

GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 13

No. 3

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Max R. Miller



The Restoration Movement is a phase of history that had its impetus in the latter half of the eighteenth century. The term Restoration Movement is used almost exclusively by members of the church of Christ and the Christian Church. To them it refers to the religious fervor and activities that brought about the restoration of New Testament Christianity and worship. Religious historians usually include this period of vigorous religious activity in the phase of history otherwise recognized as the Protestant Reformation. Students of American History identify this era as the period of revival of religious interest in early America. The term Restoration Movement is valid as are the principles that motivated the Movement. The Movement was a definite phase of religious and social history that was to reach the farthest corners of the world.

Inspired writers of the New Testament foretold of a falling away, an apostasy, from pure New Testament Christianity (2 Thessalonians 2:3). Paul warned "that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils" (1 Timothy 4:1).

The church of the New Testament would become corrupted by a perverted gospel and eventually lose its Scriptural identity. False teachers did bring in "damnable doctrines" and signs of the falling away were evidenced before the close of the first century of the Christian era. By the seventh century the prophecies of apostasy had been fulfilled. The New Testament church of the first century had become so perverted that it no longer looked to Christ as its head; it had rejected His doctrine as set forth by his holy and inspired apostles. God could no longer accept the perverted worship of the apostate church. The apostate church is historically identified, first, as the Catholic Church. Later, in A.D. 1054, it divides into two distinct religious bodies: the Holy Roman Catholic Church and the Eastern Orthodox Catholic Church.

From the moment error and gospel perversion violated the New Testament church of Christ there was need to refute the error, correct the perversions, stem the encroachment, and restore to the church its purity of truth and faith. A millennium passed before an effective movement to restore the church to its New Testament image began. This period is spoken of as the Dark Ages, a time when the church of the Lord with its

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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

STAFF WRITERS

Guy F. Hester
M. W. Kiser
John T. Polk, II
Allen Webster
Ronnie Whittemore

EDITORS

Bill Dillon
Dennis Gullledge

MAILING ADDRESSES

Contributions

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Manuscripts

P. O. Box 192
Mountain Home, AR 72653

Editorial

THE FIRST GOSPEL GLEANER LECTURESHIP

Bill Dillon

The most glorious days of the Lord's church are days of faithful gospel preaching. April 19-20, 1997 was an especially glorious time for the College and North Church of Christ. The theme of the lectures was "Restoration Movements In The Bible." The topics and speakers included: "Right And Wrong Uses Of The Restoration Movement"—Dennis Gullledge; "Nehemiah And Ezra: Great Restoration Leaders"—John T. Polk, II; "Restoring Respect For The Bible"—John T. Polk, II; "A Teenager Leads A Restoration Movement"—Ronnie Whittemore; "Restoring Brotherly Love"—Allen Webster; "Restoring The Erring"—Guy Hester.



Each lesson was true to "the Book" and was, by design, "a book, chapter and verse" sermon. Each man spoke enthusiastically and demonstrated the need of a continued emphasis today upon rebuilding the walls of sound doctrine in the kingdom of God. Each message was well balanced with no radical nor extremist tones being heard. Such an outstanding roll call of speakers could not but help provide a tremendous spiritual feast. Each message was presented in a challenging fashion as the audience was called upon to grow in devotion to the Lord and in dedication to His cause.

So pleased was the College and North eldership that plans are already underway to host the *Second Gospel Gleaner Lectureship* set for April 4-5, 1998. All readers of the *Gospel Gleaner* are urged to make plans to attend.

Special thanks are given to all of the speakers for their participation. All of the staff writers are scheduled again for next year plus a few changes are planned to make the 1998 lectureship bigger and better.

Cassette tapes of the lectures are available by writing: College and North Church of Christ, P. O. Box 192, Mountain Home, AR 72653 or call 1-870-425-4330.

Editor's Note: The Gospel Gleaner Lectureship was a source of much encouragement to the elders and members at College and North. The College and North congregation is one of the most remarkable churches anywhere. Large in number and strong in faith, she labors to stay in the "old paths" of gospel truth.

May God enrich all efforts to take the message of saving grace to all the lost. -612 E. Fourth Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653

SCENES FROM *THE FIRST GOSPEL GLEANER LECTURESHIP*



Gospel Gleaner Staff Writers and Editors - L to R - Ronnie Whittemore; John T. Polk, II; Guy Hester; Bill Dillon; Dennis Gullledge; Allen Webster; (not shown is M. W. Kiser who currently is living as a missionary in Ghana, W. Africa).



Ronnie Whittemore speaking on "A Teenager Leads A Restoration Movement."



Bill Dillon introducing the next speaker.



Lectureship tables and displays were "picked over" and many enjoyed a good visit together.



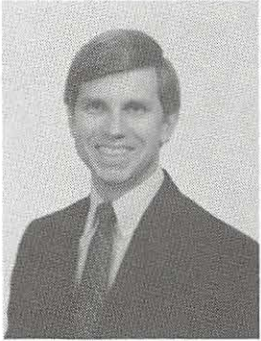
Guy Hester speaking on "Restoring the Erring."



Gospel Gleaner breakfast was well attended and enjoyed.

RIGHT AND WRONG USES OF THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT

Dennis Gullledge



Every century since the first has demonstrated the need of men to return to the New Testament pattern of religion. Almost from the time that men first realized that their religion was inferior in originality, purity and energy to first Century

Christianity, a return, however, marked by human deficiency, has been sought. In the ages succeeding the first century there were some who sought to cut away from corrupt doctrines and practices in religion. These idealists; Martin Luther, Philip Melancthon, Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin (the "Big Four" of the Protestant Reformation) tried merely to reform the existing corrupt institution (the Roman Catholic Church). The goal of the Protestant Reformers to recover uncorrupted Christianity was marked by shortsightedness. Martin Luther, for example, claimed that the Church against which he directed his critique was only four-hundred years old, and that "his effort was to restore the Church of the early Middle Ages."¹ They, however, laid the groundwork for others of independent thought, who, in ages to follow, broke away from the Protestant denominational machine in pursuit of simple New Testament Christianity.

The Restoration in America is called a "movement" because of the rapidity with which its ideas spread. In the words of Barton W. Stone, it took off, "Like fire in a dry stubble."² It identifies that religious fervor which brought about a return to New Testament Christianity and, by 1850, made churches of Christ the fourth largest religious body in the United States. It was a movement for which the time was right and for which people were ready. Several factors made it the greatest movement since the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. First, it was a *Restoration Movement*. Its purpose

was to reproduce New Testament Christianity, not to reform a corrupt system already existing. Second, it was an *undenominational* movement. Every local church was undenominational in name, doctrine and worship. Third, it was a *Bible* movement. In an age of general neglect of the Bible as a "dead letter," the ideal of the Restoration Movement was and is to go back to the New Testament as our authority in religion. Fourth, it was a *reasonable* movement. It was the "thinking man's religion," as it appealed to the intellect as well as the emotions. Fifth, it was a *unity* movement. It sought unity based upon the Bible alone.

Right And Wrong Views Of The Historicism Of The Restoration Movement

It is right to appreciate our historical predecessors in the faith, whether they be of an ancient past (Hebrews 11), or, of a more recent history. We should all be of a disposition to recognize the labors and sacrifices of those who have gone before us.

It is wrong, however, to view the Restoration Movement as the "roots" (origin) of churches of Christ. It is common to hear many brethren today refer to "our roots" in the Restoration Movement, "our movement," "our tradition," "our heritage," "our identity," or synonymous expressions referring to brethren as "restorationist Christians," "restorationists," or, "American Restorationist Christians." This is a radical misappropriation both of the term *restoration*, and of its lofty ideal of restoring New Testament Christianity!

As for me, I am not a "restorationist," following "restorationism" as my "tradition," being committed to "the Church of Christ that was born of the American Restoration Movement." I am a follower of Christ (Matthew 16:24),

committed to his church as a member of it (Acts 2:47), and wearing his name alone (1 Peter 4:16).

There Are Right And Wrong Ways Of Looking To Early Leaders Of The Restoration Movement

It is right to look to Jesus Christ our Lord, Savior, Redeemer and Master, for such he is. It is into his name that we are baptized because it was he who was crucified for us (1 Corinthians 1:10-15). Jesus alone is the "author and finisher of our faith" (Hebrews 12:2). It is, therefore, the height of absurdity for a Christian to claim that he is a disciple of any other. The most that can be said of any man is that he is a minister through whom some believe (1 Corinthians 3:5).

It is wrong to look to any religious leader and claim that we are, in any way, their disciples. The late Don DeWelt said, "Alexander Campbell's decision to be baptized has influenced multiplied thousands upon thousands of people because, whether we like it or not, we are disciples of Alexander Campbell."³ If that be true let us discard the name "Christian" and wear the name "Campbellite." In addition, let us admit to the denominations that they were correct all these years in applying to us that detestable designation.

It is wrong to look to preachers, papers, editors, schools or congregations as sources of authority. Sometimes brethren get quite excited over what certain men believe. Much goes into showing what David Lipscomb, G. C. Brewer, H. Leo Boles or Guy N. Woods taught. All of this is interesting from a learning standpoint but in the framework of any religious question there is but one issue of importance: what saith the Lord? Should one show that he taught the same things as the pioneers that would prove nothing except as he and they taught the truth.

There Are Right And Wrong Ideas Of What Constitutes A Restoration Movement

Some advance the notion that restoring New Testament Christianity is illusory because the church being in a "pilgrim" state, "...never arrives but is forever on the journey. The church is

never a perfect reflection of God's ideal but always strives to move toward that goal expressed in Scripture by the words 'Kingdom of God.'"⁴ This depicts the church in terms of a continuum, always advancing toward, but never reaching the "goal" of becoming the Lord's church or God's Kingdom. The fallacy of this error is evident when one considers the fact that if the church could be established in the first century, it can be re-established in the present century, and that the church is the Kingdom (Matthew 16:19).

