will make the switch. They have shown that they are not overly-endowed with courage, and they abandoned their honesty long ago. They have certainly shown they will not defend their beliefs. Embracing denominationalism would accomplish one thing; they would at last be able to “speak the same thing” in the sects since they would all agree in trashing the Scriptures.

Of course, they know their beliefs cannot be defended from the Bible. If they tried it, they would be exposed before the brotherhood for what they are—infidels. Some, such as Shelly, were once faithful to the Lord; they taught the truth. Now, they are more at home with sectarians than with us. It is questionable whether others, such as Lucado, Anderson, Phillips, and that crowd in Abilene *Infidel* University, ever taught or believed the truth. They certainly have not done so since receiving their doctorates in heresy (Phh, pronounced “foo”) from denominational seminaries. Can anyone remember such men ever taking a stand for the truth, defending the integrity and verbal inspiration of the Scriptures, or combating sectarian heresy. It really makes no difference whether they once did so or not; they do not and will not do so now and will not in the future unless they repent.

Do you think our liberal brethren will do a spiritual about face? There is no evidence they will. In fact, all their actions and statements indicate a further departure from the faith. How long should faithful brethren plead with these infidels to return to the faith? How many times does God expect us to beg them to be faithful?

The Scriptures (which they reject) are clear: “A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse [reject—KJV]; knowing that such a one is perverted, and sinneth, being self-condemned” (Tit. 3:10-11). Faithful saints are commanded: “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). The time is long overdue to “deliver such a one unto Satan” (1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20).

Deceased

WHEN THE INCONSEQUENTIAL BECOMES CONSEQUENTIAL

Tommy J. Hicks

“And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, *Art* thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim” (1 Kin. 18:17-18). That passage came to my mind after I read, “Catholics, Lutheran, and My Brethren,” by a dear brother, Ben Vick, which appeared in his bulletin, *The Informer* (Vol. 53, No. 5, November 7, 1999). The purpose of brother Vick’s article was to defend brother H. A. “Buster” Dobbs who has gotten into trouble for advocating “that all of life is worship.” Ben waved off the seriousness of Dobbs’ new doctrine declaring it to be *inconsequential* and saying it should not be disruptive to the unity of the church. Clearly, Vick implies that those who “sever ties and draw lines of fellowship tighter,” regarding Dobbs and his errant doctrine, are those who “troubleth Israel.” With all due respect, brother Vick has misidentified who it is that “troubleth Israel.”

I, for one, do not question Ben’s sincerity in saying, “We cannot, however, bite and devour one another over matters that are inconsequential.” Again, I believe he was earnest when he wrote, “By matters inconsequential I mean matters that will not cost one his eternal soul.” If that were as far as it went, and all things being equal, no one who is trying to be faithful to God and who is endeavoring to maintain the unity of the Spirit would disagree with our brother on this point. Inconsequential matters should never cause division within the Lord’s church and disrupt the unity for which Christ prayed. Agreed! Having said that, I must kindly question if Ben did his homework (i.e., looked to see what all might be involved) and thought his article through before he wrote it. Surely, as intelligent as Ben is, he knows *inconsequential* things have a way of becoming *consequential*. Read on.

The Bible teaches that Christians are to provide for the needs of orphaned children (Jam. 1:27). Does the

Bible specify **how** those needs are to be met? No. One brother believes the Bible teaches that orphaned children are to be adopted and cared for within a *private home*, but he believes and practices this without binding his views on anyone else. Another brother believes the Bible authorizes him to provide for the needs of orphans by contributing to the church and then for the church to send support to an *orphan’s home*, but he believes and practices this without binding his views on anyone else. Both brethren are right, doing what the Bible commands, even though they differ on the **how** of providing for the needs of orphans. In this case, Ben has to admit the **how** is inconsequential because in these matters neither will lose his eternal soul. Even so, *what if* one of these brothers becomes convinced that his view of **how** is “the right one,” that it is consequential. Thus, he begins making an issue of it, pushing it even to the point of dividing brethren? What then? To answer this question Ben must admit that the one who makes the inconsequential consequential is the one who “troubleth Israel.”

Ben must surely know that brother Dobbs and brother Eddie Whitten had a close friendship and an excellent working relationship with the *Firm Foundation*. Whitten joined forces with the *Firm Foundation* when it was at its nadir. He poured money, blood, sweat, and tears into that publication. In the not to distant past, more than a few of us heard Dobbs give Whitten credit for saving the *Firm Foundation*. With all that in mind, Ben needs to answer, did Dobbs consider his “all of life is worship” doctrine *inconsequential* when he dogmatically, relentlessly, and ruthlessly used that very issue to drive a wedge between himself and Whitten—causing Whitten to finally break all ties with the *Firm Foundation*? There is a voluminous record of what each man said and did which shows exactly *who forced* the issue. Whitten made every effort to prevent the rupture—all to no avail. Had Ben read the correspondence, e-mail messages, faxes, etc., between Dobbs

and Whitten, as some of us have, it is beyond my comprehension how he could paint, by implication, Whitten to be the “bad guy.” By defending Dobbs, Ben is condemning Whitten. It is not Whitten who “troubleth Israel.”

Should Whitten have declared the matter inconsequential and offered no opposition to Dobbs presenting his “all of life is worship” as the *official* position of the *Firm Foundation*? One cannot help but wonder what Ben would have done had he been in Whitten’s place. Closer to home, would Ben even allow Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” articles to be printed in *The Informer*, as its *official* position, without saying and/or doing a thing? That hardly seems likely in light of the Vick article in question. Ben could not even write his article defending Dobbs, claiming his “all of life is worship” doctrine is inconsequential, without saying, “I have disagreed with his view, stating so in writing.” Evidently, the matter was so consequential in Ben’s mind he felt compelled to place a disclaimer in a bulletin article. Yes, indeed, what would Ben have done if he had been in Whitten’s shoes, responsible for a major publication, the *Firm Foundation*?

Before Ben wrote his article, he needed to go to the Fleetwood congregation (Houston) to get his facts straight. Brother Jess Hall, Jr., preached a sermon there in which he taught that “all of life is worship.” In the Preface of Hall’s book, *Worship A Living Sacrifice*, his son, Eric, explained what happened after his dad preached that sermon. He stated:

After the sermon, a few in the congregation began to complain that error had been taught from the pulpit....A meeting was held with the disgruntled members in which they were specifically given an opportunity to voice their complaints directly to my father.

I have no reason to question the veracity of the above facts as Eric stated them. However, Eric did not report the steamroller attitude and the adamancy he and his father, Jess, exhibited to those present in that meeting. One thing is absolutely certain—no one in that meeting went away thinking the “all of life is worship” doctrine was inconsequential to the Halls. Eric went on to say that “most of the complainers...departed.” In

other words, the Fleetwood congregation **split**. Their “all of life is worship” doctrine was consequential enough to the Halls that they were willing to divide a congregation over it. What does this have to do with Dobbs?

Shortly after Hall’s “all of life is worship” sermon, Dobbs went to Fleetwood to preach. Dobbs knew very well that a “powder keg” atmosphere existed at Fleetwood expressly because of the “all of life is worship” issue. Every preacher with a modicum of common sense knows that when a congregation has been wounded by an *inconsequential* issue, he must leave that issue alone. To do otherwise would be like “picking at a scab” and needlessly reopening the wound. What did Dobbs preach? Let Eric Hall answer—“The next eruption occurred when Buster Dobbs preached a similar sermon at Fleetwood in which he too affirmed that, in some sense, all of life is worship.” One may only conclude that either Dobbs did not have a “lick of sense” or else the “all of life is worship” doctrine is so consequential to him that he was willing to further divide a congregation already being tortured by that issue. This case alone should prove to Ben, or anyone else, that Dobbs is the one who “troubleth Israel.”

A thing taught and/or believed may truly be inconsequential. However, that thing ceases to be inconsequential to the person who, for the sake of that thing, is willing to: part company with his friends, destroy a wonderful relationship with co-laborers in the Lord’s service, place a major publication in jeopardy, divide congregations, and ultimately ruin his own reputation among faithful brethren. Dobbs is guilty of all these. So, Ben has to realize why brethren have dealt with Dobbs as they have. It is Dobbs who has made the inconsequential consequential. It is Dobbs who “troubleth Israel.” These things being true (and they are), Ben, and others like him, as well-intentioned as they may be, should stop defending Dobbs. He is not worthy.

Next Month: “Is Dobbs’ ‘All of Life is Worship’ Stand Really an Inconsequential Doctrine?”

5208 89th Street; Lubbock, TX 79424

25th Annual Bellview Lectures

Date: June 10-14, 2000

Sad Statements Of The Bible

THIRTY-FOURTH ANNUAL LECTURESHIP MEMPHIS SCHOOL OF PREACHING

3950 Forest Hill Irene Road; Memphis, TN 38125

MARCH 26-30, 2000

“CHURCH GROWTH: MAN’S WAYS OR GOD’S WAY?”

SUNDAY, MARCH 26

9:30-10:20 AM Compromising Truth, Downplaying Distinctiveness to Grow Dub McClish
 10:30-11:30 AM Trashing Biblical Authority, Pattern Authority to Grow Steve Ellis
 6:00- 7:00 PM Trashing the Validity of the Restoration Plea to Grow Don McWhorter

MONDAY, MARCH 27

9:00- 9:50 AM Extending Fellowship Perimeters to Grow J. K. Gossett
 10:00-10:50 AM House Church Concept and Growth Ira Y. Rice, Jr.
 10:00-10:50 AM Women in the Early Church and Church Growth
 (Women’s Class) Corinne Elkins
 11:00-11:50 AM Elders Must Enhance Church Growth Billy Bland
 Class 1: Role of Gospel Meetings and Lectureships in Church Growth Paul Sain
 Class 2: Role of Congregations Encouraging Other Congregations in Church Growth Wayne Cox
 Class 3: Role of Prayer in Church Growth Allen Webster
 Class 4: Church Growth and Individually Bearing Much Fruit Stacey Grant
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM Church Growth and the Great Commission Eddy Gilpin
 Class 1: Church Growth and the Use of the Media Glenn M. Lee
 Class 2: Church Growth and Bible Unity Toney Smith
 Class 3: Speaking Up for Morality and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Anita Hochdorf
 2:10- 3:00 PM Church Growth in the First Century Church Glenn Hitchcock
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM Young Marrieds a Special Force in Church Growth Billy Smith

TUESDAY, MARCH 28

9:00- 9:50 AM Copying the Mega Churches, i.e., Willow Creek; Use of Self Appointed Growth Experts to Grow Bobby Liddell
 10:00-10:00 AM Community Church Mania and Church Growth Ben Vick
 10:00-10:50 AM Wives of Restoration Leaders and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Lois Duncan
 11:00-11:50 AM Deacons Must Enhance Church Growth Ed White
 Class 1: Role of Bible School and VBS in Church Growth Danny Cottrell
 Class 2: Role of Edification and Church Growth Bill Lyons
 Class 3: Role of Contacting Newcomers, Visitors in Church Growth Tim Nichols
 Class 4: Church Growth and Adding Christian Graces James Boyd
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM Church Growth and the Power of the Cross Sidney White
 Class 1: Church Growth Jeopardized by Biting and Devouring one Another Marvin Rickett
 Class 2: Church Growth and Prayer Billy Michael Jones
 Class 3: Christian Women in the Workplace and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Dorothy Mosher
 2:10- 3:00 PM Church Growth During the Early Restoration Movement Joel Morrison
PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS AND SUPPORTERS SEMINAR
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM Young People a Special Force in Church Growth B. J. Clarke

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 29

9:00- 9:50 AM Adopting Preaching Policy of No Offense Created, Nothing “Negative,” No Name-Calling to Grow Roy J. Hearn
 10:00-10:50 AM Drama/Skits vs Gospel Preaching, Special Music, Performance vs Participatory Worship and Church Growth Harrell Davidson
 10:00-10:50 AM Vast Value of Ladies’ Day and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Irene Taylor
 11:00-11:50 AM Preachers Must Enhance Church Growth Keith A. Mosher, Sr.
 Class 1: Role of Christian Colleges, Youth Camps in Church Growth Ronnie Hayes
 Class 2: Role of Benevolence in Church Growth Randy Vaughn
 Class 3: Role of Inviting Others in Church Growth Jim Gribble
 Class 4: Church Growth and Faithful Attendance Russell Kline
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM Church Growth and True Worship Gary Colley
 Class 1: Church Growth Against Great Odds (Revelation) Albert McDaniel
 Class 2: Church Growth and Church Discipline David Looney
 Class 3: Serving Those In Need and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Annette Cates
 2:10- 3:00 PM Church Growth During the 1940s-1960s Flavil Nichols
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM Older Christians a Special Force in Church Growth Garland Elkins

THURSDAY, MARCH 30

9:00- 9:50 AM Sheep Stealing: Building One Big Church at Expense of Small Ones to Grow Jerry Martin
 10:00-10:50 AM Entertainment Mania and Church Growth Tim Rice
 10:00-10:50 AM Wives, Mothers, and Grandmothers and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Joan Liddell
 11:00-11:50 AM Bible School Teachers Must Enhance Church Growth Noah Hackworth
 Class 1: Role of Pulpit Preaching in Church Growth Jimmy Young
 Class 2: Role of Good Singing in Church Growth W. D. Jeffcoat
 Class 3: Role of Parents and the Home in Church Growth Tom Bright
 Class 4: Church Growth and Each a Personal Worker Tim Ayers
 11:50- 1:10 PM LUNCH
 1:10- 2:00 PM Church Growth and a Dedicated, Working, Optimistic Membership Barry Grider
 Class 1: Church Growth When Faith Is Under Fire (1, 2 Peter) Mike McDaniel
 Class 2: Church Growth and the Power of Example Tony Lawrence
 Class 3: Use of Phone, Cards, Letters, E-Mail, Visits, etc., and Church Growth (Women’s Class) Cindy Colley
 2:10- 3:00 PM Church Growth and the Great Debates David Sain
 3:10- 4:00 PM Open Forum Garland Elkins
 4:00- 7:00 PM INTERMISSION
 7:00- 7:30 PM CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
 7:30- 8:30 PM Knowing We Shall Reap a Special Force in Church Growth Robert R. Taylor, Jr.

NOTE: There will be classes and activities for pre-school children daily, and also for the evening classes.

WATER/ELECTRICAL HOOKUPS PROVIDED

UNITY PERIOD

Steve E. Yeatts

Unity in diversity has become the slogan of various religious groups and unfortunately it has been embraced by some in the church of Christ. The basis for this belief is the concept that although two individuals may have different perspectives on what the truth is, they can put aside their differences and fit under the same religious umbrella. That reminds me of a statement that I heard from a Jewish rabbi, in response to why he did not believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He said, "Your truth is not my fact." The unity in diversity proponents have that same dangerous attitude towards unity. But the disturbing aspect is that genuine unity is not **my** truth, or anyone else's truth; it is God's truth, and we need to accept it.

The words of Jesus Christ in John 17:21 are as follows: "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." Those words are part of the prayer that Jesus spoke to His Father in heaven desiring unity. The apostle Paul eloquently wrote by inspiration in Ephesians 4:4-6, "*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.*" If the religious world could (or wanted to) grasp the true concept of oneness, then the cry for unity in diversity would truly be exposed for the oxymoron that it is.

The members of the church of Christ who have joined forces with the religious world support tearing down any recognizable differences between the Word of God and the word of men (contrary to the teaching of 1 The. 2:13), and rallying around the Unity in Diversity flag. The inherent problem with that concept is that if the Lord's church puts aside differences in practices, pattern, and precept under the guise of unity, it will destroy the very terms that are required for unity in the

first place. The apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "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." Now the critics of true unity discredit that concept as boring and outdated. Some are even proud to announce themselves as *anti-patternists* because they feel only the few remaining *legalists* in the church of Christ even care anymore about the unity that we as Christians should cherish. I fear that the ranks of those who teach and preach unity are shrinking and Paul's rhetorical question "Is Christ divided?" (1 Cor. 1:13) is being answered affirmatively by those who are willing to endanger truth and unity because of their contempt for a pattern.

I pray daily for more empathy in relating to people who do not adhere to the theme of unity in the name of Jesus Christ. I pray this because I realize that it was only five years ago when I did not understand the concept of unity either, so I yearn for others to be enlightened as I was. I respect and cherish unity based on the peace and harmony that it brings to those of like mind and like faith who seek after oneness in Jesus Christ. Christians are a diverse people to be sure. Each of us can bring talents and backgrounds to the table that will benefit the Lord in our service of Him. The mere fact that we are different (in educational background, life experiences, sex, race, etc.) has nothing to do with those who attempt to twist the truth and have an open-door policy for people of any religious persuasion. Jesus Christ gave us the terms for true unity for His cause (Eph. 1:22-23; John 17:20-26; et al.). It is my hope and prayer that the church of Christ will reach out to all who need the truth, but will not compromise the essential unity that we should revere and obey.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

**Write For Your
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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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IS RESTITUTION NECESSARY?

Toney L. Smith

There is not one sound minded saint that would deny the necessity of repentance. We all understand that this is essential for one to have their sins forgiven (Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 17:30). However, there seems to be a false idea among some that restitution is not a part of forgiveness. It has become a very popular concept in today's world to say that there is no need for restitution to be made when one has a change of heart. Of course, this should not surprise the Christian, because people of the world want to get away with as much as is humanly possible. They feel that the more they can get by with, the better off they are, and these enjoy thinking that they have fooled those around them. In fact, it is a popular idea to feel that we do not owe anyone anything.

Adam Clark, in his commentary on Genesis, says, “No man should expect mercy at the hand of God, who, having wronged his neighbor, refuses, when he has it in his power, to make restitution. Were he to weep tears of blood, both the justice and mercy of God would shut out his prayers if he make not his neighbor amends for the injury he has done him” (T. W. Brents, *Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p. 192). Also, T. W. Brents stated, “In vain may anyone tell me he repents slandering me while he refuses to correct his false statements concerning me, or that he repents stealing my horse while he continues to ride him without my consent” (T. W. Brents, *Gospel Plan of Salvation*, p. 191). These noted Bible commentators make these statements based not upon their reasoning, but come to these conclusions because there are Scriptures which affirm such reasoning.

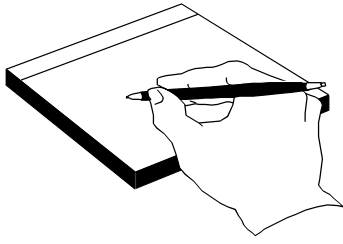
The Bible is conclusive concerning the necessity of restitution. In fact, the teaching concerning this is hard

to miss. The mind-set of the one who repents, will lead him to restitution, as far as is humanly possible. It would certainly be hard to believe that a person has repented if he denies the need to restore that which he has taken or who refuses to make right a thing said or done. Would it be possible to steal my house, my car, my bank account, or anything which is mine, then repent and continue to hold possession of my property? It is absurd to think that this is the proper course.

In the Old Testament we have a very clear legislation relative to this subject. “Speak unto the children of Israel, When a man or woman shall commit any sin that men commit, to do a trespass against the LORD, and that person be guilty; Then they shall confess their sin which they have done: and he shall recompense his trespass with the principal thereof, and add unto it the fifth *part* thereof, and give *it* unto *him* against whom he hath trespassed” (Num. 5:6-7). In this passage notice that when one sins against another it is regarded as a sin against Jehovah. Verse eight goes on to say that if the man offended could not be repaid that the offender must give compensation to the offended one's family. And if there were no family he was to make the payment to God through the priest (Num. 5:8-9). According to Ezekiel 33:15 the wicked shall live “*if* the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die.” Also Proverb 6:30-31 says, “*Men* do not despise a thief, if he steal to satisfy his soul when he is hungry; But *if* he be found, he shall restore sevenfold; he shall give all the substance of his

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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DIVISIONS

It seems that we often hear of someone complaining of the divisions within the churches of Christ. They then follow this with something along the line that the churches of Christ cannot be the church Christ established because of the divisions which we see. They overlook many biblical facts.

Jesus did come to bring unity. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, *art* in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me” (John 17:20-21). We are to exert ourselves in keeping the unity of the Spirit. “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. *There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:3-6). However, as stated by Jesus in His prayer, this unity is based upon the Word of God, or as Paul states it, the one faith.

God gave to Jesus His Word, Jesus was God’s prophet. “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by *his* Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Heb. 1:1-2). Jesus affirmed this by saying, “For I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak. And I know that his commandment is life everlasting: whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak” (John 12:49-50). Jesus sent His apostles into the world with the same Word the Father had given Him. “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received

them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me....I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world....As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world” (John 17:8, 14, 18). The apostles went all over the world preaching that Word by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. “But when they shall lead *you*, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost” (Mark 13:11). The apostles and prophets wrote that Word down for our study and consideration. “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).

That way revealed first by Jesus, then by His holy apostles and prophets is the right way. All other ways are wrong and will condemn those who follow them. “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death” (Pro. 14:12). Jeremiah wrote, “O LORD, I know that the way of man *is* not in himself: *it is* not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). God has revealed His way for us within the pages of the New Testament. Through our study of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15) we can come to an understanding of what God would have us to do. “Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*” (Eph. 5:17).

Paul teaches us that the church is the pillar and ground of the truth. “But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). The church is to support and foundation of the truth. When the Truth is attacked, the church **must** come to its aid. Jude puts it like this: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). In reading the rest of Jude, he is dealing with false teachers, ungodly men who turned the grace of God into lasciviousness. *Earnestly contend* is a word expressing the idea of striving, fighting with great zeal, struggle. When someone comes bringing some doctrine other than the Truth, then we

are to fight with all our might against doctrines which will damn man's souls.

When we fight for the Truth, some will accept it, but others will not. The result of their rejection is division. Thus, while Jesus did come to bring unity, He also came to bring division. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Mat. 10:34). Thus, while we all desire unity and for the church to never have to deal with false doctrines and divisions, that is an idealist view that simply will never exist when the church is doing what it is suppose to do. It did not exist in the first century (just about every book was written because of problems in the church), and it will not exist now. Our duty is to search the Scriptures and ascertain the right way and then to preach and defend it with all our strength. If divisions come, then so be it. However, let us resolve to do what God commands us. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

house." These and other passages clearly show what God required of His people under the Old Covenant.

The New Testament is just as clear and plain relative to restitution and repentance. In Luke chapter nineteen we have the account of Zacchaeus, a rich publican (Luke 19:2), who came to see the Lord as He passed by and then became the host of the Lord in his home. He was considered a sinner by the multitude, but he became a believer (Luke 19:7, 9). Let us notice what this repenting man said in verse eight: "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold." Again we are shown the importance of restitution in the process of repenting.

The New Testament principle of dealing with our fellow man demands restitution, "Therefore all things

whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Mat. 7:12). It is hard to mistake the teaching found in this text. No one wants to be defrauded or treated unjustly. Who would not expect a thief to return what has been stolen? Especially so if this person is a Christian and is repenting of a sin committed!

It is hard to see how anyone might think that restitution is not required. Anyone with a heart bent on doing God's will will gladly restore anything unjustly taken from anyone. We might even ask: "Why would one ever think that he could keep that which was not his own?" Of course, the repenting heart would never entertain such a notion. Job said that the one who did not restore that which was not his would "not feel quietness in his belly" (Job 20:20). And truly the penitent person who does not make restitution for his sins will never feel at ease. If his heart is right, he could never enjoy the things which were gained by sin or feel comfortable without seeking to restore a good name that had been slandered.

This author believes that it is quite easy to see from the verses that we have cited that where there is no restitution there is no repentance. And without repentance men will perish (Luke 13:3, 5). Repentance requires that one have a change of heart coupled with a change of direction. It is ending the action of sin and holding on to nothing which was coupled with the sin. Paul spoke of a sorrow that "worketh repentance" (2 Cor. 7:9-10). This repentance was brought about by deep sorrow for the sins that had been committed. This is the same deep seated sorrow and frame of mind that would do all possible to restore whatever had been taken in the sin committed. Thus, we have seen the necessity of restitution if there is to be forgiveness.

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IS DOBBS' "ALL OF LIFE IS WORSHIP" STAND REALLY AN INCONSEQUENTIAL DOCTRINE?

Tommy J. Hicks

The Bible speaks of different kinds of worship. These include worship done *in vain* (Mat. 15:9; Mark 7:7), worship done *in ignorance* (John 4:22; Acts 17:23), worship of *idols* (Acts 7:43), and *will worship* (Col. 2:23)—just to name a few. However, there is only one kind of worship which is acceptable to God. Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24). Generally, it is understood that to worship "in spirit" is to worship sincerely from the heart and that to worship "in truth" means to worship as God has instructed in His Word.

Because this is so and because, by its very nature, worship must be done with holy reverence to God. Thus, anything (teaching or practice) which denigrates the worship God expects from His children, or which detracts from or violates the veneration God expects to receive through it, cannot be considered *inconsequential* (by any definition of the term).

In the November 7, 1999 (Volume 53, Number 5) issue of his bulletin, *The Informer*, under the heading “Catholics, Lutheran, and My Brethren,” my friend and brother, Ben Vick averred that H. A. “Buster” Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine is an *inconsequential* matter. Qualifying what he meant, Ben penned: “By matters inconsequential I mean matters that will not cost one his eternal salvation.” Before asserting such a limited qualifying definition, Ben needed to weigh the consequences and effects of the implications contained in Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine. Why? Because the *implications* of Dobbs’ doctrine can “cost one his eternal salvation.” Stated another way: Dobbs may not accept the implications of his doctrine, but those who hear him may and they may lose their souls. God will hold Buster Dobbs (and anyone else) accountable for teaching (even by implication) anything which causes men to lose their souls. That makes Dobbs’ doctrine *consequential*, even by Ben’s definition. Ben knows that the implications of Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine can “cost one his eternal salvation.”

Ben admits: “There is no question that Buster’s position opens the door for all kinds of innovations in worship, including instrumental music.” (Letter to Daniel Denham, dated February 16, 2000). Does the fact that Buster insists “that the five elements of worship are to be observed on the Lord’s day” change that? No! Will it not “cost one his eternal salvation” if he engages in those “all kinds of innovations in worship, including instrumental music”? Yes! Further, if one teaches a doctrine the implications of which will cause his hearers/readers to be lost, how is it that he will not be lost for causing others to be lost? Before Ben says Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine is *inconsequential*, he needs to answer those questions.

Since Ben brought it up, let us consider the implications of Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine regarding “instrumental music” used in worship to God. As noted above, Ben acknowledges that Dobbs’ doctrine “opens the door” to instrumental music being used “in worship.” Not too long ago, Ben wrote: “Buster Dobbs is using one of **the very same arguments** that the Christian Church has used to defend instrumental music in worship [emphasis mine, TJH].” (*The Informer*, Volume 52,

Number 13, “Worship and Service.”) By *in worship*, in these references, Ben means the worship done during a Sunday assembly (i.e., Sunday morning/evening worship). Except for Dobbs making his hearers/readers think he is confused or unwilling to accept the conclusions of his own “all of life is worship” doctrine, what difference does it make that he “has stood staunchly against the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship”? Since “Buster Dobbs is using one of the very same arguments that the Christian Church has used to defend instrumental music in worship,” how can Dobbs argue that instrumental music in worship is sinful and will condemn one’s soul?

