

Defender

“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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The Spiritual Challenges Facing Blended Families

Neal Pollard

The entertainment world has made them famous, from Cinderella to the Brady Bunch. Even one of the presidential candidates in the last election had one. Abraham, Jacob, Saul, David, and Solomon had them. Today, some sources say as many as twenty million Americans are in them. Reference is made to blended families.

A study out of the University of North Texas reports that while the majority of Americans older than thirty years old grew up in a tradition, intact biological family, seventy-four percent of today's households are either single parent or blended families. Dr. Patty Purvis, a pediatric health advisor with Allina Hospitals And Clinics, adds, “Approximately half the children born since 1970 will live in a step-family arrangement.”

Exactly what is a blended family? Dr. Michael G. Connor, a clinical, medical, and family psychologist, states, “Blended families include adopted children, divorced families raising children together and children from other marriages or relationships.” The Stepfamily Association of America defines the blended family as “a household in which there is an adult couple at least one of whom has a child from a previous relationship.”

What percentage of the congregation where you preach or attend is a part of a blended family? The Cold Harbor Road church of Christ in Mechanicsville, Virginia, where this writer has preached since 1994, has elders who without exception sit down with every individual, couple, and family who wish to identify with the congregation. They talk with them extensively about their background, especially their

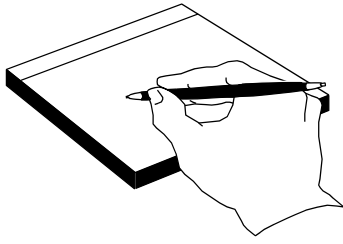
baptism and marital situations. They believe and enforce the scriptural position that God's law of marriage, divorce, and remarriage—“one husband, one wife for life, except for fornication and death”—applies to everyone equally, and thus to the best of their knowledge no member of the congregation is involved in an unscriptural marriage. With that in mind, of the 258 names found in the church directory, 59 are either in a blended or single family unit (that is 23% or nearly one of every four!).

With the growing instability of marriage and the ever-multiplying influence of worldliness upon the church, such studies as this are vitally needed. Any family faces a mountain of challenges, from spouses and parents unwilling to assume their God-given roles to the temptation to allow the family to participate in the immoral, wear the inappropriate, and be entertained with the iniquitous to marital issues like infidelity, pornography, neglect and abuse to unruly, disobedient children. In fact, one might fare better to list the things that do not threaten to impact today's family. Yet, blended families face special and additional challenges.

However, no challenge is bigger than the God of Heaven. Paul assures the Christian: “What shall we then say to these things? If God *be* for us, who *can be* against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:31-32). From the long ago, God says through Jeremiah, “Behold, I *am* the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” (Jer. 32:27). Thus, with any prob-

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Notes From The Editor



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Placing Membership

We are to be people of the book, a people who do only those things for which we have Bible authority (Col. 3:17). When people are new to an area, they are often encouraged to place membership with a local congregation. First, do we have Bible authority for such an action or is it simply a tradition of men which should be discontinued?

There are several avenues by which we obtain Bible authority for this action. After the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, we find him going to Jerusalem. "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). *Join* is a word which means to glue together (it is the word used for being cleaving to one's wife, Mat. 19:5). Vine states of this word, "in the sense of becoming associated with a person so as to company with him, or be on his side." While we do not have the terminology of placing membership, this is what Saul intended to do when he came to Jerusalem.

We also find this principle by considering the nature of the work of elders in overseeing those who are among them (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:1-2). For elders to properly do their work, they must know those sheep who are their sheep which they are to care for and protect. Placing membership with a local congregation is simply stating that you are putting your soul under the care of those shepherds (cf. Heb. 13:17).

Since there is Bible authority for the practice of placing membership with a local congregation of God's people, let us consider a few practical ideas concerning the practice. Why is it that brethren believe that we must simply accept anyone who wishes to place membership with a congregation? Additionally, why is it that elders (or the leaders of the congregation) do not

make an examination of one who desires to place membership with the local congregation? What happens so often is that a person (family) will come down during the invitation song and state that they wish to place membership with the congregation. It is then announced to the congregation that so-and-so has placed membership.

When Saul "assayed to join himself to the disciples" in Jerusalem (Acts 9:26), the disciples would not accept him. "And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple" (Acts 9:26). Only after Barnabas vouched for him, was he accepted by the disciples. Were the disciples wrong in this or were they using appropriate caution? If Saul's conversion had been a ruse, then without their caution they would have exposed all of them to one who was attempting to destroy them. After learning from Barnabas about him, he was accepted into their fellowship. "And he was with them coming in and going out at Jerusalem" (Acts 9:28).

Elders (leaders) of a congregation today who do not first examine one who desires to place membership with the congregation, exposes the congregation to far more damage than the physical harm which Saul could have brought to the church at Jerusalem. They expose their congregation to spiritual harm!

Jesus stated, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are

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ravens wolves” (Mat. 7:15). Peter would state, “But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet. 2:1). Without prior examination before accepting one into the fellowship of the congregation, we might be accepting a wolf that is coming in sheep’s clothing. Elders have an obligation to watch for the souls of their flock. “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). Elders will have to give an account on the day of judgment for those who are members of their congregation. Is it not folly to fail to examine those who want to come into the flock they have been given care over and make sure they are not a wolf?

However, we are finding another problem today in the church. There are many liberal (unscriptural) congregations who are now accepting into their membership those from the denominational world. These individuals are not even Christians, and if congregations simply accept into one’s fellowship those individuals, that congregation is giving them the appearance that they are in an acceptable relationship with God when they are not! These individuals need to be taught the Truth so they can become Christians. Also today there are many who are in adulterous marriages (and other sins) who have been accepted by liberal congregations. By what stretch of the imagination can one deduce that a congregation should accept into its membership (fellowship) an individual and then immediately have to withdraw their fellowship from that one to whom they have extended it?

What needs to be done today instead of just accepting one into our fellowship based upon the request of that person, the leaders of the congregation need to examine that person and what he believes and teaches. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). They also need to examine his conversion to make sure that he is a Christian in the first place. Then they need to consider his life to make sure that he is living in a proper relationship with God (he is not involved in any unrepentant sin, nor has been withdrawn from by another congregation). This simple practice would save many a congregation a heartache because they would

not extend fellowship to those to whom they should not. MH

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lem facing the blended family there is a more powerful solution (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). Since blended families are composed of individuals, consider this subject from the individual approach. Notice the challenges faced by those in the blended family.

Challenges the Spouse Faces in a Blended Family

Purvis notes that eighty percent of divorced men and seventy-five percent of divorced women under the age of forty-five remarry within three to four years of divorcing, and parents remarry sooner than adults without children. It *cannot* be stressed too much that only those innocent parties whose mates have died or who put away their mates because of the mate’s unfaithfulness can remarry at all and then only if the one they choose to remarry is also eligible in God’s eyes. If only that was the only challenge.

There is the challenge of overcoming the hurt and betrayal of one’s former spouse. It is not wise to marry again before one has healed from the wounds inflicted by infidelity. A psychologist at *Instep Ministries* (Tuscon, AZ) put it this way: “Wounded individuals are self-absorbed and therefore unable to effectively meet the needs of a partner.” Trusting someone in a relationship when trust has been deeply violated takes time. Thus, if a scripturally divorced person takes his or her time, he or she will avoid heartache. Most people remarry too soon, often less than two years after death or divorce. One source estimates the average remarrying adult has known their partner less than nine months. By being patient, one can heal from past wounds and choose a new mate more wisely (cf. Pro. 6:34; 21:19).

There is the challenge of bringing old wounds into the new relationship. Divorce causes many wounds, like guilt, shame, fear, distrust, and the inability to communicate. No wonder the Bible makes so clear God’s hatred of divorce (Mal. 2:16). Whether one has divorced or been an unwed parent, there will be emotional baggage with which to contend.

There is the challenge of forming the new family without needed emotional support. The innocent party who goes through the pain of divorce is often surprised at the reaction of others. They may experience distancing, awkwardness, avoidance, and even hostility from family, friends, and the church. They find this baffling and it can even be a challenge to their

faith. Why do people react in such fashion (or at least appear to react such to the adult in question)? Usually, people are at a loss for words in such situations, and they fear saying or doing the wrong thing. Thus, they say nothing at all. Further, people usually have a relationship with the couple and family, not just the individual. Thus, a break-up makes for an awkward, new dynamic. Perhaps, too, people simply need time to adjust to this new reality, just as the individual needed such after discovering the unfaithfulness of a mate and the hopelessness of the situation. Yet, it is almost never hostility or loss of affection, though it may be interpreted this way. It is important for the congregation to reach out to a family that breaks up and to a scripturally blended family (cf. Rom. 12:10).

There is the challenge of dealing with a non-custodial parent. More will be said about this below, but this is especially tough when the non-custodial parent is not a Christian or is a Christian who has degenerated into a life of sin.

There is the challenge of avoiding sexual sin while dating. Fornication is not only that which involves the never married (cf. Heb. 13:4). Paul's statement to the Corinthians has universal application: "Now the body *is* not for fornication, but for the Lord; and the Lord for the body" (6:13).

Challenges the Children Face in a Blended Family

As hard as blending a family is on the adults, no one seems to have it harder than the children. Especially is this true of children ten years of age and older. Older children have a deeper bond with the biological parent no longer in the picture. Further, they may have had a bigger role and responsibility in the home between marriages. Yet, children do not have the coping skills and maturity that adults do in a situation that is an emotional pressure cooker for everyone.

Children are challenged by conflicting feelings of loyalty. No matter how badly their biological, non-custodial parent may have behaved, that is still "Mom" or "Dad." Blending a family is going to be inherently confusing, and accepting a new parental figure is extremely hard for a child. In most cases, Ephesians 6:2 will still apply.

Children are challenged by feelings of insecurity. From the moment of birth, children bond with their parents. Children with two parents in their life get confused and experience emotional turmoil when their parents separate. When families break up, the children in these homes experience, at a tender age, one of the

most extreme traumas and hurts possible. Children often require much more time than parents to heal from such a loss.

Children are challenged by step-sibling rivalry. Look into David's family and see how potentially devastating this can be—from Amnon and Absalom to Adonijah and Solomon. Each child is faced with carving a new niche and finding a new role in this new family.

No doubt, children are often the most overlooked yet most effected parts of a blended family. Parents do well to consider a literal application to Christ's warning: "But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Mat. 18:6—ESV). These wounded children need the best chance to develop the spiritual strength that will help them go to heaven.

Challenges the Entire Family Faces in a Blended Family

Researchers at North Carolina State conclude: "Blended families have to deal with where to live, what to call each other, how to include the other spouse and relatives, how to establish emotional ties with the children, and how to discipline the children. Blended families can mean less privacy, more noise, shared space and fewer opportunities for time alone. A childless man or woman marrying into a family with children will need to learn parenting strategies." These challenges may fall into some broad categories.

There are challenges concerning sexual pressures. Sexual confusion or temptation may arise between step-siblings. Stepparents may develop ungodly desire for a stepchild. Obviously, such thoughts and actions are sinful and must be conquered (cf. Jam. 1:14-15). Consider the Old Testament example of Amnon and his sister, Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-2). This ended disastrously for everyone involved!

There are challenges concerning bonding. Again, a blended family is not automatically close. Stepparents struggle with loving stepchildren as they do their biological children, and the same struggle persists for the children, too.

There are challenges concerning authority. All the adults must work together to help the children respect the custodial arrangement. This challenge is heightened when custody is shared, and one parent is not properly disciplining.

Families have to struggle with these issues and

many others together, in view of eternity.

Challenges of Blended Families Can Be Successfully Managed

True, blended families face all the normal challenges found in traditional, nuclear families, though often with greater intensity. Any family is going to have challenges, and a blended family certainly will not be excepted. Yet, many of the ways traditional families face them is the way blended families can, too. Consider the following suggestions.

Put Christ first (Mat. 6:33). Satan is interested in derailing anyone trying to live right (cf. 1 Pet. 5:8-9). The parents in the blended home still have to steer those in it to heaven.

Be patient. Children need time to adjust to new rules. Everyone is experiencing a higher degree of stress. Remember, according to the definition in 1 Corinthians 13, that love is patient (v. 4). Paul urges Christians to be patient and bear with one another (Col. 3:12-13), and certainly that has equal force within the home.

Be empathetic. As has been shown, the individuals, the couple, the parents, and the children all face spiritual challenges in the blended family. Each constituent of the blended home should pray for strength to see things through the others' eyes and work hard to understand. Peter urges Christians to be sympathetic (cf. 1 Pet. 3:8).

Be realistic. Rome was not built in a day. A blended family takes time, and it probably will not ever be the "Brady Bunch." Even the Brady Bunch was not the Brady Bunch. Do not set unrealistically high

expectations that cannot be met in the home.

Keep your marriage strong. As in intact families, the strength of the marriage impacts the overall health of the home. The stronger and more righteous the marriage relationship is, the more positive the influence upon the home mother and father can be.

Few challenges in life are greater than blending two families together. Everyone is coping with unique issues, coming with unique backgrounds, and carrying unique wounds. Blending a family is a process rather than an event. Yet, since God and His Word is a perfect guide, it can be done (Phi. 4:13). Jesus concludes, "The things which are impossible with men are possible with God" (Luke 18:27).

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Neal's Note: Given the relative novelty of this subject and the limited resources in the author's personal library on the matter, he found the information cited in the article above at the following web site addresses:

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Ephesians 3:16 and the "Direct" Dilemma

David B. Smith

There are no sweeter words than those penned by men, inspired of the Holy Spirit. From Genesis to the Revelation, the words from Heaven to earth resound with the Greatness and Goodness of an all-caring and all-wise God. Being omniscient He knows the needs of man; and, being omnibenevolent, He meets the needs of man. Since man needs only to be spiritually complete, and since the Word of God makes man spiritually complete (2 Tim. 3:16-17), then it should be quite clear that every spiritual need of man is sufficiently satisfied through the Sacred Text. This by no means excludes the special providential working of God on behalf of His own, no more than such an assertion would exclude the need for the church, or prayer, or any other special

blessing reserved for the faithful of God. It is to say that the primary agent by which man is affected is the very Word of God. What God does in providence through natural means for His people is done so as to further enhance the relationship of said people to His written Word. What help is provided by the church (1) is done because the Word has instructed the church to so act and (2) works to build up each member of the church in the Faith. Hence, the Word of God is the primary agent of conviction, conversion, and sanctification, so it may be rightly affirmed: "The Scriptures teach that the Holy Spirit works **upon** the human heart to convict it, convert it, and sanctify it **only** through the Word of God." While God has provided aids for the

Christian especially, every spiritual need of man is met by the Scriptures. This makes the Word of God all-sufficient, both materially and formally, and, by virtue of its all-sufficiency, more beautiful than human words can describe. With such an understanding, passages which speak of the inner man, a fortification of the inner man, and a member of the Godhead (such as Eph. 3:16), only deepen the love of the saint for the Scriptures and for the member of the Godhead who stands as the power and inspiration of the Word that accomplishes the stated effect. In this, nothing is taken away from either the omnipotence of the Word or the Spirit (as per Eph. 3:16). In all things pertaining to spiritual influence, a difference must be made between what is done **to** man and what is done **for** man.

It is unfortunate that anyone would depart from this biblical model into the model of Calvinism, either in the forward direction (direct operation of the Spirit on the unconverted) or in reverse (direct operation of the Spirit upon the converted). Arguments of the *classic* Calvinists notwithstanding, some among the Lord's body are now beginning to assert that the Holy Spirit operates directly upon the human heart in sanctification. Levels of sincerity are, in all probability, divided in half with regard to advocates of this doctrine, some are no doubt sincere, while others are no doubt dishonest.

Regardless of the level of sincerity, both the honest and dishonest use Ephesians 3:16 as a primary text for assumed support of their proposition. But, the question exists: does Ephesians 3:16 prove a direct operation of the Holy Spirit upon the human heart in sanctification?

At the casual reading of the book of Ephesians, and with special attention directed toward the verse under examination, several questions are raised immediately in light of the assertion of a direct operation of the Spirit on the human heart from this verse. (1) What does this strengthening provide for the child of God that cannot be accomplished or provided though the revelation of God? (2) What does this strengthening allow the child of God to do, in addition to that which he can do through an application of the Word of God? (3) Does the Spirit directly help the child of God to overcome temptations? Would not one of the needs for the Christians in Ephesus to be strengthened have been to overcome temptations and trials? After all, this is part of letting the Christ live within the heart by means of the Faith, Ephesians 3:17. (4) If the Holy Spirit directly strengthens the inward man of the child of God so he can overcome temptations, what is to say that the

child of God would have overcome the temptations without such direct aid? (5) Who can resist a direct operation of God? (6) Does not the strengthening of the inward man involve knowledge? (7) And, if the Holy Spirit directly strengthens the inward man of the child of God, and such direct work involves knowledge, then how could such a direct application of knowledge be harmonized with the Bible's claim to material sufficiency?

Both the remote and immediate contexts of the verse in question provide a confident denial of the supposed direct operation of the Spirit. To put it simply, it is impossible to draw such a conclusion (of Calvinistic origin) from the text. Consider this from three standpoints. First, Ephesians 3 focuses upon the revelation of God, the New Testament. This is established in multiple verses by a number of synonymous terms: the revealed mystery which can be read and understood (v. 4), the mystery revealed, not formerly known in other ages (v. 5), knowledge of the manifold wisdom of God (v. 10), boldness and access by means of the Faith (v. 12), the Christ indwelling the saints through the Faith (v. 17), understanding of the greatness of God and the Scheme of Redemption (vv. 18-19), and the power which works in Christians to bring glory to God (vv. 20-21; cf. 1 The. 2:13). How could one then conclude that the strengthening mentioned in verse 16 is direct, since the context affirms that the Word of God is the agency by which knowledge, strength, and power comes to the Christian?

Second, the grammatical construction of the verse itself disallows the *direct* view of spiritual influence. *Spirit* is, of course, the Holy Spirit; and, *the inner man* is the "rational and moral I; the essence of the man which is conscious of itself as a moral personality" (Marvin R. Vincent, *Word Studies in the New Testament*, Peabody, MA: Hendrikson, n.d., 3:383). It is the Spirit who strengthens the inner man; but how? For obvious reasons, the Spirit does not strengthen the Word, else the Word would be insufficient. Accordingly, only two other options exist. Either the Spirit strengthens the inner man directly or indirectly. Concerning the former, He cannot strengthen the inner man directly. To do anything direct is to work without medium, for so is the definition of *direct*. Hence, if the Spirit strengthens the inner man directly, then the strength is gained without the Word, making the Word of God deficient in strength for the inner man. Yet, this is clearly not the case (1 The. 2:13); the Word of God is the all-sufficient power for the mind of man. This is

the only view that appropriately deals with the definition of the inner man and the way that the inner man is affected to action. So it is that the strength provided by the Spirit is indirectly accomplished through His medium—the Word. Third, the verse in question is part of a prayer request by Paul (Eph. 3:14-19). Each element of the request is linked to the other. Note the progression of the prayer. Paul prays that the Christians in Ephesus might be strengthened by the Spirit (v. 16). The result of this strengthening would be the continuance of the Christ in their heart by means of the Faith (v. 17). Therefore, the strengthening provided by the Spirit is through the Faith. This strengthening would result in their deeper comprehension of the Scheme of Redemption (v. 18) and knowledge of the love of the Christ (v. 19). Therefore, the strengthening by the Spirit of the inner man is by means of man's only source of divine information, the Word of God

Can God aid the Christian through providence? Yes. Can the church aid in one's spiritual growth? Definitely. Does this somehow prove a direct operation of the Holy Spirit on the human heart? Hardly! Verses brought into question that mention a member of the Godhead (the Spirit, especially), the inner man, and some spiritual growth of the inner man, only confirm that the Spirit is the author of the Word, that man is a rational being, and that the Holy Spirit works **upon** the human heart to convict it, to convert it, and to sanctify it **only through** the Word. In this, the all-sufficiency of the Word is upheld, the Greatness of God is affirmed, the free volition of man is respected, and no passage of the Sacred Text is placed in opposition to another. Any assertion of a direct operation of the Spirit is unfounded and places one into a severe dilemma. May the church stand united upon the truth!

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



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Divinely Sanctioned Division

Tom Wacaster

I was rummaging through my files on “unity” and “division,” and came across an article that appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* just over three years ago. The title of the article was “Church alliance proposed.” I will share with you the lead in statement: “The National Council of Churches is going to try to form a new organization that would for the first time include all major branches of U.S. Christianity, its board decided today.” This new organization is supposed to “give birth to a new ecumenical future.” I am not a prophet, nor am I the son of a prophet, but I can assure you that this effort is doomed to failure. Five hundred years have proven that all such *ecumenical* efforts that have their basis in human wisdom do not produce unity.

Unity can only come by compliance to the Word of God. This “birth to a new ecumenical future” is based upon compromise, not humble submission to God and His Will. The best that can be expected is a loose form of unity that agrees to disagree. It is just another step in an effort on the part of foolish men to erect a “tower of Babel” that will compete with God’s plan.

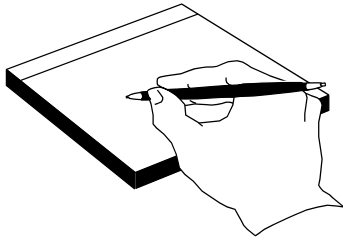
When will men learn that there is a far cry difference between unity and union. Someone once said that you can tie two cats together by their tails and throw them over a clothesline. You may have *union*, but you will not have *unity*. Unfortunately some of our own brethren need to learn this lesson. Attempts to join hands with the denominations is futile, not to mention out of harmony with God’s Word. Paul instructed us: “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove

them” (Eph. 5:11). Why is that admonition so hard to understand? “No fellowship” means “no fellowship.” Actually, I do not think it is a problem with understanding Paul’s instructions. It has, rather, to do with the willingness to obey that simple injunction. Fellowship with the denominations is sinful.

Let me address another grievous error that is destroying the body of Christ from within. I think you will appreciate what I have to say if I lay some background. The following incidents are representative of the wrong attitude and the right attitude in addressing this horrible injustice being perpetrated upon the bride of Christ. The first incident concerns a congregation with which I am personally acquainted that has, through the years, struggled with the liberal tendencies that all of us have faced since the early 70s. That congregation suffered a horrible split a little over a decade ago. The “liberal element” packed their bags and went elsewhere. One would think, therefore, that their problems were behind them and the future would be bright. But due to a lack of proper leadership they began to drift down the same old path until they are once again plagued with the push for change by certain elements within the congregation. Some concerned brethren have shared with me their sorrow and dismay in what seems another inevitable drift (more like a plunge) into liberalism. When I was asked what might be done, I simply told them, “It is time to walk away and start another congregation.” The response I received from such a suggestion? “Well, we hate the idea of splitting the Lord’s church.”

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Notes From The Editor



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Old

If something is old today, it does not have much respect. Consider a few examples of this as seen in our society. If you are discussing computers, if you have one that is just a few years old, then it is outdated and needs to be put in the trash heap. Electronics in general is the same way. After a few years they are old and ready to be discarded, and you can even forget the garage sale with them because no one wants it—it's **old**. Fashion is a fast-moving and constantly changing industry. What is fashionable today will not be tomorrow, it has become old and is no longer worth anything. These examples are just a very few of numerous which could be called upon. However, this attitude carries over into other areas also.

The Bible teaches us to have a respect of those of old age. Moses writes, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I *am* the LORD" (Lev. 19:32). The wise man Solomon wrote, "The hoary head *is* a crown of glory, *if* it be found in the way of righteousness" (Pro. 16:31). *Hoary* mean gray, gray-haired, or gray-headed, indicating one who is older. There is a respect that is to be shown one who is older in years. Yet, our society is youth oriented, not age oriented. Everything is centered around youth. Sadly, today young people growing up are not taught to respect older people. I remember my father using the illustration of what happens at pot-luck meals (fellowship meals, dinner-on-the-grounds). At one time the kids had to wait till the last to go through the line; they were only allowed to go through the line after the adults. Now it is different. Everyone better watch out or they will be run over by the kids getting to the line first. Let us teach our youth to have a respect for those who are older. "Likewise, ye younger, submit

yourselves unto the elder" (1 Pet. 5:5a).

We also see this attitude carried over to the religious realm also. Jeremiah encouraged people of his day: "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk *therein*" (Jer. 6:16). There is the encouragement to return to God's Word and no longer live contrary to it, but those were old ways and the people refused to walk in those old ways. Is this not the exact same thing which we face in today's society?

Consider the morals of our age (maybe immorality or amorality would be a better description). When there is a call for sexual purity, there is a moan which arises to say that that type of morality is old-fashioned and you cannot expect today's youth to live by that standard. The youth of our society are going to be sexually active and you cannot expect them to be pure; so goes the argument. It does not matter that God's Word calls for that type of sexual purity and that the bed is to be reserved for married couples (1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:19; Heb. 13:4).

We likewise have this in the area of our speech. The profanity which we hear today is appalling. Years ago this was not the case, but today we are more sophisticated and do not have to live (speak) by those old ways. Today we speak using the most vulgar language and no one seems to care. We have grown past the old ways. Yet, God's Word remains the same on our speech. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).

This has also carried over into our worship. We now have liberal congregations offering a *traditional* service and a *contemporary* service. They have to have the one for the old ways to satisfy those who are not comfortable with their total apostasy. There is simply no respect for the old paths of God's Word. They do not care for the old songs, but it is not simply the songs themselves. They have to get some type of performance related things into the worship to entertain the members. So they have devised praise teams since people still know we are not to have choirs and choruses. However, these new-breed would never be able to state why we are not to have them. These young people have grown up in an environment where they must be entertained, and it had better be good.

We need to remember the words of God through

Jeremiah to “see, and ask for the old paths, where *is* the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.” If we desire the home with God in heaven, we must ask for God’s Word and walk in that Word. We are thankful we have many who have not bowed the knee today, but are living according to the Scriptures. May their tribe increase. *MH*

2005 Bellview Lectures

The 2005 Bellview Lectures will be on the theme: *The Blight of Liberalism*. Liberalism has been and is a major problem not only in our society but also in the Lord’s church. Years ago anti-ism split the church carrying off many into its ways (it is just as wrong to bind what God has not bound, which is anti-ism, as it is to loose what God has bound which is liberalism). While anti-ism is a problem, it did not have the devastating effects of the liberalism which split the church before that. Now we are facing another round of liberalism and unless we know how to recognize and defend the Truth against this insidious evil, we are in danger of being swept away with it.

Thus, I believe this is one of the most important lectureships of our day. It is my opinion that this is one lectureship you need to try and attend if at all possible. We begin the lectureship on Saturday, June 11 and will continue through Wednesday, June 15. If you cannot make it to Pensacola to personally attend the lectures, then you may view them on Online Academy of Biblical Studies web site: www.oabs.orb.

We are also, as in years past, producing a book of the lectureship. The book will have more chapters in it than what we can cover in the lectureship itself. Right now there are plans for the book to contain 40 chapters. Consider the chapters in the book:

- The Attitude of Liberalism
- The Origin of Liberalism
- Liberalism’s View of God
- Liberalism and Christ
- Liberalism and the Spirit
- Liberalism and Calvinism
- Liberalism’s Effect on Bible Translations
- Liberalism’s Effect on the Mission of the Church
- Liberalism and the Work of the Church
- Liberalism and Church Growth
- Liberalism and the Origin of the World
- Liberalism’s View of the Church
- Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church

- Liberalism and Worship
- Liberalism and Singing
- Liberalism and Preaching
- Liberalism’s View of Salvation
- Liberalism and Baptism
- Liberalism And The Eldership
- Liberalism and Fellowship
- Liberalism and the Home
- Liberalism’s Support of Homosexuality
- Liberalism and Morality
- Liberalism and the Role of Women
- Liberalism’s View of Law and Love
- Liberalism’s Ethic
- “Moderates” Pave the Way for Liberalism
- Stemming the Tide of Liberalism
- The State of the Church Today
- Liberalism in the Courts
- The Covert Nature of Liberalism
- Liberalism’s Effect on the Organization of the Church
- Reaction to Liberalism—Anti-ism
- Liberalism’s Elitism
- Liberalism and “Christian” Schools and “Bible Chairs”
- Liberalism in Politics
- Liberalism and Public Education
- Liberal Publications and Workshops
- Liberalism in the Media
- How to Recognize a Liberal Congregation

If you want to make sure you get a copy of the book reserve it now by sending your order to Bellview Church of Christ (plus by ordering now you will get the pre-publication price).