Those who believe that the church of Christ has not been restored in our time base their conclusions upon the sinful condition of church members as falling short of the spirit of New Testament Christianity. As a study of the Corinthian letters will reveal, however, the sinful condition of members of the church does not diminish from the fact that the "church of God" may and does exist wherein you have such identifiable elements as Scriptural organization, worship, designation, terms of entrance, etc.

It is right, however to regard the Restoration Movement as something to be maintained through a persistent walking according to the rule of Christ (Philippians 3:16). There will always be the need to study, learn and grow. The generation that relaxes in these areas is a generation in digression.

The Restoration Movement gave us simple searchers of truth who were not content with the fruit of the Reformation. It continues with each person who comes to the Bible alone as his rule of faith and practice and treats denominationalism as something to be forsaken and forgotten. -10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

¹Ronald H. Bainton, *The Reformation Of The Sixteenth Century* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1972), 5.

²Barton W. Stone, "History Of The Christian Church, No. 1" *The Christian Messenger* (February 24, 1827), 75.

³Bill J. Humble, *Light From Above: The Life Of Alexander Campbell* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1988), 53.

⁴Rubel Shelly & Randall J. Harris, *The Second Incarnation: A Theology For The 21st Century Church* (West Monroe, Louisiana: Howard Publishing Co., 1992), 71.

RESTORING BROTHERLY LOVE

Allen Webster



Anatoly Shcharansky—though innocent—spent nine years in labor camps in the Soviet Union. At age 38, he was included in an East-West exchange of prisoners and allowed to immigrate to Israel in February, 1986. After two months of

freedom, he said: "In the Soviet Union I got accustomed to many years of living in a sea of hatred. Now I have to get accustomed to living in an ocean of love." The church is designed to be an "ocean of love," but, occasionally, one might feel more like it is a "sea of hate." Jonathan Swift, the satirical author of *Gulliver's Travels*, said, "We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love..." It is tragic that in some churches, as in ancient Corinth, the love that was so basic to Christ's character does not characterize the membership of His church.

How is love restored once it is lost? *It's hard.* The wise man said it is better never to let him get offended. "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Proverbs 18:19). *It's possible.* Paul and John Mark had a "falling out" and there was "sharp contention," but later Paul requested that Mark come to be with him for he was "profitable for the ministry" (2 Timothy 4:11).

THERE MUST BE REPENTANCE. It is a sin to be hateful. It violates God's law (Romans 13:8), Christ's example (Matthew 9:36), and the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). John wrote: "He that saith he is in the light and hateth his brother, is in darkness...He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love...If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also" (1 John 2:9; 4:8, 20, 21).

Until one recognizes his sin, and realizes that God will not save an unloving person, he will

never take steps to restore his relationship with his brother. Repentance means we feel sorrow for the things we have said or done that were wrong (2 Corinthians 7:10), and includes trying to make restitution (restoration) of the harm we have done (Cf., Matthew 3:8).

THERE MUST BE HUMILITY. It takes a humble person to go to another and say, "I was wrong. I am sorry." But that is often what it takes to restore a broken love relationship. The Corinthian church had serious internal problems. Some were going so far as to take a brother to court (1 Corinthians 6:1-7). They were proud. They thought they had "arrived" (1 Corinthians 4:6-19). They were "puffed up" (5:2; 8:1). They bragged on themselves and put others down. "Vaunt" (13:4) [*perpereuomai*] is used nowhere else in the New Testament and means "to talk conceitedly; to boast so as to exalt self." They were arrogant rather than repentant; they bragged rather than mourned. Needless to say, they lacked love.

Love replaces self-promotion with a desire to promote others. Arrogance is big-headed; love is big-hearted. Pride is to the soul what poison is to the body (Proverbs 6:16-17; 8:13; 11:2; 13:10; 16:18; 29:23; Daniel 4:37; Obadiah 3, 4; Matthew 5:3; 23:12; Roman 12:16; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5-6). In God's view, the way up is down. The hardest instrument to play in any orchestra is not the piano or trumpet, but "second fiddle." No one likes to admit wrong, especially if he feels he has also been wronged, but love puts the other person first and does just that (Philippians 2:2-4). True love prevents the tumors of self-conceit and arrogance from spreading.

THERE MUST BE PATIENCE. Patience is the cornerstone of unity in the church. We are taught to "forebear" each other (Ephesians 4:2). In simple terms this means to "put up with" those things we do not like about others. We are patient with those we love, and quick to make excuses for their mistakes. We put up with many slights and neglects from them. Those we do not love can do

nothing to please us. Christ had patience with Peter even after the many times Peter sinned against Him and disappointed Him. While Jesus was facing the agony of the cross, His unloving disciples argued about which of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24), but He was patient with them. Jesus loved to the limits of love (John 13:1).

Short-tempered people destroy churches; "long-tempered" ones keep them together. The word translated longsuffering (*makrothumein*) in 1 Corinthians 13:4 is used only ten times in the New Testament¹ and literally means, "long-tempered."² We do not use this phrase, but we use its opposite, "short-tempered." It is closely akin to the word "patience" (*hupomone*) which is found in the New Testament forty-eight times (in different forms). The word used here always describes patience with people and not patience with circumstances. It describes a man who is slow to anger and is used of God Himself in His relationship with men. Solomon wrote, "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit, than he that taketh a city" (Proverbs 16:32). Chrysostom said it is used of a man who is wronged and who has it easily in his power to avenge himself and who yet will not do it. Love is more willing to be taken advantage of than to take advantage, much less to avenge. A Christian refuses to "pay back evil for evil" (Romans 12:17; Cf., Proverbs 10:12), but if slapped on the right cheek, will turn the left (Matthew 5:39). As he lay dying under the painful, crushing blows of the stones, Stephen's last words show concern for his murderers rather than for himself (Acts 7:60).

Preachers must learn to be patient with elders; elders must be patient with preachers. Teachers must be patient with parents; parents must be patient with teachers. Strong Christians must be patient with weak ones who may be constantly unhappy or unfaithful (Romans 14:1; 15:1-5; Cf., Luke 9:51-56). Older Christians must be patient with younger Christians (Titus 2:2); younger Christians must be patient with older Christians. Love can wait for others to grow up. Someone said, "You can't throw an egg over into the barnyard and expect it to crow tomorrow." It takes a little time to grow something worthwhile (e.g., oak tree, boy, Christian, congregation).

Moses had a hard time waiting for Israel to grow up. He lost his patience with them and sinned (Numbers 20:10-12).

In Chinese folklore there is a story of a household so happy that for nine generations none of its members had left it, except the daughters that marriage had taken away. The fame of such domestic bliss reached the ears of the Celestial Emperor. He sent an envoy to discover the secret. The old father of the house, taking paper and brush, painted many characters, then handed his answers to the imperial envoy. But when the emperor unrolled it, there was nothing but the character for "PATIENCE" repeated 100 times. If a congregation is to enjoy nine generations of peace, it will be because its members practiced repentance, humility, and, above all, patience.

-P. O. Box 512, Jacksonville, AL 36265

¹*Longsuffering* appears 13 times in the KJV, but it is translated from different words. This Greek word is found in 2 Corinthians 6:6; Galatians 5:22; Ephesians 4:2; Colossians 1:11; 3:12; 2 Timothy 3:10; 4:2. Note that it is not always translated "longsuffering" (KJV—be patient 3, have patience 2, have long patience 1, bear long 1 suffer long 1, be longsuffering 1, patiently endure 1). Its corresponding word is found in the Old Testament four times.

²Thayer has this definition: "the quality of self-restraint in the face of provocation which does not hastily retaliate or promptly punish; it is the opposite of anger, and is associated with mercy."

MOUNTAIN HOME CHURCH OF CHRIST
COLLEGE AND NORTH STREETS
P.O. BOX 192
MOUNTAIN HOME, AR 72653

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Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Office Fax (870) 425-8118

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH: GREAT RESTORATION LEADERS

John T. Polk, II



A leader sees what others do not, feels as others have not, and guides where others dare not. God's leaders look to God, not men, for strength (2 Corinthians 4:18; 1 Corinthians 3:21). The late Vince Lombardi, former Green Bay Packers Pro

Football Coach, said: "It is becoming increasingly difficult to be tolerant of a society which has sympathy only for the misfits, only for the maladjusted, only for the criminal, only for the loser. Have sympathy for them, help them, but I think it's also time for us to stand up for and to cheer for the doer, the achiever, one who recognizes a problem and does something about it, one who looks for something extra to do for his country, the winner, the leader" (p. 16, *Nehemiah: Learning to Lead*, James Montgomery Boice, Fleming H. Revell Company, Old Tappan, New Jersey 07675, 1990). God's men will not let the work of God suffer any longer—they are men of action (Ezra 6:14). Ezra/Nehemiah form the best handbook of "leadership" on earth. The greatest need in the church of Christ today is the kind of leaders God can use in "restoring" the church to the foundation of Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11). The Jews' disloyalty brought great devastation, and their time of restitution demanded "right men for the right times" (Nehemiah 2:5). Among the Jews: Zerubbabel restored purity in worship, Ezra restored purity in truth, Nehemiah restored purity in obedience. Faith conquered all.