Now, notice this. Ben first says, “Buster Dobbs believes that all of life is worship.” Then, he remarks that Dobbs “has stood staunchly against the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship.” (*The Informer*, Volume 53, Number 5, “Catholics, Lutheran, and My Brethren.”) Of course, Ben uses *in worship* to mean the Sunday and other worship assemblies of the church. Be that as it may, unless, in *every case* (no exceptions), the use of instrumental music in accompaniment to singing is sinful; then, Dobbs has to admit that, at least in some cases (where it is not sinful), the use of instrumental music in accompaniment to singing *is worship*. Here is what I mean. If asked, “Is a Christian cowboy sinning when he sings: ‘Home on the Range,’ while strumming on a guitar?” Dobbs will answer: “No.” Well, according to Dobbs’ doctrine, since the Christian cowboy is not sinning, he is worshipping God while he is singing and strumming on his guitar. Dobbs insists that Romans 12:1 forces him to this conclusion. Here is where the camel gets his nose into the tent. If the Christian cowboy is worshipping God when he is singing “Home on the Range” while strumming on his guitar, why can he not worship God singing “How Great Thou Art” while strumming on his guitar? Considering the implications of this doctrine and the effects it can have upon the worship demanded by the Lord in His church, how can Ben say Dobbs’ doctrine is *inconsequential* or that it will not jeopardize the souls of men? Furthermore, Ben knows Dobbs’ “levels of worship” (what I call, “Dobbs’ Dodge” or “Buster’s Bunkum”) is sheer nonsense.

Going back to the propriety God demands regarding the worship He will accept. Ben needs to answer: “If one teaches a doctrine that degrades, profanes, and lowers worship, as God would have it, is that *inconsequential*?” Obviously, the answer is: “No!” However, contradicting the false doctrine he now holds, Dobbs once published:

The flimsy and foolish notion that everything we do is worship is so obviously wrong it should not be hard to refute. A simple rebuke ought to be enough! When we keep in mind what worship is, we will have no trouble understanding that many things we do cannot possibly be worship. If we make low and mundane things equal to worship, we degrade worship.

I do not wish to be crude, or rude, but, if everything we do is worship, then picking your nose is worship! We do a lot of things in private that are not worship. Think for a moment of the details of your intimate life, and ask yourself if it is worship. You know it is not! Only those who have an inadequate idea of worship would make such a claim. (“Fall On Your Face,” *Firm Foundation*, June 1988, p. 7.)

What Dobbs said then was correct. Thus, his own words—“low,” “mundane,” “degrade”—describe the detrimental effects of his present “all of life is worship” doctrine. The question is: “Does Ben Vick agree with this 1988 assessment Dobbs gave of the “everything we do is worship” doctrine?” If so, how can Ben say that what Dobbs is now preaching is **inconsequential**?

Earlier, I mentioned brother Daniel Denham. Recently, he received an unsigned letter, dated February 13, 2000, from brethren Lindell Mitchell and Buster Dobbs. To Denham, they stated: “Your deliberate misrepresentation of Romans 12:1 is sinful. We urge you to repent.” If Ben will go back and read his bulletin

articles (“Worship and Service I and II,” Volume 52, Numbers 13 and 14), he will find that he is in basic, general agreement with Denham on Romans 12:1. So, if Denham’s view of Romans 12:1 is sinful, and if Ben holds the same view, then Ben’s view of the same verse is sinful and, according to Dobbs and Mitchell, Ben needs to repent. Will Ben consider this *inconsequential*, too?”

I count Ben Vick a friend. What he has written refuting Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine has been right “on target.” Even so, in this matter, as well-meaning as Ben may have been, he was mistaken to offer any defense for Dobbs. The controversy surrounding Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine is not parallel to the “Woods and Nichols” discussions on the manner of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, *et cetera*. Neither is Dobbs’ doctrine to be minimized as just an **inconsequential** “war of words” or the failure of Dobbs to “express himself better in regard to what is worship.” Dobbs knows exactly what words he wishes to use and why he wishes to use them. In fact, he prides himself as a wordsmith. It is precisely because Dobbs’ “all of life is worship” doctrine (and its implications) places the souls of men in jeopardy that this is a **consequential** matter.

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THE RESURRECTION

Paul Vaughn

The resurrection of the dead is the most critical issue in Christianity. Paul stated very powerfully that the resurrection of Christ is the foundation upon which the gospel message is built and proclaimed: “But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then *is* our preaching vain, and your faith *is* also vain” (1 Cor. 15:13-14). If Christ is not risen from the dead, there is no value or hope in Christianity and no future for the soul of man. Paul said, “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 The. 5:21). How can the resurrection of Christ be proved? One must look at the evidence that verifies and confirms the resurrection of Christ Jesus.

The resurrection of Christ is confirmed by fulfilled prophesy. In the book of Psalms David prophesied about the resurrection of the coming Christ. “For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption” (Psa. 16:10). David wrote this Psalm about a thousand years before Christ’s death and resurrection. Peter said that David was not

speaking about himself, but Christ. “Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption” (Acts 2:30-31). The fulfilled prophesy of David proves not only the resurrection of Christ, but that God keeps His Word and this relates to His promises of the resurrection of all the dead.

There were eyewitnesses who declared the resurrection of the Christ. The testimony of Thomas is powerful evidence which proves that the grave had no power over the Lord. Christ appeared to his disciples on the first day of the week after His resurrection. One disciple was not present at that time (Thomas). “The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I

will not believe” (John 20:25). Thomas is just simply stating that he will not believe unless he has evidence to prove the resurrection of Christ. The next week Thomas saw the evidence he needed to believe in the resurrection of the Lord. When Jesus appeared, Thomas “said unto him, My Lord and my God” (John 20:28). There were others that saw the Lord after His resurrection. Mary Magdelene saw Him (John 20:16). Paul said, “He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve: After that, he was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep” (1 Cor. 15:5-6). The eyewitness accounts prove the resurrection of Christ.

The transformation of Saul proves the resurrection of Christ. The biblical record teaches that Saul persecuted the church. “As for Saul, he made havock of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed *them* to prison” (Acts 8:3). In an epistle to the church at Philippi, Paul said, “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ” (Phi. 3:7). What could account for the change in his life? He saw the resurrected Christ! Paul went from being a persecutor of Christianity, to one that was willing to die for the cause of Christ. This is strong evidence for the resurrection of Christ.

The evidence confirms that Christ’s body did not stay in the grave, but that His body arose from the grave and He lives. Because of the resurrection of Christ, there is hope for all. His resurrection ensures victory from the grave and takes the sting out of death.

The resurrection of Christ has been the focal point of controversy since the first century. The Sadducees rejected the idea of resurrection. Philosophers of Athens mocked at the idea of the resurrection of the dead. Skepticism has not changed throughout history. It is only polished to make it more acceptable in a modern time. Yet, the empty tomb of Christ speaks to all and its

testimony is powerful! Christian faith is not in a corpse that saw corruption, but in Christ who conquered death and “brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). Christ’s resurrection ensures hope for a greater day and takes the sting out of death. “O death, where *is* thy sting? O grave, where *is* thy victory?” (1 Cor. 15:55). The resurrection of Christ is the guarantee.

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Paul Vaughn

Establishing A New Congregation

In February 2000 the Henderson Church of Christ, Henderson, Kentucky became the supporting congregation in establishing a church in Hancock County, Kentucky. The missionaries that are working in Hancock County are Paul Vaughn and his wife Ricki. Paul and Ricki have worked in helping to establish two others congregations, in Brown County, Ohio and in Breathith County, Kentucky.

There has never been a church of Christ in Hancock County so they are blazing new territory. The congregation in Hancock County will also reach into Southern Indiana in Cannelton and Tell City. There is about 25,000 people in a ten-mile radius of the new church. The Henderson congregation are supporting Paul and Ricki and have bought new land to build a building for worship and Bible study.

The new congregation is in need of support for the work fund and support to build a building. If you know of a congregation or individual that can help with the work fund or in the building fund with this new mission work please contact the Henderson Church of Christ. Please call Gary Puryear at 270-827-1307 or the mailing address is Henderson Church of Christ, 1202 N. Green Street, Henderson, Kentucky 42420.

HOPE OF GLORY

Shan Jackson

Over the years our current generation has been tagged with several descriptive names. One of the many names we have heard it referred to is the “Me Generation.” With others leading that way I would like to tag our generation the “I Want Something For Nothing” generation. This appears to be the sentiment of our students in school, our workers at the job, as well as our preachers in the pulpit. It seems that everyone wants to be the superstar on a winning team but no one is willing

to work to make it happen. Everyone wants to win but no one wants to work at winning.

The word *win* only appears two times in the entire Bible. In 2 Chronicles 32 we see Sennacherib seeking to win his war against Judah. However, the more familiar reference is Philippians 3:8. Here we read Paul’s words, “I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them *but*

dung, that I may win Christ.”

Many times I feel we do not fully appreciate all that Paul gave up so that he might win Christ. He freely gave up his family name and prominence, any possibility of advancement within the Jewish leadership, and a host of other things. And, in spite of these losses he says he considers them nothing but refuse in relation to his being able to win Christ. You see, Paul was not interested in physical things when he compared them to spiritual glory.

Paul knew and preached Christ's plan for the salvation of souls. He taught belief in Hebrews 11:6 (if he is the author of the Hebrews letter) as well as in Romans 16:26 and Galatians 5:6. He taught repentance in Romans 2:4 and 2 Corinthians 7:9-10. He taught confession in Romans 10:9-10 and 1 Timothy 6:12. He also taught baptism as recorded in Romans 6:3-4, Galatians 3:26-27, 1 Corinthians 12:13, and Ephesians 4:4.

Yes, Paul knew the plan of Christ and he taught it as well as lived it. He knew a person needed to believe the truth, repent of sinfulness, confess Jesus as Lord of lords, and be baptized. If he had not believed it, he would not have written so much about it. In Romans 6 he shows that man must obey God's doctrine rather than man's. In Romans 16 he shows there is a needed obedience to faith. He knew it, taught it, and lived it. As proof he said, "For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (2 Tim. 1:12).

My friend, at one time there was no man on the face of this earth that wanted to destroy the church as much as did Paul. But when he realized his need, he turned his life over to Christ and trusted Christ to guard and keep him until his life was over. Such trust should stimulate us to trust the Lord without reservation and remember that if we have Christ in us we also have the "hope of glory" (Col. 1:27).

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

PRESS RELEASES

The Southwest church of Christ is pleased to announce that the 19th annual Southwest Lectureship will be held April 9-12, 2000. The theme for this year's lectureship is *The Hub of the Bible: Remaining True To Acts 2*. Speakers from several states have been invited to come and lecture to an expected record number of brethren who will gather in Austin from across the nation to attend this year's lectureship series.

During the lectureship, exhibits of various brotherhood publishers, mission efforts, and works from around the country will be on display (*upon prior approval*). In addition, the sermons and lessons delivered during this series will be published in hard back book form and will be available during the lectureship, along with audio and video tapes of this year's as well as past Southwest Lectureships. The annual Southwest School of Bible Studies Supporters' Dinner will also be held on lectureship Tuesday. For further information regarding this dinner, please contact Joseph D. Meador, Director of the Southwest School of Bible Studies. R.V. and camper spaces are available at the Southwest building. For additional information and accommodations, you may contact: Barry Grider, Lectureship Director, Southwest Church of Christ, 8900 Manchaca Road, Austin, TX 78748-5399, (512) 282-2438.

The Madisonville Church of Christ is having their Lectureship April 21-23, 2000 on the theme: *In My Father's House*. The lectures will be video and audio taped and there will be book displays and other displays available.

Then, on August 5 they will be hosting BibleQuest. This is an annual Bible Bowl of the youth of the Lord's church. They will also provide accommodations for those who travel great distances. For more information contact: Madisonville Church of Christ; 1035 N. Main St; Madisonville, KY 42431 or call (270) 821-3544.

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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A PLEA FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

Monte L. Evans

It is that time of year again when the denominations ready themselves for pageantry, sunrise services, and vain worship (the doctrine of men). They will announce their Easter festivities using every media resource available, so thousands of people will have the opportunity to celebrate the resurrection of our dear Savior. These Easter celebrations are common events among the denominations. However, sadly enough, this Easter hoopla has made its way into the church of our Lord.

ERROR OF EASTER

The belief of many people is that if an occasion or an event has been celebrated or has been recognized for many years it must be safe, good, and, therefore, should be accepted. When one glances at the theme of Easter, it seems to be a wholesome and wonderful event. The idea of searching for beautifully decorated eggs left behind by the Easter Bunny is a time of fun and laughter. But what about Easter as a religious event? Why was Easter invented? What purpose did it serve? The word Easter does not appear anywhere in the Greek New Testament. The word Easter appears only once in the King James Version in Acts 12:4. According to the *Expanded Vines Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* (pp. 344-345), the word Easter was mistranslated and should read Passover, *pascha*. “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. The festival of Pasch held by Christians in post-apostolic times was a continuation of the Jewish feast, but was not instituted by Christ.”

The purpose and the origin of Easter are not widely known (that is to say not widely discussed or taught),

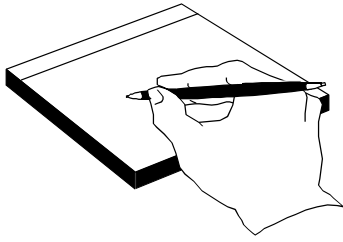
yet, Easter had a purpose. The pageantry and celebration of Easter were a part of the digression from the truth, created by men through the means of Catholicism.

The Easter celebration would give the Christians special festivals and celebrations as were found among the Pagans and Jews. Where the large number of converts were Jews it was natural for them to transfer as far as possible the Jewish customs into Christian usage. The leaders of the churches were also desirous of making the church more attractive to Jews and Pagans. As these were accustomed to pompous ceremonies as a part of their systems, it was believed that they would hold the simplicity of Christian worship in contempt. To alleviate this prejudice, rites were made more elaborate and ceremonies expanded. The Jewish and Pagan priests had taunted the Christians, saying that they had not temples, altars, victims, or priests, which to them constituted the essence of religion. Christians responded with special occasions and made a sacrifice out of the Lord's Supper. Easter became one of the most elaborate of these celebrations (Mattox, p. 121).

What was the purpose of Easter? To make the church more attractive to the Jews and Pagans. Does that sound familiar? Can we say C-O-M-P-R-O-M-I-S-E? Is this church growth at any cost? Easter was created simply to make the church comfortable for the Jews and the Pagans. Easter and all it entails are the creation of man and not authorized by Christ. The celebration of Easter is foreign to apostolic preaching and is not a part of Divine Revelation thus, it constitutes vain worship and the doctrine of men (Mat. 15:9). If Easter was set in order by Divine Revelation, there would not have been a problem dealing with what day Easter must be

(Continued on Page 4)

Notes From The Editor



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Traditions

We have a lot of traditions (of men) in the church today. There is not anything necessarily wrong with such, most are good and useful. Liberals will try to blur the distinction between traditions of men and the tradition of God and use those to attack the Lord's church today. I do not mean to do that by this statement. I love the church of our Lord and will fight to the death to defend her. However, we should recognize that we do have many traditions of men today in the church. One such tradition centers around baptism. If a preacher does not state that he is baptizing the person in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (or with others, in the name of Jesus Christ) then some would think that the person has not been scripturally baptized. Another would deal with our prayers: if a person did not state at the end of the prayer, "in the name of Christ" many would believe that it is an unscriptural prayer. We have made the statement "in the name of" a formula to be said that makes the action acceptable.

Let us consider the Scriptures as to the meaning of this phrase. While we will not consider every passage in the New Testament, we will consider enough to draw some definite, clear-cut conclusions. "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). Here are some who made the claim to prophecy, cast out devils, and do many wonderful works in the name of Christ. "And whoso shall receive one such little child **in my name** receiveth me....For where two or three are gathered

together **in my name**, there am I in the midst of them" (Mat. 18:5, 20). Here there is the receiving of one who is like a little child in the Lord's name, and then having the Lord's approval when we gather in His name in taking disciplinary action.

Jesus says, "I am come **in my Father's name**, and ye receive me not: if another shall come **in his own name**, him ye will receive" (John 5:43). He also said regarding prayer: "And whatsoever ye shall ask **in my name**, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing **in my name**, I will do it" (John 14:13-14). Jesus also told His apostles: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father **in my name**, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing **in my name**: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask **in my name**: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you" (John 16:23-26). John in giving the theme for the books says that he recorded the miracles, "that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life **through his name**" (John 20:31).

Peter says to the lame man: "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: **In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk**" (Act 3:6). Paul tells of a damsel following them: "And this did she many days. But Paul, being grieved, turned and said to the spirit, I command thee **in the name of Jesus Christ** to come out of her. And he came out the same hour" (Acts 16:18).

Paul writes to correct the division in Corinth and says, "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....Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized **in the name of Paul**?...Lest any should say that I had baptized **in mine own name**" (1 Cor. 1:10, 13, 15). In withdrawing fellowship: "**In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, when ye are gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 5:4). Again in relation to the withdrawing of fellowship Paul writes, "Now we command you, brethren, **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the

tradition which he received of us” (2 The. 3:6).

In relation to our prayers, Paul writes, “Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father **in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ**” (Eph. 5:20). Paul writes, “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). Lastly consider: “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken **in the name of the Lord**, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience....Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil **in the name of the Lord**” (Jam. 5:10, 14).

As mentioned previously some take the phrase “in the name of” and state that it is a saying which the person who does the baptizing says prior to the baptism which without it voids the baptism. Is this conclusion true? Let us now notice the passages which tell us to baptize “in the name of.” “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them **in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost**” (Mat. 28:19). “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you **in the name of Jesus Christ** for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38). “(For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus**.)” (Acts 8:16). “And he commanded them to be baptized **in the name of the Lord**. Then prayed they him to tarry certain days” (Acts 10:48). “When they heard *this*, they were baptized **in the name of the Lord Jesus**” (Acts 19:5). If this is a formula which one **must say**, then which one must we say? Are we to say “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost” as in Matthew 28, or “in the name of Jesus Christ” as in Acts 2, or “in the name of the Lord Jesus” as in Acts 8 and 19, or simply “in the name of the Lord” as in Acts 10? Which one of these exact statements **must** be made? Some have concluded that we simply ignore what Jesus said in Matthew 28, and state any combination of the other statements. Others have concluded that since in Jesus “dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9) that to say in the name of Jesus we are also saying in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. However, this simply will not work if this is a formula which **must** be stated.

Let us consider one other passage which sheds light on all of this. When Peter and John were before the council, the council asked, “And when they had set

them in the midst, they asked, **By what power, or by what name**, have ye done this?” (Acts 4:7). They responded by saying, “Be it known unto you all, and to all the people of Israel, that **by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth**, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *even* by him doth this man stand here before you whole....Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is **none other name** under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:10, 12). The council agreed among themselves: “But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man **in this name**. And they called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach **in the name of Jesus**” (Acts 4:17-18). What we learn (in all these passages) is that when something is being done “in the name of” that it is being done by the power of or by the authority of.

When the New Testament teaches us to pray in the name of Christ, it is not saying that it is a verbal declaration or a formal statement that must be attached to our prayer to make it acceptable. Instead it is by the authority or power of Christ that we can go directly to the Father in prayer (Heb. 4:16). We can address our prayers, “My Father which art in heaven” because of the authority or power of Christ; He gave us that right.

The same is true of the withdrawing of fellowship. By what right can we withdraw from a member of the church? Because Christ has given us that right or power. Christ gave us the command that when a brother (or sister) is not walking according to the Truth, then we are to withdraw our fellowship from him.

When we baptize someone, giving the forgiveness of sins to that individual, by what right do we have to give that forgiveness to that person? We have that right by the authority of Christ, we are doing it in His name. He is the one who says that the sinner is forgiven when we baptize him in water. It is not something that we **say**, it is something that we **do**. It is an **action** based upon what Christ taught in His Word.

If “in the name of” is a formal statement, and not an action based upon what Christ taught, then what are we to do with Colossians 3:17, “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Every action we perform and every word we state, we must formally state that we are doing/saying this “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” This view is reduced to the ridiculous. For example, every breath one takes, he must state: “I am taking this breath in the name of the Lord Jesus,” but he must also state that he is saying this in the

name of the Lord Jesus. This obviously is an impossibility.

We have through the years built up a formal statement regarding certain things, and some are now making the statement a matter fellowship. If the right words are not stated when you baptize someone, then the baptism is not acceptable. And if we add anything to the phraseology, the baptism is not acceptable. If we should state that we are baptizing them for their entrance into the family of God or the church, then some would believe we need to rebaptize them.

Lest any misunderstand, should we state prior to baptizing someone something along the line that we are baptizing them in the name of (or by the authority of) the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Absolutely!!!!** However, it is not a formula which validates the baptism, it is for the purpose of teaching both the person being baptized and anyone else who might be witnessing it. Thus, we should also convey other teachings: we are baptizing for the forgiveness of sins or salvation, and that it is for entrance into the church or the family of God (or any other terms which convey these meanings). We need to convey the correct idea of what is being done in the baptism, to teach and give a correct understanding to those who might not have a correct knowledge of why we are baptizing. *MH*

On a personal note: I have been invited to go to Murmansk Russia this year and teach in the Bible College there. To do this, I will have to raise a travel fund. If you would be willing to help, please send your checks to Bellview Church of Christ marked for the Hatcher Travel Fund. Thank you in advance for your help.

(Continued from Page 1)
observed.

The time for its observance, however, caused serious differences. The church in Asia Minor wanted to keep Easter at the same time the Jews observed the Passover. They began a fast on the fourteenth day of the first Jewish month, the day of the crucifixion—and then celebrated the resurrection three days later. This made Easter fall on different days of the week. They claimed that the Apostle John and Philip had taught them this method of determining the day. The Western Church under the leadership of Rome said that Peter and Paul taught them to observe Easter day always on the first day of the week (Mattox, p. 121).

As matter of fact to show the confusion regarding what day Easter was to be observed, the Council of

Nicaea, A.D. 325 decided: “Easter was to always be observed on Sunday” (Mattox, p. 142). If Christ or the apostles or any inspired writer mentioned anything about the celebrating of Easter, there would have been no confusion and doubt regarding its day of observance.

ERROR OF EASTER TODAY

As wrong and sinful as it was in the second century to celebrate Easter, forgoing any authority for it, it is still wrong and sinful today. When we study and learn from history we notice the compromise set forth by men in the effort to cause the church to grow. As noted earlier the church leaders in that day wanted to make the church more comfortable for the Jews and the Pagans, thus, Easter, the celebration, was created. Those same sentiments for church growth at the cost of doctrinal purity are practiced today. It is understandable and unfortunate that the denominations encourage the Easter phenomenon. Yet it is tragic, pathetic, and rueful for those congregations that claim to be of the body of Christ to participate in such sinful and unbiblical practices. What is sad is that they will try to justify their actions by claiming to use the Easter celebration to bring more people to the church. They will argue that whatever they can do to cause the Kingdom to expand God will accept. What happened to proclaiming the gospel of Christ? To use gimmicks and denominational falsehoods to promote church growth is compromise.

I wonder why some of our compromising brethren in an attempt to bring growth to the church have yet not placed the statue of Buddha next to the pulpit to make Buddhists more comfortable? Why not bring in the sacred cow so that our Hindu friends might be made more comfortable? Where do we draw the line? We must recognize and submit to the authority of the Scriptures and not add to them or go beyond them (Rev. 22:18-19). When congregations depart from the Divine Pattern and slip into denominationalism, the elders are to be blamed. Elders who promote the doctrines of men and false teaching certainly have added to the Divine qualifications regarding the eldership found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. These two extra qualifications must read that a man is to be spineless (unable to stand for the Truth) and that a man must be ignorant of the Word of God. The one claiming to be a gospel preacher who promotes denominational dogmas is as guilty and worthy of blame as the elders. Is it possible for a man to proclaim error and still be referred to as a gospel preacher? When so-called church of Christ congregations depart into denominationalism,

it would be a noble gesture for them to refrain from using the name church of Christ. The change in name should come simply because they are not what they claim to be, the church of Christ. It must be noted that congregations that fellowship Easter celebrating congregations and bids them God speed become partakers in their evil deeds (2 John 9-12).

The idea of celebrating the resurrection of Jesus Christ is one of great importance. It is of such importance we are commanded to do so every Lord's Day

(Acts 20:7). This of course takes place during the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-25). Members of the Lord's church must not be deceived in believing that to participate in an Easter celebration of any kind is pleasing to God or scriptural. To participate in an Easter celebration is unbiblical, constitutes vain worship, has no authority and is sinful.

WORK CITED

F. W. Mattox, *History of the Church of Christ* (Arkansas: Gospel Light, 1961).

“WHAT DID JESUS HAVE IN MIND”

Noah Hackworth

I would like to turn to the 16th chapter of Matthew: When Jesus came to Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, still others say Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” “But what about you, he asked?” “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the son of the living God.” Jesus replied, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock I will build my church. The gates of hell will not overcome it.” I've read that passage many times, and every time I find myself wondering exactly what Jesus had in mind when he said “church”.

The statement above is a small part of a 10-page speech at a University, February 21, 1993. By his own admission the author was wondering what Jesus had in mind when He used *church*, but it really should not be difficult to enlighten ourselves as to what Jesus meant. We begin by defining our words, since it has been said that a word well-defined is a case half-argued.

EKKLESIA

“Church” translates the Greek word *ekklesia* which means “called out, summoned” (Robinson). “Called out or forth; a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place; an assembly” (Thayer). Jesus did not *coin* “church”; it was already in use by the Greek-speaking people of His day. In Acts 19:39, *ekklesia* is used to indicate an “assembly, as a regularly summoned, political body” (Arndt & Gingrich). It is also used to describe a “mob” (Acts 5:32). Prior to the way Jesus used the word (Mat. 16:18) it apparently had no religious significance. He obviously had in mind a body of people who would be called out of the world in a spiritual and moral sense. He was saying, “Upon this rock I will build my ‘called out.’” Paul admonished the Thessalonians to “walk worthily of God, who calleth you into his own kingdom and glory” (1 The. 2:12). He then adds: “whereunto he called you through our

gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 The. 2:14). The church is really a body of people, indefinite in number, who are to be in total subjection to Christ (Eph. 5:24), having been called or summoned out of the world by the gospel for this express purpose. Obeying the “demands of the gospel” involve faith in Christ (John 8:24; Rom. 10:17); repentance of sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30); confession of Christ (Acts 8:37; Rom. 10:10); baptism into Christ for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). Peter said, “But ye are a elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for *God's* own possession, that ye may show forth the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God: who had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy” (1 Pet. 2:9-10).

NO CHURCH UNLESS CALLED

It is not possible to have a church unless people have been called by the gospel. This is basically the reason why denominations are no part of the church: they have not been called by the gospel, they have not been baptized into Christ for the remission of sins, they are still in the world; hence not any part of the church. The first phrase of 1 Peter 2:10 is tremendously important; “who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God.” Those “outside of Christ” are not an elect race, they are not a holy nation, they are not God's people, they have not been purchased by the blood of Christ (Acts 20:38). In fact, they are “no people.”