(Continued from page 1)

The second incident has to do with a congregation just southeast of Dallas, Texas, that had reached the state of complete rebellion against God and His pattern for worship. The story is shocking, but not surprising. Elders upheld error, calling good evil, and evil good. Here was a congregation well known for its zeal, dedication, and evangelistic spirit, that had in the space of five or six years moved so far away from the truth that one wonders why they simply did not pull the sign off the building and replace it with some denominational title to their liking. But once again, there were members who had built that congregation; members who had sacrificed their time and finances to build a shining light in this little central Texas city. Here were men and women who hated sin and hated what it had done to the

body of Christ. When things had become so intolerable they decided that it was time to “come out from among them, and be ye separate” (2 Cor. 6:17). They recognized the undeniable truth that faithfulness to the Lord is not faithfulness to some physical plant, but to the Word that our Lord gave to us. Consequently those faithful brethren who loved the truth decided it was time to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Eph. 5:11), and established a new congregation dedicated to doing all things according to the pattern revealed in God’s Word.

There is a false notion that division, any division, is wrong. Some have the mistaken idea that brethren simply must tolerate error and put up with the false teachers, unqualified elders, and blasphemous and vain worship that is occurring and simply *love* one another regardless of how far they might move away from the truth of God’s word. We must not forget that Jesus warned His disciples, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mat. 10:34). Consequently, they, like those in the first incident to which I refer, complain and moan about what is happening in the Lord’s church (as they

should do). But that is about as far as it goes. They continue to tolerate the error, contribute to the work of that congregation, and wring their hands in utter despair at what is happening. On the other hand there are those who, thankfully, are willing to walk away from error. They are not committed to property, parent, or patrons, but to the Savior Who shed His precious blood to build His church.

I once preached for the church that now tolerates error. In fact I worked with them in one capacity or another for more than half a decade. This past weekend I had the opportunity to preach for that new church that walked away from error and, against the *advice* of their friends and family, started a faithful congregation of God’s people. My heart ached as I listened to the sad plight of that once faithful congregation, but I rejoiced in knowing that there are still “7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal.” Now meeting in the local high school, with determination and zeal, they are prepared to march forward for the cause of Christ. May their number increase. Yes, beloved, there **is** such a thing as Divinely sanctioned division.

P.O. Box 283; Talco, TX 75487

“Thou Wast as One of Them”

Jesse Whitlock

(Editor’s Note: This article was written a few years ago but is still just as current today as when it was written. If one takes a look at the list of speakers from any year and you will see a “whose who” of false teachers.)

The book of Obadiah is a prophecy directed against Edom because “thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou *wast* as one of them” (Oba. 11). The Edomites stood by doing nothing, while their brethren (Oba. 10) were carried into captivity. They refused to sound forth a warning. The Edomites actually helped to deliver them to the enemy (Oba. 14).

Recently I was asked why the Central congregation did not advertise nor promote the “Tulsa Soul Winning Workshop.” If you will study the book of Obadiah, then you will understand. Yes, we received the invitation to the Workshop. We noted the list of speakers read like the “Who’s Who” of change agents among the Lord’s people; i.e. Jeff Walling, Richard Rogers, Marvin Phillips, Lynn Jones, Terry Rush, and the list goes on, inclusive of the AVB!

My New Testament still reads, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 10-11).

Have you noted that Jeff Walling and the AVB will go anywhere together? That should not seem strange since the AVB does their best to *imitate* mechanical instruments of music (I guess that is cheaper than having to buy them), and Jell Walling has made it plain, “I don’t go around the country preaching against instrumental music.” He is right about that! He never teaches God’s truth about Ephesians 5:19 or Colossians 3:16 or 1 Corinthians 14:15 or Hebrews 2:12, etc.

Realizing many will continue to promote, push, and peddle the purveyors of perversion—the Word of God still says, “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*” (Eph. 5:11). Brethren, that is not a suggestion, that is a **command!** Either we respect the authority of God’s Word or we do not! (Jos. 24:15).

912 Penrod Dr; Grandbury TX 76048

Spring 2005 Lectureship “Morals—From God Or Man?”

February 27 - March 2, 2005

David P. Brown, Lectureship Director

Sunday, February 27

9:30 AM “Positive and Moral Laws in the Bible”
10:30 AM “Covetousness Is Immoral”
4:00 PM “Godly Morals and the Practice of Medicine”
5:00 PM “A Review of the Warren-Barnhart Debate”
6:00 PM “Dressing Modestly Is Moral”

Tom Wacaster
David P. Brown
Jim Nash
Gary Grizzell
Billy Bland

Monday, February 28

9:00 AM “When Does God Approve of Civil Disobedience?”
10:00 AM “The Importance of Practicing Corrective Church Discipline”
10:00 AM “The Aged Women Likewise...” I (Women’s Class)
11:00 AM “Morality and the Nature of Man”
1:30 PM “Gambling Is Immoral”
2:30 PM “Heterosexual Fornication Is Immoral”
3:30 PM “Marital Sex Is Moral”
DINNER BREAK
CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
6:30 PM
7:00 PM “Civil Law and Its Relationship to God’s Law”
8:00 PM “Stealing Is Immoral”

Kenneth E. Ratcliff
David Baker
Carole Moore
Steve Wiggins
Don Walker
Tim Kidwell
Bobby Liddell

Lynn Parker
Ronnie Hayes

Tuesday, March 1

9:00 AM “Lying and Bearing False Witness Are Immoral”
10:00 AM “The Biblical View of Morality”
10:00 AM “The Aged Women Likewise...” II (Women’s Class)
11:00 AM “God Exists and Man Can Know It”
1:30 PM “Morality and the Nature of Animals”
2:30 PM “The Influence of Modernism and Postmodernism on Morality”
3:30 PM “Not Providing for Those in Need Is Immoral”
DINNER BREAK
CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
6:30 PM
7:00 PM “Homosexuality Is Immoral”
8:00 PM “Dancing and Other Lasciviousness Are Immoral”

Lester Kamp
Tom Moore
Carole Moore
Michael Light
Terry Hightower
Jerry Murrell
John West

Geoff Litke
Harrell Davidson

Wednesday, March 2

9:00 AM “Murder Is Immoral”
10:00 AM “Idolatry Is Immoral”
11:00 AM “Beverage Alcohol and the Recreational Use of Other Drugs Are Immoral”
1:30 PM “The Importance of Self-Control in Living a Godly Life”
2:30 PM “Profanity and Other Abuses of the Tongue Are Immoral”
3:30 PM “Pornography Is Immoral”
DINNER BREAK
CONGREGATIONAL SINGING
6:30 PM
7:00 PM “Morality Without God Is Immoral”
8:00 PM “Abortion and Euthanasia Are Immoral”

Keith Mosher
Paul Vaughn
Dan Cates
Rick Popejoy
Michael Hatcher
Gary Summers

Kent Bailey
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Lasciviousness

Neal Pollard

I have passed by members of the church who were working in their front yard in what a magnifying glass would reveal to be a pair of shorts. It is not uncommon to hear of physically mature, teenage Christians splashing water at public pools in mixed company and in brief attire. Christian men and women at ball games, boat trips, picnic socials, and other outings are too frequently found wearing immodest clothing. There are Christian moms and dads who allow, and even encourage, their children to attend dances where the clothing is immodest **and** indecent bodily movements yield an opportunity for chaperoned foreplay. On the dating scene, unmarried and unsanctioned petting are pressing temptations confronting our young people. Too many times these temptations are not battled.

A young woman wore a pair of decent, dress shorts to a congregation I attended some years ago. A couple of brethren, whose immodest dressing during the week was commonly known, took the woman aside and told her to go right home and change (which was the right thing for her to do, by the way). But, as one brother noted: “She is better off wearing her’s here on Sunday than you are wearing your’s out there during the week. God’s eyes go everywhere!”

What does God see His children wearing and doing? How often does He see His preachers addressing the sin of lasciviousness? What degree of knowledge on that subject does He witness among His children? This is a topic deserving a closer look.

Lasciviousness Defined

Thayer renders the word as follows: “wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of males and females” (Thayer, pp. 766-767). Wuest adds: “Lasciviousness is from *aselgeia* which refers to lawless insolence and wanton caprice. The word is not limited to impurities of the flesh. It speaks of one who acknowledges no restraints, who dares whatever his caprice and wanton petulance may suggest” (*Word Studies In The Greek New Testament, Galatians*, p. 157).

Vincent and Trench agree that lasciviousness means “wanton caprice.” In an excellent treatment of the word, Maurice Lusk, III, summarizes his study of lasciviousness by saying:

The word lasciviousness (*aselgeia*) has to do with: (1) activities or conduct that tends to excite lustful desires; (2) vulgar, wanton acts or manners as filthy words, indecent bodily movements, unchaste handling of the

body; (3) indulging in playful, indiscriminate, or excessive lovemaking; to be preoccupied (mentally, emotionally, or bodily) with illicit sexual pleasures (*Biblical Ethics*, pp. 456-457).

Lasciviousness in the Bible

Aselgeia is translated “lasciviousness” six times in the King James Version (Mark 7:22; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 1 Pet. 4:3; and Jude 4). But, it also appears in Romans 13:13 and 2 Peter 2:18 as “wantonness.” In 2 Peter 2:2, it appears as “pernicious.” Then, in 2 Peter 2:7, the word “filthy” is its particular rendering.

Jesus said that lascivious activity comes from a person’s heart, and such works makes one spiritually filthy (Mark 7:22). Paul plainly calls lasciviousness “sin” in 2 Corinthians 12:21, and the wages of sin is clearly known (cf., Rom. 6:23). Paul adds, in his letter to the church at Galatia, that those who are guilty of lasciviousness shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19). Lascivious individuals are alienated from the eternal life of God because of their ignorance and blindness of heart. Such individuals are past feeling and greedily practice every immorality (Eph. 4:17-19). One guilty of lasciviousness has not ceased from the practice of sin, nor has he left the former life of the old creature (cf. 1 Pet. 4:1-6). Ungodly, condemned teachers turn the grace of God into lasciviousness (Jude 4). Wanton activity is lumped with other immoral activity and works of darkness (Rom. 13:12-14). The truth is evil spoken of because of false teacher’s pernicious activities (2 Pet. 2:2). Wanton individuals are enslaved to corruption and subject to the most intense punishment imaginable (2 Pet. 2:18-22).

The choruses of “How Short Is Too Short?,” “Why Can’t I?,” “That’s Not Reasonable,” “Everybody Does It,” and “It’s My Body And I’ll Do What I Want To” will probably continue to swell as they have for so long. These comments, regardless of whose lips speak them, originate with the Chief of Corrupters and not the Father of Light. No measure of rationalization or disputation can eliminate the force of Scripture. Activity and apparel which causes us or others to **desire** what is sexually impure and immoral is impure and immoral! Our crusade should not be to “push the limit” or “cut it close to the edge.” The Christian is already engaged in an eternal battle as a soldier of Christ. That is a full-time, full-commitment crusade all its own.

6856 Cold Harbor Rd; Mechanicsville, VA 23111

Take Heed Lest We Fall

Bill Brandstatter

Occasionally we hear about a preacher who leaves his wife for another woman. News of this sort tugs at our hearts. Our emotions reach new heights. We go over and over in our minds how this could happen. Some people do a mental inventory of past acquaintances with this person. But, to many, it still does not add up. There is still no logical explanations in our minds. We should resolve to go on with our lives, and to live the best Christian life that is possible. Remember what Paul wrote, "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. 10:12). This passage applies to everyone, including preachers. But what makes a person fall?

The lust of the flesh will make an individual fall. Jesus said that "the spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak" (Mat. 26:41). This statement speaks volumes regarding human nature. Such was the case with David when he saw Bathsheba. Such was the case with Peter when he denied our Lord three times. Such was the case with Judas Iscariot when he betrayed our Lord for thirty pieces of silver.

The lust of the eyes will cause an individual to

fall. In our age of materialism, we have more than any other nation. Unfortunately many want more as well. Truly, the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Jesus warned that we should beware of covetousness (Luke 12:15). Yet, despite that warning, many are duped into thinking that money means success. Money to many represents a person who has achieved all life has to offer. Yet Solomon said it was all vanity.

The pride of life will cause many to fall. No one wants to admit a mistake. No one really likes to repent. As a result sins are not confessed. Help is not sought. The problem gets bigger until "lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death" (Jam. 1:15). A person must humble themselves to God in order to go to heaven (Mat. 18:4; Jam. 4:10).

When we hear of an individual who has fallen away from the truth let us remember it could happen to us as well. Let us pray for that individual that he or she will do what is right before judgment day comes.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



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Are You a Member of the Church?

Nathan Brewer

If you are like most people, your initial response to this question is: “Which church?” When we examine the New Testament, we find that Jesus promised to build only one church (Mat. 16:18). When Christ said, “Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,” he assured Peter and the other apostles that not even his own death would prevent its establishment. With that statement, Christ also pronounced an oft-missed eternal truth—he was going to build only one church. Jesus made good on His promise in Acts 2 when the church or kingdom was inaugurated, and those who obeyed the gospel were added to it (Acts 2:41).

When we ask the question: “Are You a Member of the Church?” we are asking if you are a member of the same church Jesus established. Now, of course, we know you do not live in Jerusalem where the church was founded. The New Testament speaks of the Lord’s church in different places, such as the church at Philippi and the church at Ephesus. One does not have to live in Jerusalem to be a member of the church Jesus built. So, “Are you a member of Christ’s church?”

Many Different Churches

There are many different churches in the United States, all claiming to exist by Christ’s authority and to follow Him. These denominations wear different names, teach different things, and worship differently, yet they all claim to be biblical. This causes a great deal of confusion. Did not Jesus promise to build only one church? Indeed, He did. Yet, most people today think that belonging to a denomination

is the only way to be a Christian. For example, a couple of years ago my family and I were in a waiting room during my sister’s surgery. As we waited, my father read a book of sermons. This caused a woman sitting beside him to ask if he was a preacher. When he answered that he was, she asked, “Which denomination?” Her only conception of Christianity was denominationalism. It occurred to me that if this woman had lived back in the first century when the apostles were still alive and teaching, she never would have asked that question. Do you know why? Because back then denominations did not exist! So, why do they exist now?

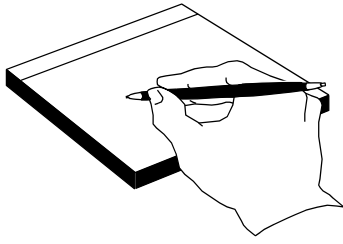
Why Denominations?

Paul, the apostle, predicted a falling away by the Lord’s church in some of his New Testament writings. Passages such as 1 Timothy 4:1-3 and 2 Thesalonians 2:3-4 bear this out. The falling away did come in the form of the Catholic Church. In the 15th and 16th centuries, men began to go to the Bible and see that the teaching and practices of the Catholic Church were opposed to the teaching of God’s Word. Out of this came what was known as the Reformation. Men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin tried to reform the Catholic Church by taking out false Catholic doctrines and inserting doctrines they deemed appropriate.

This was a noble effort, but it did not go far enough. Instead of simply going to the New Testament and restoring the church contained therein, they attempted to reform something that was never right to begin with. By stopping short, they still did not have

(Continued on page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Spiritual Relationships

In the spiritual realm there are but two relationships. Jesus taught but two ways when he said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Mat. 7:13-14). There is one way or relationship which ends in destruction. There is only one other spiritual relationship which our Lord mentions and that is the one which leads to life. There is no other spiritual relationship set forth in the Scriptures.

That there are but two spiritual relationships is emphasized by John when he writes, "*And* we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness" (1 John 5:19). There is the relationship of being "of God," and the relationship of being "in wickedness." Those who are "of God" would be those who are on that narrow way which leads to life, while those who are "in wickedness" are those in that broad way leading to destruction.

John also reveals that man can know his spiritual state. Consider 1 John 5:19 where John states that "we know that we are of God." The word translated *know* signifies to know my mental perception. A few verses before this, he had written, "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1 John 5:13). One of those two spiritual relationships leads to life, and John says we can know that we have it.

It is important for us to know that we have the proper spiritual relationship with God. If we cannot know we have life (in the proper spiritual relationship), then we cannot know if we are in that relationship which ends in destruction. If we cannot know one way

or the other, then there would be no reason for one to try and change his spiritual relationship. In that case, we would simply have to wait and take our chance as to where we will spend eternity. This would certainly be a miserable existence. However, since we can know our spiritual relationship, how can we come to that knowledge?

Some believe that we know our spiritual relationship by our feelings. Sometimes individuals will pat their chest and talk about the feeling that they have there. However, feelings cannot always be relied upon to be correct. No doubt all of us at one time or another have had a feeling we were right, but found out that we were wrong. There are several examples in the Bible of this very thing taking place. When Joseph' brothers sold him into slavery, they took his coat of many colors and dipped it in blood. They showed the coat to Jacob who came to the conclusion that an evil beast had killed him (Gen. 37). Not till years later did he find out that his feelings about his son were wrong, and that Joseph was still alive.

The apostle Paul made the comment about his former life that "I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). Yet, Paul was wrong in what he was doing. He felt like it was right to persecute Christians, but his feelings were wrong.

If we are basing our salvation upon our feelings, and having a good feeling in the pit of our stomach, what if we have negative feelings? That good feeling leaves for whatever reason, so does that mean that we are no longer saved? Since emotions generally vary (we have emotional highs, then go to an emotionally low state), does our salvation vary as the emotions vary? Very simply, emotions cannot be relied upon regarding our salvation.

If feelings (emotions) cannot be relied upon, then how can we know we have life? There must be an outside, objective standard by which one can judge whether or not he is in that proper spiritual relationship with God. That objective standard is the Word of God. It becomes our obligation to study that Word and compare our life with what it says. Each one can then "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?" (2 Cor. 13:5). This implies that one can understand the Bible so he can examine his life in comparison with it. Jesus stated, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). The Truth Jesus is speaking of is God's Word: "Sanctify them through thy

truth: thy word is truth” (John 17:17). The only way we can come to a knowledge of God’s Word is through a study of the Scriptures.

We can study the Scriptures and learn what God says one must do to become a Christian (have his sins forgiven). It is really not that difficult to understand what God says on the subject: one must upon hearing the Word (Rom. 10:17) come to faith (Heb. 11:6; John 14:6; Mark 16:15-16), then he must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3, 5; 24:46-47; Acts 17:30-31), confess his faith in Jesus as God’s Son (Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37), then be baptized in water for the forgiveness of sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:20-21). We then examine our lives and see if we have done these things. If not, then we are not in the proper spiritual relationship and need to obey what God says on this matter.

After one becomes a Christian, the Scriptures inform him how he is to live his life: the proper attitudes and character he is to possess. The Bible informs us what we are to do and not to do, the attitudes we are to possess and the ones we are to eliminate. We can study these and find out what God desires of His children, then compare our life with what God says and determine if we are living in that way where we will have life. We simply must will to do God’s Will: “If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or *whether* I speak of myself” (John 7:17). Let us make sure that we have that desire to do God’s Will, study the Scriptures, and properly apply them to our lives. MH

(Continued from page 1)

the church of Christ. Their efforts resulted in the confusion we know today as denominationalism. These man-made churches plague the world and are a great hindrance to the cause of Christ.

Which One Is Right?

With all the different churches floating around today, how do we know which one Jesus built? Well, how do we identify a car? By its make, model, and number—also known as “identifying marks.” The church of Jesus Christ also has its identifying marks. Some of those identifying marks are as follows:

- **Worship:** The New Testament church engaged in a very simple worship which consisted of five acts. Those are preaching, or teaching (Acts 2:42), partaking of the Lord’s Supper (Acts 20:7), giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2), praying (Acts 2:42), and singing without the accompaniment of instrumental music (Eph. 5:19). These five

things were done each first day of the week without addition or subtraction.

- **Teaching on Salvation:** Many false doctrines abound concerning the soul’s salvation, but the Bible plainly teaches acts of obedience must be performed to please God (Mat. 7:21-23). These things are faith or belief (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of Jesus Christ as God’s Son (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and baptism in water (Mark 16:16). When these commands are obeyed from an honest heart, one is saved from his sins and added to the church Jesus built (Acts 2:41, 47).

- **Name Worn:** Have you ever stopped to think that the names “Methodist,” “Presbyterian,” “Lutheran,” and such are never used in the New Testament to describe the followers of Christ? The term “Baptist” was used of John because he came preaching and baptizing, but that name was never applied to a follower of Christ. Man-made names such as these denominational titles are not appropriate to wear as a true disciple of the Saviour. Peter stated in Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Those who are the saved do not wear man-made names such as Lutheran, Baptist, or Methodist—they wear Christ’s name. This is why disciples of Jesus in the New Testament and today are known simply as “Christians” (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:15-16).

- **Church Government:** Local congregations of churches of Christ are to be overseen by a plurality of men known as elders or bishops (Phi. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-7). They may also have men serving as deacons or servants under their oversight. The elders are the shepherds who keep watch over Christ’s flock while He is in heaven. If congregations do not have men who are qualified to be elders (see also Tit. 1:6-9), then, they must work to develop men who are qualified and able to fill that void.

With these identifying marks, one can locate the church of the Bible today. If a congregation worships as the church of the first century did, if it teaches what the New Testament teaches, if its members wear the name of Christ to the exclusion of men’s names, and if it is organized as the church found in the Scriptures, then you have found the church Jesus established. If you are a member of some other religious body, we beg you to locate the church of the Bible and be simply a Christian who worships and works according to the New Testament pattern.

308 South Oklahoma Ave; Elk City, OK 73644

The Blight Of Liberalism

June 11 - 15, 2005

Saturday, June 11

7:00 PM The Attitude of Liberalism Keith Mosher
7:45 PM The Origin of Liberalism David Brown

Sunday, June 12

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Origin of the World Steve Yeatts
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on the Mission of the Church Terry York

Lunch Break

2:00 PM Liberalism and Church Growth Loy Hardesty
3:00 PM Liberalism's View of Law and Love Preston Silcox

Dinner Break

7:00 PM "Moderates" Pave the Way for Liberalism Marvin Weir
7:45 PM Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church Michael Shepherd

Monday, June 13

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Home Brad Brewer
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on Bible Translations Jerry Murrell
11:00 AM Liberalism and the Role of Women Clifford Newell

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Stemming the Tide of Liberalism Rick Popejoy
2:30 PM Liberalism and Fellowship Lynn Parker
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Singing Charles Orr
7:45 PM Liberalism and Worship Bobby Liddell

Tuesday, June 14

9:00 AM Liberalism and Calvinism Daniel Denham
10:00 AM Liberalism and Preaching Eddy Craft
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of the Church Jerry Brewer

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism's Ethic Tom Moore
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Eldership Wesley Simons
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism's Support of Homosexuality Paul Vaughn
7:45 PM Liberalism's View of Salvation Harrell Davidson

Wednesday, June 15

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Work of the Church Gary Grizzell
10:00 AM Liberalism and Christ David Jones
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of God Wayne Jones

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism and Baptism Guss Eoff
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Spirit Kent Bailey
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Morality David Smith
7:45 PM The State of the Church Today 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 Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The Comfort Inn (8690 Pine Forest Road) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax not included) is \$65.95—1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850-476-8989. Tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures* when making your reservations. If you are planning on attending the lectureship you may want to make your motel reservations early. Because of Hurricane Ivan hitting this area last September, several motels remain closed due to extensive damage.

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, *The Blight Of Liberalism* 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, 2005, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It will con-

tain 39 chapters and approximately 500 pages. Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO, VIDEO TAPES, AND DVD

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes, video tapes, and DVDs. They may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. (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.

Accepting Jesus

Tim Smith

There are many errors taught concerning just what *accepting Jesus* actually involves, and in this study we will try to notice some of those errors and how they may be corrected. In the course of establishing this, we shall note four areas of study concerning the Christ and His system of religion as set forth in the Bible.

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His Deity. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). *Immanuel* was defined by Matthew as “God with us” (1:23). Jesus was God in human flesh! In explaining to the Pharisees His Deity, Jesus said, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son of David*. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” (Mat. 22:42-45). The point was that Christ was before David, and greater than David, indeed called by David *Lord*.

John 1:1-4 helps us to understand this point even more clearly: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” These words are totally consistent with the record Moses gave of the creation in Genesis when he used the Hebrew word *elohim* for God. All Hebrew words ending in *im* are plural. Moses again records, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). We know that Jesus was God, and with God, in the creation. This means that since He was before time, He is eternal. In John 1:14 we read, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Here we begin to see the plural nature of the Godhead, we see God the Father sending God the Son into this world.

Jesus was man: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). To say that He was less than human, or more than human in this respect, is to misinterpret

the idea of a sacrifice. A man who was familiar with our sufferings died a cruel death for us on Calvary. Jesus was God: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

There is no accepting Him as a prophet only, or as a great religious teacher only, we must accept Him as God in human flesh. Hear Paul: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:6-8). Truly God, truly man.

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His church—the kingdom. Early on in the ministry of our Lord, He began to point man toward the coming of His kingdom. Matthew records, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Mat. 4:17). From these words we see that the coming of the kingdom of heaven was an event that was to be in the near future when Jesus said this, as close as an object in hands reach. John the Baptist had been sent before Christ to ready the world for Him and the advent of His kingdom. We read of His mission: “In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight” (Mat. 3:1-3).

We know that the church or kingdom had not been built when the events of Matthew 16:18-19 took place, for we read: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” From these verses we learn that the church and the kingdom are one and the same institution, that they were to be built sometime after these words were spoken, and that they were to be built

by the Lord.

We learn that the church (kingdom) was to be established in the lifetime of our Lord's apostles from Mark: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). From Luke we learn, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:45-49). From these verses we learn that after the death of Christ and His resurrection, salvation would be preached in Jerusalem, among all nations, after they received *power*. The apostles were told: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Acts 1:12 places the apostles in Jerusalem, and Acts 2:1-4 has them receiving the Holy Ghost. Luke records that men of all nations were present (2:5), repentance and remission of sins were preached in His name (2:38). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). We then read that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). It is not enough to merely find a church or the "church of our choice," but we must seek to find the church that Jesus built. The one He loved and purchased (Acts 20:28), the one He gave Himself for (Eph. 5:25), and the one of which He is the Savior (Eph. 5:23).

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His Gospel—the Word of God. Jesus brought with Him a message, a set of clearly defined religious teachings. He left these for us to follow on the pages of the New Testament. It is His will that we respect Him and His authority enough to do as we are commanded.

Of the Truth Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). From these words we see that if men are to be freed from their sins, it must be by the Truth. But what is the Truth? and where is it to be found? Hear again the Lord: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). To accept Him is to accept what He has said. But there is more to be accepted than just the letters that are in red print in some copies of the New Testament, for the Word of God did not only

come from the lips of His "only begotten Son."

Before His crucifixion Christ told the apostles, "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you" (John 14:26). The Holy Ghost brought to the apostles a full and perfect knowledge of the Will of God, and they in turn wrote it down on the pages of the New Testament. So, if we accept Jesus we will accept the entire New Testament, for He gave it by the Holy Ghost. Paul discussed the principle of inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16: "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God." *Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines "inspiration of God" as follows: "THEOPNEUSTOS, inspired by God (*Theos*, God; *pneo*, to breathe), is used in 2 Tim. 3:16, of the Scriptures as distinct from non-inspired writings" (593). When the writers of the New Testament were writing, they were writing the Word of God, breathed forth from the mouth of God.