1. Zerubbabel (whose name means "seed of Babel") arose in Cyrus' first year and began the greatest restoration movement of all time (Ezra 1:1; 2:2; 3:2). He insisted that God's people must be (1) Uniform. He refused to permit priests to serve who could not prove who their father was (Ezra 2:59, 62). Today, none should be allowed to think their worship is acceptable who cannot

prove their genealogy by the "New Birth" (Cf., John 3:3; Romans 8:14; Galatians 3:26-29). (2) United. By working "as one man" in a common faith (Ezra 3:1, 8, 11). Today no one is of Christ's body who divides it (Cf., 1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 1 John 2:18-19; 4:1-6). (3) Not Unsure. With the foundation of the Jewish temple finished, their opponents, (Samaritans, whose origin is recorded in 2 Kings 17:24-41), offered to "build with you" and were rightly refused with the words, "You may do nothing with us to build a House for our God; but we alone will build to the Lord God of Israel" (Ezra 4:2-3). Today, our religious friends urge that we accept them into our number because "we're all worshipping the same God." We must insist this is not so, for only children of God may build his temple (church) today and not everyone who claims to be God's spiritual child actually is (1 Peter 2:5-9; Galatians 3:26-29; Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 1:1-3; 3:9-11, 16). The Jews opponents instantly turned against them with "illegalities," which worked (Ezra 4:4-24). Today we submit to the higher powers, but nowhere in scripture does God teach that human government should define the church (Romans 13:1-5; Acts 5:24-29). The Jews foundered by listening to their opponents (Ezra 4:1-24, v. 5, 23). Today the church of Christ is stymied by threats from the world (1 John 3:13; 4:4; 5:1-5). Zerubbabel showed that worship is sacred.

2. Ezra, was "a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses" (Ezra 7:6) because he "prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord, and to do it" (Ezra 7:10). Ezra was a courier of Artaxerxes bounty for the temple (Ezra 7:11-26); cheerful for God's rule over the king (Ezra 7:27-28); careful to observe the details of Moses Law (Ezra 8:1-36); courageous in dissolving wrong marriages among the Jews (Ezra 9:1-10:44). Ezra showed the way is strait.

3. Nehemiah, thirteen years later (Nehemiah 1:1; 2:1) showed God's men must

have:

(1) **Clear eyes** (Nehemiah 1:1-11; 2:11-12) of faith to “see” Jerusalem's ruin; of feelings to “see” Israel's sins; of futility to “see” their weakness without God. Men must be able to cry over the important wounds (Luke 19:41; John 11:35) not physical scrapes. Physical tears are chemically the best solution for cleansing both the eyes and the “heart.” Men may cry too little to be saved or too often to be a man, but God's leaders will cry over God's people.

(2) **Heavy Hearts** (Nehemiah 1:4). Great burdens drive men to their knees—godly men pray often (Nehemiah 1:5-11; 2:4; 4:4, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 9:1-38; 13:14, 22, 29, 31). Today the original meaning of “prayer meeting” is lost and prayers are timed.

(3) **Strong Backs** (Nehemiah 3:1-32). Everyone did his part (Cf., Ecclesiastes 9:10). Today many in the church leave it mostly to a preacher to be done, then wonder why many are lost. Has “the church” lost its young people? senior citizens? young couples? Indeed not, for the family should care for its own (1 Timothy 5:8). If all work is on a few backs little is done. God's work is a great work-out. Obedience to God is spiritual exercise (Hebrews 5:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18). “A soul by Jesus” is far stronger than “A body by Jake.”

(4) **Tough Skin**: When “outsiders” used the weapon of ridicule, Nehemiah said, “You have no heritage or right or memorial in Jerusalem” (Nehemiah 2:20) i.e. “it is none of your business since you are not one of us.” Sanballat “was furious and very indignant, and mocked the Jews” (Nehemiah 4:1). He and Tobiah used false accusations against God's work that the Jews were doing (Nehemiah 4:2-3) just like non-Christians do today: [a] “What are these feeble Jews doing?” Now—“The church of Christ doesn't have the membership or buildings to impress other religions or governments.” [b] “Will they fortify themselves?” Now—You think your church are the only ones going to heaven?” [c] “Will they offer sacrifices?” Now—“Worship cannot save...I can be just as good a Christian without going to church...only hypocrites attend church.” [d] “Will they complete it in a day?” Now—“You think

you're better than everyone else...What makes you think you can change the world when we can't?” [e] “Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish—stones that are burned?” Now—“You are denominational just like we are...You are nothing more than Campbellites...One church is as good as another.” [f] “Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall.” Now—“Your members still sin...Your church cannot save.” Nehemiah, however, kept the people concentrating on the task at hand but with prayerful watchfulness (Nehemiah 4:6-9).

(5) **Strong Stomachs** (Nehemiah 5:1-19). When “outsider” complaints were made by “insiders” Nehemiah “became very angry when I heard their outcry and these words” (Nehemiah 5:6). One can be angry and sin not (Cf., Mark 3:5; Ephesians 4:26). His leadership shows in that he contemplated (5:7), chastised (5:7-13), corrected (5:13), commended his own example (5:14-18), and cried to God (5:19).

(6) **Eyes “In the back of your head”** (Nehemiah 6:1-14). His response should be ours: [a] Say “Oh no” to Ono (6:1-4). Ono was to be a “Unity Forum” but these only stop progress and are not set up by those who will repent and obey God. [b] Say “Not so” to lies (6:5-9). Slander is a lie, false, perverse and not to be heeded. “Tabloid Tongues” should make no headway in lovers of truth. [c] Say “Ah, So?” to entrapment (6:10-13). Let us not be motivated by personal ambition, covetousness, or pride into thinking that we are more important than the cause. Hirelings look out for number one and have their price (John 10:11-13; 1 Peter 5:2-3). There is no acceptable price for sacrificing principles. [d] Say “They're yours” to God (6:14). Leave our enemies to the highest court for vengeance is not ours (Romans 12:18-21). It is sweet only to those who have not tasted forgiveness. Church is not for “settling scores” but saving souls.

4. Nehemiah showed whole service. Nehemiah showed God's leaders they will not fail (6:15-16) though the people may be weak; to openly depend upon God's Word (8:1-18); confess all sins, their own included (9:1-38); and to wholly follow the Lord (10:1-13:31). They must take the

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RESTORING RESPECT FOR THE BIBLE

John T. Polk, II



REFORM didn't work in Judah; i.e., Hezekiah, (2 Kings 18:13-20) or Josiah, (2 Kings 22:1-23:30), what was needed was RESTORATION! Israel was crushed by Shalmaneser, King of Assyria (2 Kings 17:1-18,

22-23) and Judah was crushed by Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon (2 Kings 24:13-14, 20) in 586 B.C. Judah and the City of God had fallen—but not God! God's people had failed to do God's Will, so during their 70 years of captivity, He continued without them (Ezra 6:14). In the books of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, God oversaw the Jews' return in 538 B.C., completing the temple under Darius the Mede in 516 B.C. (Ezra 1-6); then Ahasuerus (Gk. *Xerxes*) chose Esther as Queen; and Artaxerxes I Longimanus ("long hands") saw the completion of Jerusalem (Ezra 7 - Nehemiah 13). It is visible that God is, often invisible what God does (Hebrews 11:27), but always impressive. He reversed Exodus 1:6-8, thus No King Could Ignore Israel's God! God is sovereign over nature (Romans 1:19-20) and nations (Exodus 34:23-24). That God demands "Royal Respect" is seen in Ezra 7:27, "Blessed be the Lord God of our fathers, who has put such a thing as this in the king's heart, to beautify the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem" (cf., Proverbs 21:1; Jeremiah 51:11; Ezra 1:1; 6:22).

Since wicked kings and people of Judah and Israel refused to obey God's word, He made his power noticeable in those who were not his own: Babylonians, Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2; 3; 4) and Belshazzar (Daniel 5:1-31); Persian, Cyrus the Great (Isaiah 44:28 was written one hundred fifty years before Ezra 1:1); Darius the Mede (Daniel 11:1-12:13; Jeremiah 25:10-14; Daniel 9:1-27); Ahasuerus [Greek *Xerxes*] Esther; and Artaxerxes I ["Longimanus"] (Ezra 7:1-8; Nehemiah 1:11; 2:1). God providentially placed palace "pals" in the courts of: Nebuchadnezzar

(Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, Abednego); Belshazzar (hand-writing on the wall); Artaxerxes' cupbearer was Nehemiah; Xerxes' counsel and queen were Mordecai and Esther, et.al. The Book of Esther ("star") never mentions the name of "God," but no Bible book more clearly shows God's hand. The Jewish "Feast of Purim" ("lots") on 14-15 Adar was a testimony to their reversal: for Haaman was hung, a Jewish "holocaust" avoided and they had renewed respect for God. It came not of Moses law, but of Jewish appreciation of God's providence.

In order to see "the hand of the Lord" (an expression used 11 times, Ezra 7:6, 9, 28; 8:18, 22, 31; Nehemiah 2:8, 18; 6:16), Kings were moved (Nehemiah 2:8) and enemies plans were frustrated (Nehemiah 4:15). When Jerusalem was restored, their enemies "perceived that this work was done by our God" (Nehemiah 6:16). The temple, worship and city of God were finished by "all those whose spirits God had moved" (Ezra 1:5; Nehemiah 2:12; 7:5) to whom His Word had been preached. Nothing was accomplished without prayer, then or now (Cf., Nehemiah 1:4-11; 2:14; 4:4-5, 9; 5:19; 6:9, 14; 13:14, 22, 29, 31; 1 Thessalonians 5:17). We conclude, therefore, that: (1) none of this could have been done without works of the personal, powerful, providential, invisible being: The Lord God (1 Timothy 1:17); (2) God is not merely a: *Force* (the mantra of "Star Wars," Cf., Colossians 1:16); *Farce* (the mantra of evolution and NASA, Cf., Romans 1:25); *Faith-only Deity* (the mantra of denominations, Cf. James 2:17); *Feeble* (the mantra of agnostics, atheists, socialists, and liberals, i.e. no power or inclination to rule over men or the world, Cf., John 19:11; Revelation 19:6); (3) But as in Acts 17:27-28, God's grip on life has convinced idolatrous pagans—Christians should be impressed that God's grace grants good gifts to the grateful (Cf. Matthew 6:19-34); (4) God may wait for us to completely restore his temple (the church of Christ, Ephesians 1:1; 2:21) before he restores to us the joy of his salvation

(Psalm 51:12; 2 Corinthians 9:8); (5) God never stops working for his house, but some have stopped working on his house (Cf., Matthew 28:18-20); (6) The freezes, floods, failures and flights of this world may be "the hand of the Lord" plowing hard hearts—let us arise and help men rebuild with spiritual stones (1 Peter 2:5-9).