CONCLUSION

There is always a need to know more, to understand better, to digest God's Word more thoroughly, but this is certainly not to imply that we have to be in a state of confusion about the church; what it is, how it came into being, and who is included in the membership.

5342 West La Vida Court; Visalia, CA 93277

“Sad Statements Of The Bible”

June 10 - 14, 2000

Saturday, June 10				Tuesday, June 13	
7:00 PM	What Makes A Sad Verse?	Keith Mosher	9:00 AM	“Departed Without Being Desired”;	
7:45 PM	“What Is Truth?”; John 18:38	David Brown		2 Chr. 21:20	Ted Clarke
Sunday, June 11			10:00 AM	Another Generation Which Knew	
9:00 AM	“Rivers Of Waters Run Down			Not Jehovah; Jud. 2:10	Eddie Whitten
	Mine Eyes”; Psa. 119:136	Ira Y. Rice, Jr.	11:00 AM	“Only Evil Continually”; Gen. 6:5	Terry Hightower
10:00 AM	Cannot Enter The Land; Deu. 24:4	John Priola	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
	<i>Lunch Break</i>		1:30 PM	“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem”; Mat. 23:37	Tom Wacaster
2:00 PM	Improper Leaders; Jer. 5:31	Clifford Newell	2:30 PM	“They Will Not Endure Sound	
3:00 PM	“God Heareth Not Sinners”;			Doctrine”; 2 Tim. 4:2-3	Paul Vaughn
	John 9:31	Michael Hatcher	3:30 PM	Open Forum	
<i>Dinner Break</i>			<i>Dinner Break</i>		
7:00 PM	“Neither Could They Blush”; Jer. 6:15	David Jones	7:00 PM	When Fellowship Is Broken; Gen. 3	Harrell Davidson
7:45 PM	“Depart From Me”; Mat. 25:41	Tim Nichols	7:45 PM	“Is It Nothing”; Lam. 1:12	Gary Grizzell
Monday, June 12			Wednesday, June 14		
9:00 AM	“Mine Own Familiar Friend”;		9:00 AM	Unconcerned With Sin; 1 Cor. 5:2	Michael Light
	Psa. 41:9	Joel Wheeler	10:00 AM	“So Soon Removed”; Gal. 1:6-9	Noah Hackworth
10:00 AM	“Ichabod”; 1 Sam. 4:21-22	Harold Bigham	11:00 AM	“Who Made Israel To Sin”;	
11:00 AM	“We Will Not Walk Therein”;			1 Kin. 14:16	Howell Bigham
	Jer. 6:16	Eddy Craft	<i>Lunch Break</i>		
	<i>Lunch Break</i>		1:30 PM	“No King In Israel”; Jud. 17:6	Guss Eoff
1:30 PM	“Demas Hath Forsaken Me”;		2:30 PM	“My God, My God, Why Hast Thou	
	2 Tim. 4:10	Joe Galloway		Forsaken Me”; Mat. 27-46	Joseph Meador
2:30 PM	Elders Feeding Themselves; Eze. 34:2	Carl Garner	3:30 PM	Open Forum	
3:30 PM	Open Forum		<i>Dinner Break</i>		
	<i>Dinner Break</i>		7:00 PM	“Weighed In The Balances, And	
7:00 PM	“Curse Ye Meroz”; Jud. 5:23	Lynn Parker		Found Wanting”; Dan. 5:25-27	Curtis Cates
7:45 PM	Dead Thinking They Were Alive;		7:45 PM	“Absalom, My Son, My Son Absalom!	
	Rev. 3:1	Bobby Liddell		Would God I Had Died For Thee”; 2 Sam. 18:33	Ronnie Hayes

Bellview Lectures Information

HOUSING

Free housing in the homes of Christians will be provided on a “first come, first served” basis (call our office at: 850/455-7595, or write at: 4850 Saufley Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The following motel is available nearby and is providing a *special rate* for individuals attending the *Bellview Lectures*. Ramada Limited (8060 Lavelle Way) offers the following price (tax not included) \$45-1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850/944-0333. When checking into the above motel, show them this brochure announcing this special rate, or when calling for reservations, be sure to tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures*.

MEALS

The women of the *Bellview Church of Christ* will provide a free lunch Monday through Wednesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants and a map will be available at the registration table in the foyer.

BOOKS

The lectureship book, *Sad Statements Of The Bible* will be available to those attending the *Bellview Lectures* at a reduced rate of \$10. Others may purchase the book at the pre-publication price of \$11 prior to June 30, 2000, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It will contain thirty-one chapters and approximately 400 pages.

Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPES

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes and video tapes. These tapes may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. Order blanks and price information will be available during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail upon request. (We request the cooperation of all who attend the *Bellview Lectures* in keeping the pulpit area free of privately-owned recorders and microphones.) If you would like to make your own recordings, please see one of our sound technicians in the sound room.

EXHIBITS

Limited reservations will be accepted subject to approval of the *Bellview elders* and available space. Exhibits are expected from schools, children’s homes, bookstores, publications, and other projects of general interest to the brotherhood.

TRANSPORTATION

If you will be flying to the Pensacola Regional Airport and will need transportation, please call or write our office. We will arrange to meet you, at no charge, if we know when, where, airline, flight number, and the number in your party.

HELL IS HOT!!!

Jesse Whitlock

Many people do not believe in the biblical doctrine of hell. Guess what? Fire will burn whether we believe it will or not. Frost will freeze whether we believe it will or not. Poison will kill whether we believe it will or not. Hell is real and the lost will be there in eternity whether any man believes it or not!

I once read a denominational preacher's thoughts on the subject of hell. He concluded: "The doctrine of an eternally burning hell is not found in Scripture; it is tradition." John said, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try [prove—ASV] the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).

What saith the Scripture? Christ said hell was an "everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels...everlasting punishment" (Mat. 25:41, 46). Jesus said that it is a place where "the fire...never shall be quenched...Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:43-44). Hell is further described as a place where "the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Rev. 14:11). Along with Satan the lost will be "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet *are*, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever" (Rev. 20:10). Please consider: Matthew 3:12; 8:12; 25:12ff; Hebrews 6:8; and Revelation 14:10; etc. The Bible teaches hell is real! The Bible teaches hell is a place of torment, fire, pain, and that it is everlasting!

The Northwestern University School of Education distributed a questionnaire to 500 ministers of various man-made denominations in 1995. They were asked to respond to a number of questions. One question was: "Do you believe the Bible's teaching of a literal hell?" In this survey 69% denied the Bible's teaching, while 31%

said they agreed!

There will always be those who deny what the Word of God so plainly teaches! I once had a man contend that it is wrong to take a man who has lived in disobedience to the will of God for 50 or 60 years and then condemn him forever. I responded that if it is wrong to take a man who has lived in disobedience for 50 or 60 years and condemn him forever; it would be equally wrong to take a man who has lived in obedience to God for 50 or 60 years and bless him forever! If not, why not? This man failed to recognize sin for what it is! He refused to realize that Christ died on a Roman cross because of the sins of man! (Rom. 5:8; John 3:16). Note the words of Matthew 25:46, "And these shall go away into **everlasting** punishment: but the righteous into life **eternal**." Notice the duration of time for the wicked in hell is exactly the same as the duration of the righteous in heaven! "Everlasting" and "Eternal" are both taken from a Greek term, *aiionios*, and that word means "eternal, without end, never to cease, everlasting, indeterminate as to duration." If the wicked in hell cease to be punished after 1,000 years or 100,000 centuries, then at that point in time the righteous in heaven will cease to be blessed! How do I know? For the same word is used to describe the duration of both in Matthew 25:46! The Word of God is the Word of God and hell is hot!

809 East Pershing Drive; Ardmore, OK 73401

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort *you* that ye should **earnestly contend for the faith** which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

**Write For Your
Free Bible Correspondence
Course
4850 Saufley Field Road
Pensacola, FL 32526**

Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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SALVATION

Graham Cain

There is probably no subject of greater interest and concern to the religious world than that of salvation. The meaning of *salvation* is often misunderstood. Webster gives the definition as, (1) “act of saving or delivering from evil”; (2) “In theology, deliverance from sin and its consequences.” We see then that *salvation* means simply to be saved from sin and its effects. It does not, therefore, follow that all who have been saved will spend eternity in heaven, since we know that it is possible, after once having been saved from sin, to enter back into the pollution of the world and be eternally lost (Heb. 10:26-27; 2 Pet. 2:20, 22).

When Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan in the Garden of Eden, they became sinners. They, therefore, stood in need of salvation. God then started to formulate His plan whereby a Redeemer might be provided to redeem lost and fallen man from the bondage of sin. This Redeemer came to the world in the person of Jesus Christ and accomplished His great work of soul saving. He, “existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient *even* unto death, yea, the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:6-8).

It is not possible for one to fully realize or appreciate the vastness, the magnitude of God’s love for the human soul. “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). All men have become the objects of His saving power, not through inheritance, but by committing sin. “Therefore, as through one man sin entered into

the world, and death through sin; and so death passed unto all men, for that all sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

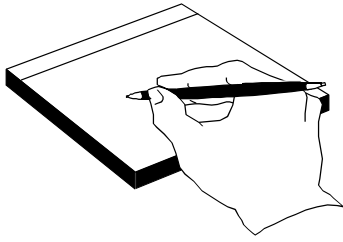
Paul said, “**All** have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). So then, all men are in need of salvation. From such a state of condemnation it was impossible for man to be saved by his own power, hence the necessity of God’s power to save. The apostle Paul tells us what that power is: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel: 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 “gospel of Christ” is **the power**. Not *one* of God’s powers to save, but the *only* power God uses in the salvation of the souls of men.

Gospel simply means *good message*, or *good news* of Christ, and would embrace all that He “began both to do and to teach” while here upon the earth. Inspiration has recorded these things for us through the writings of holy men who “spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit.” This record is perfect and complete and will furnish one completely “unto every good work.” The apostle Paul, in summing up the good news of Christ briefly, states that the gospel is this: “That Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; and that he was buried; and that he hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3-4).

After the resurrection of the Lord Jesus and just before His ascension, He delegated His apostles to carry on His work here on earth. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). He told them further: “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Hatcher**

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Judgment

A couple of years ago I was speaking with a man who advanced the idea that at the judgment God might save some individuals who had not been baptized for the remission of their sins. Sadly, this view has gained popularity among many individuals, and even among some who are otherwise sound conservative brethren. They do not deny the necessity of baptism for the remission of sins, but they think that God might somehow and for some reason decide to save some simply based upon His prerogative. The liberals simply believe that God is going to save all those who simply believe in Jesus as their Savior. While they do not deny the need of baptism, they believe that God will save anyone who makes this profession, thus denying the purpose of baptism.

Baptism is for the purpose of salvation. Jesus, after instructing the apostles to preach the gospel to the whole world, said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:16). In response to the question “Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). Peter responded by saying, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” (Acts 2:38). Saul (the apostle Paul) asked Jesus: “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). Jesus told him to go into Damascus and there “it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6). After waiting in Damascus, our Lord sends Ananias to Saul. Ananias tells Saul, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (Acts 22:16). Peter clearly states: “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by

the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 3:21). These passages plainly teach the purpose for baptism is the salvation of our soul. While stated in differing terms, they all mean the same thing. One cannot be saved without the act of baptism. Additionally, one cannot obey God without doing the action which He commands for the reason (purpose) for which He gave. Individuals who are baptized for some reason other than the forgiveness of sins (to show that one has been saved, etc.) do not have salvation. Thus, those liberals who believe and teach that God will save anyone who simply believes in Jesus as God’s Son and as their Savior are in error. God will not save those individuals: they will be lost eternally in hell.

However, there are those who come along and think that on the judgment day, God will somehow, someway find a way to save some people. They believe that to say otherwise somehow limits God. While understanding God’s nature (in particular His omnipotence), there are some things God cannot do. He cannot do anything which is contrary to His nature. God is truth (John 7:28; 1 The. 1:9), therefore God cannot lie. “In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). “That by two immutable things, in which *it was* impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:18). Lying is contrary to God’s nature, therefore God **cannot** lie.

Since God cannot lie and all that He says is the truth, what did He say about this? He taught that one must be baptized for the purpose He gave—the remission of sins—to be saved. Now is God telling the truth, or is God lying? To affirm that God might save someone on the day of Judgment who has not been baptized for salvation, is to say that God has lied to us!

Let us also notice some additional information God has said. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 The. 1:7-9). God said that He would take vengeance upon two classes of individuals. The first class is those who do not know God. In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus prayed: “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Life eternal comes from knowing God, but when

someone does not know God, then there will be an everlasting destruction coming upon them. Now is God lying or telling the truth?

The second class of individuals who will be punished will be those who do not continue to obey the gospel. How does one initially obey the gospel? Simply to summarize this: the gospel is the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord (1 Cor. 15:1-4). We obey a form of that gospel (Rom. 6:17-18) in the act of baptism. "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" (Rom. 6:3-4). That baptism must be predicated upon our faith (in God, Christ, and that He is our Savior), repentance of our sins, and confession of our faith in Christ as God's Son. Now God, through the hand of Paul, said that those who do not obey the gospel will be punished with an everlasting destruction from His presence. Was God lying or telling the truth?

To state that God might save someone who has not been baptized for the forgiveness of their sins is to say that God has lied to us. But God cannot lie, thus there is **no hope** for those who have not obeyed the gospel. There is absolutely **no possibility** that God might save anyone who has not obeyed the gospel. Let us get this idea out of our minds. God will **not** save them. They are lost and eternally doomed in the fires of hell if they do not obey the truth of God's Word. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

his name unto all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem...but [Jesus said] tarry ye in the city, until ye be clothed with power from on high" (Luke 24:47, 49).

The record tells us that the apostles did as directed by the Master. They tarried in Jerusalem until they were "clothed with power from on high" (Acts 2:1, 4). It was then, "beginning at Jerusalem," that the gospel began to be preached to "every creature." Peter, who had been given the keys of the kingdom (Mat. 16:19) preached this first, full, gospel sermon. He preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. He convinced his hearers that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter said, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly, that God hath made him both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36).

"Now when they heard *this*, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and the rest of the

apostles, Brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Now, notice closely the next verse. In it is given the answer that had so long been needed and longed for. The answer to how lost and fallen man may have the forgiveness of sins and be restored to the favor and fellowship of God, the Father. Hear Peter as he answers: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For to you is the promise, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, *even* as many as the Lord our God shall call unto him....They then that received his word were baptized: and there were added *unto them* in that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:38-39, 41).

These people obeyed the gospel. The gospel is God's power to save. The gospel consists of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. And when one believes in Jesus as being the Son of God (as these people did), repents of his every sin, and is "buried with Him by baptism into death," being raised then from the watery grave "in the likeness of His resurrection," that one has obeyed the gospel and his sins have been remitted. Read Romans 6:36. It is not necessary to seek to *join* some church, because with salvation comes instant membership in the church that was purchased with the blood of Christ. "The Lord added to them day by day those that were saved" (Acts 2:47). When one obeys the Lord, that one is added to His church.

Yes, the subject of salvation is the most important topic that can occupy our thoughts. Jesus said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the **whole world**, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mat. 16:26). When Jesus returns to claim His faithful He will take vengeance on all who have neglected to obey His gospel. He will come "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).

If you, dear friend, have not rendered obedience unto the Lord, you should give serious thought to these words, for "*it is* a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

Salvation is free. "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev. 22:17). A home in eternal heaven is yours, if you will but obey the Lord and continue in the faith. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10).

2244 Mountain View Drive; Hurst, TX 76054

“Sad Statements Of The Bible”

June 10 - 14, 2000

Saturday, June 10

7:00 PM What Makes A Sad Verse? Keith Mosher
7:45 PM What Is Truth? David Brown

Sunday, June 11

9:00 AM “Rivers Of Waters Run Down Mine Eyes”; Psa. 119:136 Ira Y. Rice, Jr.
10:00 AM Cannot Enter The Land; Deu. 24:4 John Priola

Lunch Break

2:00 PM Improper Leaders; Jer. 5:31 Clifford Newell
3:00 PM “God Heareth Not Sinners”; John 9:31 Michael Hatcher

Dinner Break

7:00 PM “Neither Could They Blush”; Jer. 6:15 David Jones
7:45 PM “Depart From Me”; Mat. 25:41 Tim Nichols

Monday, June 12

9:00 AM “Mine Own Familiar Friend”; Psa. 41:9 Joel Wheeler
10:00 AM “Ichabod”; 1 Sam. 4:21-22 Harold Bigham
11:00 AM “We Will Not Walk Therein”; Jer. 6:16 Eddy Craft

Lunch Break

1:30 PM “Demas Hath Forsaken Me”; 2 Tim. 4:10 Joe Galloway
2:30 PM Elders Feeding Themselves; Eze. 34:2 Carl Garner

3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM “Curse Ye Meroz”; Jud. 5:23 Lynn Parker
7:45 PM Dead Thinking They Were Alive; Rev. 3:1 Bobby Liddell

Tuesday, June 13

9:00 AM “Departed Without Being Desired”; 2 Chr. 21:20 Ted Clarke
10:00 AM Another Generation Which Knew Not Jehovah; Jud. 2:10 Eddie Whitten
11:00 AM “Only Evil Continually”; Gen. 6:5 Terry Hightower

Lunch Break

1:30 PM “Jerusalem, Jerusalem”; Mat. 23:37 Tom Wacaster
2:30 PM “They Will Not Endure Sound Doctrine”; 2 Tim. 4:2-3 Paul Vaughn

3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM When Fellowship Is Broken; Gen. 3 Harrell Davidson
7:45 PM “Is It Nothing”; Lam. 1:12 Gary Grizzell

Wednesday, June 14

9:00 AM Unconcerned With Sin; 1 Cor. 5:2 Michael Light
10:00 AM “So Soon Removed”; Gal. 1:6-9 Noah Hackworth
11:00 AM “Who Made Israel To Sin”; 1 Kin. 14:16 Howell Bigham

Lunch Break

1:30 PM “No King In Israel”; Jud. 17:6 Guss Eoff
2:30 PM “My God My God Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me”; Mat. 27-46 Joseph Meador
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM “Weighed In The Balances, And Found Wanting”; Dan. 5:25-27 Curtis Cates
7:45 PM “Absalom, My Son, My Son Absalom! Would God I Had Died For Thee”; 2 Sam. 18:33 Ronnie Hayes

Bellview Lectures Information

HOUSING

Free housing in the homes of Christians will be provided on a “first come, first served” basis (call our office at: 850/455-7595, or write at: 4850 Saufley Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The following motel is available nearby and is providing a *special rate* for individuals attending the *Bellview Lectures*. Microtel Inn And Suites (8001 Lavelle Way) offers the following price (tax not included) \$45-1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850/944-0333 or 850/941-8902. When checking into the above motel, show them this brochure announcing this special rate, or when calling for reservations, be sure to tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures*.

MEALS

The women of the *Bellview Church of Christ* will provide a free lunch Monday through Wednesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants and a map will be available at the registration table in the foyer.

BOOKS

The lectureship book, *Sad Statements Of The Bible* will be available to those attending the *Bellview Lectures* at a reduced rate of \$10. Others may purchase the book at the pre-publication price of \$11 prior to June 30, 2000, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It will contain thirty-one chapters and approximately 400 pages.

Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPES

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes and video tapes. These tapes may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. Order blanks and price information will be available during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail upon request. (We request the cooperation of all who attend the *Bellview Lectures* in keeping the pulpit area free of privately-owned recorders and microphones.) If you would like to make your own recordings, please see one of our sound technicians in the sound room.

EXHIBITS

Limited reservations will be accepted subject to approval of the *Bellview elders* and available space. Exhibits are expected from schools, children’s homes, bookstores, publications, and other projects of general interest to the brotherhood.

TRANSPORTATION

If you will be flying to the Pensacola Regional Airport and will need transportation, please call or write our office. We will arrange to meet you, at no charge, if we know when, where, airline, flight number, and the number in your party.

TONGUE SPEAKING

Ian McPherson

We have all met those who claim to speak in tongues. Almost all denominations are involved in this practice. Let us examine what the Bible reveals about tongue speaking?

Tongue speaking in the Bible was a miraculous sign. “And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; **they shall speak with new tongues**” (Mark 16:17). We see here that tongue speaking is a *sign*. Not all miracles were signs. For example, although prophecy was a miracle, **it was not a sign**. It could not be proven without the accompanying proof of a sign (visible proof). Prophecy was the miraculous means by which God revealed His gospel to man (2 Pet. 1:20-21). Signs, therefore, accompanied inspired believers to prove that what they spoke was from God. Mark 16:20 says, “And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and **confirming the word with signs following.**” “The word” is the New Testament message which was delivered miraculously by revelation to the apostles. It was unknown to man until the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles (Acts 2). It was a mystery that was hidden in the mind of God until it was revealed miraculously by the Spirit (Eph. 3:1-5). The fulfillment of Mark 16:20 began on the Day of Pentecost (the Jewish feast day that the Lord chose to be the historical time of beginning for the church—Acts 2). On that day we see miraculous tongue speaking being practiced **for the first time in history**. It began with the outpouring (baptism) of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on that day.

This author will approach tongue speaking from two different perspectives. We will show that what is practiced by modern Pentecostals bears no resemblance to biblical tongue speaking, and then we will provide biblical evidence that miraculous gifts, such as tongue speaking, are no longer available to the church today.

**NO ONE CAN SPEAK IN TONGUES TODAY,
BECAUSE NO ONE CAN SPEAK MIRACU-
LOUSLY IN LANGUAGES WHICH THEY
HAVE NOT LEARNED.**

Tongues were languages, not “ecstatic utterance” as Pentecostals claim. Notice Acts 2:4-6, “And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with **other tongues**, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now

when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak **in his own language.**” In these verses we can clearly see that the apostles spoke miraculously in languages they had never learned.

Tongue speaking played an important part in the beginning of the church, and the early spreading of the gospel. It served two purposes. First, as a miraculous sign. It helped convince unbelievers that its recipients were from God (Acts 2). Second, it enabled the gospel to be spread more rapidly throughout the world because those speaking it were able to preach the gospel in other languages which they had never learned.

However, Pentecostals say that the expression “Unknown tongues” (1 Cor. 14) refers to a special language known only to God which they call “Ecstatic utterance.” *Unknown* simply means that the speakers did not learn the language. It was *unknown* to the speakers. Additionally, *unknown* is not a part of the original text. It was added by the translators to try to give us a better understanding (which in this case it only adds to the confusion).

Tongues were meant to be understood by the hearers. “So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air” (1 Cor. 14:9). If the tongues could not be understood by the hearers then it was useless (and sinful) to speak in tongues in church. “Else when thou shalt bless with the spirit, how shall he that occupieth the room of the unlearned say Amen at thy giving of thanks, **seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest?**” (1 Cor. 14:16). Since tongues were meant to be understood, they were **not** ecstatic utterances.

Tongues were for edification. Paul directed that no one was to speak in a tongue in church **unless the message was interpreted** (1 Cor. 14:13-14, 28). This is because without understanding the message, the church could not be edified (1 Cor. 14:4-5, 17).

Since messages received by tongue speakers were actually direct revelation from God, the gift of tongue speaking could also be used for **private edification**. “He that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue *edifieth himself*; but he that prophesieth edifieth the church” (1 Cor. 14:4). Pentecostals use this passage to justify their bursting forth with gibberish that they do not

understand. They claim that they receive edification from this. This verse however forbids the use of tongue speaking in the presence of those who do not understand it. The tongue speaker is able to “edify himself” because he understands what he is saying. The only justification that any tongue speaker in Bible times had for speaking out loud in public was if he intended to provide the listeners with an interpretation. First Corinthians 14:28 makes this clear: “But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God.” The admonition to “speak to himself” means to speak silently. Pentecostals often interpret it to mean “Speak solo.”

The tongue speaker could understand his own message. This is made abundantly clear from the context of 1 Corinthians 14. Notice for example verse 13 which says, “Wherefore let him that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue pray that **he** may interpret.” Grammatically, the *he* is the tongue speaker. If tongue speaking is not understood then no edification can be accomplished. Pentecostals who claim that the gibberish they speak is edifying, are confusing a subjective emotional experience with edification.

Some argue that the tongue speaker could not understand what he was saying because Paul said that when he spoke in tongues that his “understanding is unfruitful” (v. 14). By this expression however, Paul simply meant that his prayer in tongues would be unfruitful to the church in that the message would not be understood by the church.

NO ONE CAN SPEAK IN TONGUES TODAY, BECAUSE THE MIRACULOUS GIFT OF TONGUE SPEAKING HAS CEASED.

First Corinthians 13 teaches that God did not intend the church to have miraculous gifts forever. Tongue speaking and other miraculous gifts had only a temporary function to perform.

Miraculous tongues cease when inspiration was completed. “Charity never faileth: but whether *there be* prophecies, **they shall fail**; whether *there be* tongues, **they shall cease**; whether *there be* knowledge, **it shall vanish away**” (1 Cor. 13:8). **Tongues therefore ceased at the same time as prophecies and miraculous knowledge ceased.** Both prophecy and knowledge were miraculous gifts available to the church in the first century (1 Cor. 12:8-10). These gifts were used to bring us the inspired message (2 Pet. 1:20). Thus, **tongues ceased when the inspired Word was completed.** If tongues have not ceased, **then the Bible has not been**

fully revealed. Why do Pentecostals claim that tongue speaking is still in force, but biblical inspiration has ceased? **Why do they claim that the Holy Spirit still works in the same way as He did in the first century, but deny that the Spirit is still producing Scripture?**

Miraculous tongues ceased when “that which is perfect” came. “For we know in part, and we prophesy in part. But when **that which is perfect is come**, then that which is in part shall be **done away**” (1 Cor. 13:9-10). *Perfect* means “that which has reached its end, complete, full.” According to this text tongues, prophecy, and knowledge had **only produced partial revelation to the church.** At the time Paul was writing, they only knew and prophesied “**in part.**” This is because at **that time** God’s revealed message was primarily only contained in the **inspired men** (apostles and prophets). However, God had the purpose of transferring His entire divine revelation (the New Testament) into written form (from the inspired men to the inspired book) (Eph. 3:1-5).

The context therefore demands that the expression “**that which is perfect**” be the completed Word of God. There can be no other valid interpretation. Inspired men had the whole truth **within them**, but until this truth was written and became Scripture, it would always only produce as much knowledge and prophecy as the inspired man could deliver in one location. Thus, the incomplete and fragmented message they imparted was described as “that which is in part.”

The following verses of 1 Corinthians 13 continue to verify the above interpretation. God’s completed revelation (the New Testament) is actually called “the perfect law of liberty” (Jam. 1:25). This verifies that the expression “that which is perfect” is the fully revealed will of God.

Miraculous tongue speaking ceased when the church grew to manhood. “When I was a **child**, I spake as a child, understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when **I became a man, I put away childish things.** For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these *is* charity” (1 Cor. 13:11-13). Here Paul uses his own life as an illustration. The miraculous era in which he was then writing (that which is in part) was compared with his childhood. A child never gets the whole picture of life, his knowledge is dispensed bit by bit. It is not until he reaches manhood that he comes to a full understand-

ing of life. Paul is therefore saying that there would come a time when the fragmental knowledge he and other inspired men were revealing through miraculous gifts would gradually cause the church to grow to manhood. It would be then that the partial (miraculous gifts) would be done away.