Paul reminded the brethren from the region of Galatia that accepting the Word of God was of the greatest importance, saying, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed" (Gal. 1:6-8). They failed to continue walking in the Gospel and were therefore lost.

The young evangelist Timothy was instructed, "Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:1-2). It was important for this young man to lead people in the ways of Jesus, but in so doing he would also be leading them after Paul's teaching, for the two are totally consistent. Paul wrote, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also *am* of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). When Paul preached, it carried the force of Jesus preaching, for Jesus had given him the words.

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His terms of salvation. Christ set forth some specific terms that must be met for salvation to be had by an individual seeking it. The first of these terms, logically speaking, is the necessity of hearing the Gospel. Jesus said, "Take heed therefore how ye hear" (Luke 8:18). It is of the greatest importance how we listen to the words of

salvation, for “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14). How can we benefit from the Gospel if we will not hear it?

Having heard the Word, we then must choose to believe it. We know that if we reject it, we cannot be saved. Jesus said, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Positively, Paul affirms, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). How can we benefit from the Gospel if we will not believe it?

Having heard and believed, one must then begin to amend his life based on the teachings of the Gospel. This is repentance. Paul tells us that “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). So repentance is the natural response of a sincere heart to the goodness of God. Paul stated, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). We should be sorry about our sins, but we will never be sorry about turning away from our sins in coming to the Lord. How can we benefit from the Gospel if we will not repent as it commands?

Having heard, believed, and repented, we are then to confess our faith in Christ. Paul wrote, “With the

mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Before his immersion, the Eunuch said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). John 12:42-43 tells of some who, even though they believed, would not confess the Lord, thus they were lost. If we believe in Him, how can we keep from confessing Him?

Having heard, believed, repented, and confessed, what does one lack? Notice that one believes “unto salvation,” and confesses “unto salvation,” and repents “to salvation,” but is baptized “into Christ.” “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). We enter Jesus Christ, thus salvation, when we have been obedient with respect to hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized. This is what Peter meant when he wrote, “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). That grand crowd assembled on Pentecost of Acts 2 heard the same message, and we must do what they did to be saved today.

1272 Enon Road; Webb, AL 36376

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The 1988-2004 books, all *Defender* issues of 1970, 1972-2002, along with numerous other books, tracts, and studies 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 \$65 plus postage/handling fee of \$1.25 (total is \$66.25) in which you receive all the lectureship books (less than \$5 per book) and other material. If you purchased a previous version of our CD, then check with us for an upgrade at a significant reduction in price upon the return of the previous CD. Take advantage of this great offer. Order from Bellview Church of Christ.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

**Write For Your
Free Bible Correspondence
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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Web Site: <http://www.bellviewcoc.com> E-mail: bellview@bellviewcoc.com

The Church Promised and Prophesied

Preston Silcox

As one traces the scheme of redemption from eternity to Calvary and examines the tremendous lengths to which God went in order to bring about the church, he should stand in awe at the magnificent manifestation of God’s great wisdom (cf. Eph. 3:10). The church revealed on the pages of God’s wonderful Word is by no means an accident or afterthought, but is the very fulfillment of God’s promises, predictions, and plans from eternity!

By giving in to temptation and transgressing God’s law, Adam and Eve severed their righteous relationship with Deity (Gen. 3). Heaven’s great and perfect plan to redeem and reconcile man then went into action. God provided the first glimpse into this soul-saving plan when He declared the following to Satan: “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). While the seed of woman would suffer slightly by the actions of the devil, that same seed would ultimately deliver a crushing deathblow to the arch-enemy of God and man.

One would do well to consider the declaration of Genesis 3:15 in light of Matthew 16:18 and its fulfillment. In response to Peter’s confession of the Christ, Jesus declared, “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mat. 16:18). Even though Jesus, the seed of Genesis 3:15, would pass through the gates of Hades (that is, He would experience death), that passage would allow Him to purchase the church with His blood (Acts 20:28) and ultimately triumph over the

grave. Thus, the promise made to Satan in the garden finds its fulfillment in Christ’s church, or body, in which God reconciles man back to Himself (cf. Eph. 2:16).

Of course, much transpired between God’s words to the devil and Christ’s purchase of the church. For example, according to Genesis 12:1-3, God made a covenant with Abram (later called, Abraham) that initiated the beginning of a nation—a nation that would bring about the Savior of the world, the builder and founder of the church. In order to accomplish the promise of Genesis 3:15, God established a line of descendants, the nation mentioned above, and a tribe through whom the head of the church would come. Notice the covenant of Genesis 12:1-3:

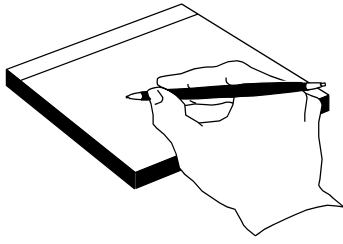
Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

Through the “great nation” of Israel came the Christ, Who in turn offers redemption to “all families of the earth”—Jew and Gentile alike (cf. Gal. 3:8)—in His body, the church (cf. 1 Cor. 12:12-13; Eph. 2:11-16).

The promises of Genesis 3:15 and 12:1-3 are not the only occasions where God spoke of His plans for Christ’s church. A number of the Old Testament

(Continued on page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Divisions

In the February issue of *Defender*, we published an article by brother Tom Wacaster titled “Divinely Sanctioned Division.” We received a letter from a brother regarding this article. The letter stated:

In Paul’s strongest language he said “let there be **no** divisions among you” (1 Cor. 1:10). He also said “Avoid those who cause divisions” (Rom. 16:17). In Paul’s strongest language he also said “withdraw from ever brother who walks disorder” (defined “who is a burden to the church”).

It was signed and then there was a P.S. added: “Don’t twist scripture 2 Pet. 3:16.”

The question we are faced with is: “Does God sanction any division?” The answer comes a resounding, Yes! The letter above indicates that if you advocate any division then you are twisting Scripture.

Consider what God in the flesh stated: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. And a man’s foes *shall be* they of his own household” (Mat. 10:34-36). Among the definitions given by Strong to *variance* is “to cut into two parts” while others state, “to divide in two.” If you divide something into two, then that is division. On another occasion Jesus stated: “Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, Nay; but rather division: For from henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three. The father shall be divided against the son, and the son against the father; the mother against the daughter, and the daughter against the mother; the mother in law against her daughter in law, and the daughter in law against her mother in law” (Luke 12:51-53). Here Jesus states

specifically that He came to bring division!

One of the passages mentioned in the letter above provides evidence that God authorizes some division. “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). The command to *withdraw yourselves* is a command to divide from those who walk *disorderly*. Contrary to the definition given in the letter, “disorderly” is from the Greek *ataktos* and is defined in these ways: “not in proper order; 1. undisciplined impulse 2. disorderly, insubordinate” (Arndt and Gingrich); “disorderly, out of the ranks (often of soldiers); irregular, inordinate...deviating from the prescribed order or rule” (Thayer); “signifies ‘disorderly, with slackness’ (like soldiers not keeping rank)” (Vine). When one gets out of step with the Word of God, that individual is *disorderly* and the church is to bring about division—withdraw from him!

In writing to the Corinthians, seven times Paul states that we are to have division: “might be taken away from among you...deliver such an one unto Satan...purge out...not to company with...not to keep company...with such a one no not to eat...put away” (1 Cor. 5:2, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13). These phrases set forth the obligation of the church to bring about division. God is not only sanctioning division, He is ordering it.

There is also some unity which God condemns. “But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumblingblock before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication. So hast thou also them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.... Notwithstanding I have a few things against thee, because thou sufferest that woman Jezebel, which calleth herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed unto idols” (Rev. 2:14-16, 20). God had something against the church and Pergamos and Thyatira because they had not made the proper division and were thus fellowshiping those whom they should have divided from.

Certainly God desires that His people be unified and there is to be no divisions. However that unity must be based upon the Word of God. Another one of the passages used by the author of this letter shows that we are to think, speak, and act the same way (1 Cor. 1:10).

That which we are to think is according to God's Word (1 Cor. 4:6). We are to speak the oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11). All our actions are also to be based upon the Revelation of God. When we are thinking, speaking, and acting according to God's Word, there is a blessed unity.

What happens, though, when an individual is no longer thinking, speaking, and acting according to the Scriptures? Then division is the result! The author of the letter mentions Romans 16:17, but leaves out an important point. He quoted, "avoid those who cause divisions." However, notice the entire verse: "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). We are to mark and avoid those who cause division and offences **contrary to the doctrine**. There are divisions which are not contrary to the doctrine, but when someone goes contrary to the doctrine, then we are to divide from them! However, we are also quick to add that the one who caused the division was the one going contrary to the doctrine. The one exposing that which is contrary to the doctrine is not the troublemaker—the troublemaker is the one who has gone contrary to the doctrine (1 Kin. 18:17-18).

No one should ever twist and pervert the Scriptures. When one does, then those who are faithful to God must practice "Divinely Sanctioned Division." Those who fail to practice that division which God requires will fall under the condemnation of God.

MH

(Continued from page 1)

prophets presented crucial details of that heavenly-designed institution to which the saved would be added (cf. Acts 2:47). The rugged prophet Amos, for example, told the divided people of his day that God would "raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof" (Amos 9:11). Amos continued by stating that this tabernacle would include all who are called by the Lord's name—both Jew and Gentile. By inspiration, James revealed that this figurative language applied to the church which Jesus built (Acts 15:14-18).

Isaiah was another Old Testament prophet who revealed key points about the church of Christ. Consider the following:

And it shall come to pass in the last days, *that* the

mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3).

When one considers the New Testament describes the church as the "house of God" (1 Tim. 3:15) and Christ's "house" (Heb. 3:6), there should be no doubt that Isaiah's prophecy definitely deals with that same divine institution.

Notice the details Isaiah gave about the church: (1) He said the church ("the Lord's house") would be established in "the last days." The *last days* refers to the final dispensation of time which began with Christ and His covenant, and which shall continue until the end of time (cf. Heb. 1:1-2). (2) He said, "All nations shall flow unto it." This is indicative of the church's being made up of all races and kingdoms, Jews and Gentiles (cf. Gal. 3:28). (3) He said the church would begin in Jerusalem and from there "shall go forth the law." This is a picture of the church starting in that specific city, and then spreading its message outward.

Each of these details finds its fulfillment in the church described in the New Testament! Acts 2 records how the church came into existence at the right time (in the last days) and in the right place (Jerusalem), while the rest of Acts records how it spread in the right manner (from Jerusalem to Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the world). Any church that started in any place, time, or manner different than Isaiah foretold cannot be Christ's church.

A third prophet to reveal important details about the church of Christ was Daniel. Whereas Amos described the church as the tabernacle of David and Isaiah described it as the house of the Lord, Daniel described the church as the kingdom of God. Concluding his interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel declared, "And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, *but* it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44). The kingdom, which was "at hand" (or, about to appear) during the preaching of John the baptizer and Jesus (Mat. 3:1; 4:17), was in existence by the time Paul penned Colossians 1:13: "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and **hath translated us**

into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Placing this fact in the spotlight of Matthew 16:18-19 where Jesus used *church* and *kingdom* synonymously, one must conclude that the kingdom about which Daniel prophesied is the church about which one reads in the New Testament.

Returning to Daniel 2:44, one notes that God was going to set up His kingdom in the days of “these kings.” Just who were *these kings*? Studying Daniel 2:36-43, secular historians and biblical scholars agree that Daniel spoke of four world empires: (1) the Babylonian Empire (the head of gold, vv. 37-38), (2) the Medo-Persian Empire (the breast and arms of silver, v. 39), (3) the Grecian Empire (the belly of brass and its thighs, v. 39), and (4) the Roman Empire (the legs of iron and the feet of iron and clay, vv. 40-43). God’s kingdom, which is Christ’s church, was to be set up during the Roman Empire. Again, Acts 2 pictures the church coming into existence at just the right time—in the first century, during the reign of the Roman kings!

Just like Isaiah, Daniel gave details about the nature of the kingdom, or church. He described it as indestructible. Consider this with Hebrews 12:28 in mind: “Wherefore we receiving a kingdom **which cannot be moved**, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.” No military might in the world can stop the spiritual kingdom of Christ. Rather than being overtaken and destroyed, it continues to consume the hearts and minds of all nations by preaching the Gospel to every creature! Truly, the church of which Jesus is head and for which He shed His innocent blood is the fulfillment of Old Testament promises and prophecies. It is the manifestation of God’s wonderful wisdom, and its doors are open to all who will enter into it through obedience to Christ’s Gospel. “Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob” (Isa. 2:3).

4006 Sunset Street; Muskogee, OK 74403

What Has You Bound?

Mark 2:3

Burt Jones

The man in Mark 2 who was sick of the palsy was in an immobile state. *Palsy* is a term that was applied to a number of diseases at the time of Jesus. It was used to describe the condition of any person who was unable to command movement in an area of his body. This man apparently fell in this category.

In palsy of this type, the muscles, tissues, blood vessels, nerves, and every other physical attribute necessary for movement are present. But, for some reason, flesh rebels against command. Your body wants to move but it cannot. “I want a better life for my family, but I cannot seem to move.” “I want to change my manner of life, but I cannot. I am stuck in this condition.”

Men and women feel anger at being bound. They feel as if everyone else is moving and free. They appear to have all of the physical, mental, and emotional attributes necessary for change and growth. They can still think, still feel. They all have talents and skills. But, their human spirit does not respond to command.

Stress turns into pressure, and pressure into rage, and that constant rage brings weariness. You become numb, unable to act or even to believe for change. Every day seems as though it is the day before. It does not matter if you live in a ghetto or a penthouse, if you are not receptive in mind and spirit, you will feel as if you are in a jail cell (Gen. 45:5; Mat. 8:6; Acts 16:8).

Stress, anger, and prejudice are not linked to any one race or level of income. They infect nearly every person. And if they become severe enough they bring a person to a state of weariness, grief, immobility. Such a person is sick of inner palsy. Maybe they are stuck in terrible childhood memories, teenage issues, adult problems.

Some among us cannot hold a job, or maintain relationships, hold onto finances, or keep their word. The soul with this type of palsy knows something is wrong with him, but seems unable to do anything about it.

If you have everyone around withdrawing from you (Psa. 41:7; Mat. 27:46), you can become quickly depleted unless you have as your companion the Great Physician. Whatever your palsied state, Jesus calls you through his glorious Gospel to an abundant life of service to others.

The Bible records that when the family of David was taken captive at Ziklag, being greatly distress, he encouraged himself in the Lord his God (1 Sam. 30:60). Jude speaks of our “building up” ourselves on our most holy faith. How, by praying as a faithful Christian and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life (Jude 20-21).

What has **you** bound?

P.O. Box 985; Moundsville, WV 26041

The Blight Of Liberalism

June 11 - 15, 2005

Saturday, June 11

7:00 PM The Attitude of Liberalism Keith Mosher
7:45 PM The Origin of Liberalism David Brown

Sunday, June 12

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Origin of the World Steve Yeatts
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on the Mission of the Church Terry York

Lunch Break

2:00 PM Liberalism and Church Growth Loy Hardesty
3:00 PM Liberalism's View of Law and Love Preston Silcox

Dinner Break

7:00 PM "Moderates" Pave the Way for Liberalism Marvin Weir
7:45 PM Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church Michael Shepherd

Monday, June 13

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Home Brad Brewer
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on Bible Translations Jerry Murrell
11:00 AM Liberalism and the Role of Women Clifford Newell

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Stemming the Tide of Liberalism Rick Popejoy
2:30 PM Liberalism and Fellowship Lynn Parker
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Singing Charles Orr
7:45 PM Liberalism and Worship Bobby Liddell

Tuesday, June 14

9:00 AM Liberalism and Calvinism Daniel Denham
10:00 AM Liberalism and Preaching Eddy Craft
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of the Church Jerry Brewer

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism's Ethic Tom Moore
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Eldership Wesley Simons
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism's Support of Homosexuality Paul Vaughn
7:45 PM Liberalism's View of Salvation Harrell Davidson

Wednesday, June 15

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Work of the Church Gary Grizzell
10:00 AM Liberalism and Christ David Jones
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of God Wayne Jones

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism and Baptism Guss Eoff
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Spirit Kent Bailey
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Morality David Smith
7:45 PM The State of the Church Today 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 Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The Comfort Inn (8690 Pine Forest Road) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax not included) is \$65.95—1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850-476-8989. Tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures* when making your reservations. If you are planning on attending the lectureship you may want to make your motel reservations early. Because of Hurricane Ivan hitting this area last September, several motels remain closed due to extensive damage.

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, *The Blight Of Liberalism* 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, 2005, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12 (plus \$2.25

for postage). It will contain 40 chapters and approximately 600 pages. Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO, VIDEO TAPES, AND DVD

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes, video tapes, and DVDs. They may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. (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.

Free Moral Agents

Rex A. Turner, Sr.

The existence of sin is certain. The evidence for the existence of sin is written everywhere upon time and timely things. The devastating results of sin are entwined with the history of man. The heinous crimes committed daily as reported by the news media tell the ghastly story of sin, as also do the penal institutions wherein millions of men and women in this nation alone are incarcerated.

Sin has been defined variously as “disobedience to a personal God,” “rebellion against the omnipotent Creator,” “an unethical act,” “missing the mark or aim,” “over-passing or transgressing of a line,” and “transgression of the law of God.” The so-called deadly or capital sins are listed as pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and sloth. Further, the sins that are said to cry out to heaven for vengeance are willful murder (Gen. 4:10), sodomy (Gen. 18:20-21), the oppression of the poor (Exo. 2:23), and defrauding a laborer of his wages (Jam. 5:4).

When faced with the horrors of sin, men project searching questions. Some person will ask, “If there is a good, righteous and all-powerful God, why did He not create man so that he could not sin?” The question, on its face, seems to be a pertinent one. The answer, however, to that seemingly unsurmountable question is quite simple when contemplated.

God created man in His own image—that is, He created man with intellect and the freedom of will or choice. He created man for His own association, and man could qualify for such a society only if he were a free moral agent. If God had created man otherwise, man would be unfit for the society and association of the Godhead and the angelic host. Then, too, who is there who would desire to be divested of his freedom of will? Another person will ask, “If there is a good, righteous and all-powerful God, why did he not create man so that he would not sin?” The answer is that God cannot do contradictory things or bring about contradictory results. He cannot make a square circle. He cannot create two high mountains without a valley between the two mountains. If God had created man so he would not sin, then he would have created man on a par with brute animals that are controlled by brute instinct. Man so created would not be—could not be—a free moral agent.

The point is that God, including the Godhead, is

infinite. Man, as well as the angels, are finite beings, and no finite being is, or can be infinitely perfect. When God created man, He knew the possibility, the probability, and the certainty that man in time would sin. Thus God made a plan of redemption for man before He made man—a plan delicately balanced between justice and mercy (1 Pet. 1:17-20).

To illustrate the fact of such a plan of redemption, Paul wrote: “For whom he [God] foreknew, he also foreordained *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren: and whom he foreordained, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom. 8:29-30).

God foreknew that if He created man in His own image, or with intelligence and the power of free will, that man would in time sin. Therefore, God, before He created man, foreordained, foreplanned, or foremade a plan of salvation for man.

The plan was calculated to lead a man when he had so fallen to become like His Son in righteousness; for God is just, and as a just God, all demands of violated justice would have to be met; and His Son was the only person who could qualify to meet the demands of violated justice.

Christ, God’s Son, was the “firstborn” from the grave to ascend into heaven to die no more. “Many brethren” would include the men of the Patriarchal and Jewish ages who would, through faith in the promised redeemer, offer animal sacrifices as a means of temporary cleansing from sin. This means of sacrificial cleansing would and did continue until the time when Christ shed His blood.

Thus, that blood so shed did reach back and cleanse those who had received the temporary blood cleansings. Further, that blood would reach forward to the permanent blood cleansing for all who can be admonished to come under the cleansing power of the blood of Christ.

God foreordained or planned a scheme of redemption for man when man fell. God *called* them through the Gospel. So certain was the glorification of all the saints throughout the ages that God spoke through Paul as if they all had already been glorified.

A third person will ask: “Why did God not content Himself with the spreading forth of planets and stars,

the bringing forth of mountains of rocks and diamonds, the springing forth of forests of trees and flowers? In short, why create man whom He knew would sin?" The answer lies in the fact that God is a social being, He desires to have the company of His own offspring with whom He can share His love, righteousness, and glory. Why do a husband and wife desire offspring?

The fact that a good and righteous God would desire to have offspring is really no wonder. Further,

God so strongly desired to have offspring that He was prepared to sacrifice His own Son in order to have myriads of righteous souls in His great family.

The origin of evil has been a problem for man throughout the ages. The case is, however, that sin stemmed from the principle of free moral agency of angels and men.

Deceased

Help Needed

Brother Clifford Newell is a sound Gospel preacher who is in need of some financial help at this time. Brother Newell is the preacher for the East Bristol Church of Christ in Bristol, VA. He speaks on the Bellview Lectures every year along with many others. He directs the Annual Bristol Lectureship in May of each year.

Brother Newell suffered two heart-attacks within the past year. In consulting with his doctor's, they advised him to discuss his situation with the doctors at the Cleveland Clinic. They decided on a course of treatment which resulted in brother Newell receiving triple bypass surgery. As a result of the surgery, brother

Newell is well on his way to a full recovery and resuming all his normal activities.

However, his insurance company considered the Cleveland Clinic, "out-of-network." The result of this is that brother Newell has higher than normal medical bills. The total amount due at present is \$17,753.36. To make matters worse, the doctors and hospitals are not willing to allow him time to pay off these bills by himself. If you are willing to help contributions can be sent to: East Bristol Church of Christ, PO Box 16038, Bristol, VA: 24209-6083. Mark the checks "Newell Health Fund" in the memo line. The elders there are overseeing the fund. Thank you for your support.

Updated CD

The 1988-2004 books, all *Defender* issues of 1970, 1972-2002, along with numerous other books, tracts, and studies 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 \$65 plus postage/handling fee of \$1.25 (total is \$66.25) in which you receive all the lectureship books (less than \$5 per book) and other material. If you purchased a previous version of our CD, then check with us for an upgrade at a significant reduction in price upon the return of the previous CD. Take advantage of this great offer. Order from Bellview Church of Christ.

Defender is published monthly (except December) under the oversight of the elders of the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526. (850) 455-7595. *Subscription is free to addresses in the United States.* All contributions shall be used for operational expenses.

MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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How May We Attain to the Unity the Lord Prayed For, and How May We Maintain It?

James E. Farley

That which may truly be called “The Lord’s Prayer” is found in John 17. In this beautiful prayer, our Lord prayed for Himself and for His apostles. Then He prayed for all who would believe on Him through the words of the apostles (John 17:20-21). That is, all who read, understand, and believe the New Testament (cf. John 14:26; 16:13-14; Eph. 3:3-5). He prayed for you and for me. Specifically, He prayed that all who believe would be **one**. The reason for this oneness is so that the world may believe that Jesus is Who He says He is! Therefore, we can know that denominational division is certainly that which contributes to infidelity and atheism!

How is this unity in Christ to be had? Can we all understand the Bible alike? The fact is, if we understand the Bible at all, we will all understand it alike. The fact that some do not understand it alike is proof only that some misunderstand it! The Word 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. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them *which are of the house* of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul? (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

The church at Corinth was a divided church. This

is contrary to the Lord’s prayer in John 17:20-21. Some had sectarian spirits—wanting to follow after men rather than the Lord. Paul’s inspired, rhetorical questions make strong arguments against such an attitude. Christ is not divided, so why are you dividing—Paul was not crucified for you, so why are you following Paul; you were not baptized in Paul’s name or by Paul’s authority so stop following Paul. Of course, the apostle later does admonish these same Corinthians to follow him, but **only** as he followed Christ (1 Cor. 11:1). He did not want them to be *Paulites* or *Paulinians*. He wanted them to be Christians!

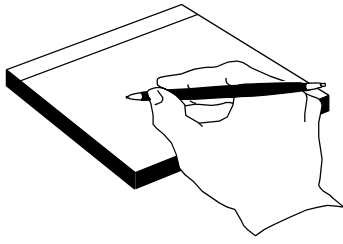
The apostle is very strong in his language to this divided and drifting church. He said that they should all speak the same thing, have the same mind and the same judgment, and the end result would be “no divisions among you.”

Simple, is it not? All that we have to do to attain to and maintain the unity that Jesus the Christ prayed for is to think, speak, and act **the same thing**. Can we do this? Well, heaven says we can, so if a man comes along and says we cannot do this, **he is wrong!** God says we can and must “speak the same thing.”

Well, what is it that we are to speak to attain to and maintain the unity that our Lord prayed for? Peter wrote, “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God; if any man minister, *let him do it* as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be

(Continue on page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Papacy

With the death of pope John Paul and the selection and installation of a new pope, we have been inundated with misinformation about the papacy. I realize that there have been several articles dealing with the Apostate Church (Roman Catholicism), so I thought I would add to them with an article dealing with the claims they make for the papacy and showing the truth on the subject.

Roman Catholicism rests upon certain foundational premises: (1) the primacy of Peter, (2) apostolic succession, and (3) the infallibility of the pope. They, of course, claim that Peter not only occupied a place of prominence in the New Testament, but that he was foremost among the apostles and the foundation upon which the church was built. If these claims are true, then the Roman Catholic church is true. However, these claims are not true as we will notice.

The Catholic Church claims that Peter was always given a preeminent or primary place among the apostles. Whenever the apostles are listed as a complete group, Peter's name heads the list (Mat. 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:12; Acts 1:13). With but a couple of exceptions, when just a few apostles are considered (Peter, James, and John). They would claim that when Peter is listed as the last name (1 Cor. 9:5-6), that there is an ascending scale of importance. When Peter's name is listed in second position (Gal. 2:9-13), then there is a pyramid type of arrangement giving special emphasis to the person at the top of the pyramid as indicated by listing his name second. As one can see by their explanations, it does not matter where Peter's name is listed, they will have some contrived way to explain where his name is listed.

They have appealed to Matthew 16:18-19: "And I

say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." They claim that the rock upon which the church is built is Peter. There are some *translations* which give support to this false claim. The Contemporary English Version says: "So I will call you Peter, which means 'a rock.' On this rock..." The Good News Translation says: "And so I tell you, Peter: you are a rock, and on this rock foundation..." The Message says: "And now I'm going to tell you what you are, really are. You are Peter, a rock. This is the rock on which I will put together my church..." Then Young's Literal Translation has: "And I also say to thee, that thou art a rock, and upon this rock I will..."

When one examines the text, it shows a distinct difference in *Peter* and *rock*. Both words are from the same root but they are a different gender giving them different meanings. "Peter" is the Greek *petros* which is masculine gender while "rock" is the Greek *petra* which is feminine gender (the feminine cannot refer back to the masculine). *Peter* means a rock but is applied to a detached fragment of rock such as a pebble or stone. *Rock* is applied to a large bedrock or immovable ledge. The Catholic counter to this by claiming that Jesus spoke in Aramaic on this occasion and used the neuter *kepha* for both "Peter" and "rock." However, there is no evidence either from biblical or secular history for accepting that Jesus spoke in Aramaic on this occasion. Actually, there is evidence to the contrary. When the Bible records a direct quotation from another language, we find a phrase such as, "being interpreted" (Mat. 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22; et al). It is interesting to note that the Latin Vulgate (which is the Roman Catholic Church's authorized infallible version) makes a distinction in the gender just as does the Greek. The Vulgate has *Petrus* (masculine) for Peter and *Petram* (feminine) for rock. However, Matthew, as is true of all New Testament writers, wrote by inspiration of God in the Koine Greek language and he made a difference between the two words.