Ignorance of the Bible is manifested by: "Heaven's Gate" cult suicides in March, 1997; a 1000-day countdown to the year 2000; proliferation of psychic hotlines; obsessive comet and star-gazing; generation "X" established churches catering to their desires; divorce, adultery, abortion, incest, rape, murder, drug-abuse, drunkenness. People want righteousness and don't know that it's in the Bible (Cf., Matthew 5:6; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:13). Empty sermons are preached by empty preachers to empty pews, for without trembling "at the words of the God of Israel" (Ezra 9:4; 10:3) there is no reason to come to church.

The three pillars of restoration are respect for: God's works; God's word; God's will to forgive. The preaching of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi who referred to "the Lord Almighty" eighty times (fifty of those occur in Zechariah 1-8) was crucial, therefore, great sermons are filled with God, great preachers are filled with God's word, great times are filled with obedience to God. Having seen Israel/Judah brought down to ruin, world-famous kings and empires changed, "circumstantial" (Providential?) events controlled decisions, all because God said so -- then the fear of God's word had returned to the Jews. There was a full return to Scripture in:

1. **Faith And Practice:** The altar was built and sacrifices were observed "as it is written in the Law of Moses the man of God" (Ezra 3:2). Priests and Levites received assigned tasks "as it is written in the Book of Moses" (Ezra 6:18). Ezra was "a skilled scribe in the Law of Moses which the Lord God of Israel had given" (Ezra 7:6). The people heard and respectfully stood for the reading of "the Book of the Law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded Israel" (re: feast of booths, Nehemiah 8:1, 14). They swore "to walk in God's Law, which was given by Moses the servant of God" (re: wrong marriages, Nehemiah 10:29). Though none of Moses' original writings existed then, God had preserved scripture which if lost was found (2 Kings 22:8), or if it was ruined was

rewritten by inspiration (Jeremiah 36:27-28). In both text and translation, God has kept his word alive, hence Jesus assures us of that fact (Luke 16:29; John 12:48-50; 17:20; 20:26-31); so also Paul (Acts 13:27).

2. **Faith-Building Preaching:** Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi preached (Ezra 5:1-2; 6:14), but there was no new doctrine or practice revealed, only a return to the original doctrine and practice in Moses' law. There was no attempt to find or start a church that would preach what they were already practicing; no excusing or justifying their sins so they would "feel good" and not struggle with their guilty consciences; they finally had faced God's word!

Haggai appealed to the people's *conscience* (1:5) with *rebuke* ("consider your ways" 1:2-11), *refocus* (compare their paltry efforts with Solomon's temple glory, 2:1-9), *review* (God blessed them when they had obeyed but not in their disobedience, 2:10-19), and *renewal* (once again, they should choose God's protection, 2:20-23). Haggai reminded them his message was God speaking twenty-six times in thirty-eight verses.

Zechariah stressed cooperation with the admonition, "Do not be like your fathers" (1:4) and to keep looking for the promised Christ (6:12-13; 14:9). His book is more Messianic than any Old Testament book except Isaiah. He is quoted seventy-one times in the New Testament; thirty-one of which are in the Revelation, all of which were fulfilled when Jesus lived on the earth. He had eight visions (1:7-6:15) and two "burdens" (chapters 9-11, 12-14) and showed that faith's expectations are great expectations.

Malachi emphasized consistency with more verses (forty-seven) spoken directly to Israel than any other prophet. Their whimpering defenses for their disobedience ("Yet you say" 1:2, 6-7; 2:14, 17; 3:7-8, 13) are all answered by God. These are still every whine his selfish children could ever use, even in 1997.

3. **Faithful Power:** Bible preaching: Stirred (a) Cyrus (Ezra 1:1); (b) Jews (Ezra 1:5); (c) Zerubbabel (Haggai 1:13-14). Says: (a) The best thing to do when there's "nothing to do;" (b) The Way For Church Growth. Saves: (a) Time—goes directly to the root of the problem: God is right and we are not. (b) Talent—it assigns everybody a
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A TEENAGER LEADS A RESTORATION

Ronnie Whittemore



Paul remarked in 2 Timothy 3:1, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." He listed a catalogue of characteristics by which to identify these perilous times. These identification marks described apostasy. While

Paul's prophecy was fulfilled through Catholicism and other movements away from the truth, do you, dear reader, see any of those identification marks today—in society and in the church? Brethren, while this writer is not a prophet nor the son of a prophet, he, as well as you, can see these identification marks in society and in the church. But are we ready to turn over God's kingdom? We need a restoration today. We need a restoration in the hearts and lives of elders, preachers, and members of the Lord's church. We need men and women of real devotion to God and His Word, not those who give lip service to Him or go through the mechanics of worship once a week. We need defenders of the truth who will arm themselves with the sword of the Spirit.

In the book of 2 Kings, we read of a great restoration leader who was young and obedient. His name was Josiah. He recognized the sinful plight of Judah and did all that he could to stem the tide of apostasy in his kingdom. This lesson is designed to review the history of God's chosen people under the Old Testament, follow the deeds of Josiah and apply those lessons to the church today.

REVIEW OF ISRAEL'S HISTORY. In order to set the stage for our study of restoration, let us highlight some important events in Israel's history. (1) God chose Abraham because he would teach his children "the way of the Lord" (Genesis 18:19). (2) God delivered Israel from Egyptian bondage and proved His majesty and power to Pharaoh, Egypt and Israel (Exodus 6:1-8). (3) Yet, Israel murmured and rebelled against God at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:11-14), in the wilderness

(Exodus 16:2-3), at Mt. Sinai (Exodus 32:7-8), and after the report of the spies (Numbers 13:27-14:4). (4) Israel also failed to conquer the land of Canaan as recorded in Judges 1-2 despite God's warnings. "But if ye will not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you; then it shall come to pass, that those which ye let remain of them shall be pricks in your eyes, and thorns in your sides, and shall vex you in the land wherein ye dwell" (Numbers 33:55).

Israel rejected God and desired a king to "be like the nations round about them" (1 Samuel 8:5-7). The Kingdom divided. There were no good kings in the North and only a handful of good kings in the South. The Northern tribes were taken into Assyrian captivity, but Judah was spared. Now, we approach the demise of Judah who followed Israel's lead into paganism and heathenism, due to the evil influences of Manasseh and Amon.

JOSIAH'S DEDICATED LIFE. Manasseh, the grandfather of Josiah, however, worshipped false gods and built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. He set up worship to Molech and made his own son to pass through the fire of Molech. He introduced horrid acts of cruelty and filthy lusts. And Amon, Josiah's father, was worse.

Good work must be accompanied by a good life. Josiah sought the Lord during a time of godlessness. "And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left" (2 Kings 22:2). Josiah rejected the influence of his father and grandfather and served God (Ecclesiastes 12:1). He acted on his strong beliefs. In the twelfth year of his reign, at age twenty, he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem from the high places and the idols. In the eighteenth year of his reign, at age twenty-six, he began to repair the house of the Lord which had been neglected and misused. It was during this time that Hilkiah the priest found in the temple the book of the Law, probably all covered

with dust like so many Bibles today. When the book of the law was read to Josiah, he tore his clothes, in sorrow and in shame, when he thought of how the Law had been neglected and broken. Josiah then had the book of the Law read in the ears of all the people and made a covenant that they would serve the Lord and keep his commandments, and all the people agreed to it (2 Kings 23:1-3).

Then Josiah tore down the high places of idolatry and destroyed the vessels of the false religions. Please read 2 Kings 23:4ff and note these specific acts of Josiah. (1) He tore down the altars and destroyed the vessels of idolatry (2 Kings 23:4; Acts 19:18-20). (2) He separated the idolatrous priests from their high places (2 Kings 23:9; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18). (3) He cast down the high places of corruption which Solomon had built for the gods of his many wives (2 Kings 23:13; 1 Kings 11; Deuteronomy 7:1-7). (4) He burnt and ground to powder the high place of Jereboam (2 Kings 23:15; 1 Kings 12:26-33). (5) He allowed the bones of the young prophet who cried against Jereboam to remain undisturbed (2 Kings 23:17-18; 1 Kings 13). (6) He possessed a heart worthy of commendation by the Scriptures (2 Kings 23:25; Acts 13:22).

Yet, despite Josiah's acts of devotion to God, Judah's sin was so repulsive to God and since the people were not totally convicted as was Josiah, Jehovah promised to cast off Jerusalem, His beloved city, much like Jesus promised to remove the candlesticks from unfaithful churches that would not repent (2 Kings 23:26-27; Revelation 2-3).

The deeds of Josiah point to a **Restoration** of the Word and commandments of Jehovah, exactly as He instructed, not just a **Reformation** which would be a change, but not a complete change to renew the law. Martin Luther and John Calvin, while they may be heralded for their efforts in denouncing Catholicism, led a Reformation which was an attempt to change Catholicism, not restore New Testament Christianity. Alexander Campbell, Thomas Campbell, Barton W. Stone, etc., led a Restoration of New Testament Christianity. They sought to go back to the Bible and do Bible things in Bible

ways. Their work looked back to Jerusalem in Acts 2; Martin Luther's work went back to Rome. The Restoration leaders were coming out of denominationalism, not going into it nor did they create denominationalism.