This same truth is taught in Ephesians 4:8-14, which teaches us that inspired men such as apostles and prophets were given “for the perfecting of the saints” (v. 12). They would only last “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (v. 13). The New Testament completed (brought to perfection) God’s plan for the unity of the church. It contains God’s full and perfect will for man (Jude 3; 2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). Thus,

1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Ephesians 4:8-14 instructs us plainly that when “that which is perfect” (the New Testament) has come, then “that which is in part” (direct revelation or miracles) would cease.

Unfortunately, there has been an increasing tolerance to tongue speaking among the church of Christ. There are increasing reports of Pentecostals infiltrating into the church and no discipline being applied.

The Scriptures emphatically teach that the miraculous gift of tongues is no longer available to the Christian. We now have “a more excellent way” (1 Cor. 12:31). We can look intently into God’s complete and perfect will, and equip ourselves for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16). In doing so, we will see clearly that it is sinful to go beyond God’s Word and speak in tongues.

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RELIGION’S “NEW HERMENEUTIC”

Noah A. Hackworth

Hermeneutics has to do with the “science of interpreting the Scriptures.” When we deal with methods of approaching the Scriptures and how to determine their meaning, we are dealing with Hermeneutics. The attachment of *new* only suggests a “new approach” to the Scriptures in place of an older method. *New* does not in any sense, however, suggest a better method. The so-called New Hermeneutic, which has made its way into contemporary religion, is in reality a blatant attempt by so-called “Christian Scholars” to reconstruct the nature of biblical interpretation. This “new method” basically rejects the authority of the Bible. The Bible, according to this new approach, cannot be regarded as a pattern. New Testament epistles can only be regarded as love letters. We therefore cannot look to the Bible as our inerrant guide and pattern for doctrine and practice. According to the advocates of the New Hermeneutic, reason has little value in determining what a passage of

Scripture means. That Christians have an all-sufficient guide which sets the standard for the way they live and worship is emphatically denied. According to this *New Method* of biblical interpretation, the direct statements, examples, and implications in the Bible do not permit us to “find Jesus.” The intelligentsia of contemporary religion does not believe that the New Testament is the pattern for primitive Christianity. In fact, they are antagonistic toward any movement that restricts religious activities to what is taught in the Word of God (cf., 2 John 9). The ultimate result of this “newly-found” approach to biblical interpretation is the rejection of the Bible as the inspired Word of God. Before one swallows the New Hermeneutic approach to the interpretation of the Scriptures, he should study carefully 2 Peter 1:20-21. The truth of the matter is that The New Hermeneutic is but an old heresy in disguise.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

**Write For Your
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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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THE OLDEST SINNER

Howell Bigham

There is one personality who holds the ugly distinction of being the oldest sinner. John said in 1 John 3:8, “He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.” He is identified clearly in the Holy Scriptures as the Devil. I am glad that God saw fit to reveal so much through His Word about the oldest sinner. I am thankful that God has warned us in His Word about the deceitful tactics of the Devil to devour our souls. The cardinal rule in the military arena is “know your enemy.” Let us look at the Bible’s teaching regarding “the oldest sinner.” As we reflect on these points, may they promote within us a desire to stay as far away as possible from the devil and to stay as close as we can to Jesus Christ.

Identification of the Devil

Look at some of the ways Satan is clearly identified in the Bible. He is called a “sinner” (1 John 3:8); a “liar” and “murderer” (John 8:44); “as a roaring lion” and our “adversary” (1 Pet. 5:8-9); “the tempter” (1 The. 3:5); the “wicked one” (1 John 3:12); “the old serpent” (Rev. 12:9); “the accuser” (Rev. 12:10); and “the enemy” (Mat. 13:28). These descriptions teach that the Devil, though wrapping sin up in pretty packages, is one who is without scruples.

Intentions of the Devil

Luke records in Luke 22:31-32, “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired *to have* you, that he may sift *you* as wheat: But I have prayed

for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Notice that Jesus told Peter “Satan hath desired *to have* you.” Peter later would write that the Devil is like a roaring lion who walks about seeking whom he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8-9). Satan set about to entice Job to curse God (Job 1). His intentions have never been honorable! He wants everyone to be lost!

Ingenuity of the Devil

Paul said in 2 Corinthians 2:11, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.” Observe that Paul stated the Devil has many tools or devices to work with. He will use everything at his disposal to entice us to commit sin. He tempted the only begotten Son of God three times in Matthew chapter four, attacking Jesus at different angles. Jesus, however, did not succumb to the tactics of the Devil. Satan operates through the three avenues of sin as is disclosed by the apostle John in 1 John 2:15-17. My, what success he has had with his temptations!

Instructions Regarding the Devil

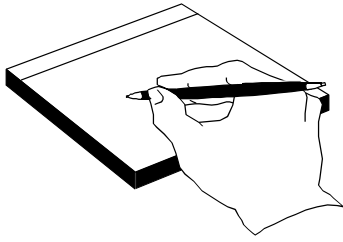
Knowing all of this information, someone might think that our foe is just too mighty and strong to combat. However, keep in mind such Scriptures as James 4:7-8; Ephesians 6:10-18; and 1 John 4:4.

Conclusion

The only way we can be victorious over the oldest sinner is by following the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). He will lead us to victory (Jam. 1:12)!

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Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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God's Foreknowledge

The question of the foreknowledge of God has always been a troublesome question. There have been many several answers given to try to resolve the difficulties presented by differing views of His foreknowledge. *Foreknowledge* is simply knowledge in advance or the ability to know events prior to their occurrence. We find this word two times in the Bible (Acts 2:23; 1 Pet. 1:2), foreknow once (Rom. 8:29), and foreknew once (Rom. 11:2). It translates the Greek word *prognosis* which means to know before. Vine adds, "Foreknowledge is one aspect of omniscience; it is implied in God's warnings, promises and predictions." Omniscience is the all-knowing attribute of God. Dub McClish correctly observed: "If God's foreknowledge is not infinite His omniscience is not infinite" (1998, p. 161).

If God knows the future, how can He not be responsible for those events? The Calvinist would state that God is responsible for all events and eliminate man's freedom of choice. They believe that God's foreknowledge means that God predetermines man's actions. They believe that God decided every action every man would perform during his life, and that God made that decision before He created the world. However, as much as God's foreknowledge is affirmed in the Scriptures, so is man's freedom of choice or free moral agency. The invitations of God's Word proves that man can choose one way of the other (Jos. 24:15; Mat. 11:28-30; Rev. 22:17). Also the admonitions to remain faithful to Christ serves as evidence that man is a free moral agent. However, we must remember that God's foreknowledge of an action does not cause the action. One night while driving down an interstate this author saw a car coming up behind him. This writer slowed down because he knew that the car would run into the

back of a car just in front of him. By slowing down this scribe stayed out of the accident. Did this writer cause the accident because he had foreknowledge of the impending wreck? Of course not. Neither does God's foreknowledge cause man's actions.

However, some who are strongly opposed to Calvinism have fallen into the same trap as the Calvinist in thinking that God's foreknowledge is causative in nature. These people (including some faithful brethren) continue to affirm man's freedom to choose or free moral agency. They deny the absolute foreknowledge of God. This is done in different ways (arguments). T. W. Brents taught that God limited his knowledge of things when it came to human free-will (1977, pp. 74-87). "God can limit the exercise of His own attributes,...God could have looked down the stream of time and have seen the secret intentions of every heart that would ever be subjected to His law, but, in infinite mercy, He saw fit to *avoid* a knowledge of every thing *incompatible with the freedom of the human will* and the system of government devised by Him for man" (p. 77). We would wonder how God could limit His knowledge of anything without first having a knowledge of it.

Guy N. Woods also had a difficulty with God knowing beforehand of Adam and Eve's sin in the garden and God's having a scheme of redemption prior to creation. He writes, "To project a plan of redemption into the period prior to the fall of man raises immediately and inevitably the question of the free agency of Adam and Eve" (1960, p. 47). So he continues and asks the question: "If God had already devised a plan for the redemption of man from a sin which was certain to be committed, how could Adam and Eve avoided its commission? If Christ was a lamb for expiation of sin from before creation, how could the transgression have been other than inevitable since not only it, but the consequences therefore had been provided for in the councils of eternity [sic]" (p. 47). Thus, he explains the passages that Christ's sacrifice "was foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Pet. 1:20) as the prior to the Mosaic system. "Christ, before the beginning of the Mosaic age, and before the intricate and detailed system of sacrifices which characterized it was originated, was ordained by the Father to suffer as a sacrificial lamb in expiation of the sins of the world...Christ, as a lamb, was foreknown as such from before the beginning of the sacrificial system originating on Sinai" (p. 48). Brother McClish correctly observed concerning this view: "If God's knowledge was infinite before creation then He foreknew the fact that Adam would sin. If God

did not foreknow that Adam would sin then His knowledge is not infinite as the Bible teaches” (p. 173).

This view made its way into the pages of *Defender* last month in the article “Salvation,” when brother Cain wrote: “When Adam and Eve succumbed to Satan in the Garden of Eden, they became sinners. They, therefore, stood in need of salvation. God then started to formulate His plan whereby a Redeemer might be provided to redeem lost and fallen man from the bondage of sin.” God did not start to formulate His plan of redeeming man after the sin of Adam and Eve. God had established His plan before He created the world. This is the clear affirmation of Scripture and only by doing some Bible gymnastics can one escape this teaching. “According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will” (Eph. 1:4-5). “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (1 Pet. 1:18-20).

Additionally, the church was also in the foreknowledge of God prior to time itself and that God’s plan was successful in the mission of Christ: “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Eph. 3:10-11). Then there are some names who have not been written in the Lamb’s book of life, which implies there are some that have. “The beast that thou sawest was, and is not; and shall ascend out of the bottomless pit, and go into perdition: and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is” (Rev. 17:8).

God knew before He created man that Adam and Eve would sin, and He had made a plan to save sinful mankind. When man sinned, God then started revealing that plan to man. However, the example of the impending wreck this author used previously is not parallel to God’s foreknowledge. In that example, this author considered the circumstances and made a determination with the conclusion that there would be a wreck. That

is not the case with God and His foreknowledge. God sees the end and the beginning. “For I *am* God, and *there is* none else; I *am* God, and *there is* none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times *the things* that are not *yet* done” (Isa. 46:9-10).

The reason God can declare “the end from the beginning” is because He is not limited by time as we are. He created time, therefore cannot be limited by it. “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou *art* God” (Psa. 90:2). Thiessen commented concerning this that: “He is free from all succession of time....But we must not suppose that time, now that it exists, has no objective reality for God, but rather, that He sees the past and the future as vividly as He sees the present. One may view a procession from the top of a high tower, where one can see it all at one glance, or one may view it from the street corner, where one can see only one part of it at a time. God sees it all in the former way, although He is aware of the sequence in the procession” (1949, pp. 122-123). He then says, “God also knows the future. From man’s standpoint God’s knowledge of the future is foreknowledge, but not from God’s since He knows all things by one simultaneous intuition” (p. 125). Thus, from God’s standpoint, Christ was slain before the world began. “And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). *Slain* is in the perfect tense in Greek indicating “an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated” (Logos online). Thus, before Adam and Eve were created, Christ had already been slain. God did not start formulating His plan after the fall, it had already been planned and after the fall, God began revealing it to man. MH

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“Sad Statements Of The Bible”

June 10 - 14, 2000

Saturday, June 10

7:00 PM What Makes A Sad Verse? Keith Mosher
7:45 PM What Is Truth? David Brown

Sunday, June 11

9:00 AM “Rivers Of Waters Run Down Mine Eyes”; Psa. 119:136 Ira Y. Rice, Jr.
10:00 AM Cannot Enter The Land; Deu. 24:4 John Priola

Lunch Break

2:00 PM Improper Leaders; Jer. 5:31 Clifford Newell
3:00 PM “God Heareth Not Sinners”; John 9:31 Michael Hatcher

Dinner Break

7:00 PM “Neither Could They Blush”; Jer. 6:15 David Jones
7:45 PM “Depart From Me”; Mat. 25:41 Tim Nichols

Monday, June 12

9:00 AM “Mine Own Familiar Friend”; Psa. 41:9 Joel Wheeler
10:00 AM “Ichabod”; 1 Sam. 4:21-22 Harold Bigham
11:00 AM “We Will Not Walk Therein”; Jer. 6:16 Eddy Craft

Lunch Break

1:30 PM “Demas Hath Forsaken Me”; 2 Tim. 4:10 Joe Galloway
2:30 PM Elders Feeding Themselves; Eze. 34:2 Carl Garner

3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM “Curse Ye Meroz”; Jud. 5:23 Lynn Parker
7:45 PM Dead Thinking They Were Alive; Rev. 3:1 Bobby Liddell

Tuesday, June 13

9:00 AM “Departed Without Being Desired”; 2 Chr. 21:20 Ted Clarke
10:00 AM Another Generation Which Knew Not Jehovah; Jud. 2:10 Eddie Whitten
11:00 AM “Only Evil Continually”; Gen. 6:5 Terry Hightower

Lunch Break

1:30 PM “Jerusalem, Jerusalem”; Mat. 23:37 Tom Wacaster

2:30 PM “They Will Not Endure Sound Doctrine”; 2 Tim. 4:2-3 Paul Vaughn

3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM When Fellowship Is Broken; Gen. 3 Harrell Davidson
7:45 PM “Is It Nothing”; Lam. 1:12 Gary Grizzell

Wednesday, June 14

9:00 AM Unconcerned With Sin; 1 Cor. 5:2 Michael Light
10:00 AM “So Soon Removed”; Gal. 1:6-9 Noah Hackworth
11:00 AM “Who Made Israel To Sin”; 1 Kin. 14:16 Howell Bigham

Lunch Break

1:30 PM “No King In Israel”; Jud. 17:6 Guss Eoff
2:30 PM “My God My God Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me”; Mat. 27-46 Joseph Meador

3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM “Weighed In The Balances, And Found Wanting”; Dan. 5:25-27 Curtis Cates
7:45 PM “Absalom, My Son, My Son Absalom! Would God I Had Died For Thee”; 2 Sam. 18:33 Ronnie Hayes

Bellview Lectures Information

HOUSING

Free housing in the homes of Christians will be provided on a “first come, first served” basis (call our office at: 850/455-7595, or write at: 4850 Saufley Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The following motel is available nearby and is providing a *special rate* for individuals attending the *Bellview Lectures*. Microtel Inn And Suites (8001 Lavelle Way) offers the following price (tax not included) \$45-1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850/944-0333 or 850/941-8902. When checking into the above motel, show them this brochure announcing this special rate, or when calling for reservations, be sure to tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures*.

MEALS

The women of the *Bellview Church of Christ* will provide a free lunch Monday through Wednesday. For all other meals, a list of restaurants and a map will be available at the registration table in the foyer.

BOOKS

The lectureship book, *Sad Statements Of The Bible* will be available to those attending the *Bellview Lectures* at a reduced rate of \$10. Others may purchase the book at the pre-publication price of \$11 prior to June 30, 2000, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It

will contain thirty-one chapters and approximately 400 pages. Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO AND VIDEO TAPES

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes and video tapes. These tapes may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. Order blanks and price information will be available during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail upon request. (We request the cooperation of all who attend the *Bellview Lectures* in keeping the pulpit area free of privately-owned recorders and microphones.) If you would like to make your own recordings, please see one of our sound technicians in the sound room.

EXHIBITS

Limited reservations will be accepted subject to approval of the *Bellview elders* and available space. Exhibits are expected from schools, children’s homes, bookstores, publications, and other projects of general interest to the brotherhood.

TRANSPORTATION

If you will be flying to the Pensacola Regional Airport and will need transportation, please call or write our office. We will arrange to meet you, at no charge, if we know when, where, airline, flight number, and the number in your party.

STUFF

Burt Jones

It is the time of year when I traditionally begin thinking of my stuff. You know the kind of stuff about which I speak. There is the closet stuff, drawer stuff, attic stuff and basement stuff, not to mention my Bible study, preaching, and teaching stuff. I separate the good stuff from the bad stuff, then I stuff the old or useless stuff anywhere other stuff is not too crowded until I decide if I will need the bad stuff.

Am I the only one plagued with unnecessary stuff? Thankfully, most of my family and my brethren are absolutely stymied as am I with the proper placement of stuff in their lives. Our brief existence on this earth has as an attendant nuisance lives being filled with stuff—good stuff, bad stuff, little stuff, big stuff, useful stuff, junky stuff, and everyone else's stuff. Do you begin to see my point?

When we leave all our stuff at the end of life's journey, as faithful Christians, whatever happens to that stuff will not matter. Why? Because we will instantly be aware that we have the right stuff prepared for us in a place "not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Cor. 5:1).

What kind of stuff interests you? What manner of stuff controls your life? "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it" (Mat. 13:45-46). This is the **right** stuff!

Are you content to wallow through this vapor of life with the rest, or are you in a constant quest for the best? It is obvious that Jesus regards this merchant with complete approval. "Here is one," He seems to say, "that is possessed of that stuff that is worth possessing. He knows how to use life—how to make himself 'friends of the mammon of unrighteousness'" (Luke 16:9). He had learned quite early that "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" (Luke 16:8).

There is the account of a man who owned a fine old violin. But, instead of learning to draw out the ethereal sounds of celestial perfection that lay dormant within it, he used it merely as stuff to keep open the door of his cabin. How tragic?

Please examine the behavior of this wise merchant that you may avoid allowing stuff to get in the way of our pearl of great price. This merchant possessed a **definite purpose**. He knew at what mark he was going to aim and for which goal he was going to strive. No purposeless soul is ever happy. We notice this throughout the congregations of the Lord's church each week as we witness those brethren "enjoying poor health." Now, please do not misunderstand this statement. There are legitimate bonafide ailments which virtually consume an individual, and then there are those aches and pains shared by all of us. I am speaking of those who use their perception of misery as stuff with which to fill each waking hour. They are purposeless.

Life is never truly melodious until it is touched by the skilled fingers of a worthy purpose. Much of the restlessness and wretchedness of our day is born of sheer aimlessness. Purpose makes for power. Purpose allowed Daniel to exhibit his godly power (Dan. 6).

This merchant man in our text had a **quest for the best**. He is so much more than a seeker of stuff, a maker of money. He was seeking the best—He was pursuing perfection. Such should we be. It is of no value to simply accumulate stuff when we can first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness. You see, if this is made the hub of our lives, then all these things, all this stuff that we **need**, will be added unto us (Mat. 6:33).

Dear reader, this wise merchant then **recognized the best** when he found it. He was a judge of values. He **could** tell the worthwhile from the worthless. He could tell pearls from paste.

As we engage in the pursuit of happiness, to which our founding fathers said we were entitled, we should emblazon on our consciousness that true values, real **stuff**, will satisfy our deepest craving. The soul of the rich farmer was just as restless and starved when his barns were empty. "And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods [much stuff] laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, *and* be merry" (Luke 12:19).

Real values, genuine stuff abides. They are not subject to fluctuations of the stock market. But, there

are values that are still at par. “And now abideth faith, hope, charity” (1 Cor. 13:13), and these are as priceless as they were in the most prosperous days that our world has ever seen. Brethren, as the Lord’s church prepares to fight the wiles of those devils of the new millennium, remember that good stuff will be worth just as much in those gray days of depression as it was when it steadied Habakkuk and inspired him to sing: “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls” (Hab. 3:17).

Perhaps the defining moment for this merchant is that, after having found the right stuff, that beautiful pearl, he bought it! This marks the **beginning of wisdom**. How many of our loved ones who know the right stuff, but have not obeyed the gospel; how many of our erring brothers and sisters who have become entangled in the bad stuff (2 Pet. 2:20), are joyless when they might be rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory? How do we account for these precious but

misguided misfits? They have failed to take that final step in rendering obedience to His gospel, **and then claim that pearl of great price!**

When this merchant saw the pearl, he, with sparkling eyes and a trembling voice, asked, “What is the price?” The answer does not frighten him as it has so many others. Without hesitation he answers firmly: “I will take it!” When he counts the price and the pearl is his, his pockets are as empty as a beggars, because the pearl, just as will obedience to the gospel, cost all that he had.

Does this account of a beautiful Bible narrative reflect **your** situation? If not, the **excuse** is nearby. You have not been willing to pay the price for the right stuff. What is Christ asking? He is asking for unconditional surrender through obedience to that gospel delivered unto us. When we give all, He gives all. Dear reader, we will find the pearl in no other way.

That is the real stuff in life to which we should cling!

P.O. Box 985; Moundsville, WV 26041

AN OPEN LETTER TO THOSE AMONG US WHO BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST ARE ALL WRONG

Tim Nichols

If you are among those addressed by the title, I have some very sincere questions that I have long wanted to ask someone who might be willing to give genuine, transparent, and honest answers. The purpose of this article is not to try to convince you that you are mistaken or to solicit your explanations for why you believe as you do. We have devoted a good deal of paper and ink to these purposes over the past several years. Assuming that you have been around for these attempts at earnest discussion we conclude that you remain unconvinced after giving your best effort to considering the matter carefully. You **still** believe that the “traditional” doctrines and practices that are common among churches of Christ are mistaken. You believe that we are legalistic, exclusive, and unreasonably isolated from other religious bodies. You think that we misunderstand grace and that we have inflexible ideas about how one becomes a Christian. You are

convinced that choirs and instrumental music in worship are not only allowable, but right and good. You feel certain that our hermeneutic is not accurate. You are confident that we are incorrect about the nature and identity of the church. You are convinced that we are simply one denomination among many and that we are no better (and probably worse) than the others.

I will preface my first question with a few comments designed to prevent misunderstanding. I am not really inviting you to leave us. If you are content to remain among us without creating division as you continue to study these matters, I would recommend that you do so. If your feet are firmly planted and your convictions are fixed, however, my question is this: Why are you still here? There are religious bodies in your community that believe, teach, and practice the very things you are seeking. They would applaud your liberation from legalism and welcome you with open

arms. They would bathe you in love and acceptance. The tension that you feel within yourself and that you are creating within and between others could be alleviated in one swift and decisive move.

My second question: Why did you come among us? You knew who we were when you came. The church hid nothing from you. You came willingly whether you “grew up in the church” or, like me, sought out those who were following the Bible as you then understood it. If your reasons for entering are no longer valid, maybe it is time to resume your search elsewhere.

Are you still here because your parents or loved ones were (or are) members? If we had the right to grant all of the changes that you wish to make, you would not be a member of what they were members of—except for the name on the sign in front of the building. Do you really want the church of Christ to become something else, except for the name, only to accommodate your sentimental need to be associated with a “church of Christ” while, at the same time, having all that the denominations have to offer? Would it not be more reasonable to join a denominational group that pleases you and then work to have them change their name to “church of Christ” while keeping all else the same? This would cause a good deal less disturbance than the other way around. It would seem to be a move more consistent with the kind of unity that you profess to believe in. Even if you, and others who are like-minded, are successful in convincing a number of people to adopt your ways you will not have contributed to greater unity. Those of us who are committed to what we sincerely believe to be the old paths will have to separate from you (or you from us) and you will have become the hammer that drove one more wedge of division (a thing that you profess to despise) into what you consider to be the larger body of Christ.

If you would be willing to answer these questions,

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

please write. If you would not like to have your response published, please clearly indicate this when you write.

Route 1, Box 206A; Burlington, WV 26710

I have been invited to go to Murmansk, Russia, in August of this year and teach in the Bible College there. To do this, I am having to raise a travel fund. If you would be willing to help in any amount, please send checks to Bellview Church of Christ marked for the Hatcher Travel Fund. I want to express my appreciation to all those who have helped financially and also thank those of you who will be helping in the future.

Michael Hatcher

“And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

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Defender



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Number 7

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TO ELDERS WHOSE PREACHER WILL APPEAR AT “JUBILEE” 2000

Jim E. Waldron

June 2, 2000

Dear Brothers in Christ,

It is truly my hope that you are in good health and that your families are also. Yet, I must confess it is very disappointing to know that you are allowing your preacher to be a part of “*Nashville Jubilee*” (July 4-8).

Just this week (June 1-4) those who are the main driving force behind *Jubilee* are joining with Billy Graham in his “crusade” in Nashville. Many of you are very near my own age—I will be 65 in November—and you are well aware of the kinds of things Graham has taught over the last 50 years.

He, as a Baptist preacher, has taught millions that salvation is by faith alone, which is a direct contradiction of the Scriptures (Mark 16:15-16; Jam. 2:24). He has taught and teaches that once a person is saved he is always saved, which is the very opposite of the words of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:4; Heb. 6:1-8). Graham teaches that one church is as good as another and that one should join the church of his choice, which things are diametrically opposed to the words of our beloved Master (Mat. 16:18; cf., Acts 2:47; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4; 5:25). Graham teaches that Christ’s kingdom has not come, but will be set up in the future, which contradicts the truth (Mark 9:1; Col. 1:13).

How is it possible that you, as elders in God’s church, could allow the brother who fills your pulpit to join forces with those, who proudly published on the internet eight months ago, “several of our shepherds wrote letters of invitation to Dr. Billy Graham to

encourage him to come to our city” (Woodmont Hills “Family of God,” *Lovelines*, Vol. 39, Sep 29, 1999, www.Woodmont.org)? These men admit to inviting this wolf to come among God’s flock in Middle Tennessee.

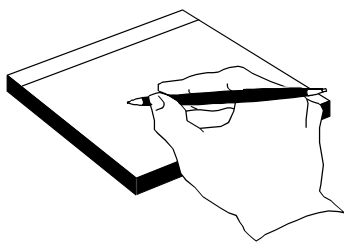
Not only are the above things true in relation to Graham, but the *Nashville Jubilee* is a para-church organization that has, for eleven years, done more to divide the churches of Christ in the state of Tennessee than any other thing. This has been done by the use of men who are, as a matter of public record, teaching things which are contrary to sound doctrine. A hundred years ago the “missionary society” was used to divide the body of Christ and to take many churches into the ranks of modernism and classical liberalism.

Such division is classed with idolatry and witchcraft as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21). By promoting *Jubilee* you are bidding Godspeed to self-styled change agents who are dividing our beloved brotherhood (2 John 9-11).

I beseech you as brothers in Christ to oppose such change agents who are trying to restructure the church of Christ into a protestant community church. Remember the words of the apostle Paul: “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them” (Eph. 5:11). He also wrote to Titus, that we are to hold “fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

Email address:
m-h@bigfoot.com

Either/Or?

We recently received a fax dealing with the gun control laws. While I am an advocate of our right to bear arms, that is not what is concerning me. The fax was for the purpose of taking a poll. The problem is the way in which things were worded (which is typical of liberals of all types). In reverse type (white letters with black background) at the top of the page it says, "1 MILLION MOTHERS, 4,000 DEAD CHILDREN or THE 2ND AMENDMENT." This is in very large letters across the top taking three lines. Then in regular type it again reminds us "4,000 children die of gunshot wounds every year." It then asks the question "Do you value your right to carry a gun more than the lives of these 4,000 children?" It then asks us to vote whether gun laws should "be seriously tightened." This *poll* is so bogus it is ludicrous. Why should anyone have to choose between children or guns? This implies that if you believe in the right to bear arms, that you do not care about children and want children to be killed. This bogus *poll* has set up an either/or situation.