In verse nineteen the Catholics claim that Jesus was giving to Peter exclusively the keys to the kingdom. *Key* signifies the right of authority, thus, according to their claim, Peter was given the authority pertaining to the kingdom of heaven. Whatever Peter decided to bind or loose on earth would be accepted and bound

or loosed by God in heaven. First, we would note that what is here given to Peter is elsewhere given to others. This power to bind and loose is given to all the apostles in John 20:23; and in Matthew 18:18 it is either given to all the apostles or to the church as a whole (I personally think it is given to the whole church here, but understand those who say it is only given to the apostles).

Second, the understanding which the Catholics give to this does not harmonize with what Jesus actually stated. *Bound* and *loosed* are in perfect passive participles in the Greek. The perfect tense is a tense which describes an action which has been completed in the past once and for all and does not need to be repeated. As is used by Jesus here it indicates that what Peter bound or loosed on earth shall have already been bound (or loosed) in heaven. Thus, Jesus is telling Peter that he could preach (bind or loose) what God gave him to preach without change or alteration.

We then should consider how Peter understood what Jesus told him here. Did Peter understand himself to be the rock upon which the church would be built, or did he consider Jesus the rock? Peter writes, "To whom coming, *as unto* a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, *and* precious, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe *he is* precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, *even to them* which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed" (1 Pet. 2:4-8). Peter said that they had come to a living stone (Greek *lithos*) who is Christ. Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16 which is a prophecy concerning Christ. This stone (*lithos*) has been made the "head of the corner." Thus, Christ is this stone (*lithos*) upon which everything is built, but then Peter says that this stone (*lithos*) of stumbling (to those who are disobedience) is a rock (*petra*) of offense. Thus, the stone (*lithos*) is the rock (*petra*), and since the stone is Jesus the rock is Jesus also. So Peter understood that Jesus was the "rock" (*petra*) and not himself.

One last thing we would point out showing the error of the doctrine of the primacy of Peter is the apostle Paul. Galatians 2:6-14 shows Paul confronting

Peter to his face because he was to be blamed. If Peter had the right to bind and loose whatever he desired, then there is no way that he could have been in such error so as anyone could confront him. If the doctrine of the primacy of Peter is correct, then Paul was in error when he "withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed" (2:11). Paul, writing by the direction of the Holy Spirit, gives a detailed list of the offices and servants in the church (1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11-16). Yet, in these lists there is never a mention of the papal office or the primacy of Peter. In fact, there is never a mention of either of these in the Scripture. If they are so important to the existence of the church and its spiritual well-being, why the omission?

These things, along with many others, show that the Catholic doctrine of the primacy of Peter is a false theory. If the doctrine of the primacy of Peter falls, then the doctrines of apostolic succession and the infallibility of the pope also falls. When those doctrines fall, then the whole system upon which they are built (the Roman Catholic Church) also falls. While we love the souls of those involved in this false religious system, we must speak the truth concerning it and expose it for what it is.

MH

(Continued from page 1)

praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Pet. 4:11).

Now it becomes clearer, does it not? That which we are to speak to attain to and maintain unity is "the oracles of God"—The Holy Bible. You see, if you speak like the Bible teaches, and I speak like the Bible teaches, we will be speaking the same thing, and, according to the inspired apostle Paul, we will be **one**. There will be "no divisions among us" (By the way, how many divisions is *no divisions*?) If you continue to speak as the oracles of God, and I begin to teach from a man-made creed, manual, catechism, discipline book, or confession of faith, etc. (or just my *think so*), I will be the one causing the division for I will have then "departed from the faith." If I do this I am no longer "abiding in the doctrine of Christ" (1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 John 9-11), but I am abiding in some man's writings and doctrine. Peter says that if we "speak as the oracles of God" (1 Pet. 4:11), it is God who gets the glory. Well what if we speak as the oracles of Luther, or Calvin, or Wesley, or Spurgeon? Who gets the glory then?

This principle is stated clearly again at 1 John 1:5-

2:6. Take a minute now and read those 12 verses. The *light* is of course the Way of God. It is what the Lord referred to as the *strait gate* and the *narrow way* (Mat. 7:13-15). This Way is indeed a lighted way, for it is by the Word of God that we are directed to it, and onto it. The Psalmist wrote, "Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Thy word *is* a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Psa. 119:104-105).

We are to "walk in the light as He is in the light." This simply means that we are to abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11). It means that we are to continue in His Word so we can be disciples indeed and made free by the Truth (John 8:31-32). It means that we are to walk in Truth, to walk after His commandments (2 John 4, 6; 3 John 3-4). The only way we can know that we know Him is to keep His commandments (1 John 2:3-6; cf. Heb. 5:8-9). The way we show the Lord that we love Him is to do what He says for us to do (John 14:15; John 15:14; 1 John 5:2-3).

John teaches that if we *walk in the light* we will have fellowship one with another (1 John 1:5-7). That is, we will have fellowship with God, Jesus, and with all who have fellowship with God and Jesus. What if

you continue walking in the light (according to God's Word) and I stop walking after the Truth or after His commandments? Well, if I stop walking in the light, my fellowship with God is severed. I no longer *have God* (2 John 9; cf. Isa. 59:1-2). Since my fellowship with God is severed, my fellowship with all who are in fellowship with God is severed as well. There can be no unity where there is no agreement in the Truth (Amos 3:3).

Our Sincere Plea

The sincere plea of churches of Christ if for unity based upon agreement about what the Bible teaches. We love God, we love Jesus the Christ, we love the church of Christ, we love the Bible that *light* which guides us, and we love **you!** We want **you** to come to a knowledge of the Truth so you can be saved (1 Tim. 2:4; cf. John 8:31-32). The Lord is not willing that you should perish, but that you should come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Please let us know how we may be of service to you in this most important matters of the soul. Contact us to know more about the salvation of your soul. We are here to serve you in these matters!

759 Ratliff Creek Road; Pikeville, KY 41501

If I Were the Devil

Tim Phillips

If I were the devil, I would persuade members of the Lord's church to stay home during services when they were not sick. I would persuade them to go to their family reunions during church services because family is more important than serving God. I would persuade them to attend any and all sporting events possible in order to miss those dreaded Bible studies. I would most definitely persuade them to miss those boring Wednesday evening studies because it is just not that important to attend Wednesday evening. I would tell them that Hebrews 10:25 is just a matter of opinion and not a command.

If I were the devil, I would persuade members of the Lord's church not to study their Bibles. I would keep them busy in other activities so that they would not have enough time to study God's Word. I would make sure they kept the television on as long as possible. I would even have them to make excuses why they neglect to study the Bible. I would even try to make the parents set a bad example in front of their children when it comes to studying the Scriptures. I would get them to see that 2 Timothy 2:15 is just for those who do

not have anything better to do in this life.

If I were the devil, I would persuade members of the Lord's church not to help out in doing anything at all when it comes to the work of the church. I would persuade them not to visit the sick, help the needy, teach others the gospel, help prepare the Lord's Supper, clean the building, help do yard work around the church building, and to love their neighbor as themselves. I would get them to see that all of this and much more that can be named is not important at all. I would get them to the point of the "I don't care attitude." I would show them that Matthew 7:12 is just for people who want to please the God whom they serve.

If I were the devil, I would like to have as much company as possible with me in all eternity in hell and especially those of the Lord's church. I would be looking forward to their disobedient service in the Lord's church and hope that they do not take Matthew 6:33 to heart.

(Editor's Note: Brother Phillips is a student at Tri-City School of Preaching.)

The Blight Of Liberalism

June 11 - 15, 2005

Saturday, June 11

7:00 PM The Attitude of Liberalism Keith Mosher
7:45 PM The Origin of Liberalism David Brown

Sunday, June 12

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Origin of the World Steve Yeatts
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on the Mission of the Church Terry York

Lunch Break

2:00 PM Liberalism and Church Growth Loy Hardesty
3:00 PM Liberalism's View of Law and Love Preston Silcox

Dinner Break

7:00 PM "Moderates" Pave the Way for Liberalism Marvin Weir
7:45 PM Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church Michael Shepherd

Monday, June 13

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Home Brad Brewer
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on Bible Translations Jerry Murrell
11:00 AM Liberalism and the Role of Women Clifford Newell

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Stemming the Tide of Liberalism Rick Popejoy
2:30 PM Liberalism and Fellowship Lynn Parker
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Singing Charles Orr
7:45 PM Liberalism and Worship Bobby Liddell

Tuesday, June 14

9:00 AM Liberalism and Calvinism Daniel Denham
10:00 AM Liberalism and Preaching Eddy Craft
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of the Church Jerry Brewer

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism's Ethic Tom Moore
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Eldership Wesley Simons
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism's Support of Homosexuality Paul Vaughn
7:45 PM Liberalism's View of Salvation Harrell Davidson

Wednesday, June 15

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Work of the Church Michael Hatcher
10:00 AM Liberalism and Christ David Jones
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of God Wayne Jones

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism and Baptism Guss Eoff
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Spirit Kent Bailey
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Morality David Smith
7:45 PM The State of the Church Today 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 Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The Comfort Inn (8690 Pine Forest Road) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax not included) is \$65.95—1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850-476-8989. Tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures* when making your reservations. If you are planning on attending the lectureship you may want to make your motel reservations early. Because of Hurricane Ivan hitting this area last September, several motels remain closed due to extensive damage.

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, *The Blight Of Liberalism* 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, 2005, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It will con-

tain 39 chapters and approximately 500 pages. Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO, VIDEO TAPES, AND DVD

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes, video tapes, and DVDs. They may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. (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.

Do We Want A Church That Flies?

Tom Wacaster

A rather interesting article appeared in *Wineskins* sometime back that deserves an open and honest investigation. The author's comments serve as a good example of the present effort on the part of change agents to remodel and restructure the Lord's church of our generation into something that is "functional," though not necessarily in accord with the "form" of the New Testament pattern. Brother Tim Woodroof draws a parallel between the progress in aviation and the supposed progress now being offered the brotherhood. He argues that our first attempts at flight failed because we sought to *imitate* the birds rather than develop the principle of flight. In like manner, he argues, we (those who would demand a "thus saith the Lord") have sought to imitate the first century church rather than build a church that is functional. He writes:

Like the ornithopterists of old, we assumed that "function" was inextricably bound to "form," that to fly with the first century church required us to fly like it. In our minds, a restoration of the first century spirit and dynamic would only be possible when we gave the modern church the same "equipment" as its ancient counterpart....Many of us are growing frustrated with a modern church that may look like the ancient church in the particulars but fails to function with anything like its power and life-changing dynamic.

Let us take a close look at our misguided brother's plea. First, functionality and form cannot be separated when it comes to divine and holy matters. God so decreed that to be the case. In short, when God designed the church He designed it to function according to His purpose, and with "his good pleasure" in mind (Eph. 1:5). It makes no difference what generation we may live in, or what culture might surround us, truth remains truth and no man can add or successfully altar God's form without incurring God's wrath and displeasure. We need to remind ourselves that Galatians 1:8-9, Revelation 22:18-19, and 1 Corinthians 4:6 are still in the Bible.

Second, functionality is not to be defined by men. I find it interesting that the change agents have no clear definition of where they want to take the church. This is because they do not know themselves where they want to go. Many of them are like the pilot who told his passengers, "We are casting off the compass, and throwing out the radio, but we can rejoice in knowing that all engines are running and it is full speed ahead."

The Bible provides a clear cut pattern for the church both in its identity and its purpose. Yes, there are minute details as to what the church should look like, but there are also plain and positive passages as to her purpose, and how that purpose is to be accomplished. If I read my Bible clearly, we are to preach and teach the lost, build up and edify the body of Christ, and provide assistance to those in need as the opportunity arises. God reminds us that if we will trust in Him, and build the church as He has instructed, it will function properly. The error among those who seek to change the church is that they do not trust in God's design. Brother Woodroof would have you believe that if you build it according to God's pattern, it will not fly! Two thousand years have proven otherwise. If it worked in the first century (and it did), what makes us think we can improve upon God's design?

Third, any problem or failure that might happen to arise lies not in the design of the craft that God has built, but the ones who might happen to be at the helm. Placed in capable hands, an airplane can and will operate properly. Pilot error is the cause of much of aviation's mishaps. Likewise when God's church is placed in capable hands it will meet all of the divine specifications and it will operate properly and function at peak performance.

If the church is not functioning as it should, blame is to be laid at the feet of elders who will not shepherd the flock as they should, preachers who will not preach the truth without fear and favor of men, and members whose lives are not in harmony with God's will.

One closing thought. Brother Woodroof's article is a clear call to abandon that pattern set forth in God's Word in exchange for something that is *functional*. It is the age old argument that the ends justifies the means. He concludes: "Central to this endeavor is a willingness to disconnect form from function, to assert that function is primary, and to suggest that it is possible to build a contemporary church that pleases God even if it does not look exactly like the church of the first or the nineteenth century." In the final analysis I prefer a church whose feet are on the ground, standing on the Rock of Ages, as opposed to one that would soar through the skies with no direction, no compass, and no certain destination.

511 Southgate Dr; Mt. Pleasant, TX 75455

A Great Need

When brother Ira Y. Rice, Jr. went to the Far East, he saw the need for a school to be established in that area which would train individuals in the Bible. He became the founder of Four Seas College. This college does a great work in training men to preach the Gospel and send them back to their own country to preach. There are numerous ones who have been trained through the intervening years and are now preaching the precious Truth of God's Word.

This need is further seen in the fact that much of the worlds population lives in the Far East. Yet, the majority of preachers are working in the United States. It has been stated that 96% of the preachers are preaching to only 6% of the worlds population. This need might be further observed in that a door is opening to Asia. This make Four Seas College all the more important in the coming years.

Christ gave a great commission to His apostles—to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15). He also informed them to instruct those they had taught to observe everything He had taught them (Mat. 28:19-20), which includes our responsibility to preach to every person. The opportunity arose for brother Lee

Davis to go to Singapore to teach and train men at Four Seas College. In December 2000, brethren David Chew (president of Four Seas College) and Ira Rice, asked Lee Davis to come and teach at the college. Lee approached the Bellview elders to oversee his work there to which they agreed.

Brother Davis is now in Singapore with a full teaching schedule; his family is now in the process of moving there also. Lee went to Singapore this time lacking \$700 of the support he needed. While he was there, another congregation withdrew their support for Lee—through no fault of brother Davis. This congregation was supporting Lee \$1000 a month. Thus, brother Davis is now \$1700 short of what he needs. Without some congregations and individuals picking up the majority of this shortfall, brother Davis will not be able to continue his work with Four Seas College. This would have a tragic effect both upon the college and possibly in the entire Far East.

If you can help personally or talk to the elders where you attend, please help in this immediate need. If you or the congregation can help, please contact the elders of the Bellview Church of Christ.

Updated CD

The 1975-1976, 1978, and 1988-2004 books, all *Defender* issues of 1970, 1972-2004, along with numerous other books, tracts, and studies 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 \$70 plus postage/handling fee of \$1.25 (total is \$71.25) in which you receive all the lectureship books (less than \$4 per book) and other material. If you purchased a previous version of our CD, then check with us for an upgrade at a significant reduction in price upon the return of the previous CD. Take advantage of this great offer. Order from Bellview Church of Christ.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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Pensacola, FL 32526**

Defender



“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Accepting Jesus

Tim Smith

There are many errors taught concerning just what *accepting Jesus* actually involves, and in this study we will try to notice some of those errors and how they may be corrected. In the course of establishing this, we shall note four areas of study concerning the Christ and His system of religion as set forth in the Bible.

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His Deity. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). *Immanuel* was defined by Matthew as “God with us” (1:23). Jesus was God in human flesh! In explaining to the Pharisees His Deity, Jesus said, “What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, *The Son* of David. He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?” (Mat. 22:42-45). The point was that Christ was before David, and greater than David, indeed called by David *Lord*.

John 1:1-4 helps us to understand this point even more clearly: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” These words are totally consistent with the record Moses gave of the creation in Genesis when he used the Hebrew word *elohim* for God. All Hebrew words ending in *im* are plural. Moses again

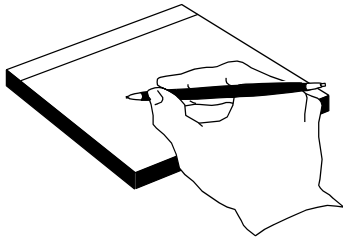
records, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). We know that Jesus was God, and with God, in the creation. This means that since He was before time, He is eternal. In John 1:14 we read, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” Here we begin to see the plural nature of the Godhead, we see God the Father sending God the Son into this world.

Jesus was man: “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14). To say that He was less than human, or more than human in this respect, is to misinterpret the idea of a sacrifice. A man who was familiar with our sufferings died a cruel death for us on Calvary. Jesus was God: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16).

There is no accepting Him as a prophet only, or as a great religious teacher only, we must accept Him as God in human flesh. Hear Paul: “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phi. 2:6-8). Truly

(Continued on page 3)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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“Behold I Thought”

No doubt all will recognize the statement from the lips of Naaman (2 Kings 5). You remember how that Naaman was a leper and when told of a prophet in Samaria who could heal him, received permission from the king of Syria to go to Israel to be healed. When he finally arrived at the prophet’s house, Elisha simply sent a messenger to him stating his need to wash in the Jordan River seven times and he would be healed. Upon being told this by the messenger the Record states: “But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. *Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage*” (2 Kin. 5:11-12).

Consider with me a few things regarding this situation. Did Elisha have any obligation to come out to Naaman? Of course not. Was Elisha under any obligation to tell Naaman to dip in the rivers of Damascus? We have the same answer. However Naaman did not like the way in which Elisha handled the situation. As a result, he got mad. Naaman was going to miss out on his great opportunity to have his leprosy removed because of his anger at **how** Elisha handled the situation.

For years we have seen this same type of thing taking place in the Lord’s church, even among those who are sound conservative brethren. Years ago, when I was a younger preacher, the Crossroads perversion was raging (which later turned into the Boston movement which became the International Church of Christ). As faithful brethren would expose Crossroads and Chuck Lucas, some would invariably ask if they had

talked personally to them, or asked if they had gone there personally. Often these people would appeal to Matthew 18:15. Jesus says: “Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.” They would misapply this passage and falsely teach that one had the obligation to go to a false teacher before you could expose him in a public manner. It would then be pointed out that this verse has nothing to do with false teachers and false doctrine. This has to do with personal sins—one Christian commits a personal sin against another Christian. (Some *translations* leave out the “against thee” giving support to the personal sin aspect and trying to make it applicable to any sin. Some have used such mistranslations to teach an obligation of one to go to someone else even if they teach public false doctrine.) When it was pointed out to these people, they would often respond that while it did not deal with false teachers and false doctrine, it sets forth a principle which should be followed. They then do the exact same thing which Naaman did: “Behold I thought.” If you do not follow their self-imposed obligation, they get upset with their brethren. So they, like Naaman, go away in a rage.

These individuals generally did not care for the truth of the matter. The Crossroaders went into congregations all over the brotherhood and caused untold divisions among brethren. Yet, if you tried to expose them and the doctrines which they taught and practiced, these brethren were mad because you had not first gone to Crossroads and privately discussed it with them. Their splitting of churches, false doctrines, false teachings did not matter as much as their self-imposed obligation for you to go personally to them before exposing them.

Often these brethren would not listen to the facts presented concerning Crossroads and Chuck Lucas. They wanted you to go to them privately because “behold I thought” Matthew 18 set forth a principle that all should follow. When you failed to follow that self-imposed principle, they were not upset with the false doctrine and practices, they were upset with those who would expose such without first going to them privately. Then because you dared to expose their doctrine, they accuse you of splitting the church. They had gone “away in a rage” and now they are mad that you did not follow their procedure (which of course one must remember that it came from a false view of Matthew 18).

Through the years other controversies have come and gone. However, it seems that we will always have this type of thinking among even those who are considered conservative within the Lord's church. It is a wrong type of attitude—it was wrong by Naaman, and it is wrong by those who have it today. Thankfully Naaman's servants reasoned with him and got him to do what Elisha had said to do. Prayerfully, those who demonstrate this type of attitude today can be reasoned with today and leave this ungodly attitude behind.

MH

(Continued from page 1)

God, truly man.

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His church—the kingdom. Early on in the ministry of our Lord, He began to point man toward the coming of His kingdom. Matthew records, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Mat. 4:17). From these words we see that the coming of the kingdom of heaven was an event that was to be in the near future when Jesus said this, as close as an object in hands reach. John the Baptist had been sent before Christ to ready the world for Him and the advent of His kingdom. We read of His mission: "In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Mat. 3:1-3).

We know that the church or kingdom had not been built when the events of Matthew 16:18-19 took place, for we read: "And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." From these verses we learn that the church and the kingdom are one and the same institution, that they were to be built sometime after these words were spoken, and that they were to be built by the Lord.

We learn that the church (kingdom) was to be established in the lifetime of our Lord's apostles from Mark: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you,

That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). From Luke we learn, "Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And ye are witnesses of these things. And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:45-49). From these verses we learn that after the death of Christ and His resurrection, salvation would be preached in Jerusalem, among all nations, after they received *power*. The apostles were told: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you" (Acts 1:8). Acts 1:12 places the apostles in Jerusalem, and Acts 2:1-4 has them receiving the Holy Ghost. Luke records that men of all nations were present (2:5), repentance and remission of sins were preached in His name (2:38). "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added *unto them* about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41). We then read that "the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved" (Acts 2:47). It is not enough to merely find a church or the "church of our choice," but we must seek to find the church that Jesus built. The one He loved and purchased (Acts 20:28), the one He gave Himself for (Eph. 5:25), and the one of which He is the Savior (Eph. 5:23).

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His Gospel—the Word of God. Jesus brought with Him a message, a set of clearly defined religious teachings. He left these for us to follow on the pages of the New Testament. It is His will that we respect Him and His authority enough to do as we are commanded.

Of the Truth Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). From these words we see that if men are to be freed from their sins, it must be by the Truth. But what is the Truth? and where is it to be found? Hear again the Lord: "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth" (John 17:17). To accept Him is to accept what He has said. But there is more to be accepted than just the letters that are in red print in some copies of the New Testament, for the Word of God did not only come from the lips of His "only begotten Son."

Before His crucifixion Christ told the apostles, "But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all

things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” (John 14:26). The Holy Ghost brought to the apostles a full and perfect knowledge of the Will of God, and they in turn wrote it down on the pages of the New Testament. So, if we accept Jesus we will accept the entire New Testament, for He gave it by the Holy Ghost. Paul discussed the principle of inspiration in 2 Timothy 3:16: “All scripture is given by inspiration of God.” *Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* defines “inspiration of God” as follows: “THEOPNEUSTOS, inspired by God (*Theos*, God; *pneo*, to breathe), is used in 2 Tim. 3:16, of the Scriptures as distinct from non-inspired writings” (593). When the writers of the New Testament were writing, they were writing the Word of God, breathed forth from the mouth of God.

Paul reminded the brethren from the region of Galatia that accepting the Word of God was of the greatest importance, saying, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:6-8). They failed to continue walking in the Gospel and were therefore lost.

The young evangelist Timothy was instructed, “Thou therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:1-2). It was important for this young man to lead people in the ways of Jesus, but in so doing he would also be leading them after Paul’s teaching, for the two are totally consistent. Paul wrote, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). When Paul preached, it carried the force of Jesus preaching, for Jesus had given him the words.

In order to accept Jesus, we must accept His terms of salvation. Christ set forth some specific terms that must be met for salvation to be had by an individual seeking it. The first of these terms, logically speaking, is the necessity of hearing the Gospel. Jesus said, “Take heed therefore how ye hear” (Luke 8:18). It is of the greatest importance how we listen to the words of salvation, for “how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?” (Rom. 10:14). How can we benefit from the Gospel if we will not hear it?

Having heard the Word, we then must choose to believe it. We know that if we reject it, we cannot be saved. Jesus said, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am *he*, ye shall die in your sins” (John 8:24). Positively, Paul affirms, “With the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). How can we benefit from the Gospel if we will not believe it?

Having heard and believed, one must then begin to amend his life based on the teachings of the Gospel. This is repentance. Paul tells us that “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). So repentance is the natural response of a sincere heart to the goodness of God. Paul stated, “For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). We should be sorry about our sins, but we will never be sorry about turning away from our sins in coming to the Lord. How can we benefit from the Gospel if we will not repent as it commands?

Having heard, believed, and repented, we are then to confess our faith in Christ. Paul wrote, “With the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Rom. 10:10). Before his immersion, the Eunuch said, “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God” (Acts 8:37). John 12:42-43 tells of some who, even though they believed, would not confess the Lord, thus they were lost. If we believe in Him, how can we keep from confessing Him?

Having heard, believed, repented, and confessed, what does one lack? Notice that one believes “unto salvation,” and confesses “unto salvation,” and repents “to salvation,” but is baptized “into Christ.” “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” (Rom. 6:3). “For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body” (1 Cor. 12:13). “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Gal. 3:27). We enter Jesus Christ, thus salvation, when we have been obedient with respect to hearing, believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized. This is what Peter meant when he wrote, “The like figure whereunto *even* baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). That grand crowd assembled on Pentecost of Acts 2 heard the same message, and we must do what they did to be saved today.

1272 Enon Road; Webb, AL 36376

The Blight Of Liberalism

June 11 - 15, 2005

Saturday, June 11

7:00 PM The Attitude of Liberalism Keith Mosher
7:45 PM The Origin of Liberalism David Brown

Sunday, June 12

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Origin of the World Steve Yeatts
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on the Mission of the Church Terry York

Lunch Break

2:00 PM Liberalism and Church Growth Loy Hardesty
3:00 PM Liberalism's View of Law and Love Preston Silcox

Dinner Break

7:00 PM "Moderates" Pave the Way for Liberalism Marvin Weir
7:45 PM Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church Michael Shepherd

Monday, June 13

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Home Brad Brewer
10:00 AM Liberalism's Effect on Bible Translations Jerry Murrell
11:00 AM Liberalism and the Role of Women Clifford Newell

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Stemming the Tide of Liberalism Rick Popejoy
2:30 PM Liberalism and Fellowship Lynn Parker
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Singing Charles Orr
7:45 PM Liberalism and Worship Bobby Liddell

Tuesday, June 14

9:00 AM Liberalism and Calvinism Daniel Denham
10:00 AM Liberalism and Preaching Eddy Craft
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of the Church Jerry Brewer

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism's Ethic Tom Moore
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Eldership Wesley Simons
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism's Support of Homosexuality Paul Vaughn
7:45 PM Liberalism's View of Salvation Harrell Davidson

Wednesday, June 15

9:00 AM Liberalism and the Work of the Church Michael Hatcher
10:00 AM Liberalism and Christ David Jones
11:00 AM Liberalism's View of God Wayne Jones

Lunch Break

1:30 PM Liberalism and Baptism Guss Eoff
2:30 PM Liberalism and the Spirit Kent Bailey
3:30 PM Open Forum

Dinner Break

7:00 PM Liberalism and Morality David Smith
7:45 PM The State of the Church Today 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 Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526). The Comfort Inn (8690 Pine Forest Road) is providing a special rate for those attending the Bellview Lectures. The price (tax not included) is \$65.95—1 to 2 people per room. Their phone number is 850-476-8989. Tell them you are attending the *Bellview Lectures* when making your reservations. If you are planning on attending the lectureship you may want to make your motel reservations early. Because of Hurricane Ivan hitting this area last September, several motels remain closed due to extensive damage.

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, *The Blight Of Liberalism* 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, 2005, or afterwards at the regular price of \$12. It will con-

tain 39 chapters and approximately 500 pages. Everyone will want to purchase a personal copy and perhaps additional copies for gifts.

AUDIO, VIDEO TAPES, AND DVD

All lectures will be recorded on cassette audio tapes, video tapes, and DVDs. They may be purchased during the *Bellview Lectures* or by mail order afterwards. (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.