APPLICATION FOR TODAY. We are in the midst of an apostasy. While some preachers, elders, members are devoted to God like Josiah, others are like Judah. They are: (1) influenced by hedonism of the world and behave like the world (James 4:4); (2) ignorant of the Word (Matthew 22:29); and it seems like those who know the least about the Word are "calling the shots" in the church; (3) possessing traits of 2 Timothy 3:1ff.

We need a commitment like Josiah (Jeremiah 1:10). We do not achieve a restoration of New Testament Christianity by imitating the denominations. Why does it seem that every innovation proposed at business meetings, adopted by elders and practiced in the church are "warmed over" ideas and failures of denominations? The church, in some places, has been turned into a social club; the woman's role is perverted; "grace only" is taught and the doctrine of "obedient faith" is ridiculed, etc. We have the one thing that denominations do not have, the gospel, in its simplicity and purity. Our aim is not to make denominational people more denominational. Our goal is to convert them to New Testament Christianity. To make them New Testament Christians who are devoted to Christ, not men, worldly philosophies and devices (Colossians 2:8).

We must possess the identification marks of the New Testament church including the: (1) Right name (Romans 16:16), (2) Right organization (Philippians 1:1), (3) Right doctrine (Romans 1:16), (4) Right worship (John 4:24), (5) Right conduct (1 Timothy 3:15) and (6) Right service (James 1:27).

CONCLUSION. The salvation of the Lord's church rests with imitating the conviction of Josiah, a young man who led a restoration movement. The church would do well to tear down the groves and high places of sectarianism, cast down the influence of false philosophies and build a pure and holy altar to Jehovah God. "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over
(Continued on page 19)

victories of faith, defeats, and trials was hardly visible to the recording eye of medieval historians.

Eventually, mighty and gallant efforts were made to roll back the tide of darkness and ignorance that engulfed the world, especially that darkness pervading the apostate and worldly Roman Catholic Church. Heroic efforts resulted in an exciting historical period identified as the Protestant Reformation. This period found gallant, courageous, and sacrificing men such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, William Tyndal, Ulrich Zwingli and others, playing leading roles as religious reformers. Their labors were not fruitless, yet they assumed an impossible task in their endeavors to effect a reformation in the apostate Catholic Church. It was not possible to again bring the apostate church within the bounds of Biblical identity. The now wholly perverted and sinful Church could not be reformed, the courage and dedication of its would-be reformers notwithstanding. The move to reform the apostate church, the Protestant Reformation, failed.

While Luther and others committed themselves to the task of reformation, some others took an altogether different approach to the essence of New Testament worship. Spontaneously, without organized efforts, particular individuals struck on the idea of preaching the simple truth as revealed in the Bible and establishing congregations of believers among those who were obedient to Bible truth. These men rejected the quarreling and divided bodies of Protestantism and called for a return to the New Testament pattern. This spiritual awakening was first evidenced in Scandinavia, Europe, England and Scotland, and then in the New World. Robert and James Haldane were active evangelists in Scotland and organized churches modeled after the New Testament pattern. Robert Haldane was instrumental in stimulating the desire to return to New Testament Christianity in France and Switzerland. The new world of colonial America was experiencing a spiritual awakening and churches of Christ were meeting in North Carolina, Virginia, Vermont and New Hampshire

before the close of the eighteenth century.

At the turn of the nineteenth century numerous churches of Christ were meeting and worshipping according to the New Testament pattern. These congregations, meeting in Britain, on the continent of Europe, and in North America were not aware of the existence of one another. More than a quarter of a century passed before these several independent churches would realize there was a spontaneous movement among many churches to restore New Testament Christianity to the world. They would later realize a unity of purpose in the embrace of brotherhood and divine fellowship in the universal church of Christ. Maintaining local congregational autonomy, they would present to the world the unity of faith and spirit that the Lord prayed for the night of His betrayal (John 17:20-23).

The emergence of the restored church from the religious climate of early America was a glorious yet painful experience for many. Individuals, especially men who preached, began to grasp the truth and preached it in denominational Churches where they served. Few of these men were "located preachers" and usually preached for as many as three or more congregations.

The rediscovery of truth and the New Testament church was further advanced with the publishing of a number of journals. As early as 1808 Elias Smith published the *Herald Of Gospel Liberty* at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Its circulation was limited chiefly to the New England states. Barton Stone influenced reformers with his *Christian Messenger* published at Georgetown, Kentucky (1826-44). However, it was Alexander Campbell's *The Christian Baptist* (1823-30) and his *Millennial Harbinger* (1830-70) that influenced reformation preachers more than any of the periodicals. *The Christian Baptist* strongly opposed creedism and boldly set forth the divine principles of truth. The Concord Association, an association of Baptist churches in Northern Kentucky, became enthused followers of Campbell's teaching in *The Christian Baptist*. The Concord Baptist Association for more than fifty years had recognized the Bible alone as its rule of faith and practice and held substantially the same

views as did Campbell. Through *The Christian Baptist* Campbell encouraged members in the churches of the Concord Association to sever themselves from the Baptist connection. The influence of *The Christian Baptist* caused the virtual disappearance of the Separate Baptists in Kentucky. Some eight or ten thousand of that association embraced the Restoration Movement. From 1830 the *Millennial Harbinger*, Campbell's second paper, began to be published and to have a tremendous influence on a vast reading public, effectually teaching and encouraging many to abandon the sects and take their stand on the truth.

During the period of 1800-1830, churches of Christ came to realize they were afforded great religious opportunities. Although each congregation was autonomous, they were wedded to the idea of congregational fellowship and gave mutual encouragement to one another. During this period of time, a number of people had rejected their former religious connection and stood on the gospel platform of unity. Paul expressed that unity in Ephesians 4:1-6 as "one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God." Some entire congregations renounced their denominational names, creeds and doctrines and were espoused to Christ as His bride.

The movement during this period of time (1800-1830) was slow although many had moved to the truth and multitudes more were "near the kingdom." However, the church had definitely emerged and many faithful churches of Christ were worshipping God in Spirit and in truth.

Typical of this period of the Restoration Movement is the activity of one "Raccoon" John Smith. What Smith did in his search for and conversion to truth was typically repeated by a great number, especially preachers, in the eastern limits of the United States. Smith was baptized on December 27, 1804 and began to preach shortly afterward. He had been a Calvinist and had preached the principle doctrines of Calvinism as then (and now) held largely by Baptist and Presbyterian Churches. He had preached the false doctrines of heredity total depravity, infused grace, predestination of the individual, limited atonement, and the final perseverance of the

saints; the five cardinal doctrines of Calvinism. Tragic events in his life and a diligent study of the Bible caused him to be dissatisfied with his religious beliefs. It was with a great soul struggle and much personal sacrifice he began to preach the truth as he learned it, little by little. He was a diligent student of the Bible and Campbell's *The Christian Baptist*. Slowly, painfully but surely, from the time he first began to understand God's plan of salvation, Smith was on his way out of religious error. One by one he gave up the principles of Calvinism. The churches where he preached also gave up Calvinism and their denominational designation and accepted truth as John Smith preached it from the Holy Book. By the year 1830 he had led the churches at Mount Sterling, Spencer, Upper Spencer, Grassy Lick, (in Central Kentucky) and others out of error and into the restoration of New Testament Christianity.

Without forming a creed or ecclesiastical statement the movement swept the country. However, there were certain fundamental beliefs, or principles, that made the movement successful and which were absolutely essential to the Restoration of New Testament Christianity. The principles of the Restoration Movement are sound and valid, having their rise in New Testament Scripture. The Principles briefly stated are:

To accept the Bible as the only source of authority in matters of religious faith and practice.

To call Bible things by Bible names.

To restore apostolic worship: observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week; the sacrificial contribution of the saints on the first day of the week, singing praise unto God.

To restore the church of the New Testament in doctrine, worship and mission.

To restore the zeal of evangelism of the first century.

Our work today is much the same as those of earlier years of the Restoration. We must still contend for the truth "as it is in Jesus." We must set in our own minds and hearts the sacred, valid and Scriptural principles of the Restoration Movement. -10726 Hwy. 59 W., Burlison, TN 38015-7244



THE GOOD OLD WAY

(Jeremiah 6:16)

M. W. Kiser



We are all travelers. Life is the way. Eternity is the destination. Some are only concerned about the way; but not the destination. That is foolish indeed! I know it is my business to inform you about them both. Our text helps us understand.

I. THE FACTS ABOUT THE GOOD OLD WAY.

A. Identification.

1. Some ways we know cannot be this way.
 - a. "Of the ungodly" (Psalm 1:1, 6).
 - b. "Of the transgressor" (Proverbs 13:15).
 - c. "Broad way" (Matthew 7:13).
 - d. "Own way" (Isaiah 53:6; Jeremiah 10:23).
2. It is certainly designated as being:
 - a. The way of Christ (John 14:6).
 - b. The way of repentance and self-denial (Matthew 7:14).
 - c. Certainly leads to a pious life by those who live it (Ephesians 5:6).

B. Description.

1. Antiquity. "Old paths" (Isaiah

55:6-9).

2. Excellence. "Good way" (1 Timothy 4:8).

C. Destination.

1. It leads to eternal life (Matthew 7:14).
2. It is certain to do so (Romans 2:7).
3. It is the only way that does (Hebrews 12:14; Matthew 7:21; Acts 4:12).

II. THE COMMANDS OF THE GOOD OLD WAY.

A. Consideration: "stand, see."

1. Is your way one of outward or secret sin; irreligion; self-confidence; formality; or apostasy?
2. Examine yourself! (2 Corinthians 13:5).