This is the same attitude that many liberals try to set up for those who are biblical. It will often be presented something along the lines of the spirit of the law and the letter of the law. They will claim that they have the spirit of the law while those who strive to do what the Bible says seek only the letter of the law. They are saying that they care about people; they are concerned with mercy. They present themselves as showing compassion and pity upon others. Additionally, they are saying that we do not care about people; we refuse to show mercy, compassion, and pity upon man. They have established an either/or situation in which they have placed us. However, as the bogus *poll* above, this is a bogus situation.

It is the case that those who believe in the right to

bear arms also care about children, and yes the 4,000 children who have been killed by gunshot wounds every year (if these figures are accurate). Also those who desire to do everything the Scriptures authorize and only what they authorize, also care about people, show mercy, compassion, and pity. It is not an either/or situation, it is a both/and situation.

Jesus shows the error of thinking that it is one or the other in His condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (Mat. 23:23). Jesus condemned their hypocrisy and told them they had omitted judgment, mercy, and faith. They were concerned with obeying the law concerning tithing but omitted these other important matters. Did Jesus view this as an either/or situation? **No!** He said they should do **both!** They should continue being concerned with the tithing, but they were also to be concerned with judgment, mercy, and faith. Thus, it was a both/and situation.

The same is true for man today. It is man's responsibility to obey God's Word. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:8-9). Additionally, we are to obey without change or alteration. "Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish *ought* from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you." (Deu. 4:2). "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book" (Rev. 22:18-19).

However, it is also necessary for all Christians to be compassionate and merciful. "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32). "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering" (Col. 3:12). "Finally, *be ye all*

of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, *be pitiful, be courteous*" (1 Pet. 3:8). Those individuals who fail to show mercy in this life will be judged without mercy. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment" (Jam. 2:13).

The real reason this *accusation* is made is because those who follow the Bible will not compromise what the Scriptures teach. They have already made the decision to and are compromising God's Word. When we refuse to compromise, they hurl bogus charges that we do not have the spirit of Christ. They falsely equate compromising the Truth with compassion, mercy, pity, tenderness, and etc. True Christians refuse to compromise the Gospel and are also compassionate, merciful, et. al. But let all of us who are Bible loving people be both: obeying the Truth without compromise, and living a life of compassion. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Tit. 1:9-11). The list of those appearing at this year's *Jubilee* may be found on the internet at www.nashjubilee.org.

Woodmont Hills has four men from its staff on the *Jubilee* program. These are Randy Gill, "worship leader," Eddie Plemmons, "children and family ministry," Terry Smith, assistant preacher, and Rubel Shelly, preacher, who has a long track record of joint participation with denominational churches and their leaders.

Others who are joining forces with Woodmont Hills

at *Jubilee* are Jason Allison, Greg Anderson, Buddy Bell [former preacher at Gateway Church Of Christ, Pensacola, FL], Mark Black (David Lipscomb University Bible professor and preacher for the Donelson church, Nashville), Phil Barnes, Bobby Chapman, Mike Cope (preacher for the 5th and Highland church in Abilene), Ron Cook, Gwynneth Curtis, and Ken Dye (founder of the Hendersonville Community church, who now preaches for the West End church in Nashville). Still others are Steve Davidson, Doug Foster (professor of church history at Abilene), Joel Fort, Ken Green, Scotty Harris (preacher at Pegram, near Nashville), John Mark Hicks (professor at Harding Graduate School) and Gary Holloway, who is dean of the College of Bible and Ministry at David Lipscomb.

Still others are Jim Holway, Wesley Jones (Represents "World Christian Broadcasters, Inc.," Franklin, TN), Wayne Kilpatrick (preacher—Homewood church in Birmingham), Russ King, Mac Lynn, Don McLaughlin (preacher—North Atlanta church), Jim Martin, Rolston Mondaizie and Randy Moody.

Others include Ken Neller, Chris Qualls, Floyd Rose, Chris Seidman [present preacher at Gateway Church Of Christ, Pensacola, FL], David Slater, Brian Simmons, Chris Smith, Mark Smith, Brandon Scott Thomas (worship leader at Otter creek) and Jim Woodroof, (whose two books, *Divorce Dilemma* and *The Church In Transition* provide self documentation of his antithesis to the doctrine of Christ). Tim Woodroof, Edwin White and Dale Ward are also on the program. In Christian love,

P.O. Box 123; Dunlap, TN 37327

"SAD STATEMENTS" LECTURES ENJOYED

Joe E. Galloway

Just as *sorrow* can be turned into *joy* (John 16:10), so many of us from various parts of this country *enjoyed* a discussion of *Sad Statements of the Bible*, June 10-14, at the Bellview Church of Christ in Pensacola, Florida.

Keith Mosher opened this profitable series with a biblical word study of "sad" and "burden" as he explained "What Makes A Verse 'Sad.'" From various Scriptures he pointed out that *sadness* comes through ignorance of, rejection of, and lack of obedience to God's Word. He well pointed out that God's Word becomes a *burden* when the reader does not intend or want to obey it, but that God did not design

His commands to be burdensome (1 John 5:3). This lesson was followed by 28 lessons on various *sad statements* from both the Old and New Testaments. These were presented by a corresponding number of faithful men who regularly labor to preach the gospel throughout the world. In addition, Dub McClish very competently directed an open forum each afternoon (Monday-Wednesday) in which a number of varied questions submitted by those present were ably discussed.

My wife, Barbara, and I have made the annual Bellview Lectures a part of our schedule for the last several years. We enjoy the friendliness of this fine

congregation, and admire its emphasis in both the teaching of the gospel worldwide and its firm stand for the truth of the gospel. It has an exemplary eldership in the godly men now serving: Bill Gallaher, Paul Brantley, and Fred Stancliff. These men are capable in Bible knowledge, in guarding the flock against the many present-day efforts of the change agents, and in encouraging every good work. We noticed each of them being present at each session! Michael Hatcher works well with them as the local preacher, serving also as the lectureship director, as editor of *Defender*, their local bulletin the *Beacon*, and of the annual Bellview Lectureship Book.

A 390-page, hard cover book, is available that

contains all this year's lessons, plus a bonus of two more chapters on this theme that were not presented orally. In addition, both audio and video cassettes of the lectures can be ordered from the Bellview church and a CD is now available in Adobe Acrobat format that contains all the lectureship books to date (1988-2000). Order any or all of these from the Bellview church.

We encourage you to make plans, now, to attend the 2001—26th Annual Bellview Lectures, June 9-13! Possibly next year's theme will be a follow-up from this year's on the theme, *Encouraging Statements of the Bible*.

218 Pinecrest Drive; Greeneville, TN 37743

Debate With Catholic Priest

Spring Bible Institute (formerly Houston College Of The Bible) announces that Director David Brown will debate Daniel Callam, Roman Catholic Priest. The debate is set for July 17-18, 20-21, 2000 at 7 each evening. The location will be the Klein High School gymnasium in the Spring area. The propositions for the four-night debate will be as follows:

Monday and Tuesday

“The New Testament is the exclusive authority in the Christian religion.”

Affirm: David Brown

Deny: Daniel Callam

Thursday and Friday

“The Bible and tradition, as defined by the Roman Catholic Church, constitute the authority of the Christian religion”

Affirm: Daniel Callam

Deny: David Brown

Much effort, planning, prayer, and expense have been invested in this effort. We invite you to be our guest for this debate, and bring your denominational friends with you. For more information or directions, call the S.B.I. Office at (281) 353-2707 or email at: springbibleinstitute@swbell.net.

JESUS: MINISERIES—MAXI-ERRORS

Gary W. Summers

Most of us gave up a long time ago expecting to find any semblance of **accuracy** about the life of Christ when it comes through America's entertainment media. The recent CBS miniseries proved to be as errant as any ever produced. In fact, compared to it, the claymation version (an animation process) aired just a few weeks previously was flawless. (The producers of that version took a little artistic license, but overall it was quite well done.)

In this version Jesus and Mary, the sister of Lazarus, flirt with each other even though the claim is made that they are blood relatives. Joseph says to Jesus: “Mary loves you. Why do you treat her as though her feelings are nothing?” Then he asks Jesus if He loves her, to which He replies, “Yes.” How was this idea deduced, since the Scriptures do not teach it?

But this conjecture is a mild departure compared to what follows.

When Joseph dies, Jesus is naturally grieved, but none of us would have ever imagined the following conversation that He purportedly has with **the** Father. In the miniseries, Jesus is portrayed as saying: “Now, when I'm in most need, you take him from me. I've never been without him. You can give him back to me. You can do it now. Give him back to me **now**.... Raise him.” Would Jesus have really made such a demand?

Next, we find John out in a shallow stream that is apparently supposed to be the Jordan River. He is preaching, and a man comes to be baptized of him. John says, “Your baptism signifies that your commitment has already been made—to hate injustice and

fight the battle of the righteous ones. I baptize you with water for repentance.” The person kneels down; John cups his hands, scoops up some water, and pours it on his head! Who wrote this script—John Calvin?

One does not need to be a brilliant historian to know that baptism is *immersion* in the New Testament. Most of those today who advocate sprinkling and pouring in place of immersion have always acknowledged this fact. Anyone who has ever read that Philip and the eunuch both went down into the water and came up out of it would know better (Acts 8:35-39). Such a biblical blunder is **inexcusable!** To blatantly disregard historical facts, as well as New Testament doctrine, reveals impure motives on the part of all who had a part in this production. It is obvious that the gospel is not safe in their hands; they lose their credibility from the outset.

Furthermore, where in the New Testament did John, Jesus, and any apostle or evangelist ever say that baptism signified a commitment that had already been made? Baptism is never regarded as a sign of something that has already occurred (such as salvation). People came to be baptized “for the remission of sins.”

And what is this nonsense about hating injustice and fighting the battle of the righteous ones? What scriptwriter made up that one? Neither John nor Jesus came to encourage people to fight injustice. Otherwise they would have formed an army and fought the Romans. The Day of Judgment is the time for justice. Baptism involves salvation from sin and forgiveness—words that either were never included in this miniseries or else were left lying on the cutting room floor.

Jesus joins John around a campfire and asks John if he will baptize Him. Not only is this conversation hypothetical; it turns ludicrous. John answers, “If you confess your sins and dedicate your life to God, of course.” Jesus does not reply, “John, I have no sins.” Nothing further is said. Is this silence intended to convey to the viewer that Jesus was a man like everyone else who had sins He needed to be forgiven of? While we may not be sure in this instance, there is a later situation that reflects poorly on His Deity.

It involves the Syro-Phoenician woman who pleaded with Jesus to heal her daughter. He refused at first and told it was not fitting to feed the dogs when the children were hungry. She answers that even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the children’s table. Jesus says that her faith is great. Afterward, the

disciples complain that He had helped a Gentile. Jesus replies, “This woman has taught me that my message is for Gentiles, too. If I can learn it, so can you.” Whoa! This was not a learning experience for the Lord (see Luke 4:16-30). He was not in doubt about who He was or what His mission was. Comments like these are tantamount to saying Jesus was not the Divine Son of God.

Furthermore, they contradict the way they portrayed Jesus in the temptation. At first the devil appears to Jesus in the form of a woman dressed in red. She tells him, “You must give up every privilege. You must be like them in every way—as fragile, alone, and little as they are. Are you willing to feel as men feel, Jesus, without the protection of the Father? Only in this way can we challenge one another.” Shortly thereafter she adds: “Welcome to life, Jesus. If you are flesh and blood, you can be tempted.” These allegations imply that Jesus had somehow been protected by the Father from being tempted all throughout His life. Now, however, in the wilderness, Jesus must give up that protection and face temptation like a normal human being.

This notion is preposterous! Jesus came as God in the flesh (John 1:14). The idea that He was somehow protected and only subject to temptation after His baptism is not even remotely biblical. If He did have such protection prior to His baptism, then He certainly would have had no sins to confess (as suggested previously). The viewer should be thoroughly confused by now concerning the Lord’s identity.

At the wedding in Cana of Galilee, when the wine is depleted, Mary asks Jesus to do something about it. He says, “My hour is not yet come,” but she responds with a firm, “It is time.” Imagine that! Mary knew better than Jesus concerning the time for Him to begin working miracles. She knew He could do so, however, because as a child He healed a dead bird that His playmates had killed. How odd that Mary knows it is time for Jesus to begin His ministry when she does not even know that it requires His eventual death!

This production wanted desperately to show Jesus as a human being. Too desperately. First of all, they show Jesus dancing at the wedding. Then when He is introduced as the Messiah, He is skimming stones across the water, enjoying Himself as though He were five-years-old. On another festive occasion, Jesus and the disciples are thirsty and approach a

rather large fountain-like well. After a taste of water, Jesus begins splashing the other disciples, and they splash Him back. On another occasion He takes a long scarf-like object that encircles His neck and extends almost to the ground, and starts snapping one of His disciples, who tries snapping Him back and then chases Him around the other disciples. Showing the human side of Jesus is one thing; portraying Him as a goofy prankster is another.

A few other inaccuracies include:

John saying: "One who comes after me will cleanse with fire." The producers are obviously ignorant (as are most Pentecostals) of the context of the baptism of fire (Mat. 3:10-12). It involves judgment, not cleansing.

When soldiers come to execute John, he says: "I forgive you. I will live again in the kingdom of heaven." Stephen was as gracious as the Lord in forgiving his murderers, but apparently John started this trend, and Bible students have not known it all these centuries.

Mary Magdalene identifies herself as a prostitute. Mary, the mother of Jesus, takes an immediate liking to her and tells her: "I don't judge. I've been judged."

Jesus does not bless the bread or the cup prior to giving it to His disciples.

Instead of the disciples asking, "Is it I?" when Jesus says that one of them will betray Him, they all respond, "Not I, Lord."

Judas betrays Jesus because he refuses to lead a rebellion against Rome.

Barabbas smites Jesus on both cheeks before he is taken prisoner for fighting against Rome.

Pilate really wants to get rid of Jesus. He cannot wait to put Him to death. All of his protests of Jesus' innocence are to make a good showing before the people.

Apparently, the following comment was intended to be humorous. Jesus is brought before Pilate and they meet for the first time. After a brief hesitation, Pilate regards Him and says: "Jesus of Nazareth, you have an interesting face." Of course, Jesus is portrayed with the now customary long hair when in all probability His hair was no longer than any other man's. Also, Isaiah writes that he has no great beauty that men should be impressed by him (53:2).

The final confrontation between Christ and Satan is more realistic than the blasphemous *The Last Temptation of Christ*, but it is still not biblical. After Jesus has prayed in the garden of Gethsemane and Judas is on his way with the soldiers, Satan confronts

Jesus again. The Lord has already told His disciples, concerning the crucifixion: "I must face it as a man to fulfil my pledge," whatever that means.

Satan comes to Jesus in the form of a man and tells Him that His death will be in vain. This was a very interesting and imaginative part of the film; we do not deny that such a temptation could have occurred, but notice how the dialogue mentions nothing concerning salvation from sin—at the very time it should have.

Satan shows Jesus scenes from the Crusades a thousand years in the future. Soldiers are riding into battle, killing their enemies and saying that they are acting upon the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Satan's point is that His death will not make any difference in the world. People will still fight—some in the name of the Lord.

Jesus: He gives them the choice of doing good or evil.

Satan: And this [the war in the background, gws] is what they choose. Hah, hah, hah.

Jesus: Yes.

Satan: You can stop it. Come down off that cross they have waiting for you. Why die in agony when you can take control? Make the earth a paradise. End poverty and hunger and war. You can do it. It's within your power right now.

Jesus: No, I cannot.

Satan: Oh, yes, you can.

Jesus: It's not God's will.

Satan: It's not God's will to end a war? What kind of God is that?

Jesus: One who loves mankind so much that He gives them freedom of choice. He has not created them so He can be their dictator.

Satan: Jesus, you don't even have to bow down to me. I'm not asking you that. Just call to the Father and have Him deliver you. Tell Him you don't want this. He won't make you go through this. You know He won't. Just wave your hand, and you'll be home safe. Do it. Now. You know that what I showed you is true. You are going to die in vain. You don't know the plan. I do. I've seen it. Nothing changes. They don't have the capacity to love that you want them to. This will never happen....Don't die in vain. Don't die alone.

Jesus: I will die for the everlasting kindness of the human heart created by the Father so that man will make His image shine once again. And those who want to will find in me the strength to love unto the end.

The fictional strategy assigned to Satan here is excellent. It is not beyond the scope of possibility that he tried to convince Jesus that His death would be in vain and that nothing would change as a result of it. Telling Him that He could create paradise on earth is certainly something Jesus had within His power to create—even though it would have to be by force and not willingly.

But the emphasis on love misses the point of redemption. Of course, the cross demonstrates God's love (John 3:16). The cross likewise demonstrates the love of Jesus (Rom. 5:8). It is also true that we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19) and that we are commanded to love one another as Jesus loved us.

But man's capacity to love has always been present. In every age men have either loved or hated God. Jesus did not die that men might love again (the Crusades do demonstrate that fact). Jesus did not die so that we would find the strength to love until the end. He died to redeem us from sin, to pay the price that was due for our transgressions. Yet, not a word about man's redemption or the need for forgiveness was uttered.

A good script would have made a powerful point. Jesus might have responded to Satan's charges this way: "You are right, Satan, that men will still sin. They will fight in wars; they will hate one another. They will kill one another. They will be motivated by

greed, power, and fame. They will harden their hearts against God and against Me; they will care nothing for what I am about to do. Have I not already said that the majority of people will follow you to destruction?

But they will all be spiritually lost for eternity if I do not endure the cross. There are some that refuse to follow you despite all your enticements. There is no way that these can ever be set free without my atoning death, which will not be in vain. You are a liar and a murderer from the beginning. You care nothing about me, and you care nothing about mankind or you would not strive so earnestly to see them damned.

Even now you are trying to tempt me so they will remain lost in their sins. But you have lost the battle; I have made up My mind. I will endure the cross and die for them that they might be saved. Whoever wills to leave your kingdom of darkness may repent of their sins, be baptized for the forgiveness of their sins, and enter into my kingdom of light. You shall be utterly defeated, and they shall be victorious through Me. Behold, I embrace the cross, and those who desire life will have it. They shall overcome you through My blood." Now **that** scenario might have made an impact.

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The 1988-2000 books are available on computer disk in Adobe Acrobat Reader (PDF) format (making it useful for both Intel and Macintosh computers). The Acrobat Reader is also provided on the CD. The CD is completely indexed allowing searches of all the books at the same time (you can find every occurrence of a word or phrase such as "baptism for the remission of sins" in every book at the same time). The cost of the CD is only \$50 in which you receive all 13 books (less than \$5 per book). If you purchased the CD last year with the 1999/1998 books you can receive an update for \$40 upon the return of the CD. Postage/handling per CD is \$1.25. Take advantage of this great offer. Order from Bellview Church Of Christ.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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LIPSCOMB SEEKS 150-MILLION DOLLARS

Jim E. Waldron

The Lipscomb News, April 2000, stated that “Lipscomb University officials have announced plans to raise \$150 million by the end of 2005 through Lighting the Way: Igniting the Future Campaign.” A major point in the article was “one thing that will not change as a result of the campaign will be the university’s dedication to its founding mission.” The president, Steve Flatt, said, “In fact, this campaign will enhance who we are. We have maintained a clear and concise mission for 109 years that involves educating the total student—spiritually, academically and socially.”

This statement by Flatt is exceedingly strange in light of the fact that one of their professors in the Bible department, Mark Black, spoke twice on the “Jubilee” program (July 5-8) and Gary Holloway, who is dean of the “College of the Bible and Ministry,” spoke three times. In so doing they were in harness with fellow speakers like Jim Woodroof, Jeff Walling, and Rubel Shelly, who are well known for their compromise with error and denominationalism. In fact, brother Shelly just the month before (June 1-4) had served as a committee member for the Billy Graham Crusade. Last fall Shelly published on the Internet “several of our shepherds wrote letters of invitation to Dr. Graham to encourage him to come to our city.” Disregarding this fact, Walling and his elders a little over six weeks later (Nov 7) had Shelly as guest speaker for the church at Providence Road in Charlotte, NC (*Providence Road Bulletin*, Vol. XXVI, No. 21).

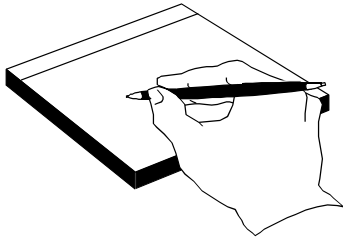
Billy Graham has for years taught truth interspersed with much false doctrine, including salvation by faith alone, the non-essentiality of baptism, once saved

always saved, one church is as good as another, Jesus’ kingdom is yet to be established, and that it is right to use instruments of music with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. The Woodmont Hills elders played a prominent role in getting this man—this wolf in sheep’s clothing—to Nashville (Mat. 7:15, 21; 15:9, 13-14; Acts 20:28-31; Gal. 1:6-9). Graham is guilty of adulterating the gospel. He therefore rests under a curse (Gal. 1:6-9). Brother Shelly and the Woodmont elders are guilty of bidding him God speed (2 John 9-11). Walling, and those with him in Charlotte, instead of rebuking Shelly for his compromise with this wolf gave him (Shelly)—not just the right hand of fellowship—but access to their pulpit.

Ahab of Samaria (c.918-897 B.C.) was one of the most wicked kings (1 Kin. 16:30) in ancient Israel. He and his wife, Jezebel, were notorious idolaters, who killed and persecuted the prophets of God with a vengeance. Jehoshaphat king of Judah was a far better man than Ahab, but contrary to sound reason he made affinity with the king of Israel. When the latter asked him to join him in his fight against Ramoth of Gilead, Jehoshaphat said, “*I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war*” (2 Chr. 18:3). This good king of Judah was committing God’s people to the work of a most ungodly man. The inspired historian tells us that Ahab was killed in the battle (2 Chr. 18: 33-34), but the king of Judah returned safely to his house in Jerusalem (2 Chr. 19:1). Upon his return home we are told, “Jehu the son of Hanani the seer went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat,

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Hatcher**

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Surrender

Surrender is defined, “to give up, yield possession of, relinquish, under pressure or compulsion...to give up voluntarily, relinquish, resign, cease claim to...to yield oneself, or something in one’s possession or keeping, to superior force; to submit, cease to resist” (p. 1221). The Lord’s church has often been pressured to surrender to the forces of Satan, often successfully. Satan will always be fighting against the truth but our obligation is to stand firm upon the Truth of God’s Word and never surrender. During the First Century Judiazing teachers attacked Paul and his apostleship. Paul could have just yielded to their pressure and surrendered: he refused. He stood fast upon the truth of God’s Word and the truthfulness of his apostleship.

During the late 1800s and early 1900s there were a group of apostates who were not content to abide by the authority of Christ concerning the worship we offer to God and the autonomy of the church when it comes to mission work (the missionary society). They fought against the truth of God’s Word and those faithful Christians pressuring them to surrender the Gospel to their desires. Faithful brethren strongly withstood their apostasy. When they perverted the instructions of our Lord in singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs by adding a mechanical instrument of music to the Word of God, those faithful brethren pointed out that instruments were not authorized in the Bible. These apostates cared not for the Scriptures wanting their instruments instead so when they could not get the faithful to surrender the Truth, they chased the faithful away and started their own denomination, the Christian Church.

Error seems to return after a few years. We now see the same doctrines perpetrated upon the church as was seen a century ago regarding mechanical instrumental music and companions to it. While brethren stood

solidly against instrumental music, there arose a group of singers who made their voices sound like instruments. They opined that this was permissible because it was “vocal music.” They ignored that it did not teach and admonish. “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). Neither is this speaking: “**Speaking** to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Additionally, this vocal music is not singing (which is authorized) but another kind of music. Yet, many brethren accepted this and slowly they started accepting instrumental music as an issue that was not that important (Jesus did not die for it they argued).

Around this same time, individuals started compromising the Lord’s doctrine concerning divorce and remarriage. The Lord’s basic teaching is that there is one man for one woman for life. He then allows one exception to that rule, when one spouse commits fornication the innocent party may divorce the fornicator and the innocent party is free to remarry (Mat. 5:32; 19:3-9). Because of the ease of divorce, many surrendered to society and changed God’s laws.

Those of the liberal persuasion also changed the work of the church. God authorized the church to seek and save the lost. He authorized three ways of performing this work: (1) preaching to the lost, (2) edifying the saved, and (3) acts of benevolence. Those who desired to change the church of our Lord started including recreation and entertainment as the work of the church. They would send their kids (paying for everything out of the church treasury) to special events (skiing trips, to Six Flags, and other such trips). They also built gymnasiums (often using the terms “family life center”) and concentrated their efforts to provide recreation for the young people.

Lately, liberals have started fellowshiping those in denominations. They have ignored God’s laws concerning fellowship. “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). They pass over the fact that by extending fellowship to those who do not abide in the Truth, they are just as guilty as the false teacher. “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). These liberals have compromised the truth, but they are not satisfied with going off themselves, they want to take others with them leading them to hell. Additionally they want us to surrender our convictions and God’s Word itself so they can feel good in leading men to destruction.

We must stand fast and never surrender the Truth in any way. We need the admonition which Paul gave to the Corinthians: “Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Or as he encouraged the Thessalonians: “Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 The. 2:15). Realizing that we are in a battle against the forces of evil, we must take “the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God” (Eph. 6:17) and never put it down but always “fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12). Shall we surrender to the liberals who desire to change the Word of God: **Never!**

MH

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(Continued from Page 1)

Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore *is* wrath upon thee” (2 Chr. 19:2).

Beloved this is the kind of *drama* that is being played out in my hometown, Nashville. The Holy Spirit commanded “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). Did Black or Holloway expose the duplicity of Shelly and the Woodmont elders for encouraging this false teacher to come to the state of Tennessee? Did Steve Flatt rebuke his two Bible professors for jointly participating with the teachers of error on the “Jubilee” program and with those from Woodmont Hills, who admittedly invited Graham to Nashville?

The same issue of the Lipscomb paper carried the list of those scheduled to speak on the 2000 Willard Collins Summer Lectures (June 11-14). One of these was F. LaGard Smith, a lawyer and former professor from Pepperdine University, who joined the Lipscomb staff a year ago. Some of the errors of this brother, such as a denial that the wicked will suffer eternal conscious punishment in hell, have been documented previously in

Bulletin Briefs. Smith’s teaching, which denies the reality of the biblical description of hell (Mat. 25:46), is not liberalism—it is rank modernism! I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I want to go on record with the following statement. If this doctrine, no eternal conscious punishment for the ungodly, continues to be taught in what are termed Christian Universities we will see other and bolder examples of modernism being taught in their Bible departments. See Wayne Jackson’s Review of LaGard’s book *Who Is My Brother?*, and read Daniel Denham’s review of this book for additional documentation of Smith’s errors. Steve Flatt’s affirmation about maintaining the 109-year-old mission of David Lipscomb is not according to the facts.