Peace

Tracy Dugger

Peace is the absence of discord. It is a precious word. Millions of dollars are spent each year to preserve peace. Our government employs persons to keep peace—we call them “Peace Officers.” We have sent troops into war-torn areas to cease the fighting for the sake of peace. Diplomats work diligently to call for peace between nations (Mid-East, Bosnia, etc.). NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) was organized to keep peace. NATO is an organization initially established to bind Western Europe and the United States together in a common defense alliance against the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies. The United Nations is an association of independent national states. It was formed by the victorious nations of World War II to keep the peace that had been won. Its supreme goal is to end war. Most have heard of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 1895, Alfred Nobel, a Swedish chemist and the inventor of dynamite, left more than nine million dollars to found the Nobel prizes. Some familiar recipients include: Theodore Roosevelt, the Red Cross, Woodrow Wilson, George C. Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., Henry Kissinger, and Lech Walesa. The point I have been laboring at is this: The world spends an enormous amount of time, energy, resources, and money for peace. We hold it in high esteem!

There is a **greater** Peace-Maker than all of these. He has made available such harmony and unity that He carries the title: “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6). Paul stated in Ephesians 2:13-18: “But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, *even* the law of commandments *contained* in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, *so* making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.”

The kind of peace Jesus brings can end all physical strifes and wars; but much more importantly is the

peace He has brought between man and God. Consider two types of peace resultant from Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace.

Peace with God

“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:1-2). Before our obedience we were enemies with God, but now Jesus Christ has reconciled us to God, thus creating peace. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life” (Rom. 5:10).

Peace in the Church

Paul said to “be at peace among yourselves” (1 The. 5:13). One problem within our brotherhood among sound and faithful brethren is that peace has been forgotten and lost. Because of personal conflicts which have occurred a war is raging in some congregations. Some brethren have forgotten how to forgive. On the other hand, there are those, who in pursuing peace have went to the other extreme, thus causing more problems. They have gone too far and misunderstood the kind of peace that must exist in the church. They believe that for the sake of unity, error and sin can be tolerated. But this is erroneous thinking and will lead to condemnation. The church at Corinth received heavy rebuke for tolerating a fornicating brother and not separating from him. They might have been at peace with this man but not with God (1 Cor. 5). Jesus could have conformed to the Pharisees’ and Saducees’ teaching—He could have had peace with them, but then He would not have had peace with the Father. If we compromise the truth to be at peace with other men, we sever peace with God (2 John 9). We must always remember that all peace is not desirable. The Prince of Peace stated on one occasion: “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword” (Mat. 10:34). Peace at all costs is not what God wants! It is noteworthy to recognize that one cannot have peace with God until first involving themselves in division. We must divide and separate from the world, from Satan, and from service to sin to

have peace with God. When we become a Christian and enter into God's kingdom, we are divided from the world and darkness (Col. 1:13).

It should be the desire of every Christian to be at peace with God and with one another. We want to do all that God demands that we might be at peace with Him. Being at peace with God allows reconciliation, thus salvation. We want to do our best to be at peace with others. Paul made this clear when he explained, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:19).

We must ever remember that our lives are surrounded by subtle foes seeking to gain an entrance. At the door are temptations, errors, deceptions, fears, and alarms. But in the heart of the Christian is found an ever watchful sentinel and guard called peace. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:6-7).

7229 Aldea Drive Apt. A; Austin, TX 78745

Lectureship Information:

We would love for you to come and be at the lectureship in person, we know that it is not possible for all to attend in person. Being here in person during the lectureship does have its advantages, so we encourage others to attend. Yet, some (because of other commitments, work, etc.) cannot come to Pensacola and spend those days with us.

If you cannot be here in person, please view the lectures on the internet as we will be live. The Online Academy of Biblical Studies has agreed to again host the lectureship live. If you have the opportunity go to www.oabs.org and follow the link provided.

The Online Academy of Biblical Studies is a wonderful site to study more of God's Word. I would encourage everyone to visit the site and if possible to sign up for the Saturday classes. It is a four-year program of study through the Bible. It will aid anyone in their study of the biblical text.

Updated CD

The 1988-2005 books, all *Defender* issues of 1970, 1972-2004, along with numerous other books, tracts, and studies 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 \$70 plus postage/handling fee of \$1.25 (total is \$71.25) in which you receive all the lectureship books (less than \$4 per book) and other material. If you purchased a previous version of our CD, then check with us for an upgrade at a significant reduction in price upon the return of the previous CD. Take advantage of this great offer. Order from Bellview Church of Christ.

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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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Speaking in Tongues

Wesley Simons

Introduction

There are those who claim to be able to speak in tongues. They contend the spiritual gift of tongue speaking is applicable to our age. If one observes their worship, he will eventually witness various ones “speaking in tongues.” My wife and I came out of this kind of belief system. As a matter of fact, it was their so-called tongue speaking that helped us to find the truth. We noticed the following unscriptural facts: (1) Women speaking in tongues in the assembly when the Bible says that women are to remain silent (1 Tim. 2:11-12; 1 Cor. 14:34-35). (2) They spoke in tongues with no interpreter (1 Cor. 14:27-28). (3) They would speak gibber-gabber and call it tongue speaking (more on this later). (4) They had a very limited vocabulary. They repeated the same phrase over and over, “shee-mummidy-i.” This caused us to ask: “Why is the Holy Spirit so limited in His vocabulary?” The Holy Spirit is not, but they were! (5) They used tongue speaking as a sign to show how spiritual they were. Thus, it was to them a sign to the “believers.” However, tongues are a sign for non-believers (1 Cor. 14:22). (6) When their preachers were going to enter a country which spoke a different language, then they had to go to college to learn to speak the language of the aforementioned country. Why, because they did not and do not speak in tongues as per the Word of God! (7) One lady spoke in tongues and I interpreted it. She said, “Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani” which means, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Why would she speak in tongues crying out “My God, my God why has thou forsaken me?” All of this information

convinced us that the “tongue speaking” going on in the Church of God of Prophecy was not equivalent to what took place in the New Testament.

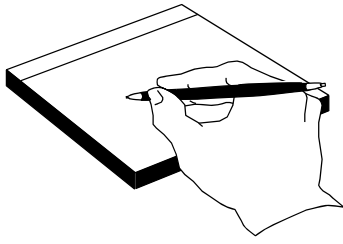
The Purpose for Tongue Speaking

In the Bible, tongue speaking was not for the purpose of displaying the fact that one had been born again. It was for the purpose of evangelizing and confirming God’s Word (Mark 16:15-20). In the limited commission, tongue speaking was not needed since the disciples were going to the lost sheep of the house of Israel: “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, **raise the dead**, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give” (Mat. 10:6-8). Notice, these men had the God-given ability to do many things, but **they could not speak in tongues**. They could **raise the dead, but could not speak in tongues**. This is because they went to their own people. They were not going to every creature upon the face of the earth.

When we come to the great commission, the ability to speak in tongues was needed: “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. And these signs shall follow them that believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they **shall speak with new tongues**; They shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:16-18). Why were they given the ability to speak in tongues? They were going into all of the world: “And he said

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Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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2005 Bellview Lectureship

The Bellview congregation just completed its Thirtieth Annual Lectureship this past month. This lectureship was greatly successful in many respects. First it was successful from the standpoint of attendance. In comparison to last year's attendance in 26 of the 32 sessions the attendance increased over last year's and in one of those sessions the number attending was the same. In one of the sessions, we had a record attendance (at least for the years of which I have a record). There was a total attendance of 3,237 when all the sessions were added together. While there were 93 registration sheets signed by visitors (from 14 different states); from our attendance records we had 144 visitors. We had this attendance even though there was a tropical storm which moved through (thankfully all we received was a lot of rain and a little bit of wind). Most did not allow it to affect them. So, from an attendance point of view, the lectureship was very successful.

The theme of the lectureship, *The Blight of Liberalism*, was one which was very needed. The liberal mind-set seems to be taking over in so many areas. However, during the lectureship we centered upon the liberalism in the Lord's church. Because of the importance of the theme of this lectureship, I do wish that many more had attended and taken advantage of the great opportunity presented. The lessons were necessary and each one did a great job in preparation and presenting them. It was our intent to begin the lectureship with the two lessons which I believed would serve as a background for studying liberalism, the origin and the attitude of liberalism (they are the first two chapters of the book). However, because of the weather we had to make a change in the schedule and the lesson on liberalism's origin was not delivered till later in the lectureship.

During the lectureship we had lessons primarily dealing with different aspects of the church and how liberalism is affecting it. Sunday morning brother Yeatts presented a lesson dealing with evolution. If we do not have the proper understanding of how we got here, we will not have a proper understanding of anything else. Liberals have attacked the Genesis account of creation for years, compromising with the atheistic evolutionary hypothesis.

Next, we began dealing specifically with the church. During the lectures we had lessons dealing with the uniqueness of the church and that it is not simply a denomination or any other religious group. There were lessons dealing with the plan of salvation and what the liberals are doing to God's scheme of redemption. When one loses sight of the distinctiveness of the church and God's plan of saving sinful man, then they also liberalize the fellowship of the church.

There were lessons designed around the work of the church and how liberals have destroyed the mission and work of the church. One of the reasons (certainly not all) that the church is not growing today is based upon the liberalism which has made its way into the church. When they pervert God's way of saving man and act as if those in the denominations are saved, then why seek the salvation of those people? There were lessons concerning the worship of the church and one dealing with singing and another dealing with preaching in particular. There was also a lesson dealing with the woman's role as there are many within the church who argue for an expanded role of women in the Lord's church. There are those who would have women doing everything which the Bible authorizes the man to do, however this lesson showed the fallacy of their arguments.

The lectures also dealt with morals and ethics and what liberals have done to our ethical and moral standard—God's Word. There was one specific moral issue which all Christians need to be aware of which was dealt with by brother Vaughn: homosexuality and liberalism's support of it. Sadly, we as Christians often do not keep up with what is taking place regarding these types of perversions and the inroads they are making. We also had a lesson dealing with the home and what liberalism is doing to it. Everything really begins in the home and it is so important to have a solid foundation there.

There were lessons which dealt with the Godhead. Like with the home, so much starts with our view toward God. When one thinks that God will never do anything as far as punishment is concerned, then why

obey Him? While liberals have attacked God and Christ, a majority of the problems we face in the church come from a liberalizing of the teachings concerning the Holy Spirit. To the liberals, they have Him doing just about anything and everything today. However it was pointed out that the way the Spirit works today on the heart of the individual is through the Word of God.

There were other lessons dealing with Bible translations, the eldership, and one in which we looked at the state of the church today. However, two in particular need to be mentioned dealing with the fact that “moderates” pave the way for liberalism to move in and take over. Moderates in many ways are more dangerous to the cause of Christ than the radical liberal (the moderate is liberal in many respects). Another important lesson dealt with stemming the tide of liberalism. It is not enough to simply recognize what liberalism is and what it is doing to the church, there also needs to be an understanding of what we need to do to put a stop to it.

This lectureship was a very successful one and also one which was very needed. We have the lessons available in DVDs or VCR tapes (contact the church office if would like to purchase a set). We also have a book containing all the lessons plus several additional chapters which were not able to be covered in the lectureship. There are several chapters dealing with social issues including such things as politics, the educational system, the courts, and the media. There is also a chapter concerning liberalism in our “Christian” schools and a chapter dealing with liberal publications. The book is 675 pages and can be purchased for \$14.25 (including postage).

We are now making plans for next year’s lectureship. After looking at the subject of liberalism, we believe it is also important for us to build things up also. Thus, we have selected the theme for the 2006 lectureship as: *A Time To Build*. The date will be June 10-14, 2006. We hope you will make plans to be with us at that time.

MH

(Continued from page 1)

unto them, Go ye into all the world, and **preach the gospel to every creature**” (Mark 16:15). If they were going to preach to all the world, then they would have to have the ability to communicate with these people. Therefore, God gave them the miraculous ability to speak in various languages without studying those languages. So then, the truth could be preached to every creature.

What Is Biblical Tongue Speaking?

If one is going to answer this question, then he must go to the Bible. In Acts 2, the apostles spoke in tongues. The issue is, what did they do?

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**. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which **speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?**” (vv. 2:4-8).

Notice, the apostles spake in tongues and every man heard them in the **language** wherein he was born. Therefore, we know that tongues are languages. The apostles did not speak in ecstatic utterances that were unintelligible.

When this information is shown to religious people today who claim to speak in tongues, they concede this point for the most part. However, they declare that the tongue speaking in which they are involved is the “unknown tongue” which is a heavenly language known only by God. We have had one lady call our radio program and speak in tongues. I called upon her to interpret what she had just said. She declared that she was clueless when it came to the message she had revealed. She stated that she had spoken in a heavenly language that is understood only by God. She further affirmed that it is the **unknown tongue** of 1 Corinthians 14. Since there is so much confusion on the subject of the **unknown tongue** we want to examine it more closely.

The Unknown Tongue

Is there really a tongue (ecstatic utterance) spoken by religious people which can only be understood by God? This concept comes from a misunderstanding of 1 Corinthians 14:2: “For he that speaketh in an *unknown* tongue speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” Please note that the word *unknown* is in italics. This means that the translators **added** the word. The word *unknown* is not in the Greek manuscripts. The translators were trying to help us by saying a tongue (language) which was spoken that people did not know was **unknown because one would not know that language**. Therefore, one would be speaking into the air, speaking mysteries and unto God rather than man. If I would have written this

article in German, then it would be an **unknown tongue** to most of you. I could not have written this article in German because it is an **unknown tongue** to me!

The **unknown tongue** of this chapter (1 Cor. 14) has certain characteristics which will help us to understand what it is. Let us notice these: (1) It is comprised of words (v. 9). Languages are comprised of words. (2) One who speaks in an **unknown tongue** is to pray that he might interpret (v. 13). How can he interpret the **unknown tongue** unless it is a language? (3) Paul compares his tongue speaking to what they were doing (v. 18). We have already noticed that the apostles spoke in languages, Acts 2. (4) Tongues are for a sign to the unbeliever (v. 22). Therefore, any effort to use tongues to demonstrate that one is more spiritual than another because he speaks in tongues is wrong. (5) The **unknown tongue** can be interpreted (vv. 26-27). This proves that it is a language. (6) If there is no interpreter, then the one speaking in tongues is to keep silent (v. 27). Those who spoke in the unknown tongue in the first century had to have an interpreter. This certainly proves that it is a language. One could speak in the **unknown tongue** and another could interpret it. (7) Tongue speaking was to be done by course—meaning one at a time (v. 27). Those who claim the ability to “speak in tongues” today all speak at the same time, or whenever they please. (8) The spirits of the prophets were subject to the prophets—meaning they could control themselves (v. 32). Those “speaking in tongues” today claim they cannot control themselves. (9) God did not want confusion over the use of spiritual gifts (v. 33). Those who claim this gift today cause mass confusion in their own services. Some people go to those services to see the “show.” (10) Women could not speak in the assembly. Therefore, could not speak in **tongues** in the assembly (v. 34). In the Church of God, it was almost always the women who “spoke in tongues.” I do not remember one man that did it. (11) Anyone who thinks himself to be spiritual must acknowledge that Paul is preaching and teaching that which had come from the Lord (v. 37). If spiritual gifts were operative today, then they would have to be regulated by the Scriptures.

When one considers all of the aforementioned evidence, then he must conclude that the **unknown tongue** is a language. The one thing that proves that the **unknown tongue** is a language is: “If any man speak in an **unknown tongue**, *let it be* by two, or at the most by

three, and *that* by course; and **let one interpret**. But if there be no interpreter, let him keep silence in the church; and let him speak to himself, and to God” (1 Cor. 14:27-28). How can one interpret that which only God can understand? So then, those who contend that the **unknown tongue** is some kind of ecstatic utterance that only God can understand are wrong. Notice carefully, if there is no interpreter, then the man is to speak to himself and God according to these verses. This helps us to understand 1 Corinthians 14:2: “For he that speaketh in an **unknown tongue** speaketh not unto men, but unto God: for no man understandeth *him*; howbeit in the spirit he speaketh mysteries.” The reason no man can understand him is because there is no interpreter.

Tongue Speaking Has Ceased

One thing that my wife and I noticed in the Church of God was that no “tongue speaking” took place unless the people were emotionally high. When they found themselves in this highly emotional state and did things they normally would not have done, then many of them sincerely believed that they had the real gift of tongue speaking. They were/are **sincerely wrong!** This is the easiest gift to fake. The people in the Church of God were taught how to “speak in tongues” (ecstatic utterances). They tried their best to teach my mother, but she could not get it. They taught her to say glory, glory, glory over and over until she would get her tongue tangled, then she would be told that she spoke in tongues. I heard a preacher on TV promoting a tape on how to learn to speak in tongues. The apostles did not have to be taught how to speak in tongues, theirs was miraculous. The reason some must try to sell us on ecstatic utterances as being tongue speaking is because the gift of tongues and all spiritual gifts have ceased. Paul penned these words to show the cessation of tongues:

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. 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. 13:8-10).

Prophecies were going to fail. This does not mean that some prophecies would not come to pass. It means they would cease. Paul states knowledge will vanish away. This does not mean that there would come a time when people would not know anything. It means miraculous

knowledge would cease. When the Bible says tongues will cease, this does not mean there will come a time when men would not be able to talk. It means the time would come when the miraculous gift of tongues would cease.

All of the aforementioned were to cease when that which is perfect is come. The Bible does not say **He** who is perfect, but **that which** is perfect. Paul has reference to the perfect law of liberty (Jam. 1:25). Since the miraculous has ceased, then no one today can speak

in tongues by the power of God. So those who try to get around tongues being a language are wrong. They are also wrong when they fail to realize that tongues have ceased. Their **ecstatic utterances** are not the same as what took place in Acts 2 or 1 Corinthians 14.

May God help us to honor Him by recognizing that when He says a thing has ceased, then that is the way that it is. Therefore, tongues have ceased according to God.

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Wrestling with God (Gen. 32:22-32)

Glenn Hitchcock

And he rose up that night, and took his two wives, and his two womenservants, and his eleven sons, and passed over the ford Jabbok. And he took them, and sent them over the brook, and sent over that he had. And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day. And when he saw that he prevailed not against him, he touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob's thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him. And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What *is* thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed. And Jacob asked *him*, and said, Tell *me*, I pray thee, thy name. And he said, Wherefore *is* it *that* thou dost ask after my name? And he blessed him there. And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. And as he passed over Penuel the sun rose upon him, and he halted upon his thigh. Therefore the children of Israel eat not *of* the sinew which shrank, which *is* upon the hollow of the thigh, unto this day: because he touched the hollow of Jacob's thigh in the sinew that shrank.

The above text has been a tremendous source of comfort and inspiration to many of God's children. Jacob's wrestling with the mysterious being serves as a pattern for perseverance and persistence in ones prayer life.

There are many lessons to be gleaned from the incident of Penuel. This account is typical of the struggle of an earnest soul reaching out for a better life. It portrays a prayerful soul clinging and holding on to Jehovah in anticipation of a blessing. Let us ponder

together the following points:

Prayer Is a Struggle

Prayer is taking a firm grip of the power in whose Hands we have already found ourselves. Prayer is that asking, seeking, and knocking after the Father above. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Mat. 7:7). Prayer is that earnest effort to learn more about Him. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phi. 4:6-7).

Prayer Is a Lonely Struggle

"And Jacob was left alone." Every faithful saint can identify with Jacob in that prayer can, indeed, be a lonely struggle. The sincere soul withdraws from the world, if only for a moment, to seek those blessings which are above. "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth" (Col. 3:1-2).

Jesus advocated solitude in prayer: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly" (Mat. 6:6). The desires of the restless heart are unknown to all except God.

Prayer Is a Desperate Struggle

"He [the angel, God] saw that he prevailed not against him" "the worm, Jacob." Who could imagine? Man prevailing with The Father of All Blessings!

Man, who is in the image of God, possesses a soul that must not be passive in prevailing upon the Creator for that specific blessing. When we have no other

helper but the Father, we learn to firm our grip on Him. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psa. 46:1b).

Prayer Is a Revealing Struggle

“He touched the hollow of his thigh; and the hollow of Jacob’s thigh was out of joint, as he wrestled with him.” Man’s many infirmities are brought to light when he wrestles in prayer. God knows all of our vulnerabilities. In the closet of prayer, we are also reminded of them.

Prayer Is a Persistent Struggle

“Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.” Though Jacob’s thigh was strained so that he was too weak to wrestle, he clung to the angel. When the Christian becomes too weak to wrestle he can, like Jacob, cling to the Lord. No force is greater than the force which is of God. Only He is the Almighty: “And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I *am* the Almighty God;

walk before me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1).

Prayer Is a Triumphant Struggle

Though the divine antagonist refused to tell Jacob his name, “He blessed him there.” Jacob became a “new man.” His name was changed from “Supplanter” (Jacob) to “Prince of God (Isra-EL). A change in name signified a change in character. With Jacob, old things passed away, and all things became new.

From That Time, He Was a Different Man!

God revealed Himself to Jacob: “I have seen God face to face.” It is during prayer that one sees God and is changed. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even* as by the Spirit of the Lord.” (2 Cor. 3:18).

His life was preserved: “And my life is preserved.” He was saved from the anger of his brother. Prayer and security are forever linked together for the struggling but faithful child of God. What a blessing!

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The Valley of Decision

Shan Jackson

Recently I was watching an old Jack Benny program and his friend Rochester used a phrase that took me back. In a state of panic he said, “Jumping Jehoshaphat.” Now, I am not knowledgeable as to what Rochester meant, nor what prompted him to use that phrase in his conversation, but I decided to try and find out what, and why this expression came to vogue those many years ago.

Jehoshaphat is a character of the Old Testament, in fact, there are several men who sport that name. In 2 Samuel 8 we encounter a prominent figure by this name. We read of Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, who was the recorder during the reign of King David. His job, as I understand it, was to be the official in charge of keeping track of the king’s business. I suppose in today’s economy he would be referred to as a business secretary to the king.

In 1 Kings 4 we find another man named Jehoshaphat. This Jehoshaphat was the son of Paruah and he was one of the twelve officers who served Israel during the reign of King Solomon. His official position required him to supply physical provisions to the king and the royal household. Each of the twelve was responsible for these provisions one month out of each year. (As a point of interest, some translations list Ben-

Hur as another of these officers.) Incidentally, Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was retained as recorder during the reign of Solomon, the same position he held during the reign of David.

In 2 Kings 9 we encounter another Jehoshaphat, father of King Jehu and son of Nimshi. We also read of a Jehoshaphat who was king of Judah, a priest whose name was Jehoshaphat, and probably others that my research was not able to find.

But the Jehoshaphat that I would like to use as the basis of this article is not a man at all. In Joel 3 we find this reading: “For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land” (Joel 3:1-2).

Dear reader, from the first time God separated His people and referred to them as “His people,” He has always held high expectations for them. From His call of Abraham to the conquest of Canaan He has always had high expectations for them. But, have we not also been separated by God from the world? Are we not known today as “His people?” Does not Paul issue

God's Words when he wrote, "Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate" (2 Cor. 6:17)? If Paul was "separated unto the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1) should not we be also? Brethren, so many questions to be answered.

Joel mentions a valley called Jehoshaphat and in the same passage he calls the same valley a valley of decision. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! for the day of Jehovah is near in the valley of decision" (Joel 3:14). Decisions concerning God's people needed to be made then and similar decisions need to be made now.

With that premise in mind let us shift our attention to Acts 20. Acts 20 begins with Paul traveling to Macedonia. From there he travels to Greece where he remains for three months. Eventually, he finds himself in Miletus just south of Ephesus on the Aegean Sea. While there he sends to Ephesus requesting the elders of that congregation to come and visit him in Miletus. When they arrive he begins to recount to them his actions and teachings while he was laboring among them. In verse 25 he makes salutations and informs them that they will never see him again. Then, in verse 28 he begins, what will become, one of the greatest warnings he ever utters. "Take heed unto yourselves,

and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit hath made you bishops, to feed the church of the Lord which he purchased with his own blood." Then verses 29-30, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you...Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them." Brethren, this falling away that the inspired penman alludes to began in the First Century, but it continues today.

Perhaps it is time, or past time, for us to enter the valley called Jehoshaphat. Perhaps it is time for us to go to the valley of decision. Joel 3:16 says that God will "roar out of Zion" so that His people will know that He is God (Joel 3:17). Perhaps it is time for His church to hear Him roar again. We have been warned. People who follow their own desires "shall not be a part of the kingdom of God."

Paul finished his visit with the Ephesian elders by saying, "I have shewed you all things" (Acts 20:35). Joel ends his book by saying, "I [God] will cleanse their blood" (Joel 3:21). Perhaps it is time, nay, it is past time, for us to ask again for God to restore His kingdom, the church, to its rightful place of honor.

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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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Recommended Reading: *The Blight Of Liberalism*

Gary L. Summers

During the past forty years brethren have published many excellent books on the theme of liberalism, but this 2005 lectureship book from the Bellview Church of Christ in Pensacola, Florida, is not only recent (June 11-15)—it also stands as one of the most comprehensive books on this subject ever compiled and is easily the largest one (675 pages) ever to be associated with this annual event.

“The Origin of Liberalism” gets the reader into the subject with some necessary definitions. Of interest are the “two things liberals and antis have in common” (3). Ultimately, the writer traces liberalism’s beginning back to the Garden of Eden but then works his way up to modern liberalism. He discusses three important philosophies: *existentialism*, *pragmatism*, and *irrationalism*, followed by a look at some of the world’s theologians of liberalism, such as Kant, Schleiermacher, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Bultmann, Tillich, and others.

Brother Guy N. Woods knew of the rising threat of liberalism. On November 3, 1966, he wrote to Ira Y. Rice, Jr., expressing agreement with the material published in the first volume of *Axe on the Root* (19); he further warned brethren shortly afterward in the Open Forum at Freed-Hardeman College. Also cited to show how long our current apostasy has been developing is the Introduction to the 1970 Freed-Hardeman College lectureship book by brother Thomas B. Warren (20).

W. Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett were two of the early apostles of liberalism in the 60s, and their doctrine is discussed. (Having known of the damage done by these two men for more than three decades,

this reviewer was stunned to find out that one of the elders of a church, living in the same town as Leroy Garrett, was fellowshipping this false teacher and the congregation with which he worships—and he (the elder) had no idea who Garrett was!) This first chapter concludes with a look at Postmodernism.

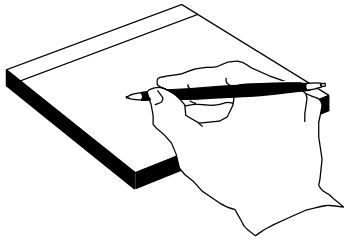
“The Attitude of Liberalism” brings to light the arrogance of those who challenge the authority of the Scriptures. Generally speaking, such men attack those who uphold the Truth, make up their own definitions, and are willing to settle for unity in diversity (so long as they get to be leaders).

The next chapter describes the infiltration techniques that liberals use (“The Covert Nature of Liberalism”) and provides some recent examples of language that departs from what we read in the Scriptures. One of those involves the phraseology used to describe two of the speakers at this year’s “Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop” (51). Still more historical material of “Liberal’s Elitism” is provided, including one man who was extremely condescending toward brethren committed to the Truth—until he was arrested for stealing from parked cars and trying to pass a hot check (65).

Such setbacks, however, do not slow down those opposed to the Gospel. They do not have a very high opinion of anyone—except themselves—and that includes “Liberalism’s View of God.” These men have no confidence in God or His Divine Word. One lengthy paragraph by Jeff Walling demonstrates his view that the Bible is not sufficient (74). Jim Woodroof is equally dissatisfied with the Bible alone (75-

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Notes From The Editor



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Jesus the Great Prophet

In the long ago, God told Moses: “The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken... I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him. And it shall come to pass, *that* whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require *it* of him. But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die” (Deu. 18:15, 18-20). That prophet Who was prophesied to come is, of course, Jesus of Nazareth.