B. Inquire: "ask."

1. By searching (John 5:39).
2. By asking (Acts 2:37; 8:34-36; 9:6).

C. Obedience: "walk."

1. This command requires you to get into the way (Acts 2:38; Galatians 3:26-27).
2. This command hastens us to act upon it now (2 Corinthians 6:2).
3. This command requires you to keep it by being steadfast against temptation (1 Peter 5:8-9; Luke 21:36).
4. This command requires you to go forward in spiritual growth (2 Corinthians 7:1; 2 Peter 1:5-11).

III. THE PROMISES OF THE GOOD OLD WAY.

A. They are meaningful. "Rest."

1. We have rest in this world from:
 - a. The anguish of guilt (Isaiah 53:4-6)
 - b. Oppression of Satan (Matthew 11:28).

- c. Tormenting fears (Psalm 34:4).
- d. Defilement (John 15:2; 1 John 1:9).
2. We shall have glorious rest in heaven.
 - a. From all temptation and troublers (Job 3:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7).
 - b. From all our sufferings and danger (Revelation 21:4; Matthew 6:20).
- B. They are most certain. "Shall."
 1. God is all-sufficient, He has it to give (Genesis 19:22).
 2. God is truthful, we shall have it (1 Thessalonians 5:24; Isaiah 45:19).
 3. God is kind, He wants us to have it (John 3:16-17; 10:10; 14:1-3).
- A. They are everlasting. "Souls."
 1. It remains ahead of us (Hebrews 4:9).
 2. Some are resting now (Revelation 7:13-14)
 3. It will be eternal (2 Peter 1:4).

This is the "good old way." Satan's way is the new way designed to lead men to hell. There is no injury or eternal loss to one who walks in the good old way. I call you to it. -P.O. Box 0344, Takoradi, W-R, Ghana, West Africa

MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
10820 MABELVALE WEST ROAD
P.O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

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Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
 Office Fax (501) 455-2547

Dennis Gulledege, Evangelist

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RESTORING THE ERRING

Guy F. Hester



In Luke 15:4-32 we have the record of three parables given by the Lord concerning that which was lost and the way in which each was restored. In verses 4-7 we have the parable of the lost sheep. In 8-10 we have the parable of the lost

coin, and in verses 11-32 the parable of the lost boy. Each of these is given to point out the importance of restoring that which is lost. The man with the hundred sheep left the ninety and nine and went in search of the one until it was found. The sheep just wandered away from the shepherd and was lost. He did not intend to be lost, but he was lost just the same. Many Christians wander off into sin and become lost. They do not intend to be lost, they just momentarily take their eyes off of Jesus the Good Shepherd, and focus on their worldly surroundings, and before they know it they are lost from Christ and the church in a world of sin and destruction. The problem is, too many of us are not leaving the ninety and nine and going in search of the brother that is lost. Paul said, "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1-2). Just as in the parable, when we have restored an erring brother, "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance." When a brother carelessly wanders astray, we should immediately go after him until we find and restore him to the fold.

The coin of the next parable was not lost by its own carelessness but by the carelessness of another. Many children are lost to the home and the church due to the carelessness of their parents, but how many of these parents are seeking their lost children as the woman of the parable sought her lost coin. Many elders (shepherds) are losing

the members of the flock of God that has been entrusted to their care and keeping. Elders are to be the overseers of the flock (1 Peter 5:2). How many elders really oversee the flock? Do sheep (members) often go astray because of careless elders? When a member of the flock is A.W.O.L. do the elders immediately set about to find that one and know what the problem is? Paul said to elders, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:28-29). Elders, and all Christians, need to take heed, lest through our carelessness, others become lost. If one has been lost due to our own carelessness, let us light our candle, sweep and seek diligently, until we find that one and bring him back. "Likewise I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth."

In the last parable, the boy was not lost due to his own carelessness as was the sheep. He was not lost due to the carelessness of another as was the lost coin. He deliberately made up his mind to leave his father's house and go into a far country. Having experienced all the advantages and comforts of home, when he made up his mind to leave there was nothing that could be said or done to stop him.

Today, when a member of the church (God's family) goes back to the world and deliberately turns his back on his Father's house and all the rich provisions that He has provided for us, there is nothing that anyone can do. Not the elders, not the members, not even his own family can stop him. This individual is guilty of willful sin (Hebrews 10:26). He knows what is right and what is wrong. The trouble is, he doesn't care what is right and wrong anymore. Concerning this type of individual, the Bible tells us, "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and were made

partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" (Hebrews 6:4-6). For such a one "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." All the power and sacrifice of heaven has gone into saving us from sin and making us members of God's house and when we say to the Father, "I'm going to journey into a far country (the world) and waste my substance in riotous living" our Father will tell us to go ahead and do what we are determined to do. It will grieve Him who loved us so much "that he gave his only begotten Son" He will long for our return but will not force us to stay with Him. Sometimes we have to wake up in the "hog pen" before we come to our senses and realize just what we have given up.

The world has its attractions and at best we are tempted. But Christians are warned not to love the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17). If we are friends with the world we are the enemies of God (James 4:4).

The father of the prodigal son did not stop loving him but he let him go. Just so, when we are determined that we will do wrong, our heavenly Father does not stop loving us but he lets us go, even to hell if we do not come back in penitence to the Father's house. There are three classes of people who need to be restored. (1) Those who carelessly wander astray. (2) Those who go astray because of the carelessness of others. (3) Those who deliberately go away. We must go after those who fit into the first two categories and restore them "in the spirit of meekness," remembering that we likewise need the help of others (Galatians 1-2). Those in the third category must *come to themselves*, realizing their destitute state, and remembering the blessings of the Father's house, return to the Father and ask His forgiveness. He is waiting to forgive and restore. -P. O. Box 664, Fulton, MS 38843

THERE ARE TWO WAYS TO GET NOTHING DONE: (1) LET EVERYONE DO IT, (2) LET NO ONE DO IT.

EZRA AND NEHEMIAH: GREAT...LEADERS

Continued from page 9

work personally, not the criticism (John 15:18). Take the work more seriously than jobs, gardens, hunting/fishing, little league, school routines and themselves. God's leaders will cry, try and fly. With men's hands in "God's hand," "Let us rise up and build" (Nehemiah 2:18). -125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

RESTORING RESPECT FOR THE BIBLE

Continued from page 11

needed task to benefit the Lord's Work; (c) Traffic—it keeps all the members striving to "please God" (Hebrews 11:6).

Because it is God's Word: It is truth when men's isn't (Romans 3:4). It alone can save from sins (John 6:63, 68; Romans 1:16; 2 Timothy 4:2). It still builds up God's house (Acts 20:32). The handwriting is "on the wall," in the Bible, and in nature—is it in us? -125 The Trace, Dover TN 37058

A TEENAGER LEADS A RESTORATION

Continued from page 13

kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10). -200 S. Curry Pike, Bloomington, IN 47404

SPECIAL ISSUE

This issue of *Gospel Gleaner* is devoted to the theme: "Restoration Movements Of The Bible," reflecting the topic of our first lectureship. Each staff writer has written an article comprising the lesson which he delivered orally at the lectures. This issue is complimented by Max R. Miller's classic piece, "The Restoration Movement." We hope that this issue will keep alive the zeal of many in restoring New Testament Christianity. -The Editors



READERS' RESPONSE

"How Readest Thou?"

Luke 10:26

GG IS HELPFUL IN A CHRISTIAN'S GROWTH

I have read a few copies of the *Gospel Gleaner* magazine and I find it very helpful in my Christian growth. I especially appreciated the articles on cloning and the one titled "Three Days And Three Nights" because these were subjects that I had wondered about for some time now. The article on the "Lord's School Of Prayer" will help me have a more effective prayer life. The entire magazine is excellent. Keep up the good work. Do you ever have articles on how to teach a Mormon? Toni Arnold, Union City, TN.

GG USEFUL IN LOCAL WORK

Just wanted to drop you both a quick note and tell you how much I appreciate *Gospel Gleaner*. It has been a great encouragement to me in my local work. I've used several GG articles over recent years in my radio and newspaper endeavors. I appreciate the sound, and yet simple way you present the truth. Please send my thanks to your elders for their overseeing this important work. Mike Benson, Parsons, TN.

PRAYERS ARE WITH YOU

You are doing a wonderful job, keep up the good work. My prayers are for you. We need more good papers like the *Gospel Gleaner*. Lizzie Payne, Indianapolis, IN.

SOME STILL STAND FOR TRUTH

Please add my name to your mailing list. What a joy to know some still stand for truth. Cecil R. Williams, Rossville, GA.

A NEW READER IS VERY IMPRESSED

I have just finished my very first *Gospel Gleaner*. I am very impressed with this publication. My only wish is that I would have known of it's existence long before now. In a world of compromising brethren and weak periodicals it is a pleasure to read the articles in the *Gospel Gleaner*. I will spread the word about you in this area. May God bless your efforts as they glorify Him. Jim Beltz, Kissimmee, FL.

SPREADING TRUTH TO A CONFUSED WORLD

It is encouraging to see publications such as the *Gospel Gleaner* spreading the truth to a world that is confused. with deceiving doctrines. It would be a great gift for me if you would put me on your mailing list. Carolyn Kimball, Bastrop, LA.

GG HELPFUL TO A NEW PREACHER

My name is Howard Vosburg and I have just begun to preach for the churches of Christ in northern Illinois. I have just read your last issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* and request that I be placed on your mailing list. I know that this publication could assist me in the work that I have chosen. Howard Vosburg, Crystal Lake, IL.