It is utter nonsense to pretend that men like David Lipscomb, James A. Harding, E. A. Elam, and H. Leo Boles would have tolerated such compromise. Shelly and Walling repeatedly crack jokes at the expense of sound brethren and faithful congregations (such things are on tape). Men like Lipscomb and Boles would have been like Jehu the son of Hanani. They would have gone out to meet these professors in the Bible department at Lipscomb because of their affinity with Shelly, Walling, and Woodroof and rebuked them. Such professors would have never been allowed in the classroom where they could contaminate the minds of impressionable young men and women. Parents are greatly concerned about what their children will be taught when they go to college. Mothers and fathers are often perplexed concerning a higher education for their child in a state university or in one that is called a “Christian” university. It is true that state schools are filled with unregenerate and worldly professors, but at least in those one knows who the enemy is. Recently, when the question was asked: “Why is David Lipscomb University pulling so hard to the left?” Freddie Clayton of Dunlap, TN, allowed it was “because the college has a Flatt on that side up front.”

Those who contribute to David Lipscomb University are going to have to ask themselves if they want to support the kind of compromise described above. They will also have to give an account at the judgement for supporting such. For it is written, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things *done* in *his* body, according to that he hath done, whether *it be* good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10).

What is another sad thing about the report in *The Lipscomb News* is that more than 170 congregations are

listed as contributors to the University and thereby to the present path the Bible department is following. That Christians may build and support schools to educate their youth in a faithful manner we have no doubt—education is the responsibility of the home and family. Nor do we doubt that a congregation may support a faithful man to teach the Word of God in a college that is sound, but where do the Scriptures even hint at the creation of another body to take donations from the churches to do their work? The one body in which God is glorified is the church; for it is written,

“Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Eph. 3:21).

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“SAD STATEMENTS”

Danny Box

From June 10-14 it was my good fortune to be able to attend the Bellview Lectures, held annually at Bellview Church of Christ, Pensacola, Florida. This year the theme was *Sad Statements Of The Bible*. The lectureship began with brother Keith Mosher defining “What Make A Sad Verse” or as he put it “What Makes A Verse ‘Sad’?” From there other sound preachers of the gospel discussed verses such as “Rivers Of Water Run Down Mine Eyes” (Psa. 119:136); “Who Made Israel To Sin” (1 Kin. 14:16); “Neither Could They Blush” (Jer. 6:15); “Mine Own Familiar Friend” (Psa. 41:9); “We Will Not Walk Therein” (Jer. 6:16); “They Will Not Endure Sound Doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2-3); “My God, My God, Why Hast Thou Forsaken Me?” (Mat. 27:46); and many more. Then the lectureship was closed out by brother Ronnie Hayes with one of the saddest statements of all: “Absalom, My Son, My Son Absalom! Would God I Had Died For Thee!” (2 Sam. 18:33).

What a great lectureship it was! But, do you realize that as each man developed his passage, the reason for each of the Sad Statements was directly related to **sin**. Sin caused rivers of water to pour down the eyes of David. It was sin that caused God to “remove His fellowship.” Sin caused the people to be unable to blush. It was due to sin that David’s own friends turned against him. Sin caused the people to harden their hearts and not want to walk in the “old paths.” Sin will cause people not to endure sound doctrine, and sin will cause God to turn His back on us. It is also due to sin that we will “Departed Without Being Desired” (2 Chr. 21:20).

How sad it is to see people with the opportunity to have their sins forgiven, but because “They Will Not Endure Sound Doctrine” they are “Dead Thinking They Were Alive” (Rev. 3:1). We have many Christians, who

like “Demas Hath Forsaken” the Lord, and we have many who are “So Soon Removed” from the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Just as the Lord stood above the city and cried, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem” (Mat. 23:37) because they were in sin, He stands and cries out to us today through His inspired Word. It is by the Word that we will be “Weighed In The Balances” and many of us will be found wanting even today because of sin. We are “Another Generation Which Knew Not God” and because of this our heart is “Only Evil Continually.” We must not be “Unconcerned With Sin” but we must repent and obey before it is eternally too late. It will be a terrible day at judgment to hear the Lord say: “Depart From Me” and we “Cannot Enter The Land”!

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Editor’s Note: We would like all to start making plans to attend our 26th Annual Bellview Lectures scheduled for June 9-13, 2001. The theme will be “Encouraging Statements Of The Bible.” We believe this will make a great companion copy to this year’s lectureship. We would love everyone who receives this publication to be able to come to these lectures. They will be well worth your time. We would also encourage all who have not bought a book of this years lectures to do so. There is a great amount of needed material in this book. If you notice the back page you will see that many of our lectureship books (the 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1994, and 1999 books) are completely sold out. The 1995, 1997 and 1998 books are close to being sold out. However, you can get all the books on the CD (right now that is the only way to get those books that are sold out). We would encourage you to get a copy of the CD (the books are in Adobe Acrobat format which can be used on Intel or Macintosh systems).

THE AMAZING SAVING GRACE OF GOD

Samuel J. Dilbeck

News Flash! Grace has finally been discovered. Christ did not have it. The apostles did not preach it. The Bible does not contain it. The restorationists could not restore it. Most gospel preachers today have never heard of it. But we have found it!

This is what some brethren would like for the church to believe. They even claim that they are the ones that found grace. Do you know where these men found their grace? **The Denominations!** Those who fellowship with denominations think that the church of our Lord does not understand the meaning of grace, and that it must be instructed properly. God's grace is not something new. It has been around as long as sin. However, God's grace is not the same as this denominational idea of grace that is plaguing the pews of the church today.

These brethren accuse good sound preachers of forgetting about grace. They say that *conservatives* have no clue as to what grace is. These false doctrines about grace teach that the grace of God is all that man needs. There is nothing that man has to do in order to obtain this grace. In fact, some say that man does not "contribute one whit to his salvation." Often this extreme view is called the "grace only" view. This name is not meant to be derogatory, but is simply a summary of what these men believe. This grace only theory is not found in the Bible. It seems if this was truly the nature of God's grace, He would have put it in His Book. However, He did not!

This interdenominational clique often goes to Ephesians 2:8 to establish its case. In Ephesians 2, Paul is bringing to the Christians' remembrance their former state. They once were walking in sin, being controlled by Satan. Then they were saved. God in His rich mercy and love made them alive from spiritual death. God even raised them up with Christ to show His grace and kindness to all men. Then Paul begins to explain what is being shown as they are being exalted. He says, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God." Paul declares with certainty that they were saved by the grace (in the original language of the New Testament). That is the free, undeserved favor of God. In other words, God has saved men by His grace, not a grace that comes from within oneself, but a grace that comes from God. That

is the significance of "and that not of yourselves." *That* is a pronoun, and it refers back to the noun, *grace*. Paul says that *grace* is not man's part, it is God's part of salvation. However, Paul never said man did not "contribute one whit." In fact, he claimed the exact opposite.

Paul says that man is saved "through [the] faith" (Eph. 2:8). God's grace works through one's faith. Man's part of salvation is obedient faith; without this part, there is nothing through which God's grace can work. Paul recognized that man has a part to play in his own salvation. God's amazing grace is what saves man, when and only when man complies with the conditions that God has set down for him to follow. Is submitting to the will of God contributing to one's salvation? Well, of course it is. If that is not contributing, what is? God has left man a part in his salvation. He left Noah a part in his salvation, and that was the actual building of the ark (Gen. 6). Does this submission nullify God's grace? **No!** Man is still in need of God's wonderful gift.

Complying to the will of God is a work of man (John 6:28-29). However, it is not a work of man that is done to boast. These types of work are condemned by Paul in Ephesians 2:9. It must be realized that Paul is not condemning all works. If this were the case, then it would be contradicting what James wrote, "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified" (Jam. 2:24). If Paul was condemning all works, then he would be condemning faith in Christ, because it is a work (John 6:28-29). Also, if condemnation of all works was what Paul had in mind, he contradicted himself in the next verse, verse 10. Here Paul reveals that men are the creation of God, made "in Christ Jesus unto good works." This clearly means that God created mankind to do works. Christians do not work to be boastful, but to do the works that "God hath ordained [**prepared**] that we should walk in them." These works include belief in God and Christ, visiting the widows and orphans, living righteously, and many other deeds (John 6:28-29; Jam. 1:27; Jude 3). Should any of these be done so a person could glory, then it becomes a vain work.

Thus, it can be seen that God completely saves man by His divine, merciful, loving grace. However, this does not exempt man from doing his part. This is the

grace that Jesus had to give. This is the grace that the apostles preached. This is the grace the Bible contains. This is the grace that the restorationists recognized. This is the grace that sound preachers proclaim from pulpits today. Sadly, however, this is not the grace that

some brethren have recently discovered from the denominations. God deserves thanks and praise for His grace, but this *new* grace needs to be banished from the church forever.

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THE BATTLE WE FACE

Clint Brown

We are involved in a battle for our very souls. Eternity hangs in the balance and time is of the essence. Today is the “Day of Salvation,” tomorrow may be too late! We have a promised victory in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the power of His Word. We can defeat the great powers of Satan and stand on the shores of eternity washed in the blood of Christ and looking to the great throne of God. But while we sojourn through this world we must realize the great arsenal of the devil and stand fast in the whole armor of God that we may be able to stand against his wiles and win the battle we face (Eph. 6:10-13).

Paul explained to the Corinthian brethren that we are not ignorant of the devil’s devices (2 Cor. 2:11). Though he is a formidable foe, we can be ready to face the enemy and overcome by the grace of God.

The most wide spread of all the devil’s devices are the **false prophets**. On most every corner of every street you can be sure to find someone spouting off false teachings. False doctrines abound in our day and time as they did back in the first century. Thank God we have been given His inspired, inerrant Word that we can test the many and varied doctrines of the day (1 The. 5:21). One ploy of the false teachers is to divert the hearer from the pure morals of Scripture. It has been said that the first doctrine to be diminished by false teachers is the doctrine of Christian purity. Armed with the Word of God we can discern the difference between right and wrong and know to choose the good (Deu. 1:39; Isa. 7:15). The battle for purity can be won if we stand fast in the Lord and in pure Christianity.

Probably more deceitful is Satan’s influence through **weak preaching**. This is more deceitful because the messenger poses as a sound gospel preacher. Men and women may come to hear the truth but instead are bombarded by a weak message that fails to feed their souls. This is a problem in many pulpits of the Lord’s church today. The message is filled with anecdotes, short stories, and jokes. While you may not necessarily hear blatant false doctrine, you certainly will not hear a whole lot of truth either—which is just as

perilous to the soul (1 Pet. 2:2). Usually the first emphasis is placed on materialism resulting in increased worldliness in the church, followed by full-scale apostasy from the truth. This has happened over and over again in the body of Christ. The Bible teaches us to “preach the word”—not messages based on human philosophy, personal experiences, etc. (2 Tim. 4:2). The battle for the souls of men is begun, endured, and won with the preaching of God’s Word in a forceful and loving way!

However, the most deceptive and most evil of all of Satan’s devices is **shallow parenting**. God entrusted the valuable souls of children into the hands of parents (Deu. 6:7-9; Eph. 6:4). Our children belong to God, not really to us (Psa. 139:13-16). To waste their time and opportunities in life by emphasizing the shallow, carnal things in the world instead of instilling in them a love of things spiritual, is to mock and insult the very God who created their souls and put them in our trust. Too many kids are growing up with a severe lack of discipline and discernment between right and wrong. They have not been taught! You can readily see why this is the most hideous of all the devil’s deceptions. The young people of today are the elders, preachers, and Bible class teachers of tomorrow. If we fail to instruct them in the sound doctrine today, apostasy from the truth is just one generation away (2 Tim. 2:2)!

God entrusted the upbringing and nurturing of children to the family unit—not to the public schools, not the television sets, not even to the church! Why do so many families expect the church to provide a “professional babysitter” to do the work that God has given **them** to do?

The devil’s arsenal is loaded with ammunition. His wiles are many. But some of his most powerful darts are false teachers, weak preachers, and irresponsible parents. If we would incline our hearts to follow the Lord, learn of the devil’s devices and live in obedience to the will of Christ, we can win the battle that rages against the souls of men.

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BEWARE OF THOSE NASA—SCIENCE REPORTS

Don Tarbet

A few weeks back, a letter began to be circulated through the internet, to the effect that scientists were trying to establish where the heavenly bodies would be in the future, and as they looked into the past (to look to the future) they discovered a missing day in time, and found it was all confirmed by the Bible—in Joshua 10, and 2 Kings 20. This is the kind of story that might well bring tears to the eyes of one telling the story, and to those who hear, and help people to confirm their belief in the Bible. However, the story is a **hoax**—it just did not happen. About 1969, that very same story made the rounds in religious journals and church bulletins, and captivated the thinking of the brotherhood. There were probably 2 or more efforts to investigate the story to determine its validity. One such investigation was begun by Olden Cook, then living in Sherman, Texas. It seems that bro. Cook had a book of sermons by one of our older preachers that was either written in the 1920s or 30s, that carried that **same** “general story” (without the NASA twist). Olden became suspicious when he saw what someone had done to the story, so he wrote to NASA for confirmation. They responded that such a *discovery* did **not** happen, and they knew nothing about

it. Bro. Cook published his information for the benefit of interested persons, and it too was carried to the brotherhood.

We are always concerned about false information being circulated, because even though it *sounds* good, it does more harm than good when it is exposed as a hoax. Through the years we have been embarrassed by the many reports of Madeline M. O’Hair in her efforts to stop religious broadcasting. Thousands upon thousands of letters were written to the Federal Communication Commission of the government. We were informed that such an effort by O’Hair had never taken place, but the more we cried *wolf*, the more our credibility was shaken. Let us not shake up our credibility now by promoting, circulating, and putting our names to articles about the great NASA—Science *discovery*—that never took place.

Many are preaching now that were **not** preaching in 1969, but undoubtedly some that **were** either do not remember the expose’ of the hoax, or missed out on it at that time. Nevertheless, we are a better brotherhood if we are an informed brotherhood.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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TRUTH VERSUS RELATIVITY

Gary W. Summers

One thing our “intellectual betters” never lack is passionate belief. “There are as many truths as there are people,” these ardent intellectuals preach. “Follow your feelings. Believe what seems right to you. Do as you please” (78).

The above paragraph may be found in the November 1994, *Reader’s Digest* in an article written by Michael Novak. To be sure, he is discussing a political, social, and economic subject rather than a spiritual one, but applications can be made in religion.

Morally speaking, the quotes from our “intellectual betters” cited above have been accepted as *gospel* for the last thirty years. Beginning with Joseph Fletcher’s theory of “situation ethics” in the mid 1960s, many have shied away from absolutes.

In a nutshell, Fletcher argued that even biblical statements concerning morality could not always be relied upon; only a person’s situation could determine whether it was permissible to lie, steal, commit adultery, etc. Citing a multitude of examples in his book, he concluded that in certain circumstances it would be all right to commit adultery (to get released from a Nazi prison camp, for example).

Musically (although barely), this idea was expressed as: “It’s your thing. Do whatcha wanna do. I can’t tell ya who to sock it to.” In terms of drama it was *The Rainmaker*, the title character of which seduces the dowdy daughter of a farmer with the noble purpose of raising her self-esteem (“Let us do evil, that good may come”—Rom. 3:8). Philosophically, literature professors have insisted that everyone brings his own truth to the text—which is highfalutin terminology for subjectivism. However the student perceives what the author has

written is wonderful and marvelous—until exam time when all teachers resort to the use of an objective standard to grade their pupils. Spiritually, Fletcher’s philosophy results in a cacophonous chorus of whiners who (although they probably do not know another Scripture in the whole Bible) cite: “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Mat. 7:1). The religious version of “situation ethics” has resulted in: “You’re judging me,” “That’s just your opinion,” and “We’re all trying to go to the same place.”

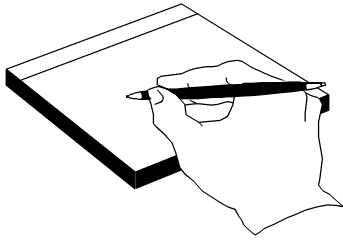
This is an odorless, deadly gas that is now polluting every free society on earth. It is neither political nor economic, but the poisoning corrupting culture of relativism (78).

Incredibly, many leaders of the religious world in general and in the church in particular have been echoing the philosophy of relativism. No, they did not get it from Joseph Fletcher; they got it from the same source Fletcher did: Barth and other theologians. (Despite its original definition, a theologian in this century refers to someone who studies about God from the ideas of men rather than the Bible.)

Relativism has resulted in a refutation of the idea that truth exists. If it does exist, not everyone can know it. If we can know it, we cannot all agree upon it. Of course, John 8:31-32 states that we can know the truth—if we continue in the teachings of Christ. Paul says we can understand the “mystery” (Eph. 3:3-4). Paul exhorted that we “be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). John says it is possible for the followers of Jesus to “walk in truth” (3 John 4). Most people would find

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Withdrawing Fellowship

The Lord gave very specific instructions concerning our fellowship. When we obey the truth of the Gospel, we get into Christ (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Getting into Christ we get into His body, the church. The same action which places us into Christ, baptism, also places us in the body (1 Cor. 12:13). As such, we, as individuals, are members of that body. As a body works together and feels together, so the church is to work and feel together. We do realize that all members of the body are necessary and have their function to perform. When all members of the body are doing their job, then the body works in perfect harmony and remains healthy. However, there are times in which parts of the body become diseased. When some disease comes into the body, the body tries to fight it off. If the diseased part becomes so bad, it may even be necessary to cut off that diseased part of the body.

The church is the body (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18) and in many respects the church is to work like the physical body. Upon our baptism into Christ the Lord adds us to the church (Acts 2:41, 47), or sets us into the body as it pleases Him (1 Cor. 12:18). As a part of that body we enjoy fellowship with the rest of the body. When one part of the body is honored the entire body rejoices with it, and likewise when one member of the body suffers the entire body suffers with it. "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it" (1 Cor. 12:26). It is this way because of the natural fellowship of the body. This fellowship is based upon our fellowship with God (1 John 1:5-7).

However, when disease comes into the body—the disease of sin—then that disease must be dealt with. First, we must try and fight off the sin. There must be teaching done, an admonishing of those in sin. While

referring specifically to those who speak against, the principle would hold true that the elders are to exhort and convince (Tit. 1:9) those in sin (whatever the sin might be). Speaking of the factious man, there is to be a first and then a second admonition (Tit. 3:10). There is to be the attempt to bring those diseased parts of the body back into faithfulness to God.

Sometimes those in sin simply refuse to respond to the admonition brought about by their brethren as they wield the sword of the Spirit. When such occurs, then there must be the ultimate love shown, the withdrawing of our fellowship from the sinner. This was the situation in the church at Corinth. There was a man in sin, a man living in fornication. Paul tells them they are to withdraw their fellowship from that man. Paul, by inspiration, tells them to that this man should be "taken away from among you....to deliver such an one unto Satan...purge out...not to company with...not to keep company...with such an one no not to eat....put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1 Cor. 5:2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13).

Paul also gives some reasons why we are to withdraw our fellowship. First it is to save the soul of the sinner. It is to encourage them to realize their sinful condition and repent of their sins ("the destruction of the flesh"; 1 Cor. 5:5). This leads to the eternal salvation of the person who has been withdrawn from ("that the spirit may be saved"; 1 Cor. 5:5). Through his realization of sin and the devastating effects of sin, he learns not to commit sin thus leading to an eternal home with God in heaven.

Second, withdrawal purges sin out of the church and thus keeps the church pure. Since, "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6), when we fail to purge out that sin, then it emboldens and encourages others to commit sin. Thus, only by purging out that old leaven of sin will the church be kept from contamination of that sin.

Third, withdrawal magnifies and glorifies God and the Lord's church. Each Christian has the obligation of doing all to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). When members of the church are allowed to continue in sin with no repercussions, then the church is denigrated in the eyes of the world. Only by proper corrective church discipline will the world be brought to a greater respect for the church. When Ananias and Sapphira were disciplined (put to death for lying to God) "great fear came upon all the church, and upon as many as heard these things" (Acts 5:11).

Fourth, is to teach all Christians that they must live

godly lives. Paul instructed Timothy, “Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:20). The practice of withdrawal will teach others to live in such a way that this does not happen to them.

God has told us from whom we are to withdraw our fellowship. We have generally classified these as those who commit personal offenses against another (Mat. 15:15-20). We are to withdraw from those who are immoral as is seen in the situation at Corinth. When a person becomes factious or causes division we are to withdraw from him (Tit. 3:10). When a person begins teaching doctrinal error (of such a nature that would cause others to lose their souls) the church is to withdraw from that individual (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 6:3-5; Tit. 1:9-11). Then we have the general statement to withdraw from those who walk disorderly (2 The. 3:6, 14). However, it seems that those congregations which practice withdrawing fellowship only do so to those who stop attending the worship services of the church. While these are proper subjects of withdrawal, it is certainly wrong to limit it to such wayward members.

Sadly, we as a people have failed to practice this command. Some have thus called this the forgotten command. However, it has not been forgotten, it has been ignored. We know what God says, we simply have not done it. Brethren, let us get back to practicing what God has commanded us. MH

(Continued from Page 1)

Scriptures like these pretty persuasive, but theologians are not like most people; they possess a *higher* knowledge.

How has the denial of truth affected people? Some, it has been noted, create their own truth practically every day. Rubel Shelly, for instance, can say in one location, “If instrumental music were introduced where I preach, I wouldn’t mount the pulpit to oppose it.” Traveling to another state, however, he avers, “Brethren, I’ll never be a party to introducing instrumental music into the church.”

Now some people would consider those statements contradictory, but they just do not understand what it means to be a theologian. They do not understand how relativism works. Shelly also told one Christian Church audience: “I don’t think you have a case for using musical instruments. History is against you. But for all I know, I may be wrong.”

Now that is a theologian! As philosophers, they are

never really sure about anything. In fact, although referring to other individuals, the Scriptures provide an excellent definition equally applicable to theologians/relativists: “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Tim. 3:7).

Some have been known to practice this in a political way. For years they will vote pro-life and then affirm that they are pro-choice. Not only will they flip-flop in this manner, they will further claim that they have always been pro-choice. Many people would call this lying, but it just shows that they do not understand politicians any better than theologians.

Hope For the Future of the Church?

First, truth matters. One single truth, as Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn said upon receiving his 1970 Nobel Prize in literature, is more powerful than all the weapons in the world. The martyrs of our time—victims of fascism and communism—have shown again and again that in fidelity to truth lies true human dignity (79).

Is the world prepared to learn that truth is important in a political sense? If so, would it be too much to wish that there might just be some fallout into religion?

Oh, that people would search the Scriptures daily as the noble Bereans did instead of listening to their *pastor* or *priest*! Imagine people following the philosophy of proving all things (1 The. 5:21-22)! How interesting it would be if there would once again be religious debates so that people could compare truth with error!

In the final analysis, it is only truth that matters (and our obedience to it). It is so valuable that Solomon wrote that we should buy it and never sell it (Pro. 23:23). Those who have been advocating the relativistic view in the church know better. Once faithful brethren who now fellowship just about anyone and anything know it, too.

Would that a love of the truth would sweep through the church again so brethren everywhere would stand up and be counted! Oh, that those who persist in fellowshiping error were refused platforms from which they lead and deceive! Oh, that brethren would grow strong in the Lord and move once again as the mighty army of God, sweeping into foreign countries with the everlasting gospel, while standing firm at home!

It could happen—if once again we committed ourselves to the precious truths of the New Testament: that there is one and only one plan of salvation, which includes (besides faith and repentance) baptism **for** the remission of sins; that there is **one** and only **one** church (Eph. 4:4); and that we have a divine purpose—to save

souls from sin (Mat. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Wallowing around in the hazy murkiness of “For-all-I-know-I-may-be-mistaken”-ism will convert no one.

We must not only know the truth, but obey it, stand upon it, and proclaim it to the glory of God.

920 Imperial Drive; Denton, TX 76201

“STRANGE FIRE”—LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Alton W. Fonville

Fire is fire, is it not? What difference does it make where the fire came from? All fire is hot, and burns.

Do those arguments sound familiar? They should, being used by so many religious people in today’s world, trying to *justify* their religious practices. This argument may have been used by Nadab and Abihu, in relation to their *choice* of fire to burn, as recorded in Leviticus 10. From a careful reading of the text, it is obvious that God did not accept that line of “human reasoning.” Nor does He accept it today.

Offering of “strange fire” is the basis for **every denomination** in existence in the world today. Men have added to, or subtracted from the Word of God and substituted “human reasoning” in place of a “thus saith the Lord.” When the Lord’s church was still in its infancy, God, through the apostle Paul, warned that the time would come when this would happen. Read carefully, these words from God: “Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and **to the word of his grace**, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:28-32).

It happened just exactly as God had said, and has caused the rise of all the various “apostate churches,” with all their different *opinions* relating to their worship and practice. They left the “word of God” and have put their own wisdom up against that of God’s. They cannot show a “thus saith the Lord” for all their ungodly practices, and, like Nadab and Abihu, will one day reap “like treatment” from God. They are trying to *glorify God* by actions and practices which “God commanded them not.” And they use arguments such as: “God did

not say, not to do it.” We must listen to what God **did** say and respect the **silence** of Scriptures. What God **did** say, is all important, and cannot be brushed aside lightly. After all, God had given specific instructions on the fire which was to be used in worship to Him.

The use of “instrumental music” in worship is “strange fire.” God clearly said to “sing...with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Col. 3:16). We can each understand that plain language, if we so choose. The use of “holy water,” “burning of incense,” “partaking of the Lord’s supper on days other than the Lord’s Day,” “the use of church dramas,” “teaching that baptism is not essential for our salvation,” and a host of other such beliefs and practices are all “strange fire” being offered to the Lord. Each practice is a sign of **unbelief**. Can we then, **fellowship** those who hold to, and practice such? Let God answer. “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).

Will we hear God? Moses understood a profound lesson, and declared it to Aaron. Would to God that we learn that same lesson. “Then Moses said unto Aaron, **This is it that the LORD spake, saying, I will be sanctified in them that come nigh me, and before all the people I will be glorified. And Aaron held his peace**” (Lev. 10:3).

When we try to worship God in **our own way**, we are offering *strange fire* to the Lord, and like Aaron, we will have no right to say word about the consequences. God **will be glorified** in our worship.