Consider this word *prophet*. It comes from the Greek *prophetes* is a compound word meaning literally, “to speak forth.” While we generally think of a prophet as one who foretells the future, the prophet is actually one who speaks forth. The **foretelling** might be a part of that **forth-telling**, but it is not inherent in the word. When one looks at the two main Hebrew words translated prophet, we learn this lesson again. The Hebrew *nabi* is the word most often translated *prophet* in the Old Testament. *Nabi* has the basic idea of “to boil forth.” The idea is seen very well in the life of Jeremiah when he says, “Then I said, I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name. But *his word* was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not *stay*” (20:9). The ASV expresses the last phrase as, “I cannot contain.” God’s Word was in Jeremiah in such a way that he could not contain or hold back speaking that Word; God’s Word boiled forth from his heart. The other Hebrew word is *roeh* which means “seer.” This

word refers to one has seen God or has had a communication with Him and then reveals that Will of God to man.

Jesus is that great prophet of whom God spoke to Moses. The Father gave His Word to Christ. Jesus said, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that I am *he*, and *that* I do nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things” (John 8:28). Jesus was speaking forth what the Father taught Him. Later Jesus would say, “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. 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 12:48-50). When He says, “I have not spoken of myself,” He uses the Greek word *ek* (translated “of”) which shows the source of His message (it literally means “out from within”). Thus, the one who originated Christ’s message was not Himself, but the Father.

In the Lord’s prayer, Jesus prayed for His apostles: “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” (John 17:8, 14). He again states that the Word was given to Him by the Father. In this we now have an additional thought—the **same** Word Jesus received of the Father, He gave to His apostles.

The Father also affirmed that Jesus was His spokesman on the Mount of Transfiguration. “While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him” (Mat. 17:5). The Father was affirming that Jesus was that great Prophet of which He told Moses. Peter also affirms that Jesus is that prophet when he says, “For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, *that* every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people” (Acts 3:22-23).

Jesus was faithful in delivering the Word of His Father. In Jesus’ prayer, He not only speaks of receiv-

ing the Word from the Father, but of giving that same Word to His apostles. He did not change or alter that Word; He had total respect for it. He gave that **same** Word—not some different Word—to the apostles.

The apostles received the same Word which the Father had given to the Son and which He had given to them. Like Jesus, the apostles were faithful in dealing with the Word. Paul wrote of the Thessalonians' need to hold the traditions they had been taught. (2 The. 2:15). *Traditions* means that which has been handed down. In this case, the *traditions* were those teachings which the Father had handed down to Christ, He had handed down to his apostles, and Paul was now handing down to them. Paul, and all the apostles, had dealt faithfully with that Word.

In faithfully delivering that Word to others, Paul expected them to deal just as faithfully with it as did Christ and himself. In writing to Timothy, Paul said, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2). Paul expected Timothy to hold faithfully to the Word ("the things that thou has heard of me"), but also to give it to others who would just as faithfully handle it as Christ, Paul, and Timothy had done. That pure Word of God has now been handed down to us today; it has been committed to our trust. Jude wrote, "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). "The faith," the Word of God, has been delivered to us, and we must be faithful stewards of God's Word today.

The sad fact remains that some today do not deal with God's Word faithfully. We all know of the rank liberals in the church today who do not hold to the Word (e.g., Rubel Shelly, Jeff Walling, Randy Harris, Max Lucado, et al.). However, perhaps even more worrisome to me are those in the church who are generally considered to be *sound*, but who teach false doctrines and concerning whom very few seem to care. Otherwise faithful brethren continue to use these men on their lecture programs, and many will even defend these men. For example, brethren continue to use a brother who teaches a doctrine which destroys the authority of the eldership (i.e., congregational reevaluation and reconfirmation of the elders, requiring each elder to get a certain percentage of congregational votes or be removed). Further, the same brother advocates that a foreign citizen can marry an American citizen for

the purpose of defrauding the American government and getting into the United States, divorce that person, and still have the right to marry because supposedly he never had the "intent" to be married (actually, he did have the intent to be "married," even though his motive and purpose for the "marriage" were fraudulent). Yet, many faithful brethren simply ignore the false doctrines of this brother. Why do faithful Gospel preachers continue to appear on lectureships with one who teaches such damning doctrines? If Mac Deaver was to appear on those programs, they would refuse to speak on them—and rightly so, yet they will not do so with one who teaches such doctrines as noted above. Why, brethren? Not only would these brethren not speak on a program with brother Deaver, they also would not support any organization of which brother Deaver is a part. Why then will faithful brethren support organizations that employ and promote men who hold such doctrines as those described above?

God told Moses that this prophet of Whom he spoke would speak what the Father commanded Him. We should do no less today. Those who speak other things need to be held accountable for those false teachings, and unless and until they repent of them, they should not be used by faithful brethren. They certainly should not be promoted and encouraged (2 John 9-11). MH

(Continued from page 1)

76). This declared deficiency of the Scriptures is just part of their problem.

Liberals also challenge the Lord Jesus Christ by first of all denying that sound doctrine is necessary. Carroll Osburn is quoted in that regard from his book, *The Peaceable Kingdom* (89-90). Rubel Shelly defends denominationalism (90) and the unscriptural tradition of Easter (91). In other words, the liberal philosophy is summed up by the word—**Whatever**. According to liberal philosophy, God hardly ever means what He says. They are akin to the Pharisees who undoubtedly thought they were clever to have found a way around the fifth commandment by saying, "It is corban."

"Liberalism and the Holy Spirit" covers the various theories of the way in which the Bible is inspired (97-98). The writer briefly relates the effect that Calvinism has had on doctrines concerning the Holy Spirit. After giving a brief history of Wesley and

Parham, he discusses *neo-Pentecostalism*, the *Vineyard Fellowship*, and the *Third Wave*. Rubel Shelly is eager to embrace this error (why not?). In 1996 he “spoke on the *Mid-South Conference of Spiritual Renewal* conducted at Florence, Alabama” (103). Mike Bickle, founder of the *Kansas City Prophets*, now part of the *Vineyard Fellowship Movement*, also spoke on the same program. This group claims to have the gift of prophecy.

“Liberalism and the Origin of the World” looks at the “big bang” theory and explores interestingly the matter of “cause and effect” (109). The recent admission of Dr. Antony Flew (the atheist who debated brother Warren in 1976) that some kind of God may exist, after all, is also referenced (113). One other challenge to the truth is found by those who espouse theistic evolution. In particular are noted the views of John Clayton, which (whether he realizes it or not) question the inspiration of the Scriptures (115).

The longest chapter in the book is “Liberalism’s Effect on Bible Translations.” All brethren would profit from reading this excellent summary (119-68), which begins with a history of English translations and sets forth the characteristics of a good one. Consideration is given to some of the deficiencies of modern translations, beginning with the Revised Standard Version and includes the New International Version and a few others (142-55). The chapter concludes with a look at how today’s erring brethren have followed some of the doctrinal departures in these faulty versions. The writer cites about 55 sources and provides 62 endnotes.

As the reader might imagine, “Liberalism’s View of the Church” is different than what faithful brethren have preached for decades. The writer points out the way liberals use their own special language when referring to us, such as “our heritage,” “our fellowship,” and “our traditions,” all of which seek to make us denominational (171). Some mention is also made of unity efforts (181), which have not promoted harmony but compromise. A companion chapter is: “Liberalism and the Uniqueness of the Church,” which refutes such popular notions as “one church is just as good as another,” “the church is just like the airport,” and “join the church of your choice.”

The next area of consideration is: “Liberalism and the Work of the Church,” which includes a chart of “How to Determine Authority from God’s Word” (212). Included is a lengthy section on the role of women in the church, feminism’s influence upon the church, and false arguments made to justify women in

positions of leadership. Since the work of the church is so broad, an entirely different aspect is examined: “The Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Organization” in Nashville, Tennessee (231-37).

Related to the previous topic is “Liberalism’s Effect on the Mission of the Church.” Some of the strange things that are referenced are that liberal congregations are now supporting *In Search of the Lord’s Way*, one congregation is advertising a “Recreation Ministry,” and brethren are allowing their young people to attend Winterfest, which is little more than a Pentecostal pep rally (250). Also related is “Liberalism and Church Growth,” which analyzes thoroughly what hinders church growth and what truly promotes it.

Hardly any aspect of our worship and work has been left untouched by those who have departed from the faith; thus the reader finds material dealing with “Liberalism’s Effect on the Organization of the Church.” Heretics like Lynn (“big sick denomination”) Anderson are recommending that brethren follow the thinking of denominational leaders (274). “Liberalism and the Eldership” notices that some elders go beyond their authority—while some are not permitted to exercise the authority they have. Women Elders have been added in some churches, and others have bought into the faulty notion of “Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders” (292-94).

The chapter that discusses “Liberalism and Fellowship” asks the important questions: “Can we continue to fellowship apostate congregations?” (307-308). In “Liberalism and Worship” there is a portion of an interview from *The Baptist Standard*, which provides some insight into Max Lucado’s heretical ideas. There follow chapters relating to liberalism’s effect on singing and preaching. On page 342 the editor of this volume, Michael Hatcher, prints a chart concerning music—what God does and does not authorize.

The next two applications of liberalism relate to salvation and baptism. The former reveals the weakness of “the umbrella of grace” concept, and the latter looks at teaching of *The Standard Manual for Baptist Churches* by Edward T. Hiscox, a philosophy endorsed by Max Lucado (369, 376).

“The State of the Church Today” includes some interesting statistics about current congregations of the Lord’s church (379-82) and is followed by “How To Recognize a Liberal Congregation,” which includes the following subsections: “A Needed Vaccine Against Liberalism,” “A Needed Antidote for Liberalism,” and “A Needed Amputation of Liberalism.” A chapter that

clearly needs to be read by brethren everywhere is: “‘Moderates’ Pave the Way for Liberalism.” Most congregations do not just wake up one day and say, “We think we should be liberals.” It occurs by degrees, and all should be aware of the warning signs.

At this point is included the chapter titled, “Reaction to Liberalism—Anti-ism.” Two of the sub-headings are “Common Elements of Anti-ism and Liberalism” and “Expediency: Major Principle Misunderstood by Anti-ism.” The first of these provides an explanation for some brethren swinging from one extreme to the other.

Few would probably envy being assigned “Liberalism and Our ‘Christian’ Schools,” and 33 pages is probably not nearly enough room to cover everything, but the reader will certainly have enough information to seriously consider the subject. Most of us already know about Abilene Christian University (447-55), but the writer refreshes our memories with references to theistic evolution, Carroll Osburn’s disdain for Truth, the school’s willingness to support fellowship broader than that prescribed in the New Testament, and its support for feminism and unscriptural roles for women.

Some professors at Abilene felt compelled to take issue publicly against one of their colleagues who wrote a letter to the editor, upholding the biblical view which opposes homosexuality. Their letter of rebuttal against him and in favor of the homosexual is reprinted on page 454. This, by the way, is the upshot of liberalism: their “love and compassion” cannot allow them to condemn anything or anyone—except those who stand for Truth both morally and doctrinally.

Oklahoma Christian University has at least one professor who openly supports the theory of evolution (455). Another OCU professor is one of the officers of the “Winterfest Group,” which subjects young people to Jeff Walling and “contemporary Christian performers” who are not even members of the church (457). OCU also publishes *The Christian Chronicle*, which promotes every aspect of liberalism and in its recent July issue degraded itself by airing information for all to see that did not need to be made public.

Harding University has professors like Flavil Yeakley, John Mark Hicks, and Evertt Huffard (Dean of the school) who promote openly or approve of the “community church” concept (460-62), which is reflected in many of their graduates’ disassociation with the churches of Christ. Jimmy Allen, once a great Gospel preacher, has now compromised even on the plan of salvation, as promoted in his book, *Rebaptism?*

(464).

David Lipscomb is well-known for its apostasy and fellowship of those who are “Christians” but just do not “go to the church of Christ” (466). They also invite false teachers in to conduct seminars, such as Joe Beam who claims that God tells him when someone lies to him in a counseling session (467). F. LaGard Smith, “Scholar in Residence of Christian Studies,” announced as early as 1988 at the Pepperdine lectures that God will destroy the soul, not punish it. He has decided that the biblical doctrine of hell cannot be true (468). Although Freed-Hardeman and Faulkner University are not in the same category as these others, they are definitely fellowshipping along liberal lines (469-76).

The next chapter deals with “Liberal Publications and Workshops,” and it covers the “Spiritual Growth Workshop” here in Orlando, Florida, along with the “Tulsa International Soul Winning Workshop” (486-87). It also refers to *The Christian Chronicle*, which is published by Oklahoma Christian University (488).

Following “Liberalism’s View of Law and Love” is a connection that brethren need to see, which perhaps we have overlooked: “Liberalism and Calvinism.” Some of our brethren have had so much association with denominationalists that they are now teaching the theology of John Calvin. Given attention are Jack Exum’s *The ABC’s of Grace* (507-508), Bill Love’s *The Core Gospel* (508), Milton Jones’ *Grace: the Heart of the Fire* (with a Foreword written by Max Lucado 508-509), William Mural Worthey’s *Jesus Our Righteousness* (509-13), David Chadwell’s *Having the Faith of Abraham* (513-15). Briefly mentioned are Mike Cope’s *Righteousness Inside Out* and Norman Bales’ *How Do I Know I Am Saved?* (515). The chapter also mentions those whose views of the Holy Spirit tend toward Calvinism, including those of Terry Rush, Terry Bell, and Mac Deaver (516-17). Of course, Max Lucado and Rubel Shelly have been leaders in asserting certain aspects of Calvinistic doctrine (519-20). Brethren need to give this material serious consideration.

The next five chapters cover some additional fundamental applications: “Liberalism’s Ethic,” “Liberalism and Morality,” “Liberalism and the Role of Women,” “Liberalism’s Support of Homosexuality,” and “Liberalism and the Home.” The material on homosexuality is from the perspective of liberals in society rather than the church.

Another chapter dealing with the effect of this philosophy in society is “Liberalism in the Courts,”

which considers: “How Should We View the United States Constitution?” and “Following Precedent.” An Appendix is included of all appointments to the Supreme Court (600-602). A not-altogether-unrelated topic is “Liberalism in Politics,” which deals in part about the intent of our founding fathers. The idea that there is no truth in politics, which liberals obviously believe, comes from Karl Marx. In his eulogy of Marx, Engels stated: “Our dialectical philosophy abolishes all the notions of absolute and definitive truth” (610). Other quotes from Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas are similar.

“Liberalism and Public Education” presents a thorough look at the history and current condition of our public schools. If students are unable to read or execute simple mathematical calculations in their minds, there is a reason for it—these abilities are being de-emphasized by many. Several examples are cited of both teacher and student deficiencies. Note the com-

ments of “the smartest student” in a class (623). John Dewey himself, who has had a profound effect on public education, said that “early education need not be tied to specific content” (635). Grades are being de-emphasized while the student’s self-esteem is exalted. Values clarification, death education, sex education, and several other topics are discussed. A look at some of the textbooks being used is instructive, also. The 44-page chapter closes with “Ten Principles Used By All Liberals” (653-60). This section shows how that the liberals in education and the liberals in the church used the same methods.

The volume closes with a look at “Liberalism in the Media”—an obvious fact, but we are in danger of becoming desensitized to it. The book costs only \$12 (plus postage) and may be ordered from the Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526.

3671 Oak Vista Lane; Winter Park, FL 32792

Spiritual Pacifism

Tracy Dugger

Webster defines *pacifism* as: “Opposition to war or to the use of military force for any purpose.” Certainly, there are brethren who oppose the use of physical force on the part of a Christian toward other human beings whether it be a soldier, law enforcement officer, or even in self-defense. It is not the intention of this article to discuss that issue. However, I want to expose a very damaging attitude among some brethren with regard to another form of pacifism—this I will call “spiritual pacifism.”

As long as there exists truth and error there will always be conflict (Mat. 10:34-39). It seems some believe that if we ignore controversy, this conflict between good and evil and truth and false doctrine will disappear. The devil has propagated this lie in every generation. Those who so believe could not be more wrong about a view! The only remedy for sin is righteousness and the only remedy for error is Truth. The battle is not won by meeting on the “plains of Ono,” nor offering a compromise somewhere between “you do your thing and let me do mine.” There is a war to be waged as long as there is a devil who walks about like a lion, seeking who he may devour (1 Pet. 5:8) and as long as there is one to flee from (Jam. 4:7). Of this war, Paul writes:

For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war

after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ (2 Tim. 2:3).

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses (1 Tim. 6:12).

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (Eph. 6:12-17).

Yet, we have those among us today who have sent the white flag out in the name of love and understanding. When will we learn that there is no compromise with error, no laying down the arms against those who

malign the saving Gospel. God's terms for surrender have always been the same—"It's My Way Or No Way!" This is illustrated numerous times by Holy Writ. Moses would not compromise with Pharaoh and stated, "there shall not an hoof be left behind" (Exo. 10:26). Micaiah would not compromise with Ahab when he stated to his messenger, "As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak" (1 Kin. 22:14). Paul explained regarding false teachers, "To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Gal. 2:5). We must make sure that we do not forget the supreme example, the Lord Jesus Christ, who unequivocally corrected the Sadducees in Matthew 22:29: "Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

Must we be loving in our approach with false teachers and their error? **Always!** The Bible so teaches (Eph. 4:15). Must we exhibit a care and respect for the souls of all involved? Even those who are in error? **Absolutely!** "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one **in the spirit of meekness**; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1).

Have we forgotten the lessons of history when it

comes to church growth? The church always grew when it was militant and aggressive against error. We see this in the first century, we read about it during the Restoration Movement, and many remember it in the mid-portion of this present century. Men were ready to debate error wherever it raised its ugly head. Preachers of the church preached biblical not social sermons. They exposed the error of the day—both religiously and morally. They lovingly told people that they were wrong and showed them from the Scriptures. They remembered that there was a war to be waged.

Many today, in our "age of tolerance" have forgotten, or never learned, that there is a war going on. They have therefore become "spiritual pacifists." They seemingly believe it wrong to engage the enemy; to wage an offensive against false doctrines which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11; 1 Tim. 1:19-20). It is as if some believe that friendship with the world is equal to friendship with God and yet inspirations repudiates that idea (Jam. 4:4). Let us together with God's help put away our pacifism and "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil" (Eph. 6:11).

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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The United Church of Christ and the Church of Christ Are Not the Same!

David B. Smith

Lately, several people have asked about the organization known as the United Church of Christ. The group has been in the headlines for the last few months because of its endorsement of the homosexual agenda. Its Synod met recently and passed a resolution to approve same-sex marriages. One source suggested that approval rating in the membership for the decision is about eighty percent. That is, the majority of the membership favors “gay marriage.” Naturally people are curious about the group since “Church of Christ” is a part of the organization’s title. Some members of the Lord’s church (the church of Christ) have been asked about the approval of “gay marriage,” as if the United Church of Christ and the church of Christ are the same. One dear sister was even asked by a co-worker what she would do now that “her church” was endorsing homosexuality. They are not the same, and people need to know the difference.

The United Church of Christ was founded in the late 1950s. The easiest way to describe the group is by drawing attention to other groups. Think of the controversy surrounding the Episcopalian religion not long ago because it confirmed a known homosexual to oversee a diocese. People thought, “they are definitely a liberal group.” If it can be imagined, amplify the liberalism of groups like the Episcopalians or the Disciples of Christ and you will have an idea what the United Church of Christ is like. Their endorsement of homosexuality alone should say something about this newly-formed denomination.

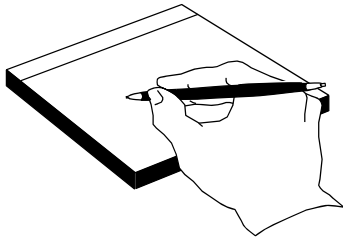
The group is organized by human standards. Mead records the structure of the organization, stating:

Beside the local church stands the associations, conferences, and the general synod. Local churches in a geographic area are grouped into an association.... Associations are grouped into conferences.... It meets annually, and its main function is to coordinate the work and witness of its local churches and associations, to render counsel and advisory service, and to establish conference offices, centers, institutions, and other agencies (290).

Synods, presidents, clergy/laity distinctions, conferences, and such like clearly distinguish the United Church of Christ from the church built by the Lord in organization. The UCC is a man-made organization ruled by men; the church of the Christ is a divine organism guided by its head Jesus the Christ. For the friends and neighbors who ask, please show them the biblical basis for true organization—in order for them to understand that the UCC is just the work of a man. The statement made in Acts 14:23 is a good starting point: “And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed.” In every individual congregation, the apostles appointed a plurality of qualified men (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-11) to oversee, protect, and feed the local flock (Acts 20:28; 1 The. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). The words used of these men—

(Continued on page 3)

Notes From The Editor



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Purpose

There are some who are now trying to defend the reevaluation/reconfirmation of elders based upon the purpose for the action (they just do not call it this). I would never denigrate the aspect of purpose behind actions. It is true that if one has an authorized activity, that one's purpose in doing the action is also important. The action might be scriptural but the individual (or group) doing it might sin because of their purpose. We see this principle with those who preached the Truth but their purpose was to bring affliction to Paul (Phi. 1:15-16). However, one cannot justify an action based upon the purpose of the action. Consider some examples with me.

It is God's desire that all men be saved. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). Jesus came to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). It should also be the desire of every Christian to save souls (Mat. 28:19-20; Acts 8:4; et. al.). Even as it was Jesus' purpose to seek and save the lost, so it should be the desire of Christians today to do the same.

When children are conceived, they are innocent. The Bible never teaches anything such as the Calvinist doctrine of Hereditary Depravity. Jesus taught that one must become like a little baby to enter the kingdom. "And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3). He also taught that the kingdom consisted of ones who were like little babies. "But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 19:14). Thus, we know that those babies in the womb are without sin. If one of those babies dies, he will enter heaven's home. Therefore, for the purpose of saving souls, we can state that

abortion is now right! Now we would not advocate abortion for any other reason, and if one gets an abortion for some other reason it is certainly wrong and needs to be condemned. However, if the purpose is to save the souls of those babies who are at this point free of sin (if they grow up most of them will be lost), then certainly no one would object to this way of saving souls.

Brother Lee Davis is in need of additional support for his work in teaching at Four Seas College in Singapore. In playing blackjack, a person can learn to count cards and by doing so can turn the odds in his favor instead of the odds favoring the house (this is why casinos refuse them entrance if they know they are counting cards). Thus, while we all recognize that gambling is sinful, if we change the purpose of the gambling, surely no one will object. The purpose is no longer a selfish purpose, to gain money for self; it is now for the purpose of supporting a missionary. Everyone agrees that supporting missionaries is a good work and greatly needed today. Thus, when the purpose changes to doing this good work, it will make the action of gambling all right.

I would pray that no one would ever argue such as the two previous examples. However, we have preaching brethren who are now arguing the same principle as these ridiculous arguments above, only they argue that a congregation may reevaluate/reconfirm elders. The way in which this is argued is that it would be wrong if it is a "hostile" takeover (whatever that means). They generally also admit that it would be wrong if they do this on a regular basis (how regular no one knows). However, if there is a stalemate in the eldership and some of those elders are not what they should be and thus blocking the eldership from doing the right things, then to get rid of those unscriptural and unqualified elders a congregation may engage in this process of reevaluating and reconfirming the present elders (I wonder if the liberal elders would consider this a "hostile" takeover?).

Thus, you have that if it is done for the purpose of a takeover or on a regular basis, then it is wrong; but if you do it for the purpose of getting rid of some liberal elders who are causing a stalemate in the eldership, then it is right. What difference is there in this line of argumentation and the line of argumentation for abortion or gambling?

To justify the action of reevaluating and reconfirming elders these ask how you deal with the situation where you have a stalemate in the eldership or have

liberal elders in the eldership. Instead of simply doing what the Bible authorizes, they devise a scheme which destroys the authority of the eldership and gives it to the congregation. The elders are shepherds under the Chief Shepherd. Would these same individuals agree to reevaluate and reconfirm the Chief Shepherd? If you can do it to one, why not the other? The fact of the matter is that the action is wrong to begin with.

What does the Bible teach about elders who are not what they are suppose to be? Listen to Paul give instructions to Timothy on this: “Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses. Them that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear” (1 Tim. 5:19-20). This procedure is simply not good enough for many. Instead they wring their hands and come up with some unauthorized action to get rid of unscriptural elders. Brethren, let us start doing what the Bible says instead of following man-made ways.

MH

(Continued from page 1)

“pastors,” “overseers,” “elders,” or “bishops”—merely describe their role within the local church. This is important for several reasons. For one, it establishes the autonomy of each local congregation. No eldership or congregation has the oversight of another. The government is self-contained. Remember that the church is a divine monarchy, so the ultimate source of authority is the Christ. While the actions of each congregation are certainly open for scrutiny (Rev. 2-3), there is no earthly headquarters to which local congregations report. Their king is in heaven, not on earth. Next, it shows that scriptural organization requires a plurality of “pastor/elders” and not one. The very idea of “one pastor over a church” (denomination) or “one man (pope) on earth over all congregations” (Catholicism) is the same corrupted doctrine that spawned a great apostasy in the mid-second century A.D. In local churches, there are also to be deacons (Phi. 1:1). While their work is not equal to that of an eldership, it is no less important. The qualifications (1 Tim. 3:8-13) and the name itself describe their important work—the work of service. Yet everyone is important in the Lord’s body. There are no “clergy/laity” separations; this is foreign to the Word of God. Elders, deacons, and all members of the church of the Christ are members one of another. This pattern is not evident in the United Church of Christ, thus it bears no connection to the true

Lord’s church.

Those interested in an in-depth study of the UCC should reference the organization’s self-published materials, especially the sections that detail the documents they consider authoritative. It is certain that in the UCC, man-made documents and creeds get high-praise and attention on par with the Bible. Councils (like the Nicaean Council of A.D. 325) are accepted as God-ordained which demonstrates the Catholic roots of the group. However, the Lord teaches that His people have no rule of faith and practice but the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The New Testament is the “once-for-all” delivered pattern for the church (Jude 3), and it provides all the necessary guidance for “life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). Everything man needs to know to serve God faithfully in this life is provided in the Bible. Accordingly, no group is “of” God if it does not follow the book God gave. While the UCC might be glad to say *Bible*, it does not consider the Bible to be an objective and exclusive source of authority. That is the difference between the UCC and the church of Christ.

Another notable difference between the two is the UCC’s use of women in the role that God gave specifically to men. Many *preachers* for the UCC are female. Yet the Bible is clear: “But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (1 Tim. 2:12). God designated men to lead in spiritual matters (1 Tim. 2:8-15). This is also a difference between the Lord’s church and the United Church of Christ denomination.

Other notable differences include the UCC’s tolerance toward unethical activities, their employment of unauthorized innovations in worship (like mechanical instruments of music), their founding date/place, their corrupted plan of salvation, et cetera.

The point is that while the designations for both groups share some similarities, there is a world of difference between the two. It is unfortunate that the similarities have caused a bit of confusion, but it has also provided an opportunity to “*give* an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear” (1 Pet. 3:15). Since people are asking, why not take the chance to tell them about the true Lord’s church and at the same time voice opposition to the sinful practice of homosexuality? Surely this is redeeming the time and thus pleasing to God.

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Edification

Gary W. Summers

How often do people just grow up and accept the teachings and traditions of their childhood without really thinking through those things? Not only must information that we were taught be re-examined, so must the more subtle impressions which created false ideas be corrected. Since it is convenient to do so in this instance, I will use myself as an example.

Growing up in the Methodist Church, I formed certain views of “church” and what “worship” was all about. A sermon, for instance, contained an average of one Scripture—one which was usually read at the beginning of the hour. A sermon was designed to be boring. An organ was for playing religious hymns. Only the best singers were allowed to be in the choir, and everyone else listened to them. Before the sermon the organ would play (loudly) while the people came in to be seated. After the sermon the organ would play while the people filed past the minister to shake his hand and tell him, “Nice sermon.” Everyone was then free to move about their lives until the next Sunday morning. Tithing was very important.

It is strange how many of these wrong notions (except the last one mentioned) have been adopted by members of the Lord’s church; our goal here is to present what the Bible teaches about all these things, beginning with the purpose for our meeting in the first place.