HE FOUND GG INSIGHTFUL

A fellow minister, Jerry Joseph, gave me a copy of your publication. I want to say I enjoyed it and found it to be insightful. Please add my name to your mailing list. Jeff Thomas, Portageville, MO.

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GOSPEL GLEANER



Volume 13

No. 4

FAMILY LIFE CENTER

Frank Chesser

The home, civil government and the church are divine institutions. God ordained them. Each was planned with man in mind. God planted the first home in the beauty and serenity of Eden. The home is God's family life center. Each room in God's blueprint is designed for man's happiness and well-being.

There is the instruction room. We are all the product of what we have been taught. Children receive instruction from various sources and upon the basis thereof, they build a life. God's formula for child rearing is threefold: love God with all your being, receive his word into your heart and teach it incessantly to your children (Deuteronomy 6:4-9). Children are admonished to "hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Proverbs 1:8). There is no substitute for parental instruction.

There is the example room. The best of instruction can be quickly nullified by a bad example. Children must have parental visual aid to accompany their teaching. Jehoshaphat "walked in all the ways of Asa his father, he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kings 22:43). Ahaziah "did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother" (1 Kings 22:52). The difference in

Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah was the difference in the example of their parents.

There is the entertainment room. God's blueprint has the entertainment room in the home, not the church. Zechariah pictures the return of God to Jerusalem and the restoration of the city with the delightful scene of children "playing in the streets" (Zechariah 8:5). There is a time to play. Families need to spend some fun-time together. Instead of "go play," there is a time when parents need to say "let's play."

A humanly devised family life center as an adjunct to the church is a counterfeit for the real thing. Let us strive to make our home a real family life center. -6723 Sycamore Drive, Montgomery, AL 36117

A HOME IS MORE THAN BRICKS

It's a place where your child gains his concept of God.

It's a place where your daughter learns how to be a wife and mother.

It's a place where your son learns how to be a husband and father.

It's a place where going the second mile can pay big dividends.

It's a place where the Christian graces can be added by practice.

It's a place where the reality of your Christianity is tested.



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The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is dedicated to restoring New Testament Christianity. We welcome your comments and questions regarding any article found herein.

STAFF WRITERS

Guy F. Hester
M. W. Kiser
John T. Polk, II
Allen Webster
Ronnie Whittemore

EDITORS

Bill Dillon
Dennis Gulledge

MAILING ADDRESSES

Contributions

P. O. Box 345
Mabelvale, AR 72103

Manuscripts

P. O. Box 880
Mountain Home, AR 72654-0880

Editorial

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

Bill Dillon

Jesus said, "It must needs be that offenses will come..." (Matthew 18:7). Since there shall always be differences among brethren, we would all be well advised to remember certain rules of engagement by which our conflicts are to be resolved. When we criticize others let us remember to...

1. Be Humble—Arrogance has never been a sign of true greatness. "Let's get him told!" was never the spirit of Christ. The thing most needed in the church of Christ is the spirit of foot-washing. Some brethren are eager to wash another's feet, especially if they can use scalding hot water to do so! Yea, "God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1 Peter 5:5b).

Paul's instruction should not be lost upon us:

"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" (Galatians 6:1).

Any motivation other than the sincere correction of error and the healing of souls is improper.

Humbleness of heart certainly means the courage to say, "I was wrong. I apologize" when necessary. No man or woman ever lost anything worth losing by saying "I'm sorry."

2. Be Accurate—Make sure of your facts and figures before you fight. Some shoot out criticism of others as it rolls through their minds. Perhaps a better term for such would be "evil surmisings" (1 Timothy 6:4).

3. Be Fair—Fairness includes giving the benefit of a doubt. This is love's way as love "believeth all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7). Love accepts all truthful matters and doesn't impute evil where none is found. Indeed, love "rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6).

Fairness also includes the possibility of the critic not being fully aware of all necessary information. Sometimes what is not known can alter completely your perception of a circumstance.

Fairness includes the specification of what the problem is. One effort was found objectionable because "it just didn't sound right." Isn't "soundness" more than the vibrations that enter the ear? If an activity is in violation of the scriptures, then clearly stated and carefully considered reasons should be given as to why such is the case.



Sarcastic rhetoric and such extreme measures are better left as a means of last resort—if indeed to be used at all!

It is also necessary to emphasize that fair play demands use of the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). Indeed, let's be more fair and use the Diamond Rule. The Golden Rule (commonly stated) says, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The Diamond rule is a step up from the Golden Rule and says, "Do unto others *even better* than you would have them do unto you" (Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3).

Would you appreciate being approached privately first about a matter needing correction? Apollos' errors were pointed out privately by Aquila and Priscilla (Acts 18:26). The hope Aquila and Priscilla had of making Apollos an even more effective servant of the Lord was increased mightily by the wisdom and generosity of their approach.

4. Be Patient—Patience will often achieve more than physical force. It was no accident that the Holy Spirit put patience between self-control and godliness (2 Peter 1:6). Can self-control or godliness be achieved without patience? The grace of patience would make the difficulties of controversy easier to bear and help all to keep a cool head as well as a warm heart.

5. Be Careful—Many have a frugal praise habit, believing others shouldn't be given commendation for doing what's right because, "it's their duty and they don't need a pat on the back for the effort." These uncaring critics, with their "red-pencil mentality," see it as their God-appointed mission to tear down anyone and everyone outside their narrowly selected group. They are responsible for much discouragement. The Lord said, "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment" (Matthew 12:36).

Let's be careful to remember the brotherly duty of edification (1 Corinthians 14:26b). And let all be aware of how powerfully, for good or ill, our words and deeds affect others.

And be careful lest you cry "wolf, wolf" too many times and people eventually learn to dismiss your warnings and tune out everything you

say, so that if the wolf ever really comes on the prowl, your words are unheeded!

6. Be Sincere—There is nothing virtuous in having a critical spirit for the sake of having such. Genuine concern for the saving of souls and the building up of the kingdom of God should be the spark-plugs of all our spiritual engines.

Anyone who is motivated to confront others because of a desire to be "one of the biggest and best known names in the brotherhood" is not qualified to find fault and would do well to keep his observations to himself.

When Jesus was confronted with the adulterous woman in John 8, with full knowledge of the motives of the scribes and Pharisees, the Lord refused to criticize the guilty woman while the ill-motivated accusers were present. Motives matter. Let's keep our hearts pure so that we may be "sincere and without offense till the day of Christ" (Philippians 1:10).

There shall always be offenses and difficulties and disputes among Christians. Even good spirited men like Paul and Barnabas didn't share common judgment in all matters (Acts 15:39). No one should enjoy wrangling controversy and brethren shouldn't engage in conflict unless it's absolutely necessary (Romans 12:19). But if differences are to be, let us have them with all concerned being humble, accurate, fair, patient, careful and sincere. -612 E. 4th Street, Mountain Home, AR 72653

MABELVALE CHURCH OF CHRIST
10820 MABELVALE WEST ROAD
P.O. BOX 345
MABELVALE, AR 72103

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:30
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
Office Fax (501) 455-2547

Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist

FIVE LIES OF THIS OR ANY CENTURY

Dennis Gullledge



Recently, it was my good fortune to come across an interesting book entitled, *Five Lies Of The Century*, by David T. Moore.¹ It discusses the way in which society's approach to moral and ethical issues has shifted over recent decades.

Congressman Dan Burton says of this book, "I believe David Moore has his finger on the pulse of what has, for some time, been going wrong in America. *Five Lies Of The Century* vividly points out the problems with American society and what we, as Americans, must do to turn our country around—without God Almighty, we are lost."

The five lies of the century, according to Mr. Moore are these:

1. "America Never Was a Christian Nation." Moore argues "Christian" origins, but church historians tell us that "The first three elected presidents of the United States—Washington, Adams and Jefferson—all advocated a form of reasonable religion that drained the supernatural from religion and valued piety primarily for its civic utility."² Apparently, they did not consider themselves "orthodox Christians," some doubted Christ's deity, nor did they accept the Bible necessarily as a divine revelation, but sought revelation in nature, reason and common sense (e.g., Thomas Paine's, *Common Sense*). These men did, however, prize the Bible as the "rock upon which our nation stands." Mr. Moore, in his book, challenges the idea that our founding fathers were deistic.

2. "The Traditional Family Is Irrelevant." This contention is often heard as we are now seeing mom, dad and the kids routinely victimized as "no-fault" divorces, step-families, lesbian and "gay" marriages and "non-traditional" homosexual "families" edge closer to the norm. Add to that the pressures brought on by double-

wage earning and the decline of cultural support for matrimony.

3. "Evolution Is An Established Scientific Fact." Almost from the beginning of his educational experience a child of today is bombarded with evolutionary philosophy, along with the underlying suggestion that one dare not question such "scientific" conclusions. The relatively few school children of today who have not been adversely affected by evolutionary theory are those who have either been taught by loving parents what is right, are privileged to have diligent Bible class teachers who emphasize the truth in this area, or, are blessed to sit at the feet of public school teachers who realize the dangers of accepting organic evolution and consistently teach the truth along with it.

4. "The Sexual Revolution Has Set Humanity Free." According to Dr. William J. Bennett, in his 1993 report, *The Index Of Leading Cultural Indicators*, teenage pregnancy, birth and abortion rates have doubled in the past two decades; about three million teens will contract a sexually transmitted disease; illegitimate births have increased 400% since 1960, and, today nearly one in four pregnancies end in abortion. Such is "sexual freedom."

5. "Entertainment Is Harmless." Anyone who believes that the entertainment industry these days in value neutral, and exists solely for the purpose of entertaining us, really has an ostrich complex.

Beyond the societal lies which have affected us adversely, there are the religious lies of this or any century which are even more serious.