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Third Annual Lubbock Lectureship

“IN THE BEGINNING”

(Christian Evidences and Apologetics)

Tommy J. Hicks, Director

October 8-12, 2000

Sunday, October 8

9:00 AM	“Indestructibility Proves Bible’s Inspiration”	David Watson
10:00 AM	“The Bible’s Word ‘Church’”	Tommy J. Hicks
11:00 AM	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
2:00 PM	“Does Evil’s Existence Prove Atheism?”	Jesse Whitlock
3:00 PM	“Genesis Creation Account, Fact or Myth?”	Jason Rollo
4:00 PM	“Is Empirical Evidence the Only Evidence?”	Gary Summers
5:00 PM	<i>Dinner Break</i>	
6:30 PM	Congregational Singing	Dale Stone
7:00 PM	“The Messiahship/Deity of Christ is a Fact”	Joseph Meador
8:00 PM	“The Bible’s Word ‘For’”	Keith Mosher

Monday, October 9

9:00 AM	“Content’s Unity Proves Bible’s Inspiration”	Marvin Weir
10:00 AM	“The Bible’s Word ‘Faith’”	Tim Ayers
11:00 AM	“The Injustice of Christ’s Trials”	Kenneth Ratcliff
12:00 PM	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
2:00 PM	“The Gospels and the ‘Q’ Document”	Robert Dodson
3:00 PM	“Did the Bible’s Flood Really Happen?”	Fred Riley
4:00 PM	OPEN FORUM	Dub McClish
5:00 PM	<i>Dinner Break</i>	
6:30 PM	Congregational Singing	Dale Stone
7:00 PM	“The Bible’s Word ‘Evidence’”	Tom Bright
8:00 PM	“Its Superiority Proves Bible’s Inspiration”	Robert Taylor

Tuesday, October 10

9:00 AM	“Testimony of Christ Proves Bible Inspiration”	Tim Nichols
10:00 AM	“The Bible’s Word ‘Fellowship’”	Noah Hackworht
11:00 AM	“The Doctrine of Uniformitarianism”	Roelf Ruffner
12:00 PM	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
2:00 PM	“Were N.T. Writers Duped or Dishonest?”	Foy Forehand
3:00 PM	“Are Religions Basically the Same?”	David Baker
4:00 PM	OPEN FORUM	Dub McClish
5:00 PM	<i>Dinner Break</i>	
6:30 PM	Congregational Singing	Dale Stone
7:00 PM	“The Origin of Life”	Tyler Young
8:00 PM	“The Gospel is for All Men”	Ira Y. Rice, Jr.

Wednesday, October 11

9:00 AM	“Archaeology Proves Bible’s Inspiration”	Daniel Denham
10:00 AM	“The Bible’s Word ‘Substance’”	Tom Wacaster
11:00 AM	“Is the Universe Billions of Years Old?”	Randy Mabe
12:00 PM	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
2:00 PM	“Are There Errors in the Bible?”	Toby Soechting
3:00 PM	“Can Men Not Understand the Bible Alike?”	Richard Massey
4:00 PM	OPEN FORUM	Dub McClish
5:00 PM	<i>Dinner Break</i>	
6:30 PM	Congregational Singing	Dale Stone
7:00 PM	“True Science Proves Bible’s Inspiration”	Jerry Murrell
8:00 PM	“The Validity of the New Testament Canon”	Bobby Liddell

Thursday, October 12

9:00 PM	“Fulfilled Prophecy Proves Bible Inspiration”	Ted Clarke
10:00 PM	“The Bible’s Word ‘Hope’”	Neal Abbott
11:00 PM	“Christ’s Death, Burial, and Resurrection”	Eddie Whitten
12:00 PM	<i>Lunch Break</i>	
2:00 PM	“The Bible, A Sufficient Guide for Today”	Bob Patterson
3:00 PM	“Does the Bible Contradicts Itself?”	Kent Watson
4:00 PM	OPEN FORUM	Dub McClish
5:00 PM	<i>Dinner Break</i>	
6:30 PM	Congregational Singing	Dale Stone
7:00 PM	“Theory of Evolution Cannot Be Proved”	B. J. Clarke
8:00 PM	“God Does Exist”	Ronnie Hayes

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JOTHAM'S PARABLE OF THE BRAMBLE KING

H. Joe Spangler

And when they told *it* to Jotham, he went and stood in the top of mount Gerizim, and lifted up his voice, and cried, and said unto them, Hearken unto me, ye men of Shechem, that God may hearken unto you. The trees went forth *on a time* to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, *and* reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the vine, Come thou, *and* reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, *and* reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, *then* come *and* put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out of the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon (Jud. 9:7-15).

Paul wrote, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Rom. 15:4).

At the death of Gideon, Israel forgot him and his work to bring them out of apostasy, and began to worship Baalberith. Gideon died, leaving 70 sons (including Jotham) by his wives and one son (Abimelech) by his concubine in Shechem (Jud. 8:32-35). At this point Abimelech connived the men of Shechem into making him their king instead of any of the 70. Receiving their appointment, he proceeded to slay the 70 upon one stone at Ophrah. Jotham hid himself during the ordeal and upon hearing of it proclaimed the above parable. For three years the men of Shechem allowed Abimelech to cruelly reign over them until they sought to ambush him. However, Abimelech, learning of their plot, escaped and defeated them, destroying their city and sowing it with salt, making it useless! Ah, they failed to heed the parable of the bramble king and its fire destroyed the mighty cedar (cf., Jud. 9:1-6).

The lesson for us is this: When good men will not lead or serve, evil ones will; where God's people will not labour, Satan will; when God's men do not stand for the truth and stomp out error, Satan will sow his damnable seed and salt on his adversaries (God's men). Letting evil reign will destroy us just as it did the men of Shechem.

Are we not in danger for letting the bramble rule? Consider the area of educating our young. Public

education has been and still can be a blessing, yet in the last few decades the bramble of humanism has taken over our school systems. The floodgate was opened with the famous Scope's Trial and allowing the lie of evolution to be taught in our schools. A casual look at the system reveals that the brambles have tumbled into and oversee textbooks, teaching colleges, and the public education system in general. Fires will come out of these brambles; generations who will know not God. While our children spend 30 hours a week at school versus 4 hours in Bible study and some time in home instruction (?), we better stand up and warn our children of the fallacy of evolution and humanism, and instill faith in Jehovah.

Due to relaxing our battle against Satan, his vanguards have taught our nation that it matters not what a man believes, nor how he lives. Such bramble doctrines as "faith only," "grace only," and "universalism" are relied on as protection against the fires of the last day (cf., 2 Pet. 3). Many a cedar will fall in flames because good men fail to rise in battle and rescue a mighty forest that could be to the glory of its Maker (cf., Acts 2:40; Eph. 3:21). Where are the legions of men and women who will stand up and protect their neighbors from the "wages of sin"? If good men will not stand, evil will surely stand in their place and triumph.

Many a Diotrepes will wreak havoc in the church if good men fail to lead and serve as overseer of the Lord's church. If good men had taken a stand and disciplined, Diotrepes could not have gained his one-man control. Without the willingness of John, no doubt he would have continued his reign of terror (3 John 9-10). When good work is left undone, sin triumphs (Jam. 4:17).

If knowledgeable men and women will not teach a Bible class, the bramble will rule. When Christian men will not pitch in to care for the building and grounds, the work goes undone, is done inadequately, or is done by those who have neither the time nor health to perform the task. When good men will not visit the sick and seek and save the lost, who will? When the Lord's people do not give of their means to do the good work of the church, who will? When godly men will not take an aggressive role as deacons and elders, the work load must be carried by a few and thus the bramble tax. When Christians no longer encourage their own to be

preachers of the gospel, the bramble grows up in the pulpits of our land and chokes out the Word. The same can be said about papers and schools run by the brethren. It is high time the bramble be plucked out, lest it destroy us!

How thankful we should be for those godly men and women who will stand for what is right and do what

good must be done. Let us thank our Bible class teachers and encourage them in the work. Let us express our appreciation for elders and vow to them our complete support. Let us lend deacons our encouragement and support. May God bless such and send us more Jo-thams.

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HE "CHASED" THEM AWAY

Harold Blevins

The Word of God cuts the hearts of men. Christ came to bring a sword, not peace (Mat. 10:34). Jesus judges by a rule called a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15; Phi. 3:16). Ministers must be militant in preaching and not pleasing, because one cannot please man and satisfy the Savior (Gal. 1:6-12). "Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *him*, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42-43).

The idea that Gospel preaching chases members from the church of the Master is absurd and unscriptural. We must preach by the name (that is, the authority) of the almighty (1 Cor. 1:10; Rev. 1:8); we must preach the glorious Gospel (1 Cor. 1:17); we must preach the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:18); we must preach Christ crucified (1 Cor. 1:23); we must not

preach ourselves (2 Cor. 4:5); we must preach "not with excellency of speech...[but we must preach] determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:1-2); then, and only then are we preaching the Word (2 Tim. 4:2).

If and when members are then chased away, place the argument on the Prince of Peace, not on the one doing the preaching. The Word still cuts the hearers' hearts. The same question is being asked, "Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). What did Peter do? Peter preached. Peter did not please! Peter did NOT back away!! **Peter preached!!!**

Gospel preaching does not chase people away; the devil does. Preaching in love causes some to hate the speaker: "Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?" (Gal. 4:16).

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH

V. Glenn McCoy

There is growing pressure in the Lord's church for women to assume leadership roles in the public worship of the church. Without question, the influence of society is having its effect on God's people. Until a few short years ago we had no difficulty in understanding what the Scriptures taught on this subject. It was generally viewed that the Scriptures presented certain limitations for women and those limitations were understood and accepted. Unfortunately, in recent years some have rejected those limitations and are now attempting to place women in leadership roles. As a result, this matter has developed into an extremely divisive issue that threatens the harmony and purity of the church. This issue cannot be settled by what is politically correct, or on the basis of what we like or dislike, but rather it must be settled by what the Scriptures have to say. Most definitely, the Bible reveals God's will for women pertaining to their role in the church.

Some have suggested that unless a woman can have exactly the same role in the church as the man, she is a second-class Christian. This is simply not true. Biblical submission does not make anyone a second class Christian. Please look at 1 Corinthians 11:3: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman *is* the man; and the head of Christ *is* God." This passage tells us that Christ is in submission to God, man is in submission to Christ, and woman is in submission to man. Christ is not a second-class Savior because He is in submission to God. The man is not a second-class Christian because he is in submission to Christ, and the woman is not a second-class Christian because she is in submission to man.

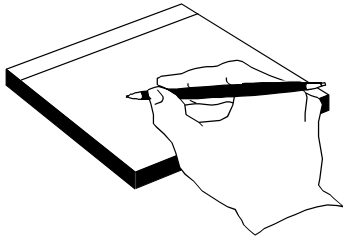
Certainly, she has a different role than does the man, but this does not make her inferior.

Even though women have some limitations, this does not mean that they are to be inactive in the church. On the contrary, Christian women play a vital role in the life of every congregation. A Christian woman is to teach other women, love her children, be discreet, be chaste, be a homemaker, be good, and be obedient to her own husband (Tit. 2:4-5). She is to teach children (2 Tim. 3:15), teach men privately (Acts 18:26), do good works, raise children, lodge strangers, wash the feet of the saints, and relieve the afflicted (1 Tim. 5:10). She can marry, bear children, manage the house (1 Tim. 5:14), and be submissive to her husband, attempting to win him over to the Lord by her godly conduct (1 Pet. 3:1). To their great credit, Christian women engage quietly in many good works of benevolence that brings glory to the Lord. Much of the work done in the local congregation would simply not be done if it were not for the women.

In the second and third chapters of 1 Timothy, Paul deals with one's conduct in "the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15). Prior to Paul's discussion of the role of women he boldly establishes his authority as an apostle and his right to speak. He is not offering his opinion, as some have suggested, but is speaking with the authority of inspiration: "Whereunto I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle, (I speak the truth in Christ, *and lie not*" (1 Tim. 2:7). The "therefore" in verse eight and what follows is directly related to Paul's claim to be

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Withdrawing Fellowship

This month I would like to again address the subject of congregations withdrawing from another congregation. In 1995 I wrote several articles dealing with this subject and would encourage everyone to read that material. The reason is that late last year and early this year a group of spiritual pygmies published material claiming it was sinful for one congregation to withdraw from another. Listen to John T. Polk II as he makes his stand: "In order for one church of Christ to withdraw fellowship from another church of Christ, there must be: One person or a group of people with authority over all the churches. An absolutely infallible assessment of every heart within every church. Impeccable timing for knowing when to execute this discipline for the good of everyone involved. Inspired instructions for renewing fellowship when the disciplined church repents" (2000, p. 6). Not one of these four points are correct. However, if someone wished to argue against a congregation withdrawing fellowship from an individual, they could easily use each of these four points in attempting to offset God's plain teaching.

The main argument these brethren use is stated thus: "The arguments presented in the lectures under review would make the churches of Christ just another denomination by teaching that local churches of Christ must be regulated by a governing board of self-appointed judges who determine what is proper fellowship toward other churches. This necessitates a hierarchy to control congregation-to-congregation affairs" (p. 6). The article under review is Dub McClish's article "One Congregation May Withdraw From Another Congregation" in the 1999 MSOP lectureship book *God Hath Spoken, Affirming Truth And Reproving Error*. This same material had been presented at the 1998 Bellview Lectures *Christian Fellowship* under the title "May One Congregation Withdraw From Another?" As they

review the different passages brother McClish used in his manuscripts they conclude: "This passage does not authorize a sectarian organization over and above the local churches of Christ."

The inconsistency of these brethren is seen in the same issue of this journal when Dennis Gullledge marks and exposes the Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio, TX where Max Lucado preaches (p. 4). Have they set themselves up as self-appointed judges determining what is proper for other churches? Are they setting themselves up as a "brotherhood eldership or a brotherhood bishop"? Have they, by exposing another congregation and marking it as not having the Bible as their guide, set themselves up as "a sectarian organization over and above the local churches of Christ"? We certainly are not opposed to marking this congregation and realize that we should mark and avoid them. "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). However, when we mark and avoid those who "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned" we are not setting up a brotherhood eldership or an sectarian organization over and above the local churches of Christ!" Can an eldership do this same thing which they did? If not, why not? Can that same eldership in marking and avoiding say, "We cannot have fellowship with them"? Again, if not, why not? Then can someone tell me what the difference would be in avoiding them and having no fellowship with them!

Closely associated with this frivolous charge is that if one congregation withdraws from another it violates congregational autonomy. We wonder how? If an eldership, in watching for the souls under their care, informs their congregation of another congregation that is no longer following the Bible as their guide and are teaching and practicing things which will destroy the souls of people, therefore they (as a congregation) cannot have fellowship with that unfaithful congregation; how have they violated congregational autonomy? How have they tried to set up a sectarian organization over and above the local churches of Christ? The faithful congregation has not tried to impose anything upon the apostate congregation. They have simply informed their congregation of the sin and resultant withdrawal of fellowship from the heretical congregation. The faithful have not robbed the apostate congregation the freedom to act and make decisions on its own. They have simply marked the unfaithful congrega-

tion (even as those in *First Century Christian* did). They have instructed their members (and not anyone else) to obey God's instructions to "avoid them" (Rom. 16:17), to "have no fellowship" with them and their "unfruitful works of darkness" (Eph. 5:11).

No doubt the liberals will love finding out that one congregation may not withdraw from another congregation. It allows them to continue spuing out their false doctrine and it leaves the elders of the faithful congregation helpless to defend and protect their flock against ravenous wolves. What these and others who teach such have done is to make a law where God has made no law and they need to repent. *MH*

Works Cited:

Polk II, John T. "Neo-Sectarian' Scriptures" *First Century Christian* January 2000: 6-11.

(Continued from Page 1)

speaking the truth as an apostle of Jesus. Paul then clarifies that the men are to do the praying when men and women are present: "I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting" (1 Tim. 2:8). The offering of public prayers in the assemblies is authorized for men only. In view of the fact that women were to worship (John 4:23-24; Acts 2:42), and that women prayed in certain situations (1 Cor. 11:5, 13), verse eight must refer to the men having the responsibility of leading in the offering of prayers when both men and women were present.

Paul then reminds Timothy of the need for Christian women to learn in silence with a submissive attitude: "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). In spite of the fact that Paul is making this pronouncement with authority as an apostle of Jesus, it is amazing that some people today simply dismiss it as one would do with an unwelcome opinion offered by an unqualified person! These instructions apply to all women for all time. Women were not only to dress in modest apparel, behave with godliness and good works, they were to "learn in silence with all subjection" (1 Tim. 2:11). Since women are to sing (Eph. 5:19) and confess Christ (Rom. 10:9-10), the restriction on women remaining silent obviously does not extend to these activities. However, when an assembly of men and women is gathered together for teaching by a selected teacher, that teacher must be a man. It is impossible to deliver a public lesson without the audience submitting to the speaker. A woman must not assume the designated authority necessary to teaching, but she is to assume the submissive role along with the others assembled.

The restriction given in verse 12 regarding the male/female relationships has two parts: (1) "I suffer not a woman to teach," (2) "nor to usurp authority over the man." As observed earlier, there are times when women are authorized to teach. The restriction then must have to do with teaching over a man. She is not to have authority over a man in any sense that would violate these Scriptures. Some have argued that a woman cannot take authority over a man, but if she is given that authority by the men, she would not violate this passage. However appealing that may sound, since God did not give women that authority, they cannot have it, no matter what a group of men might decide. It is improper for women to place themselves, or allow themselves to be placed in a public position of teaching men or teaching a mixed group of men and women. The total context of all passages dealing with the role of women in the church clearly shows that they did not take a leading role in praying or teaching over men.

To justify women taking leadership roles today, some argue that the restrictions given by Paul were just cultural in nature and applied only to the women of that time and place. However wishful some may be, this kind of thinking cannot be substantiated by the Scriptures. There are three primary New Testament passages in which the apostle discusses feminine restrictions and subjection. They are 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 1 Corinthians 14:33-38; and 1 Timothy 2:11-15. A summary of these passages reveal that Paul's inspired reasons for requiring such subjection had absolutely nothing to do with culture or custom. The fact that present social attitudes are opposed to what is taught in the New Testament about women does not in the least change what the Bible says.

This letter to the Corinthians was not written to the Corinthians exclusively. It was addressed to "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" (1:2). This shows clearly that the instructions were for all Christians in all places for all times. Further, there can be no doubt that Paul's instructions for women given through Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:11-15 were intended to be for all women. Paul gives two reasons for the restrictions being placed on women and neither of them has anything to do with custom or culture. The first reason given for this restriction is the order of creation: "For Adam was first formed, then Eve" (1 Tim. 2:13). Adam had priority in creation. He was the original human being. Eve was taken from Adam, being formed as a helper to him. She was subordinate to him. This argument based on priority of creation is strengthened by Paul's statement to the Christians in Corinth: "For the man is not of the woman;

but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:8-9). The teaching of Paul regarding the public position of the woman in which she holds a subordinate position to man is not based upon custom, culture, or human decision, but upon God’s divine order of creation.

The second reason that Paul gives for excluding the woman from public praying and teaching is the fact that Eve was deceived by Satan in the garden of Eden (Gen. 3:1-6). “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression” (1 Tim. 2:14). Both sinned, but Eve was thoroughly deceived by Satan. In this important situation in which Eve was placed she showed that she was not qualified to take the lead.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the church in Corinth he gave clear and specific instruction concerning the role of women in the public assembly: “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” (1 Cor. 14:34). Such phrases as “If therefore the whole church be come together” (v. 23), “when ye come together” (v. 26), “in the churches” (v. 34), and “in church” (v. 35) clearly show that the speaking limitation placed on women was intended to be in the church assembly. This rule of women remaining silent is positive, explicit, and universal. There is no ambiguity here. Those who would advocate change in the role of women in the church today may make some plausible sounding arguments from a human standpoint, but the authority of the inspired apostle remains positive: “Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak” (v. 34).

During the infancy of the church some Christians were given special miraculous gifts that enabled them to do things they could not otherwise do. The Corinthian church had several of these gifts, but there were restrictions governing their usage. In 1 Corinthians chapters 12-14 Paul wrote to correct certain abuses that had crept into the worship of the church at Corinth. Part of those abuses in worship involved the misuse of miraculous gifts. Besides speaking in languages that no one in the assembly knew, and more than one person speaking at the same time, some women were speaking out publicly in the worship. Paul wrote to identify and correct these abuses.

While gifted men were allowed to speak in the public assembly in foreign languages (tongues) as long as an interpreter was present, and other men were allowed to prophesy in the public assembly in an orderly fashion, women were restricted. The women were to

keep silent and take no part in this. That which constituted the business of the public teaching was reserved for male members only. The special gifts that were present in the church at Corinth are no longer with us today, but the principle remains. The public teaching in the assembly is reserved for the male members of the church. “And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home” (1 Cor. 14:35). The Christian women at Corinth were not to interrupt the public worship. Rather, if they wanted to learn more on a particular subject or have their questions answered, they were to inquire of their husbands when they got home.

Paul then states one more reason for the women to remain silent in the worship assembly: “For it is a shame for women to speak in the church” (1 Cor. 14:35). It would not be shameful for a woman to sing when all others are singing, or make the confession of her faith prior to baptism, but it would be disgraceful for her to speak in teaching over a man. A proper understanding of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-12 will forever keep Christian women from occupying the pulpit if they intend to be faithful to the Lord.

Those who insist on *modernizing* the role of women in the church are causing needless division in the Lord’s body. One gets the impression that to some causing division is of less concern than allowing women to take leadership roles. To encourage or condone such a practice knowing that it will divide the church cannot be justified.

The passages pertaining to the women’s role in the church exclude women from preaching, serving as elders or deacons, and leading singing in mixed assemblies of men and women.* These passages also exclude women from teaching classes where men are present. In spite of what many are advocating today, within and without the church, the Scriptures do not change. If we want to be the true church of the New Testament, we must heed the instructions of the New Testament, regardless of what pressures are applied for us to be “politically correct.” The church has always struggled to be in the world, but not be of the world. The mission of the church is to preach the gospel and transform the world, not to be conformed to the world. Paul warned Christians of all times: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind” (Rom. 12:2).

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[* Editor’s Note: This would also include the novel practice of giving a microphone to several individuals some of which are women to “help” the singing. In that situation you have a woman leading, or helping to lead, the singing and is thus sinful.]

NINETEENTH ANNUAL DENTON LECTURES

NOVEMBER 12 - 16, 2000

“STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS AND COLOSSIANS”

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 12

9:00 AM	David Watson	Philippians and Colossians—An Introduction
10:00 AM	Dub McClish	Losing all Things To Gain Christ (Phi. 3:1-11)
12:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK	
2:00 PM	Tim Nichols	“To Life is Christ” (Phi. 1:18-30)
3:00 PM	Joseph Meador	Answering False Doctrine: Does the Holy Spirit directly enable us to bear “fruits of righteousness” (Phi. 1:11; Col. 1:5-6, 9-10)? Does the Holy Spirit directly strengthen us with His power (Col. 1:11; cf. Eph. 3:16)? Did Jesus claim Deity for Himself, or was it only claimed by Paul and others (Phi. 2:6; Col. 1:15-17; 2:9)? Does God work His will in us according to His “irresistible grace” (Phi. 2:13)?
4:00 PM	Lester Kamp	Difficult Passages: What does Paul mean by “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ” (Phi. 1:19)? In what way can suffering be a gift (Phi. 1:29)? Of what did the Christ empty Himself when He came to earth (Phi. 2:7)? To what does “under the earth” refer (Phi. 2:10)?
5:00 PM	DINNER BREAK	
7:00 PM	Gary W. Summers	Pressing on Toward the Goal (Phi. 3:12-21)
8:00 PM	Daniel Denham	Holding Fast the Head (Col. 2:13-23)

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 13

9:00 AM	Don Tarbet	Christ’s Example of Humility and Obedience (Phi. 2:1-13)
10:00 AM	James Meadows	Difficult Passages: In what sense was the Gospel preached “in all the world” and “in all creation under heaven” (Col. 1:6, 23)? What is meant in the statement that Jesus is “the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15)? What are the “thrones or dominions or principalities or powers” (Col. 1:16)? How could the “fullness of the Godhead” dwell in Christ bodily (Col. 1:29)?
11:00 AM	Michael Hatcher	Paul’s Salutation and Thanksgiving (Phi. 1:1-17)
12:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK	
2:00 PM	Jerry Moffitt	Resolved: The Bible teaches that, in the process of perfecting a holy character in the Christian, the Holy Mac Spirit always operates indirectly on the heart to sanctify it, and only through the medium of His indwelling, abiding, and active Word.
4:15 PM	Questions from the audience to the debaters	
5:00 PM	DINNER BREAK	
7:00 PM	Tyler Young	Unity as Enjoined in the Philippian Letter
8:00 PM	Robert R. Taylor	The Object Worthy of Our Ambition (Col. 3:1-15)

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14

9:00 AM	Tim Ayers	Answering False Doctrines: Is it sinful to debate spiritual issues (should we remain passive and silent in the face of error) (Phi. 2:14-15)? Is it sinful for Christians to possess any of this world’s goods (Is Paul urging a vow of poverty?) (Phi. 4:7-8)? Should we forget the past sins, errors, and offenses of others, even without their repentance (Phi. 4:13)? Are women (e.g., Euodia and Syntyche) authorized to preach and teach the Gospel publicly in mixed assemblies (Phi. 4:2-3)?
10:00 AM	Jesse Whitlock	Two Faithful Companions (Phi. 2:14-30)
11:00 AM	Garland Elkins	Answering False Doctrines: Were the Colossians the “elect” of God unconditionally by predestination (Col. 3:12)? Is our forgiveness of others to be unconditional (Col. 3:13)? Does singing “psalms and hymns and spiritual songs” merely refer to personal and private behavior (Col. 3:16)? Does performing every word and deed “in the name of the Lord” mean that all things that we do are worship (Col. 3:17)?

12:00 PM LUNCH BREAK

2:00 PM	DEBATE (same proposition as Monday)	
4:15 PM	Questions from the audience to the debaters	
5:00 PM	DINNER BREAK	
7:00 PM	Noah Hackworth	<i>The Kingdom</i> in the Colossian Letter
8:00 PM	B. J. Clarke	An Exhortation and a Warning (Col. 2:1-12)

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 15

9:00 AM	Ted J. Clarke	Translated into the Kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:1-14)
10:00 AM	Tom Hicks	Difficult Passages: In what sense was the “bond written in ordinances” “against us” and “contrary to us” (Col. 2:14)? By what means and when did Christ openly triumph over the “principalities and powers” (Col. 2:15)? How can one have inner peace when one’s outer surroundings are often so painful and vexing (Col. 3:15)? To what does the “epistle from Laodicea” refer (Col. 4:16)?
11:00 AM	Tom Wacaster	Admonitions, Announcements, and Greetings (Col. 4:2-18)
12:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK	
2:00 PM	Mac Deaver	Resolved: The Bible teaches that, in addition to His sanctifying influence through His Word, the Holy Spirit operates directly to sanctify the heart of the Christian.
4:15 PM	Jerry Moffitt	denies
5:00 PM	Questions from the audience to the debaters	
5:00 PM	DINNER BREAK	
7:00 PM	Curtis A. Cates	The Preeminent Christ (Col. 1:15-29)
8:00 PM	Bobby Liddell	Stand Fast in the Lord (Phi. 4:1-9)

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 16

9:00 AM	Robert Dodson	Answering False Doctrines: Does God translate sinners into Christ’s kingdom with no effort on their part (Col. 1:13)? Was Jesus merely the “image” or “reflection” of God, rather than Deity Himself (Col. 1:15a)? Was Jesus the first Being God created (Col. 1:15b)? Does the “bond written in ordinances that was against us” refer to the record of our sins (Col. 2:14)?
10:00 AM	Carl Garner	Paul’s Thanksgiving for Their Support (Phi. 4:10-23)
11:00 AM	Marvin Weir	Difficult Passages: In what sense are we to be in “fear and trembling” as we “work out” our salvation (Phi. 2:12b)? Why does Paul say, “Finally,” near the middle of his letter to the Philippians (Phi. 3:1)? Was Paul uncertain about his salvation and his resurrection (Phi. 3:11)? How can we reconcile “not already made perfect” with “as many as are perfect” (Phi. 3:12, 15)?
12:00 PM	LUNCH BREAK	
2:00 PM	DEBATE (same proposition as Wednesday)	
4:15 PM	Questions from the audience to the debaters	
5:00 PM	DINNER BREAK	
7:00 PM	Ken Ratcliff	“Do All in the Name of the Lord Jesus” (Col. 3:16-4:1)
8:00 PM	Darrell Conley	Philippians and Colossians—A Summary

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SHOULD A CHRISTIAN VOTE?