The Church

How often do those in denominations preach about the church? Probably there was some teaching which I simply fail to recall, but even if it is mentioned that the Lord built His church (Mat. 6:18) or that He purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28), where in the Scriptures does someone go to teach about the Methodist Church? Neither they nor any other religious denomination can find their origin in the Scriptures.

Lost in this institution of substitution is not only the ownership and sacrifice of Christ on the church’s behalf, but the very nature and purpose for coming together is also obscured. A religious denomination such as the Methodists, for example, exists not to make people Christians—but to make them Methodists (the same is true of any religious group). In other words, the Bible can teach a person how to be a Christian, but no one becomes a Methodist without extra-biblical teaching. Catholics and Lutherans have composed cate-

chisms, which will indoctrinate those who study in the ways of Catholicism or Lutheranism. Religious groups, in other words, do not merely have as their goal making someone a Christian; they desire to make someone a Christian *plus*.

Therefore, their understanding and teaching concerning the church as the body of Christ for which He died is somewhat skewed by their attempt to weave a man-made, unauthorized denomination into the fabric. The purpose for worship becomes in some measure propaganda to perpetuate the religious sect, which in turn puts an emphasis on making it palatable for all—perhaps even entertaining.

In reality, Jesus loved the church and gave Himself for it (Eph. 5:25). It has purposes for existence, but these are not the same as those of denominationalism. The church of the Bible exists to save sinners. The church has the responsibility to preach the Gospel of Christ to the lost, not recruit members. As a secondary result of people obeying the Gospel, Jesus adds them to His church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Have members of the body of Christ been influenced by this type of thinking that devalues the work of Christ and the importance of salvation to treat the church as a mere social club which periodically has a membership drive? Rather, we are God’s people with an important work to accomplish.

Worship

Closely related to the correct ideas of the New Testament teaching regarding the church is its worship. The meeting of brethren on the first day of the week is not for purely social reasons, although we do greet, speak, and socialize with one another. The purpose of worship is two-fold. First, we come together as a body of believers to offer up our collective worship to God. Although Paul was in a hurry to get to Jerusalem in time for the Passover, he waited six days for the church to meet on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7).

How did he know they would be meeting then? Paul had been engaged in this region in evangelism; in fact, he writes: “Furthermore, when I came to Troas to *preach* Christ’s gospel, and a door was opened unto me of the Lord, I had no rest in my spirit” (2 Cor. 2:12-13a). Paul had established these churches; therefore, he knew what he had taught them and what they practiced. The time for brethren to meet for worship was on the

first day of the week.

Brethren in Troas met then “to break bread,” which stands for the Lord’s Supper, which in turn represents all the acts of worship. Some have erroneously concluded that the Lord’s Supper is the most important aspect of worship; in truth, everything done in the assembly is important. The writer of Hebrews exhorts members of the body of Christ not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25). Some have been known to come into worship, take the Lord’s Supper, and leave. They not only fail to worship God properly; they also have lost sight of the second purpose for God’s people coming together—to edify one another.

The idea of trying to remain aloof from the members of the body of Christ is foreign to the New Testament, and it would be just as silly for a finger to (if possible) wander off by itself and to maintain its own agenda. No one thrives spiritually apart from the other members of the body. In fact, the apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers were all given for “the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-12).

Every new Christian has the responsibility to grow (1 Pet. 2:2), which results from the teaching of the Word: “And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). Christians have an obligation to edify one another (1 The. 5:11). This important task cannot be accomplished for those who wish to be as isolated as possible from their brothers and sisters. In many congregations there is an individual or a family who never attends Bible classes, shows up for worship only on Sunday morning, usually sits in the back row, and leaves as soon as the final “Amen” is said. One couple in a particular congregation would not even hang around that long; they would leave during the closing song. How can such actions fulfill the definition of *edification*?

Have some retained denominational concepts? How are these actions different from what many in denominations do? The only differences are that we have no organ blaring in the background and we use more Scriptures in a sermon. The same cold attitude may remain. If we had choirs, these folks would probably not object because they seldom enthusiastically participate in the singing.

What are God’s expectations concerning worship? He desires that we do so in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24). *In spirit* means that we are offering God our worship from the heart. Our singing and praying cannot be mechanical, ritualistic, or cold. It ought to flow from a grateful heart. To call it a “raucous celebration” goes a bit too far, but it should be characterized by exuberance.

To worship *in truth* means that it must be according to the Word of God rather than according to the wisdom and preferences of man. Worship is directed to God; we are edified by it; nothing in the New Testament indicates that it is to entertain people who are bored with what God has required or too shallow to think about spiritual concepts. Some care nothing for truth—that what we do is authorized by God; such an attitude was not that of the Bereans, who searched the Scriptures daily to see if the things Paul were teaching were the truth (Acts 17:11).

Many people today possess more of the spirit of Cain, who brought to God what **he** wanted rather than what God required (Gen. 4:1-6). Many people prefer “will worship” (Col. 2:23—KJV) or “self-imposed religion” (NKJ). They think (at least subconsciously) that worship is all about them. Therefore, if **they** are entertained and amused, they think the worship has been great—especially since they did not have to put any effort into it.

Many sermons are boring to some for just that reason—because they made no effort to follow or comprehend it. They came with the idea of: “Here I am; now do something that holds my attention.” This notion contradicts all that we have looked at concerning the purposes of worship and the expectations God has of us. While it is true that sermons can be boring (not well arranged or thought through or not well presented) and the singing can be less than inspiring (too low or too slow), the key ingredient to meaningful worship is the attitude possessed by the worshipper.

When we meet together, therefore, we are offering worship to God and building up each other. We often stay and visit with one another so we can rejoice in the successes of our brethren and sympathize with the problems we all periodically face (1 Cor. 12:25-27). We are inter-connected, as the body of Christ, we are supposed to be. People should look at us and describe us as a family with a loving heavenly Father. Nor is Sunday the only involvement we have with each other. We are commanded: “exhort one another daily, while

it is called To day” (Heb. 3:13).

The Scriptures declare frequently the level of involvement and concern we ought to share: “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s *well-being*” (1 Cor. 10:24); “*Let nothing be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself” (Phi. 2:4); “through love serve one another” (Gal. 5:13b).

Furthermore, worship is not an end in itself (for us). We do come to honor God, but we are also edified, which enables us to be better Christians and better servants. Most Christians have heard Hebrews 10:25 (“not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting *one another*, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching”), but perhaps they have not looked closely at the construction of the sentence, which begins in verse 23.

There are two primary commands: “Let us hold fast” and “Let us consider.” The first clause is an exhortation for us to be faithful, and it is based upon God’s faithfulness. The writer had previously mentioned that what God promises He keeps, because He cannot lie (Heb. 6:17-20). The second exhortation deals with our treatment of each other. Below are the two commandments as they appear in Hebrews 10:23-24: “Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works.”

These are the commandments; the oft-cited Hebrews 10:25 informs us as to **the manner** in which those two commandments are to be accomplished by the Christian. We remain steadfast in our hope, without wavering and stir each other up to love and good works by “not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” In other words, one purpose for our gathering on the first day of the week is to be built up in our faithfulness (edification). Bible classes and worship accomplish that goal. A close examination of the Scriptures among like-minded brethren serves as a reaffirmation of our commitment to Jesus. It also serves as an opportunity to stir each other up to things we ought to be doing—good works (Tit. 2:14)—things that are motivated by our love of God and one another.

If we only come to worship out of a sense of obligation (I know I should do it), to be entertained passively instead of being an active participant, or to get it over with so we can get back to our own life (and the plans we have made), we are missing the point of

our being together entirely.

The saints meet to show our reverence for our Creator and to become equipped “for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). God expects all of us to be servants, but we need to be equipped for that work. The teaching and training we receive in classes and in the assembly provide a large part of what we need—if we pay heed to what is being said and done.

100% Pure

Because we meet to be edified, only the truth will serve. Error cannot build up anyone. False doctrine will save neither ourselves nor those who listen to us (1 Tim. 4:16). Consider a few examples. Suppose a druggist, in dispensing medicine (paid for by Medicare) decided to dilute the ingredients with some foreign substance. Do we not expect purity rather than a pollutant in our prescription? What would we think of a teacher who taught our youngsters that $2 \times 5 = 9$? Would we not prefer that pure mathematics be taught instead of the inventive kind? If we receive income tax information from someone, we expect it to be accurate. (Few people enjoy being audited.) Anyone who told a taxi driver to take him to 42nd Street would probably be irate over being told he must leave the cab at 135th.

We all expect correct information when we seek it and grow upset if we are ill-advised. For some reason, however, when it comes to religion, the attitude of certain individuals is: “Just tell me anything. I don’t care.” What sort of rationale is that? It is one that either fails to recognize or is unconcerned about the difference between truth and error. It is the equivalent of saying of medicine, “I don’t know whether this bottle contains a cure or poison; oh, well. It doesn’t matter. I’ll just take it anyway.” Truth saves (John 8:31-32), and error kills, yet some are as blase as they can be concerning which one they prefer to hear. As a result of listening to false prophets (Mat. 7:15-20), many will be lost on that great and final day (Mat. 7:21-23).

False teachers tell people that it is all right to do things (usually of an immoral nature) that the Word of God forbids (Jude 3-4; 2 Pet. 2). They also deny that certain commands (such as living evangelistically) need to be observed (Mat. 28:18-20). They say things that people want to **hear** (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Not only must preachers and teachers be careful to “*speak* as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11), the listener also has the responsibility to demand pure teaching from God’s Word.

Besides edification the church in general and the Christian individually has the responsibility to be evangelistic and benevolent. These are unlikely attributes of those who come begrudgingly to worship and hastily depart. Such *members* remain untrained and unmotivated to serve either God or their fellow man. Some are only interested in their own salvation and do not care about the spiritual condition of others.

We truly thank God for those who are growing in knowledge and who approach Bible study and worship

with enthusiasm—another opportunity to learn and be a better servant to the Master. Not only must preachers teach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27), members of the body of Christ must learn it. How much more effective would the church be if all of those who were baptized for the forgiveness of their sins would take that decision seriously! Spiritual growth cannot be considered an option when it is a necessity. All of us need teaching—edification.

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MICHAEL HATCHER, EDITOR

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A Statement from Brother Dave Miller

Dub McClish

On September 23, 2005, brother Dave Miller issued the following statement in response to the accusations of numerous brethren that he has taught and practiced the unauthorized elder reevaluation/reaffirmation procedure and that he has advocated an erroneous position regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage. We produce his statement in full below:

For Honorable Brethren Who Sincerely Want to Know

The vast majority of those in our great brotherhood who encounter rumors and hearsay choose to believe the best about their brother, suspending judgment until verification is forthcoming. They sincerely want to believe and hope the best about their brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Corinthians 13:7). *For the sake of these dear brethren*, and in the spirit of Proverbs 18:17 (“the first one to plead his cause seems right, until his neighbor comes and examines him”), I wish to offer a brief word of explanation and clarification concerning the allegations and accusations that are circulating.

“Elder Reaffirmation”

I do not believe in the “reaffirmation/reevaluation of elders” as my critics have defined the concept.

I do not believe that elders should be temporarily appointed and their “terms” only continued on the basis of an arbitrary vote of the membership.

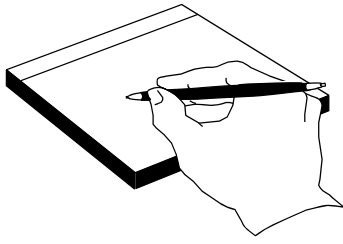
I do not believe that a congregation has the right to use any procedure that expels qualified men from the eldership.

What I **do** believe is that elders have the authority to solicit from the congregation the congregation’s desires regarding who should serve them as elders.

The specific instance at Brown Trail in 1990 entailed a process that was instigated and executed by the elders themselves. The elders appointed Johnny Ramsey, two instructors from the school of preaching, and me to do the “leg work,” but it was **the elders themselves that initiated the process and implemented it** from beginning to end. The issue boils down to a single point, illustrated by two questions: (1) Does an elder (or preacher, deacon, Bible class teacher) have permission from God to request the members to give him their feedback regarding whether they think he is qualified to continue to serve and/or perform his job properly? (2) And does that elder then have the scriptural right to decide whether he will remove himself on the basis of the response that he gets from the members? The few passages that have anything to do with the selection and ongoing qualification of officers in the church (e.g., Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 5:17-20), imply that the congregation has the right to participate in the appointment (i.e., “evaluation”) of their leaders. The process or method by which an individual is deemed to be biblically qualified is not spelled out in Scripture. It is therefore a matter of expediency that falls within the God-granted **authority of the elders**. Those who have turned this issue into their pet hobby are the very ones who are tampering with the authority of elders.

(Continued on page 4)

Notes From The Editor



**Michael
Hatcher**

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Word Games!

For years faithful brethren have realized that one cannot simply accept some responses at face value. One good illustration deals with the subject of the inspiration of the Bible. Almost everyone will admit that they believe in the inspiration of the Bible. We can ask atheists if they believe the Bible is inspired and many of them will state that they do believe the Bible is inspired. If we left it at that point, we might come away with the idea that the atheist in question not only believes in God but also believes in the Bible as God's Word. However, we must dig a little deeper than simply asking if they believe the Bible is inspired, or we will never know what they really believe. We must ask them if they believe the Bible is inspired of God and then they will give a negative response. If we then asked them what they mean by inspiration, they would explain that they believe the Bible is inspired in the same way that other works are inspired (works such as works of art, music, etc.). They have played a **word game** with us and the question.

In dealing with a modernist, we can ask him if he believes the Bible is inspired, and we will get a positive response. We might then go a little bit further and ask him if he believes the Bible is inspired of God. The modernist would answer that he believes the Bible is inspired of God. Again, if we simply accept what is said, we will be deceived into believing that the modernist believes the same thing we believe. The modernist is playing **word games** with us. While the modernist claims to believe that God exists and that the Bible is "God's Word," he also believes that there are mistakes and errors throughout the Scriptures. Modernists do not believe that every word comes from the breath of God; instead, they only believe that the over-all idea, sometimes referred to as over-all "tenor," of the Bible is inspired. This is also called "thought inspiration"

because they think God gave the writers the general thoughts, but they wrote in their own words. They believe the writers preserved the thoughts, but mistakes and errors crept into what they wrote. The modernist has played a **word game** with us, and we must be careful not to be deceived by such tactics.

Now we are faced with well-respected brethren in places of great influence in the brotherhood who are playing **word games** with us. Instead of playing word games about the inspiration of the Bible, their word games concern the reevaluation/reaffirmation of elders. These brethren say they do not believe in the reevaluation/reaffirmation of elders, and that they believe this action is wrong. Some have preached sermons condemning the action. They tell us they do not believe that (1) elders should be appointed on a temporary basis and (2) elders should only be allowed to continue based upon the vote of the membership. Some of them tell us that they do not believe that a congregation has the right to remove from the eldership any man who is scripturally qualified.

They then turn around and try to rewrite history by telling us that what the Brown Trail Church of Christ in Fort Worth, Texas, did in 1990 was not the practice of reevaluation/reconfirmation of elders. However, it makes us wonder what they would have to do to practice this doctrine. They are claiming that all that took place was that the elders went to the congregation to get *feedback* as to whether or not they thought the existing elders were qualified to continue to serve and perform their work as elders, and that based on that feedback elders could choose to remove themselves from the eldership. Since elders are shepherds, and Jesus is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), should Jesus also go to the members of His church and get *feedback* from them to see if they think He is qualified to continue to serve and perform His work as our Chief Shepherd? According to the reasoning above, He would have that right! In fact, since He is our perfect example, He **should** have done this.

Did the existing elders have the option to remain elders or remove themselves regardless of the *feedback* they received? According to the printed information describing the Brown Trail reevaluation/reaffirmation program in 1990, the elders had no such option. Their description of the process, titled "Procedure For Implementing Elder Evaluation/Selection Process," subtitled, "Brown Trail Church of Christ," contains one point in particular that concerns this question. Under point number four they write: "Tabulation of forms by the committee. Present elders must receive 75% support of those submitting forms." Notice carefully the word

must. If they **must** get 75% support, and they do not get to the 75% level, where is their choice of stepping down as an elder or continuing as an elder? That choice was taken out of the individual elder's control and placed in the control of the flock, at least the 75%. The spin some have made on what took place at Brown Trail is simply not according to the facts of the situation.

Another fact which shows the decision was not the individual elder's decision after getting the feedback from the congregation is the announcement Johnny Ramsey made on May 6, 1990. Prior to this "evaluation" process, Brown Trail had five elders. Brother Ramsey preached the sermon that Sunday morning, then after the invitation, he returned to the pulpit and announced the "mandate" of the congregation concerning the eldership. He stated that two of the present elders had been "reconfirmed" and one other man would be added to their number. After his announcement of who had been "reconfirmed" followed by a prayer, one of the elders (who did not attain the 75% approval) then resigned from the eldership "in compliance with the ground rules" set forth at the start of the process. The other two who did not attain 75% approval rating did not resign! If it is the case that they had the choice as to what they would do (remain elders or remove themselves), when they did resign, why were they not still elders? They did not resign, **but they were no longer elders!** Why not? Also, why did this one elder resign "in compliance with the ground rules" if it was only his **choice** to remove himself or not?

Also, by the very nature of the case at Brown Trail, while some claim they oppose any action which might remove a scripturally qualified man from the eldership, the very action which they took could as easily remove a man who is qualified as one who is not qualified. Notice also in another form handed out by the Brown Trail congregation in 1990 (titled: "Biblical Rationale For Evaluation Of Elders"), we have another important consideration concerning this matter. Their point number 2 states, "Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. Even if a man is technically qualified to be an elder, if the membership where he attends does not perceive him as a leader whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively." Thus, the very rationale for what they were doing at Brown Trail in 1990 states that one who is "technically qualified" (i.e., according to the Scriptures) might be removed because what amounts to 26% of those who filled out the forms (note, not of the congregation, but merely of those who filled out the forms) choose not to follow him. Instead of this type of action taking place, should the congrega-

tion not be taught to submit to the elders as the Bible teaches (Heb. 13:17), instead of removing the elders?

Some will argue that the "complexion of the congregation" changed and thus some of the present congregation might not follow those elders who were previously selected and appointed. Brother Garland Elkins speaks to this point when he writes: "Those who contend for 'reconfirmation' argue that many of the present members were not there when the present elders were appointed, and if they were given the opportunity at present they would not be in favor of appointing the present elders. That may be true, but remember that they agreed to work under the oversight of the present elders when they placed their membership with a given congregation" (qtd. in McClish 94). Brother Elkins made the foregoing statement in response to what took place at Brown Trail and specifically to the sermon preached by Dave Miller advocating such. (For a complete transcript of his sermon see *Contending For The Faith*, Aug. 2005, pp. 10-14.)

It is sad that some are now playing word games with us as if what Brown Trail did in 1990 was not what it was. Some claim they would be opposed to the elder reevaluation/reaffirmation program if it were done on a regular basis, or if an elder would only be appointed for a specific time frame and continued only on the basis of a vote of the membership. However, there is no basic difference in these actions and what Brown Trail did in 1990. If Brown Trail had the right to do the reevaluation/reaffirmation once, then, it has the right to do it a second time, a third time, or every few years to see if its elders should continue to serve in that capacity. The action taken is the same action, whether a congregation does it once or several times.

The Brown Trail congregation repeated the process in 2002 (see Marvin Weir, "Change Agents and Leadership" *The Gospel Journal*, Oct. 2002). Following this second reevaluation/reaffirmation process, they issued an undated statement in 2004, titled "Elder Evaluation and the Brown Trail Church of Christ." In it they state: "For the mistakes made the present elders have asked forgiveness of the congregation through public confession and request for prayer on July 28, 2002." In this statement they did not confess the sinfulness of the practice, which they had done twice, but simply for making "mistakes" in the process of doing it.

The problem with the actions Brown Trail took is aptly stated by Garland Elkins when he wrote: "I do not know of any Bible authority for 'electing' elders as if it were a political process. Neither do I know of any Bible authority for 'reconfirming' existing elders. If elders lose their qualifications, they should resign. If

qualified elders resign, the congregation has the same right to appoint them again in the future (if they are qualified) as they did the first time they were appointed.... I do not know why brethren cannot be content to simply ‘appoint’ (ASV), ‘ordain’ (KJV) (Acts 14:23) rather than to come up with an imaginary ‘reconfirmation’ of present elders” (qtd. in McClish 100). There is simply **no authority** for this action and it is sad that some are playing word games with us to try and justify it when there is **no justification** for it. Why are some trying to justify it now? It appears that the reason is to support Apologetics Press, and to support Apologetics Press they must support Dave Miller (Apologetics Press Executive Director), and to support Dave Miller one must find a way to justify the sermon he preached advocating this procedure and the procedure itself as implemented at Brown Trail in 1990. Time will not take care of the false doctrine which Dave Miller taught or the false practice which Brown Trail practiced in their “evaluation” of its present elders in 1990. As with all sins, only confession and repentance will properly handle these sins. *MH*

Work Cited:

McClish, Dub. “Reevaluation/Reaffirmation of Elders?” *Leadership*, ed. Michael Hatcher. Pensacola, FL: Bellview Church of Christ, 1997. 83-103.

While I am not aware of any unscriptural actions having occurred, I was not in any way involved in a completely separate procedure implemented at Brown Trail **in 2002** by a different eldership that was then in place. I had already resigned and was in the process of moving to Alabama. It is astounding that an event that occurred **15 years ago**—an event that I have neither repeated nor promoted since—should cause such a stir!

M,D,R as it Relates to “Intent”

It is unnecessary for me to explain my views regarding what the Bible teaches on the overall subject of marriage, divorce, and remarriage. I have taught on this subject for many years and my views are a matter of public record, having been permanently documented in lectureship manuscripts, school of preaching classes, a tract I wrote on the subject, a section in *Piloting the Straits*, numerous sermons I have preached over the years, articles in brotherhood journals, and television programs recorded for “The Truth in Love.” My views are the same views held by the faithful segment of our brotherhood: one man for one woman for life with fornication being the one and only exception by which the innocent party can put away his/her mate and remarry.

However, several years ago an incident occurred in

the school of preaching where I served as director. One of the staff members was found to have gained entry into the U.S. several years earlier (before he became a Christian) at the behest of his cousin who had concocted a plan by which they would “marry” on paper in order to defraud the U.S. government to achieve his entrance into the U.S. As soon as the conspiratorial goal was achieved, they planned to put through the paperwork to end the “marriage.” When the elders and I became aware of this situation—which had occurred years earlier—we confronted the brother, who acknowledged/confessed the incident and expressed a penitent attitude. The elders then assessed the situation and decided that he would be allowed to continue in his capacity with the school and church. The elders counseled him to rectify these past mistakes to the extent that he was able to do so. They also cautioned him regarding his marital status, but no official pronouncement was made concerning his future eligibility for marriage in view of the fact that he was single and not entertaining any prospect of marriage. The entire affair was laid to rest to the satisfaction of the eldership. Five factors that the talebearers of the brotherhood consistently fail to include in their widespread reporting of this circumstance is (1) the woman who offered to accomplish his entry into the U.S. was **his cousin** (illegal in and of itself); (2) the two never did anything to indicate that they actually **intended** to be married or viewed themselves as such (i.e., they did not live together or enter into any relationship or arrangement that could even be remotely construed as marriage); (3) the woman had been married before and was **not eligible to remarry**; (4) the woman is **dead and has been deceased for many years** (cf. Romans 7:1-3); and (5) he remains **unmarried** to this day.

Totally separate and apart from this incident which occurred in the 1990s, I was asked by the elders to participate in a Wednesday evening Summer Series program in 2001 in which the preachers of the congregation formed a panel and fielded questions from members of the auditorium class. One question posed the hypothetical situation in which two people conspire to defraud the government in order for one of them to gain entry into the U.S. In a completely off-the-cuff response to the question. I pointed out that there must be mutual intention for a marriage to take place. I gave as an example (poor as it may have been) a situation in which a person is kidnapped and drugged only to wake up days later to find that he is married—with no recollection of having gotten married. He did not consent/intend to be married. [Another example would be Hollywood actors making a movie in which their

characters get married. They speak the vows and say everything that would ordinarily be said at a real wedding. Yet no one thinks they actually get married—since their intention is lacking.] These incidents, in which I responded “off the top of my head” in an attempt to offer input on the submitted question have been latched onto and blown all out of proportion to make it appear as if I’ve abandoned Bible teaching on M,D,R and am out counseling hundreds of people to remarry. They claim I advocate that a marriage is not a marriage if either party had “mental reservations” when they married! I categorically deny ever having said, implied, or believed such a thing. My spur-of-the-moment remarks do not contradict my continued belief that two eligible people who are married can divorce only on the grounds of fornication, with the result that the fornicator is not eligible to contract another marriage. Yet, this extremely rare, unusual, unique situation is being held up as a “false doctrine that threatens to undermine the very foundations of marriage”!

May God bless us all in our efforts to be faithful to Him, and to do His work without the distractions of unnecessary division.

Dave Miller
Montgomery, AL
9/23/05

PS: In addition to the above misrepresentations, I have been astounded that in the last 3-4 years, additional FALSE rumors have circulated about me, including the following:

1. That I believe in instrumental music in worship
2. That I stole money from Brown Trail (a charge dispelled by an IRS audit)
3. That I had an affair with a woman
4. That I believe in the doctrine of annihilation of the soul
5. That I am dead

A Response to Brother Miller’s Statement

I am glad to see that brother Miller has finally addressed in print the accusations many of us have made against him for a long time. I have read brother Miller’s statement, and I have some observations:

1. His condescending attitude is evident in the title of his statement. He suggests that those who dare question his doctrine or practice is “dishonorable” and “insincere,” and that those who do not accept all of his explanatory statements are “dishonorable,” “insincere,” and wilfully ignorant. He obviously does not think well of those who dare question his doctrine or practice.
2. He based Brown Trail’s implementation of the reevaluation/reaffirmation (hereafter r/r) procedure in

1990 on the claim that the elders themselves “initiated,” “instigated,” and “executed” the program. To argue that a practice is authorized merely because fallible elders decide to do it is very dangerous ground. A large number of unauthorized and erroneous practices, which elderships have “initiated,” “instigated,” and “executed” characterize many congregations nowadays. “Eldership authorization” and “Scripture authorization” may be and sometimes are vastly different. Liberals argue that women may lead prayers or preach in mixed adult assemblies **if the elders themselves “initiate” and “instigate” it.**

3. I do not know about other “critics,” but I have not defined brother Miller’s r/r doctrine for him in what I have written about him (1997 Bellview Lectures book, *Leadership*). I simply quoted him and let him define what he believes and advocates concerning the practice. I believe he has attempted to erect a straw man here, of which he can easily dispose, of course. He needs to come face-to face-with what he taught and helped implement, rather than accusing others of inventing things about him.

4. I have never suggested (nor have I seen it suggested by others) that Dave Miller believes in the practice of “term limits” or stated terms for elders, at the end of which they must submit to the r/r procedure. This is another straw man.

5. If he does not believe “that a congregation has the right to use any procedure that expels qualified men from the eldership,” why did he advocate and help implement a procedure that could do just that? In the “Rationale” (prepared and issued by the Brown Trail r/r committee, of which brother Miller was a part), issued to help “sell” the congregation on the r/r program it implemented in 1990, we read the following:

Shepherds cannot lead where sheep will not follow. Even if a man is technically qualified to be an elder, if the membership where he attends does not perceive him as a leader whom they respect and trust, he cannot shepherd effectively.

Brother Miller said the same thing in his sermon on April 8, 1990, from the Brown Trail pulpit. The admission that an elder who is qualified may be removed simply because a sufficient number of members choose not to follow him or do not “perceive him as a leader” is a glaring and exceedingly dangerous addition of Sacred Scripture. To “perceive” one as a leader on its very surface is a subjective evaluation. This, in effect, adds another qualification to those Paul specified in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

6. Brother Miller cites Acts 6:3 as if it favors his r/r

case. All this passage does is furnish the principle that the whole congregation is to be involved in the selection of elders and/or deacons. One searches it in vain to find some intricate reevaluation process of men who were already selected, appointed, and serving. Acts 6:3 does not help his cause.