Bill Brandstatter

This is an election year. Still to come is a presidential election, and a statewide election which include electing a new governor. Also, many states will be selecting representatives to Congress and Senators. Many today are crying for change. The Christian should be careful not to vote for change just for change sake.

There are issues in this election year that are important to the moral fiber of this country. Some of these issues include: increased rights for homosexuals, federal and state funding of abortions. These are issues very close to many people and very emotional issues. Many Christians have no doubt wrestled with these issues.

Those reading this article by the providence of God live in the "land of the free and the home of the brave." We should be thankful to our Creator for putting us here (Eph. 5:20). Many in other countries can only dream about the freedoms that Americans enjoy. The Bible teaches that there is a parallel between the law of God and the law of the land. Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome: "Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers: for there is no power but of God; and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God: and they that withstand shall receive to themselves judgment" (Rom. 13:1-2).

God provides government the authority. God does not select the rulers. God chose Saul as the first king of Israel, but today the people choose the rulers. So even though the governmental authority comes from God, not all rulers come from God. All rulers are certainly not godly men. Some of the laws that have been passed by men in positions of authority are contrary to biblical teachings. This is where Christians can make an impact. By voting, a Christian can choose the ruler that best represents Christian ideals and standards. By so doing

more godly men will be selected to public office. Far too many Christians, however, have an attitude of indifference.

Here are a few basic duties and rights that every Christian should **want** to put into practice.

FIRST: Pray for the leaders and for a godly nation. Paul teaches that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-2). This is pleasing to God (1 Tim. 2:3). When Paul wrote these words, the wicked ruler of the Roman empire was Nero. Some of the enemies of Christianity are the rulers of nations. To the church of Christ at Ephesus Paul wrote, "For our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, against the world-rulers of this darkness" (Eph. 6:12).

SECOND: Register to vote. Find out some information about the person running for office and the stance taken on the moral and ethical issues of the day.

THIRD: Vote. Some think his or her vote will not count, but several thousand people with that attitude could determine the outcome of the election.

Since we have an opportunity to choose our rulers, every Christian should vote and try to get moral and godly men elected to public offices. That is the way God wants it. Exercise your right. Vote!

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Editor's Note: While it is not a sin for a person to fail to vote, we can make a difference in this world in the way in which we vote. We, as Christians, should vote in a way which promotes righteousness (not simply because we belong to a certain party). It is the height of inconsistency for one who professes to be a Christian to vote for one who will promote ungodliness.

MUCH WINE?

Tracy Dugger

In giving the qualifications of elders, the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to write that an elder is not to be "given to wine" (1 Tim. 3:3). Then in verse eight, Paul stated of deacons, "Likewise *must* the deacons *be* grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine." This alleged difficulty is sometimes used to support a moderate use

of alcohol for recreational purposes. The objections goes like this: "Paul taught that elders were not allowed any wine but deacons could indulge in a little as long as it wasn't a lot? Doesn't this show that we cannot make a blanket condemnation against social drinking?"

Friends, think about this for a minute. Do we really

think that with the multitude of Bible warnings and prohibitions (Pro. 20:1; 23:29-35; Isa. 5:11-12; 28:7; Hab. 2:15-16; Gal. 5:19-21; 1 Pet. 4:3-4), and with the detriment to our society that it is, that God is permitting an officer in the church to imbibe? One who is set up as example? One whose life is to be pure from the lusts of flesh? In the jargon of our youth: "I don't think so!"

Much in 1 Timothy 3:8 is defined according to Thayer as "abundant, plenteous." Paul is condemning the excess in this verse. He is literally saying, "Do not engage in a bunch of drinking. Do not get out here and get plastered." Please do not miss the point: Just because a Bible writer condemns the excess does not mean that he is allowing moderation. For instance, if you were to sit down with your kids and tell them, "Now do not get out here and smoke a bunch of pot," would they understand this to mean that they could take one puff off of a joint? Or, if you told them, "Do not get out here and get pregnant or get someone else pregnant." Would this mean they could fornicate as long as they used protection? Obviously not!

Let us note some Bible examples of condemning an excess of activity but are never considered as condoning a moderate engagement.

(1) In 2 Kings 21:6, speaking of the evil king Manasseh, the Bible says, "He wrought **much** wickedness in the sight of the LORD." Do you suppose that Manasseh would have been acceptable in God's eyes if

he had just engaged in a moderate amount of wickedness?

(2) Solomon wrote, "Be not over much wicked" (Ecc. 7:17). Did Solomon's admonition permit one to engage in a small amount of wicked just as long as it was not *much*?

(3) Paul exhorts us in Romans 12:21 by saying, "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Is one to understand this to permit the practice of evil as long as one is not *overcome* with it?

(4) James sated in James 1:21, "Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness." *Superfluity* means "overflowing" (ASV). Does this permit us to engage in a little naughtiness as long as it does not become overflowing?

(5) Peter says, "Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with *them* to the same excess of riot" (1 Pet. 4:4). Can I indulge in some riot as long as it is not too much?

(6) Peter continues in his second epistle, "Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin" (2 Pet. 2:14). Can I engage in mental adultery (Mat. 5:28) just as long as my eyes are not too full of it?

Surely, one can see the point. Apply this same principle to 1 Timothy 3:8 and the passage is not so difficult. Somebody has well said it, "The Bible is its own best commentary." Amen!

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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UNITY—AT THE BEGINNING

J. Cleo Scott

“Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:41-42). This is a statement of the beginning of the church. Today, we talk of restoration of the church and the unity they had in the beginning. Some people seem to think that the restoration movement that took place in the eighteenth century was the beginning of the church of Christ. That is just **not** true. The restoration movement then and now is just trying to restore the church as it was founded in Jerusalem in about A.D. 33. Peter spoke of the church in Acts 11:15 as in “the beginning.” We today who are talking and writing about restoration should be (and must be) speaking about restoring the church to the unity and doctrine of the first century as Christ established it. We are not writing about the congregations as in Corinth or Ephesus but as **Christ established** her. We can speak of restoring the church of any century; to the unity of the first century teaching.

Some write and talk about unity as if it cannot be attained. They speak of “unity in diversity” which really means unity in division, a contradiction of terms. They may join into some form of **union** with some religious group or groups but they are still divided in doctrine. This in **not** the unity that the Scriptures are talking about in Acts 2:42. These were united in doctrine (the apostles’ doctrine). We must be united by teaching what the apostles taught; no more and no less.

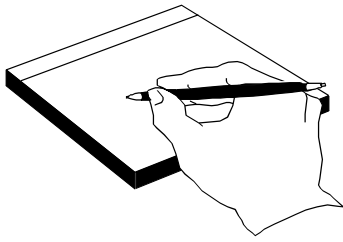
We sometimes talk unity and practice division: My friends, this just must not be. If we are going to restore

the Lord’s church, we must restore it as Jesus gave it to us. The unity of the first century church is stated in Acts 4:32, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any *of them* that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.” They were away from home. They believed a new religion. They all believed the same thing. They believed in their new religion so strongly that they did not consider what they possessed as their own, but all they owned was for the good of all those of the same faith. How strongly do we believe in the same doctrine? What did they do about their faith? What do I do about **my** faith? “And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 4:33). They did not divide over doctrine. They taught the Lord Jesus Christ (His doctrine; His teaching). They did not apologize for teaching the doctrine that was not of the Jews. They were not indifferent in opposing false teaching. They were not indifferent in preaching against worldliness that had permeated the lives of the Jews.

This new church was one that was ready to help the needy. They were united (of one mind) in relieving suffering. When a question arose about the care of the neglected widows of Greece, the apostles told the people to appoint someone to care for this matter (Acts 6:1-4). “The saying pleased the whole multitude” (Acts 6:5). They heard the apostles’ doctrine about this matter and they acted upon it (Acts 6:5); choosing faithful men to do the work as was stipulated by the apostles’ doctrine. Today, we each have an idea, one objects, and

(Continued on Page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Acappella

On October 24 of this year, the Acappella group came to Pensacola for a concert, advertized by the Gateway Church of Christ here in Pensacola. In case you might not be familiar with this group, they go around the nation (and foreign lands) to “spread the Gospel to the world through unique, a cappella music.” According to their web site, they “strive to reach the world for Jesus Christ through the medium of unique a cappella Christian music.” This “unique, a cappella music” is the making of their voice sound like instruments of music. (While this is not the only group that does this, this is the group which appeared here; however, the principles apply to all).

I often ask where is the authority for making our voices sound like instruments of music. I invariably receive two responses. The first is in the form of a question as to where does the Bible say not to do it. Brethren, this type of thinking is straight from the denominations. We only have the right to do what God says to do. We **must** have authority for everything we do in life, otherwise it is sinful. Paul wrote, “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). Doing something in the name of the Lord means to do those things which God has authorized or commanded in His Word. In Matthew 21:23-27 Jesus established that authority for actions resides either from heaven or from men. If our authority for actions only come from men then it separates us from God. “But in vain they do worship me, teaching *for* doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9). This principle is what caused the Lord’s church to split in the early 1900s with the denominational group, the Christian Church apostatizing from the Truth. They did not believe one must have authority for what one must do.

However, if we do not need authority for what we do (silence permits, and whatever is not specifically forbidden is allowed) then it opens the door for steak, potatoes, and Coke on the Lord’s supper; the rosary beads; and a thousand and one other things in worship to God. Yet, sadly, when some wish to defend something they want, they return to this very principle.

The second response I receive is to inform me that it is vocal music and no mechanical instruments of music are being used. First, this is a misunderstanding of what God has authorized. They tend to believe the Bible authorizes vocal music. However, that simply is not the case. For a proper background there needs to be an understanding of the different categories of music. Music can be divided into two categories: vocal and non-vocal. Under the non-vocal category, we again can divide it into two sub-categories: mechanical non-vocal and non-mechanical non-vocal. The mechanical non-vocal would be the mechanical instruments of music (i.e., trumpets, flutes, trombones, clarinets, drums, violins, etc.), while the non-mechanical non-vocal would be things such as snapping fingers, stomping feet, clapping hands, etc. None of the things under the category of non-vocal music has been authorized by God.

As we move to the vocal music, it likewise can be divided into two subcategories: communicable and non-communicable. The non-communicable vocal music would include things such as humming, whistling, making our voices sound like mechanical instruments of music, long sustained Ah’s and Oh’s, etc. The communicable vocal music could be divided into two categories: a foreign language or our native language. This music communicates a message by the use of words.

Now, what did God authorize? Did He authorize simply vocal music? If so, where? Instead, as we read Acts 16:25; Romans 15:9; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19, Col. 3:16; Hebrews 2:12; and James 5:13 we observe that God authorizes one form of vocal music and that is communicable vocal music: **Singing**. In singing we are communicating a message through the use of the words of the song. That is why Paul states we are “teaching and admonishing one another” (Col. 3:16), and “speaking” (Eph. 5:19).

What the group Acappella does is not authorized by the Bible. The Bible does not authorize simply vocal music, it authorizes a specific type of vocal music. Anything that the Bible does not authorize is sinful. We, as a people of God, need to remain consistent in our

stand regarding our need for authority from God for our actions, and we need to remain consistent on what the Bible does authorize, not just vocal music but singing. Therefore, groups which make their voices sound like mechanical instruments of music (like Acappella) sin in so doing. Let us never encourage or support sin. "Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them" (Rom. 1:32). May we never fellowship this unfruitful work of darkness. "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*" (Eph. 5:11).

MH

(Continued from Page 1)

presents his idea of how things ought to be done or not done at all. We squabble over the way to do something and most of the time we do nothing. If we choose the apostles' doctrine (the Lord's way) we will be able to get things done for the Lord and the Lord's people.

The apostle's doctrine (the Gospel of Christ) gives us instruction concerning the unity of the Lord's people. "Neither is there salvation in any other [Christ]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). This is a statement of the doctrine which the apostles preached. To preach in the name of Jesus is to preach what He authorizes and nothing more. If I add to His doctrine, it is no longer His doctrine. If I take away from His words (leave out what He taught), it is not His teaching any longer. "As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision [Jews]: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake [money]" (Tit. 1:10-11). Paul was instructing Titus not to tolerate false teachers in the church. False teachers do not bring unity but division. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel" (Gal. 1:6). He is saying that they had been divided by preaching something beside the Gospel of Christ. Then he said, "Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:7). Does that sound like today's preaching of unity in diversity? Hear Paul as he continues, "But though we, or an angel from heaven,

preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:8). That is what Paul taught about a preacher preaching anything except the Gospel of Christ.

How did the apostles deal with the erring (false teachers)? First, they were ready to sit down and discuss the error being taught. In Acts 15, we have such a conference. They all agreed on the correct teaching and informed all other congregations about the decision. (They did not have the Scriptures to guide them then, but the inspired apostles and elders). Now, we have the complete Word of God (the Scriptures) to guide us. What does the Scriptures say about those who will not abide by the Doctrine? "*There is* fornication among you" (1 Cor. 5:1) "to deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). "Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us" (2 The. 3:6). "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Tim. 4:16).

The Scriptures show us how the unity of the first century can be obtained. We can teach what is taught in Ephesians 4:3, "Endeavouring to keep the **unity** of the Spirit in the bond of peace." The unity of the Spirit is spelled out in the Scriptures. "*There is* one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). "Teach no other doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:3). "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" (2 John 9-11).

The unity of the teaching of the doctrine will produce unity among believers and therefore will restore the New Testament church to the same assembled people as in the first congregation of God's people in His Kingdom in A.D. 33. This will **not** be unity in division but unity of faith. "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" (1 Cor.

1:10). What a glorious congregation of God's people that is!

If we would have unity of the doctrine of the first century, we will teach the apostles' doctrine as they taught. We will teach faith in Christ and His teaching

(Heb. 11:6; John 3:16); repentance (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38); confession of our faith (Rom. 10:9-10); baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38); and we will teach **how** to live in Christ (Tit. 2:11-12).

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BAPTIST LUCADO AND LOYALTY

Gary Summers

What is it about some people that inspires such loyalty? Moses, as God's spokesman led the people out of Egyptian bondage, for which they had cried for deliverance. He led them through the Red Sea, and the nation rejoiced at the death of their enemies. But when it came time to enter into the Promised Land, the people became frightened. Instead of reasoning: "Moses is a trustworthy man of God who has already done a lot for us; let us follow him," they determined to stone him.

Joash had been saved by Jehoiada the priest and his wife; they kept him safe for six years and saw to it that he was placed upon the throne. All of these bold and courageous acts ought to merit a measure of loyalty, but Joash commanded that the priest's son (who was a prophet of the Lord) be put to death.

Jesus did many marvelous things in the presence of His countrymen, but the people allowed themselves to be incited to crucify Him; even His disciples fled.

How is it, then, that false teachers like Rubel Shelly and Max Lucado inspire such loyalty? About fifteen years ago, when astute brethren noticed the Shelly shift to the left, some absolutely refused to acknowledge it. Even five or more years later some were still mumbling: "He was taken out of context."

The same is now true of Max Lucado. No matter what he says or does, his defenders are Legion. About 75% of all feedback from the numerous articles Pearl Street has on its Website comes from people taking issue with the articles about liberal, Max Lucado.

Moses and Jesus were both deserted, but Shelly and Lucado have a loyal and loud (albeit inarticulate) gaggle of followers, who occasionally honk at us when they feel threatened. Many of them try misapplying Matthew 18:15-17. "Did you talk to Max first before you criticized him? He's soooo accessible." Right! To his fawning fans he may be (although even that is doubtful), but faithful brethren have never been permitted near him. The passage cited, however, is one which deals with private, personal offenses—not someone who sells hundreds of thousands of books and broadcasts over the

radio.

Speaking of which, there is a transcript of a message from a program aired in December 1997, which is currently being circulated through the brotherhood. Max concludes his main message by encouraging his listeners to pray with these words:

Father, I give my heart to you. I give you my sins. I give you my tears. I give you my fears. I give you my whole life. I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins. And I ask you Father to receive me as your child. Through Jesus I pray. Amen.

Can one of Max's devotees explain what is different between that *invitation* and one used by Billy Graham or any other Baptist or denominationalist on radio or television? Following a brief commercial message, the announcer states: "Now, Max Lucado returns with a special word for those who received the gift of salvation just moments ago in prayer." So, yes, the prayer was intended to be one that brought salvation. Saul of Tarsus could not be saved by prayer only, nor Cornelius. But apparently Max thinks that his listeners can be saved by just saying those words. He continues:

Today is the first day you've ever prayed a prayer like that. Could you do me a favor? Could you write me a letter? I don't have anything I am going to ask from you. I do have a letter I would like to send to you. I'd like to give you a word about the next step or two. I want to encourage you to find a church. I want to encourage you to be baptized. I want to encourage you to read your Bible. But I don't want you to do any of that so that you will be saved. I want you to do all of that because you are saved. You see, your father has a great life planned for you, and I want to tell you about it. Give us a call, or drop me a note. And, thanks my friend, for making the greatest decision of your life.

A few observations are in order. Notice first that Max seems quite fond of the personal pronouns *I* and *me*, with there being eleven usages of the former and three of the latter. Second, if I think I am saved by praying this prayer, the obvious question is: "Why do I need to read the Bible? God has a wonderful plan for my life? Hey, I think my life is pretty good already. Thanks for salvation, Lord, but I will take over from

here.”

The most important thing about this paragraph, however, is that it is clearly Baptist doctrine. You should be baptized—but not in order to be saved. Max wants you to be baptized because you are saved! For over 150 years faithful brethren have debated this issue with Baptists: Is baptism *in order to be saved* or *because you are saved*?

For those who are as confused as Max, churches of Christ have always taken the Bible position: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Baptists have attempted (unsuccessfully) to argue that *for* means “because of.” Not only is the weight of scholarly evidence against them, but Matthew 26:28 (if this same suggestion were applied there) would have Jesus shedding His blood because our sins had already been forgiven.

Paul teaches that there is only one gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Which is it? Does it include baptism or does it not? It certainly did for Saul. After Jesus appeared to him on the road to Damascus, he believed and knew that Jesus is Lord. How simple it would have been for him to pray: “Father I give my heart to you...I accept the gift of your Son on the cross for my sins.” If Baptist/Lucado doctrine were correct, Saul would have been saved right there on the road to Damascus.

Saul fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9, 11). He was not, however, saved as a result of those two heartfelt actions, as worthy as they are. Ananias said to him: “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

Saul, even after praying and fasting for three days, still had all of his sins, which needed to be washed away by the blood of Jesus (Rev. 1:5) in baptism. Saul was not saved on the road to Damascus—nor by prayer. It is in the act of baptism that sins are removed.

Lucado is teaching a different *gospel*. Being saved **without** and **before** baptism is not the same as saved **at the point of** and **during** baptism. Even Max’s loyal followers should be able to see that point. One is the true gospel; one is a false gospel. Max is teaching the **false** gospel; churches of Christ for the past 150 years

have taught and defended the truth. Max has been unwilling to defend in debate anything he believes.

If Lucado is teaching a false gospel (and he is), then the Word of God says he is accursed. In fact, anyone who teaches a false gospel is accursed. Why? So many who teach that doctrine are such moral people. True, and we admire the moral stands taken by religion people, but a false gospel cannot save anyone.

There is nothing worse than assuring someone that he is saved when he is, in fact, still lost in his sins. The false gospel is from the devil, who wants people to be lost. What better way of deluding people than by trying to convince them, they are saved when they have never obeyed the gospel? “Oh, I know I’m saved; I could not be mistaken about such a feeling. I was filled with warmth, and the love of God flooded my soul.”

But where did such an idea (that salvation would be experienced that way) come from? Is that what Peter told the multitude on Pentecost to expect? Is that what Paul told Ananias had happened to him? “You’ve made the trip for nothing, Ananias. I accepted Jesus as my Savior while you were on your way, and my heart is overflowing with emotion.” Paul may have been filled with emotion all right, as he pondered his former persecution of the church, but he was baptized to wash his sins away (Acts 22:16).

If the Bible is right, there is one gospel. If there is one gospel, all others are wrong. Those who are teaching the false gospels (such as lax Max) are accursed. How do such men command such loyalty when those devoted to the truth are maligned and rejected?

Paul had a difficult time understanding that concept, too. He wrote to the Corinthians: “For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or *if* ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with *him*” (2 Cor. 11:4). Those who gladly put up with Rubel and Max (and their multitude of errors, including a “different gospel”) have demonstrated that they no more honor the Truth than those in Corinth, who were willing to submit to frauds and challenge the inspired apostle Paul. Some things never change.

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SALVATION WITH JOY

Shan Jackson

As we study the Bible we sometimes tend to think that these things all happened in a matter of a few years, however, sometimes years pass from one verse to another, or one epistle to another. We read in Acts 26 about Paul appearing before Agrippa, but we many times fail to realize that Paul had been in prison for two years in Caesarea before he was even called before Festus, let alone Agrippa. Something else we sometimes fail to realize is that Agrippa was a Jew, and as a Jew he was well acquainted with the customs and teachings of the Jews. Paul even realized that Agrippa believed the teaching of the Jewish prophets of the Old Testament. Toward the end of his discourse he asked Agrippa: "Believest thou the prophets?" and before Agrippa had a chance to respond Paul says, "I know that thou believest" (Acts 26:27). Then Agrippa makes a statement that probably was felt as far as Rome itself. After Paul preaches, Agrippa, a puppet for the Roman Empire, says, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28).

You know, many people do not understand what it means to be a Christian. Just like this writer feels that many Christians lose track of the chronological time-line of the Bible, so he also feels that many people in the world do not understand what it means to be a Christian. The concept that many people have is that a Christian is a long-faced, sour-dispositioned, moss-covered gnome. Many people think that becoming a Christian is the most restrictive thing they will ever do in the entirety of their lives. This is why many people refuse to align themselves with Christ. This is why so many refuse to "take up their cross and follow Jesus." Paul does not agree with that line of thinking, and neither should we. Paul does not say we are to be long-faced and of a sour disposition. Instead, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice" (Phi. 4:4).

Rejoice is an interesting word. It does not mean that a person laughs at every joke we tell, or smiles when we walk into a room. (Or, in some cases, smiles when we walk out of a room.) Rejoice means to make your life a receptacle of joy. In that same verse, Paul also makes it plain that we are not to rejoice in the world, rather we are to rejoice "in the Lord." Brethren, if Paul could rejoice in the Lord then anyone should be able to as well. He says that he was beaten because he was a Christian, but he still rejoiced in the Lord. He was

stoned because he was a Christian, but he still rejoiced in the Lord. He says that many other things happened to him because he was a Christian, but from in his life we see that he always rejoiced in the Lord. In Acts we read where he is in prison, his feet chained in stocks, his back bloody from being scourged, but at midnight he and Silas were singing praises to the glory of God. Furthermore, Paul says, these terrible things happened to him to help him present the gospel (Phi. 1:12). Therefore, he says, "I therein do rejoice" (Phi. 1:18). Now, here is another overlooked, yet very important point: Brethren, the sole basis of true Christian joy is spiritual blessings. That for which we must be most thankful is the spiritual blessings that flow from God's bounty. Those who spend all their time trying to find happiness in material things are doomed to disappointment. True happiness is based on something more durable, something more lasting. Jesus says that our joy "no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

You know, there is nothing that can describe the joy we have in Christ. It is worth more than all the money in the world to be at peace with the Father. Paul also reminds us in Philippians 3 that our citizenship is not on this earth, our citizenship is in heaven, and thus we can patiently wait for our Lord's return. Paul says that this hope that we have is the anchor of our soul "both sure and steadfast" (Heb. 6:19). With this hope and assurance of joy, as Paul says, we can even rejoice in the face of privation, tribulation, persecution, or anything else the devil throws in our path. He says such hard times as those strengthen our faith (Rom. 5:3ff).

Brethren, it should fill us with joy to know that our salvation is secure with Jesus. When the Ethiopian was baptized, the Bible says, "he went on his way rejoicing" (Acts 8:39). When the Philippian Jailer was baptized the Bible says, he "rejoiced" (Acts 16:34). Salvation is a beautiful realization. David says that it is in God that we put our trust, and in God's presence is the "fulness of joy" (Psa. 16:1, 11). A Christian should be filled with joy because he has nothing to be ashamed of. We can walk down the street and look people straight in the eye. We can walk down the street and hold our head up high. Paul says that Christians walk in "newness of life."

Twenty-seven times in the book of Philippians Paul uses words like joy, rejoice, peace, and thanksgiving. If we were to find one verse that best captures the essence of the book it would be, "Rejoice in the Lord always: *and* again I say, Rejoice" (Phi. 4:4). To another group of

Christians in a much larger city Paul said, "Rejoice evermore" (1 The. 5:16). Brethren, too many of us borrow troubles from the world and then claim them as

our own. Such should never be the case. As Paul says, our life should be an overflow of joy (2 Cor. 4:7ff).

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CHRISTIAN LIVING IN A POSTMODERN SOCIETY

Jeremy Light

When the indifferent culture around us embraces the notion of postmodernity, we should shudder. We live in an age which clings to fragmented sensations, promiscuity, superficiality, disposability, anarchic freedom, and general Godlessness. Amid the swirling chaos we stand and ask ourselves: "How must I conduct myself in accordance with God's Word among the international and pervasive threat of persecution?" Brethren, the answer is as clear and rational as it is stated in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this *is* the whole *duty* of man."

We must not feel that we are the only ones in history to be mocked and belittled at society's whims. Study your Bible. You will find the early Christians, in fact, all of God's people since the beginning of the world, have had to deal with the lawlessness of society. God holds no place in their hearts. Why? The answer: God has placed restrictions on man. Man has always rebelled against God because he was selfish. He sought his own will above God's. Such is not acceptable because God **demands**, not requests, strict obedience to

His will (Acts 5:29). In today's world, men look upon God with a cool and casual nonchalance and deadpan aplomb. They hold vehement contempt for all those who choose to follow God and never miss an opportunity to persecute them.

Now back to the essential question: How are we to act? We must act as all faithful followers of God have always acted. We must put on the whole armour of God (Eph. 6:11) and not only stand, but take a bold and unflinching step into evil's face. It is true that such an action puts us perpetually at risk of mocking, scoffing, laughing, exclusion, and possibly physical abuse. However, anytime we feel we are being put upon or mistreated, we must remember that our Lord and Saviour suffered this and more in His life. If we will only take a stand for truth, in spite of the consequences, we will be counted on the right side—God's side—then we **will** receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10). And yes, there are sides, no matter what the postmodern *enlightened* ones hold to be the case.

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