7. To use 1 Timothy 5:17–20 as authority for the r/r practice is to engage in eisegesis rather than exegesis. To say that a man should be removed because “25% of the congregation doesn’t want to follow him,” “doesn’t like him, or “doesn’t perceive him as a leader” is not in this passage or any other. 1 Timothy 5:17–20 does not help his case. Obviously, brother Miller would have used additional passages to justify the r/r process if he could have found them.

8. To accuse those who dare question brother Miller’s advocacy of r/r as thereby pursuing a “pet hobby” is purely pejorative terminology, intended to bias uninformed readers against those who sincerely question his doctrine and/or practice. The hurling of such terminology has for years been a favorite ploy of liberals, and it is certainly unworthy of the author of the fine book, *Piloting the Strait*.

9. We who deny the existence of Scriptural authority for the r/r process are not the ones who tamper with the authority of elders, as he charges. Rather, those (whether or not they are elders at the time) who form committees (such as brother Miller was a part of) are those who tamper with the authority of elders **by becoming de facto “elderships” while the r/r procedure runs its course**. The existing elderships and their respective congregations in such cases **must subject themselves** to such committees for the plan to operate.

10. If brother Miller was not involved in the 2002 r/r procedure at Brown Trail, why did he help Maxie Boren (Brown Trail preacher at the time) defend the practice to brother Dub Mowery (nativeheritage@peoplepc.com), who journeyed all the way from Drumright, OK (near Tulsa, where he preached at the time) to Brown Trail (about 300 miles) to express his objections to and concerns over their 2002 version of r/r?

11. Brother Miller seeks to place the Brown Trail practice of r/r in the realm of “expediency.” This appeal to “expediency,” however, overlooks an elementary principle of Biblical hermeneutics: Scriptural authorization must precede expediency. No matter can be expedient unless it is first authorized, and the Scriptural authorization for this practice has not been and cannot be produced.

12. Why is brother Miller “astounded” that an event that occurred 15 years ago could cause such a “stir”?

Surely, he is aware that the mere passage of time does not transform sin into righteousness or error into Truth? Repentance, rather than the passing of time, is necessary for correction and forgiveness. My guess is that he has likely preached this principle to others through the years.

13. Brother Miller denies he has “preached or promoted” this practice since 1990 (clearly, an admission that he “preached” and “promoted” it then). Brother David Watson has observed his influence encouraging this practice in a congregation near him in recent years, contrary to his disclaimer.

14. If brother Everett Chambers and his cousin “never did anything to indicate that they actually intended to be married or viewed themselves as such (i.e., they did not live together or enter into any relationship or arrangement that could even be remotely construed as marriage),” how did their actions help him get into and stay in the U.S.? Did they not have to go through some sort of wedding ceremony and did they not have to affix their signatures to an application for a marriage license and then do the same on a marriage certificate? Were not these actions on the part of both of them actions which indicate “that they actually intended to be married,” even though their purpose in doing so was a conspiracy to “defraud” the authorities? Was not the full intent of both of them to become legally married so as to enable him to enter and remain in the U.S.? Had they not indicated to the authorities (by going through required marriage procedures) that they desired to be married, they could not have accomplished their purpose. They may not have viewed themselves as married, but the authorities did, else they would not have had to “put through the paperwork to end the ‘marriage’” (generally called “divorce”). I have the same difficulty justifying this “I didn’t intend to” doctrine that I do in justifying the Roman Catholic doctrine of “mental reservation.”

15. Is brother Miller implying in the statement above that a man and a woman are not married at the time they are pronounced husband and wife, but that they must “live together” before they become married? If, after being pronounced “husband and wife” in the eyes of both civil and Divine law, Bob and Sally, on the way from the wedding site to the place of their initial act of intimacy, Bob dies of a heart attack, were they never married?

16. What is the relevance of the woman’s being ineligible to marry brother Chambers because they were cousins? Is he arguing that had she not been his cousin, their defrauding the immigration authorities

would have been acceptable?

17. That the woman had been married before and was not eligible to remarry does not alter the fact of their conspiratorial intent. Is brother Miller attempting to argue that had she been eligible to marry, the deception would have been justified? If this is not his point, I missed it.

18. That brother Chambers was not a Christian at the time he and his cousin “accidentally” married is hardly relevant, unless one wishes to argue (as many false teachers do) that one’s marriage relationships before he becomes a Christian do not “count,” and that baptism takes care of such unscriptural unions.

19. Whether or not brother Chambers “remains unmarried to this day” is not the issue. The issue is, does brother Miller believe/teach that brother Chambers has a Scriptural right to remarry?

20. So far as I know, neither brother Chambers nor his cousin whom he married was kidnapped or drugged and therefore pronounced “husband and wife” against their wills or while in a drugged stupor. They were quite conscious of what they were doing, fully intending deceptively (yet nonetheless actually) to marry each other. Nor were they actors in a movie, but they deceptively “acted out” a live drama, with full intent to satisfy civil marriage laws so as to deceive the U.S. Government.

21. I have never suggested or heard anyone suggest that brother Miller has so “abandoned Bible teaching on MDR” that he is “out counseling hundreds of people to remarry.” If anyone is doing so, he should stop. Also, if anyone is doing so, let brother Miller produce the evidence of such or stop his accusation.

22. It is good to see brother Miller’s forthright declaration of his position on who is eligible to marry, divorce, and remarry. However, he then diminishes the impact of that position statement with a significant “However, several years ago the following...” exception, describing the behavior of Everett Chambers. After describing

it, he then concludes: “Yet, this extremely rare, unusual, unique situation is being held up as a ‘false doctrine that threatens to undermine the very foundations of marriage’!” It matters not how “extremely rare, unusual, unique” the situation with brother Chambers may have been and may still be. If one (including brother Miller) justifies and excuses this practice in one person, then he must logically and consistently do so for all persons. If (a) brother Chambers did what brother Miller says he did (legally married his cousin), and (b) if he did it for the reason brother Miller says he did it (to defraud the U.S. Government, lying in order to circumvent U.S. immigration law), and (c) if, as brother Miller believes, brother Chambers and his cousin were not really married because of their lack of “intent,” then (d) “the very foundations of marriage” are indeed thereby threatened.

23. Brother Miller refers to those who have dared challenge his strange MDR position relative to brother Chambers as “talebearers of the brotherhood.” Would liberals, whose errors he exposed so well in *Piloting the Strait*, be accurate in characterizing him as a “talebearer of the brotherhood”? I doubt that he would think so. Neither do I believe that he is accurate or fair in thus characterizing those who are not content to let his errors pass.

24. Brother Miller’s statement will doubtless be more than sufficient for those who have defended him through the years. They will now begin saying that he has “cleared up” and “corrected” all of those accusations. However, for my part, I see no substantive answers to any of the nagging doctrinal questions he has created. I find his statement to be a very weak and self-serving one. Some may even suggest that I will not be satisfied unless “he crawls over shattered glass” and “bathes my feet in tears,” but they will be as wrong as wrong can be. While I require no such thing, I do wish he had forthrightly repented of (instead of denying) his errors.

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“I am set for the defense of the gospel”

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Can Christians Help Support the Salvation Army?

Danny Pettus

Christians are at liberty to support many things other than the church of our Lord, but false doctrine is **not** one of those things. You may have had someone come to your door selling this or that for a certain denomination.

You might go to a store and be approached by someone outside its doors, asking you to buy something for a particular religious body. You may go to yard sales, but we have all learned to be careful, and avoid those sponsored by false religions.

This article is not written out of any hatred whatsoever, as an attack upon the Salvation Army. My heart's desire is that they be saved. My purpose in this article is to help us, as members of the body of Christ, to become aware of who and what we can support.

There are many organizations a Christian can aid and help. There are many we cannot support. We must always ask ourselves: “Will good be done with the money we give?” We must also ask: “Will we be supporting and aiding the teaching of error or truth” (1 Tim. 6:3-5)?

It has been my observation that several in the Lord's church have helped support the Salvation Army, not knowing it is a denomination. Every Christian I know, who has given to this denomination, has stopped helping as soon as they learned what they were supporting.

Why did they stop? Because John said, “If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into *your* house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 10-11).

The Salvation Army is a denomination which split off from the Methodist in 1861. They preach their doctrines in 89 countries, and have one and one-half million members. Their denominational headquarters in the United States is in Verona, New Jersey.

Their creed book (I have the 1969 edition) says on page 6, the Salvation Army is an integral part of the new Israel, the church. This is the same thing taught by most denominations, that is, each denomination is a part of the one church.

On July 9, 1993 the *Birmingham News* ran an article titled: “Salvation Army Eyes Change In Militarism.” The article mentioned how several of their members are wanting to start calling their officers “pastors,” instead of “lieutenants, captains, and majors.” These members in this denomination want to make the public aware that the Salvation Army is a church.

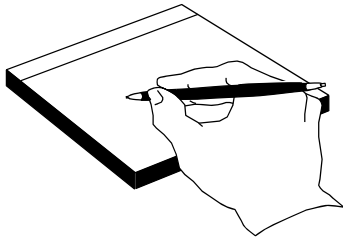
Notice carefully some of the many doctrines this church teaches. In doing so, you will be able to easily see why members of the Lord's body cannot support this cause. Yes, they do a lot of good, but yes, they also teach a lot of error to those they help.

This denomination teaches others they are born sinners. Article 5 of their creed book (*Handbook of Doctrine*) says all men are totally depraved, and have become sinners as a consequence of Adam and Eve's fall. Page 83 states man is a sinner by inheritance. Page 85 teaches man is born a sinner.

The Bible teaches, “They are all gone out of the way” (Rom. 3:12). God does not say, “They are born

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Notes From The Editor



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Death

Recently in a discussion I was having with another preacher over some events and our different recollections of those events, he asked me if I could live with what I was saying (he believed that I was lying when I was not and this was his attempt to try to get me to alter what I had said). My response was that I could not only live with it, I could die with it. It is one thing to live with something, because there are some who do sear their conscience over (1 Tim. 4:2). It is another thing altogether to die with it.

Everyone needs to remember that at some point in time (unless Christ comes first), we will die. The Hebrews writer reminds us that “it is appointed unto men once to die” (Heb. 9:27). The Scriptures also reveal: “For we must needs die, and *are* as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect *any* person” (2 Sam. 14:14). At death, our eternal destiny is sealed. The Hebrews writer goes on to add: “but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

After death, we await the judgment. At that judgment, each individual will stand before the Judge of all and answer for his life. Paul writes, “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). At that time the Judge will make a separation between the righteous and the wicked. “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth *his* sheep from the goats” (Mat. 25:31-32).

The righteous (the sheep) will be placed on His right hand and the wicked (the goats) on His left. Those

on the right hand will hear the words: “Well done, *thou* good and faithful servant...Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Mat. 25:21, 34). However, to those on the left He will say, “Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.... Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Mat. 25:30, 41).

Then there will be the entering into eternity and our eternal destiny. “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal” (Mat. 25:46). Those on the right hand will receive “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4). However, concerning those who would be on His left hand, Jesus had said, “As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Mat. 13:40-42).

While there is life, there is always the possibility that we will correct anything in our lives which are contrary to what is right! However, at the point of death, there is no way in which to correct any wrongs we have committed. The only thing which will matter when we die is if we are right with God. Thus, in life we must do those things which are right and approved of God and reject all things that are wrong and disapproved of God.

At that judgment scene, Jesus said that there would be those who would talk about their good works. “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). I can just hear some of my brethren today as they point out: but Lord, I supported “x” organization and sent money to them. This is about the way it was years ago prior to “Herald Of Truth” apostatizing. To be considered faithful, you had to support “Herald Of Truth.” At that time, it did not matter if the organization was faithful (it was faithful when it began but is not now), the only thing which mattered was if you supported it or not. It now

seems as if we are entering this type of a situation again. Some are going to support certain organizations (not the Lord's church, but certain works whether or not they are overseen by a congregation of the Lord's people) no matter if they are scriptural or not (or those in charge are sound in the faith or not). It would almost be like those Jesus described saying to Him, Lord, Lord, I supported "x" work (or organization).

There are some preachers whose aim is to speak on certain lectureships or to be asked to preach in meetings across the brotherhood. Often the preacher does not care if the congregation (or program) where he speaks is staying faithful to the Lord, just that he is invited to speak and, sometimes, simply to make a name for himself.

Bible Truth is the important thing. What difference does it make if when I stand before the judgment seat of Christ and give an account for what I have done in my body if I can say that I supported this work or that work, or spoke on this lectureship or that lectureship (or any lectureship), if those works are not what God would have them to be? None of the accolades of our day will be worth my (or your) eternal destiny. Let us make sure we support what is right and oppose every wrong (no matter who might be involved). *MH*

(Continued from Page 1)
out of the way." Jesus said, "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Mat. 18:3).

The Salvation Army teaches no one can understand

the Bible without the direct help of the Holy Spirit (*Handbook of Doctrine*, pp. 2, 133-134).

Paul said God would have all men "to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4). In no place does the Bible teach men must receive the direct help of the Holy Spirit in order to understand and know the truth.

Those in Acts 5:27-33 did not have the Holy Spirit, but they understood exactly the truth Peter preached. They did not like it. Not only did they reject the Word, they understood it so clearly they wanted to kill Peter and the apostles.

Peter had preached the same truth of the Gospel in Acts 2. Instead of wanting to kill Peter, three thousand obeyed the truth they had understood that very day (vv. 36-41). Their obedience came from what they heard (vv. 14, 22, 37, 40, 41).

The Salvation Army teaches those they help that salvation is at the point of faith. Their creed book devotes nine whole pages, trying to prove baptism is not essential to salvation (pp. 180-188).

Page 188 of their creed book teaches baptism and the Lord's supper should not be practiced at all today. Their members are not to speak against those religions, which practice baptism and the Lord's supper, unless those religions teach these are essential.

The Lord's church does teach baptism is essential. Why? Because the Bible says, "Repent, and be baptized...for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38).

We also teach the Lord's supper is essential in the life of a Christian. Why? Because Jesus said do it in remembrance of Me (1 Cor. 11:24-25). We are told to show the Lord's death till He comes (1 Cor. 11:26). The binding example of the church at Troas that upon

Public Forum

I just received an invitation to an open forum to discuss the issues dealing with *The Gospel Journal* and the board's release of Dub McClish and Dave Watson (editor and associate editor) along with events concerning "Apologetics Press" as it relates to and influenced their release.

On September 10-11, 1973, because of events relating to "Herald Of Truth," there was a meeting which took place in Memphis, TN. Lynn Anderson along with some of the elders from the Highland congregation in Abilene, TX: and some representatives of the program itself showed up at this "Memphis Meeting," and at least offered some defense for what had taken place. Brother Garland Elkins presided over this two-day meeting in which primarily ten issues were discussed. The interesting part is that they showed up.

I wonder if brethren from *The Gospel Journal* and "Apologetics Press" (and the overseeing eldership) will accept the invitation to discuss these matters at this open forum? This open forum will be held in Spring, TX on February 28, 2006. It is my prayer that all parties involved will accept the invitation to attend and that much good will result from this open forum.

every Sunday they partook of that communion is still to be done today (Acts 20:7). Therefore, baptism and the Lord's supper should be practiced today. It is not the Bible, but it is this denomination which teaches these things should not be done today.

They also teach a Christian can be sanctified, so as to never sin. Their creed says a sanctified Christian will be tempted, but as Jesus never sinned, so we will never sin. It says the sanctified Christian can be mistaken in judgment, but even that is less likely to happen (pp. 145-165).

Sanctification in the Bible means a Christian is set apart as holy to God. Never does it mean a Christian has reached the point of never sinning (1 John 1:8-10). The church at Corinth was sanctified (1 Cor. 1:2). As one reads 1 Corinthians, he will read of several sins committed by these sanctified Christians.

The Salvation Army has left the Bible doctrine concerning giving. This is not taught in their creed

book, but one cannot go shopping around Christmas time without seeing them outside stores wanting a donation for their church. They have also turned to the fund-raising method to finance their denomination. Over the last few years, they have started getting into the "Thrift store" business.

The first century church gave on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). They did not ask the world to support the work of the church. We can have nothing to do with denominational money raising methods.

We may clean up around the house and have several good items we want to get out of the way. Several congregations of God's people have excellent benevolent programs. Why not give these things to the Lord's church, so more people can be influenced by the truth? "Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21).

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Are All Peacemakers Blessed?

Gary W. Summers

All Bible students have the obligation to study the Scriptures to ascertain their true meaning. Many problems in the Lord's church, not to mention the religious world in general, could have been avoided with more of an honest investigation into God's Holy Word. Too often has a verse been lifted out of context and used to establish a position that contradicts numerous other passages. Some have, for example, taken verses which emphasize the grace of God (Eph. 2:8-9) to mean that obedience is totally unnecessary, despite the fact that Titus 2:11-14 explains what the grace of God actually requires. Some have perverted passages that teach the security of our salvation into the "once saved, always saved" doctrine, which is one of the most easily-refuted errors ever devised by men.

One passage which lends itself to misinterpretation is: "Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Mat. 5:9). Jesus did not mean that all forms of peace are better than all forms of conflict, which becomes obvious just a few chapters later :

"Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to '*set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law*'; and '*a man's enemies will be those of his own*

household' (Mat. 10:34-36—NKJV).

This is an odd statement for the Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) to make. So we must ask the question: "What kind of peace was Jesus talking about in Matthew 5:9?" He did not refer to political or social peace; He meant *spiritual* peace, which is obtained through salvation.

The only worthwhile peace is that which results from the knowledge that one's sins have been forgiven. Those on the day of Pentecost knew that, after they repented of their sins and were baptized (Acts 2:38, 41), their sins were forgiven, they were saved, and that they now had peace with God. Saul of Tarsus was certainly plagued by internal conflicts when He discovered that the One Whom he had been persecuting was actually the Lord. He fasted and prayed for three days (Acts 9:9, 11). We can only imagine the anguish he experienced, but it was turned into peace once he arose and was baptized (Acts 9:18).

Those who help bring about peace between God and men are truly blessed. There is nothing greater that could be done for fellow human beings than to bring them to Christ by teaching them the truth about salvation. Some, like Saul, may not know that they are opposed to Jesus; such discord must be made known first, but then genuine peace can be theirs.

Certain types of peace are actually wrong, as evidenced by Jesus' own example. He did not make

peace with the Sadducees and the Pharisees, but rather He challenged and exposed their false religious concepts. He called Herod a fox rather than try to placate him (Luke 13:32) and pronounced several woes upon the Pharisees; He even asked the politically incorrect question: “Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell?” (Mat. 23:33). *Serpents* and *brood of vipers* were **not** terms of endearment. One might consider this verse strife-provoking and narrow-minded. It did not result in social peace.

Jehoshaphat, the Misguided Peacemaker

Over all Jehoshaphat was a good king: “And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing *what was* right in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kin. 22:43). This description is truly commendable, and there are not many kings that received such high praise. Surely, such faithfulness encompasses many areas of life in which the king exercised a positive influence in the lives of the people.

As with most kings, however, certain imperfections characterized Jehoshaphat. We read further: “Nevertheless the high places were not taken away, *for* the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places” (1 Kin. 22:43). His father Asa had done a great deal to rid the nation of idolatry:

for he removed the altars of the foreign *gods* and the high places, and broke down the *sacred* pillars and cut down the wooden images. He commanded Judah to seek the LORD God of their fathers, and to observe the law and the commandment. He also removed the high places and the incense altars from all the cities of Judah, and the kingdom was quiet under him (2 Chr. 14: 3-5).

Also he removed Maachah, the mother of Asa the king, from *being* queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah; and Asa cut down her obscene image, then crushed and burned *it* by the Brook Kidron (2 Chr. 15:16).

In the latter part of Asa’s reign, some of the high places must have been restored, and Jehoshaphat allowed them to go unchallenged. This was certainly a flaw in an otherwise excellent reign as king. The Scriptures provide us one other complaint, however, against this ruler: “Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel” (1 Kin. 22:44).

One might not expect to see making peace with a neighboring king listed as a fault, but when the king is as evil as Ahab, one can immediately understand God’s rationale. Under normal circumstances, obtaining political peace would be praiseworthy. In this instance, however, Ahab was an evil man, who allowed his wife

to kill the prophets of the Lord (1 Kin. 18:13), as well as the innocent man, Naboth (1 Kin. 21:1-16). The responsibility for his death cannot be put off entirely on Jezebel; surely, Ahab had some inkling of the means by which she would obtain his vineyard. Elijah was told by God to ask Ahab: “Have **you** murdered and also taken possession?” (1 Kin. 21:19).

Jezebel (whose name means “chaste,” one of the most obvious misnomers in the Bible), actively supported idolatry. The 850 idolatrous prophets of Baal and Asherah ate at her table (1 Kin. 18:19). When Elijah killed the 450 prophets of Baal, Jezebel vowed vengeance against him (1 Kin. 19:1-2).

In what ways did Jehoshaphat make peace with Ahab? We first read of a tremendous mistake that the king made: “Jehoshaphat had riches and honor in abundance; and by marriage he allied himself with Ahab” (2 Chr. 18:1). It may be that he thought this action was politically expedient—that it might stave off war. But one must consider all things when making important decisions, including, “Is this idea in harmony with what God thinks? Will He be pleased if I do it?” Although it may have seemed politically wise, the alliance was spiritually foolish. Why would anyone want to be linked with the most morally and spiritually corrupt monarch ever?

Did Jehoshaphat think of the effects this marriage would have on the people of Judah? Did he not consider that it might cause them to be more tolerant of idolatry? Certainly, he did not consider the future of Judah or the welfare of his own son. Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was no spiritual encouragement to her husband Jehoram (Jehoshaphat’s son). He became so evil that “the Lord struck him in his intestines with an incurable disease” (2 Chr. 21:18). When he died, “his people made no burning for him, like the burning for his fathers” (v. 19). Sadly, we read: “He reigned in Jerusalem eight years and, to no one’s sorrow, departed. However they buried him in the city of David, but not in the tombs of the kings” (v. 20).

Not only did Athaliah fail to help her husband, but when her son Ahaziah was killed, she attempted to kill all the remaining royal offspring. And she succeeded—except for one who was rescued and hidden for six years (2 Chr. 22:10-12). Athaliah ruled over the land during that time, usurping the throne and exercising total power until the rightful heir was established at the age of seven. Jehoshaphat probably never imagined such events, but he made them all possible by allying his son by marriage with the house of Ahab—by

making peace.

But Jehoshaphat went even further than the marriage partnership; he went up to visit Ahab and agreed to fight with him against an enemy: “I *am* as you *are*, my people as your people, my horses as your horses” (1 Kin. 22:4b). What?!! This display of poor judgment nearly cost him his life (1 Kin. 22:32-33). Ahab was killed in the battle, but as Jehoshaphat journeyed home, Jehu the seer met him and asked him: “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? Therefore the wrath of the LORD *is* upon you” (2 Chr. 19:2). The king should never have made peace with Ahab—because the king of Israel was a wicked and idolatrous man. He was spiritually and morally perverted, and God’s servants have no business making peace with such an individual.

A far better example is seen in the actions of Jehu the king. Actually, although he had been anointed king by Elisha (2 Kin. 9:1-10), Joram, Ahab’s son, remained king in Israel, although he had been wounded. King Ahaziah from Judah was up visiting him when Jehu came to avenge the blood of the prophets upon Ahab’s house. As he drove furiously toward Jezreel, two emissaries rode out to him, and asked him: “Is it peace?” Jehu rode on past them (2 Kin. 9:17-19).

Finally, Joram and Ahaziah rode out to meet him; Joram asked, “Is it peace, Jehu?” (v. 22a). Jehu might have answered: “Why, yes, I can think of nothing more important than peace existing in the kingdom. After all, if we do not have a solid, united front, all of our enemies will try to take advantage of us. Peace in Israel is probably the highest priority we should have. The things we have in common far outweigh all of our differences.” But Jehu did not utter those words; instead he said: “What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft *are so many?*” (v. 22b).

Unlike Jehoshaphat, who was faulted for making peace with the king of Israel, Jehu killed both kings and then came to the gate of Jezreel. Jezebel sarcastically

asked Jehu: “*Is it* peace, Zimri, murderer of your master?” (v. 31). She had seen the killing of her son and knew full well what was intended against her. Jehu did not relent and say: “Yes, I have dispatched two monarchs today; it is time for peace.” He knew that she was the source of Israel’s problems (despite A & E’s March 25, 2002, attempt to exonerate her by gathering favorable opinions of her from liberal “Biblical scholars” on *Biography*). Jehu asked: “Who *is* on my side? Who?” He demanded them to cast Jezebel down the wall, which they did (v. 32-33). Truly, there is “a time to kill,” “a time of war, and a time of peace” (Ecc. 3:3, 8).

Jehu refused to be at peace with God’s enemies, but Jehoshaphat failed in that regard. After Ahab’s death (but before Joram came to power), another of Ahab’s sons reigned briefly. Jehoshaphat tried to ally himself with this wicked king also in a business venture. They were building ships to go to Tarshish, but God destroyed them (2 Chr. 20:35-37).

Jehoshaphat accomplished many good things for the people of Judah; he trusted in God, but he had this flaw of wanting to make peace with those who hate the Lord. Christians are warned in the New Testament: “Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (Jam. 4:4). Neither are we to assist anyone who does not abide in the teachings of Christ (2 John 9-11).

We ought to pursue peace with all who are striving to serve God; peacemakers are greatly needed in the kingdom. We should be peacemakers in the sense of leading the lost to Christ. We need, however, to avoid at every opportunity the invitation to make peace (compromise) with the world or with false teachers. God has set standards of doctrine and morality for us to match. May all of the children of God labor with diligence to, above all else, be at peace with Him.

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Born of Water and Spirit

Alton W. Fonville

“Jesus answered, 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). Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews had sought Jesus out at night and was questioning Him about His doing of the miracles. He freely acknowledged that Jesus had to be

from God, because no man could do such on his own. At this point, Jesus made the famous statement: “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.”

A great amount of confusion and false teachings

have resulted from a misunderstanding of these passages. But, with some study of this and related verses, it is possible to determine the truth being taught.

First, it is clear that this is an imperative command for us to obey, or else, we cannot see or enter the kingdom of God. The *except* clause shows the mandatory nature of the command. Simply put, it means that “if, and only if” one is born of water and the Spirit, can he be saved. This “except clause” is the same as that used showing that *except* for fornication, a divorced person is not eligible for remarriage (Mat. 19:9).

Next, commands are to be obeyed. Being born again is such a command. It was never a “promise.” Many people confuse the “**promise**” of Holy Spirit baptism, given to the apostles for their writing of the New Testament, with this command. Promises cannot be **obeyed**—but they can be **received**. *Again* refers to another birth and not our first physical birth, as some say. This is only **one** birth, but has the two elements—water and Spirit. The work of the Spirit is by and through **the word**. Notice the phrases which we understand more easily:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in **obeying** the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:
Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of

incorruptible, **by the word of God**, which liveth and abideth for ever (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

The words that I speak unto you, **they are spirit**, and they are life (John 6:63).

Of his own will **begat** he us with the **word of truth**, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures (Jam. 1:18).

Now ye are **clean** through **the word** which I have spoken unto you (John 15:3).

Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is **born of God**: and every one that loveth him that **begat** loveth him also that is **begotten** of him (1 John 5:1).

All these verses, being equal show the same thing.

We are **born again** by the Word of God. Another way of putting it is that the Spirit uses the Word of God to accomplish a new spiritual life.

We know that *water* refers to the act of baptism. In baptism we are buried with Christ and then are raised up (Rom. 6:3-4) to be a **new** creature (2 Cor. 5:17), or clean spiritually. Our past sins have now been washed away, our conscience being clean also, because we have obeyed **God’s command** (1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16).

Being “born of water and the Spirit” is not speaking of Holy Spirit baptism, but baptism in water for the remission of sins.

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