The book, *Five Lies Of The Century*, brings to mind the fact that any lie can be serious and consequential, especially if spiritual in nature (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). There are many lies which affect us by threatening to rob us of our eternal reward if believed and obeyed. Some of these lies are now being espoused by brethren who

once stood for the truth and opposed these Satanic deceptions. Five lies of this or any century comprise the current liberal agenda:

1. "The church doesn't matter." This lie is couched amid other lies of a like nature: "Give us the Man; not the plan" and "One church is just as good as another." Many people seem to think that the church is merely a detour off the strait and narrow way that leads to eternal life. However, if the church doesn't matter, then it is also true that what the church is doesn't matter. The church is the body of Christ (Colossians 1:18); the church is the Kingdom of Christ (Matthew 16:18-19); the church is the family of God (1 Timothy 3:15); the church is the Lord's flock (John 10:16); the church is the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:23). Do these things not matter?

2. "We are saved before and without baptism." It is now popular among false brethren to equate the Bible doctrine of baptism for the remission of sins with the Roman Catholic dogma of "baptismal regeneration," or, "sacramental salvation." It is also in vogue to speak of baptism as being "important to salvation" (which is not the same as saying that it is essential).

The truth, as taught in the New Testament, is that an alien sinner should be baptized in order to become a child of God (Galatians 3:26-28); to be saved in Christ (Mark 16:16); for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38); to have his sins washed away in the blood of Christ (Romans 6:3); to obey the gospel (Acts 2:38-47) and to become a member of the church of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). Any counter-doctrine is a lie.

3. "God saves us by grace only." Some brethren are now espousing the thread-bare denominational ideas of "salvation by grace only," that we are saved by "grace plus nothing" or, "100% grace." No one who reads his Bible denies that if we are saved at all it is by God's grace, but, the word "only" is a human appendage.

Without God's grace no one can be saved, but, the Lord also interjected faith into the equation (Ephesians 2:8-9). A living faith is always obedient to God (James 2). This common lie is now one of the most frequently espoused errors among denominationalizing brethren today.

4. "One cannot know truth." It is not

uncommon to hear it said that we cannot know that we know the truth, and that to claim such a knowledge is the height of arrogance and bigotry. Jesus said we could know truth (John 8:32). John taught the same (1 John 2:3). Who is willing to say that they were arrogant?

For one to say that he knows the truth is hardly tantamount to a claim of knowing everything. All of us, hopefully, are growing in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18), and we can and must know what God expects of us in order to please him.

5. "The Bible is a love letter from God." It is true that God is love and that the Bible, from cover to cover, radiates with divine love. The idea, however, behind this current lie is that a "love letter" is certainly not "law" and never makes demands. The "love letter" analogy breaks down in that the New Testament is intended to be instructive by showing us how to respond to God's love and be saved. This lie would have us to believe that the Bible is no pattern.

We guard against believing lies in all areas of life. It is even more important to believe and obey the truth in matters pertaining to the soul. - 10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

¹David T. Moore, *Five Lies Of The Century: How Many Do You Believe?* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1995).

²Nathan O. Hatch, *Eerdman's Handbook To Christianity In America* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdman's Pub. Co., 1983), 164-165.

THINGS WE MUST NOT COMPROMISE

The Name of Christ	Acts 4:12
The Gospel of Christ	Romans 1:16
The church of Christ	Ephesians 3:21
The Plan of Salvation	Acts 8:12
The Perfect Example of Christ	1 Peter 2:21
The Sacred Scriptures	2 Peter 1:21
The Authority of Christ	Matthew 28:18
Purity of Life	Titus 2:12
The Purpose of Existence	Philippians 1:21
The Hope of Heaven	Titus 1:2

GOD BELIEVES IN YOU, TOO

Allen Webster



God wants us to believe in Him (John 8:24). In fact, unless we have faith in his existence, we cannot be saved (Hebrews 11:6). We have faith in God, but He also has faith in us. Sometimes He believes in us more than we believe in ourselves.

GOD BELIEVED IN ABRAHAM. God said of this “father of the faithful:” “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment...” (Genesis 18:19). Almighty God believed enough in Abraham to go out on a limb and say that his children and grandchildren would be trained in the way of truth. He was right! Isaac (his son), and Jacob (his grandson), believed in God and followed in the paths of Abraham. In fact, the nation of Israel—with minor lapses—continued in the faith that once rested in the bosom of their progenitor.

GOD BELIEVED IN JOB. Satan suspended his pursuit of mankind long enough to “report in” before Jehovah (Job 1:6). “And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?” (1:8). God issued a challenge to the old serpent by insisting he would have no success with Job. God believed in Job. He knew he would not let him down. And Job withstood the worst onslaught of devilish torture recorded in the annals of Adam's race. He did not “curse God and die,” as his wife had pled with him to do (2:9). God believed in Job and Job believed in God.

GOD BELIEVED IN RAHAB. Rahab was not exactly a role model for kids (Joshua 2:1-6). She was the type of person that people whispered about, pointed at and shunned. They would not have trusted her with their reputations, much less their children or wallets. She had been a woman of

loose morals and unflattering character. To put it frankly, she was a prostitute (*harlot*¹, Hebrews 11:31; James 2:25). She had sold her body to men who passed through her city and stayed at her inn. During these pagan times, harlotry was often a part of worship.² Second, Rahab was a traitor. She betrayed her country by harboring its enemies.³ Third, Rahab was a liar. She said the spies had left when they were hiding on her roof. Some use this as an example of situation ethics (Cf. Romans 3:8), but God never approves of lying (Proverbs 6:17; Ephesians 4:25). She could have protected the spies in a way that did not require sin. Rahab was accepted in spite of her lie, not because of it. Other Bible characters are complimented, though guilty of serious sins (e.g., David committed adultery, 2 Samuel 11). Many of those who are commended in Hebrews eleven are not praised for all they did (Abraham lied; Noah got drunk; Samson committed fornication). They are praised simply for some heroic act of faith. We may heartily commend an orator for eloquence while earnestly opposing his ideas. Being a Canaanite, she may not have been taught that lying was evil.

In spite of all this, God believed in Rahab. He pardoned her iniquity. He was willing to forget her previous life and forgive her falsehood regarding the spies. He saw something good in this “washed up harlot.” He believed she had changed and that there was something worthwhile about her. What God liked about her was her faith and works. In Hebrews she is eulogized for her faith, and in James for her works. Remarkably, Rahab was eventually listed in the genealogy of God's Son (Matthew 1:5). God allowed this formerly loose woman to marry into Israel—His chosen, holy people—and became the mother of a child. Some writers speculate that Salmon (her husband) was one of the spies whom she befriended; if so, what a beautiful love story! Rahab became a princess in Israel, and more importantly, become a part of the line that ran

from Abraham through King David to Jesus Christ. Matthew, in giving the Lord's genealogy, mentions only four women—Tamar, Rahab, Ruth and, implicitly, Bathsheba. Three of these have tainted names. Most people would be embarrassed to have harlots and adulteresses in their family tree and would certainly keep it “hush-hush.” If it were in their power, they would never have allowed them to have been there in the first place. It was within God's power, but He believed in Rahab to the point that He put her in His family album!

GOD BELIEVED IN PETER. Peter cursed and swore that He did not know Jesus of Nazareth. After Jesus had been his friend, after He had taught him for three years, even after Peter had boasted that he would *die* before he would *deny*, Peter blushed at a maiden's question. He pretended he had never met Jesus and backed that affirmation with profanity (which always disassociates one from Christ). Afterward, Peter wept as a penitent child. He was sorry for his failure. God could have given up on Peter. He could have found someone else to be the “apostle to the circumcision,” but God still believed in Peter. And, when it came time to pick somebody to be the head spokesman for Christ on the inauguration of the church, God tapped Peter to be the one to deliver the stirring speech that launched the Gospel dispensation (Acts 2).

GOD BELIEVED IN SAUL. “...the Lord said...he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel” (Acts 9:15). Everybody else saw the church's worst enemy; God saw it's greatest promoter. Others saw one who could dish out persecution; God saw one who could take it. They saw a blasphemer; God saw a preacher. They saw a murderer; God saw a missionary.

These instances show that God believes in us sometimes when others (or even ourselves) won't. Those who faithfully serve and suffer for Him He will not only protect, but prefer, and will do for them more than they can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). God can use people who have made mistakes. We read of publicans and harlots entering into the kingdom, and not just tolerated, but welcomed (Matthew 21:31). Those on Pentecost had killed Jesus, but they became the

first Christians (Acts 2). The Corinthians had been immoral, but God forgave them (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Believe in God. Let God believe in you. -
P.O. Box 512, Jacksonville, AL 36265

¹Some translate this as “innkeeper,” but the word used in the New Testament (*pornā*) means “prostitute.”

²Even after she ceased from this behavior, the reproach stuck to her name. Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6), though cleansed from leprosy, wore the reproach of it in his name as long as he lived; so Rahab the harlot, so called in the New Testament, though both her faith and her good works are praised. Even those that through grace have repented of the sins of their youth must expect to bear the reproach of them (Matthew Henry).

³Under normal conditions, we count traitors as the most despicable of criminals, but in Rahab's case, if she knew God had given Canaan to the Israelites, she could have hindered them from possessing it. The higher duty to God suspends the lower duty to country and to family (Cf., Acts 5:29).

“SAVED BY THE BELL”

Bill Dillon

You've heard of the phrase, “saved by the bell.” Most people think it comes from boxing. It doesn't. It actually originated from the 17th century guards at Windsor Castle in London. Any sentry sleeping on duty incurred the death penalty. One thus accused guard maintained his innocence stating he had heard the bell in the clock tower of St. Paul's Cathedral strike thirteen times at midnight. The tribunal doubted him until witnesses confirmed the bell had indeed struck thirteen times. Thus he was “saved by the bell.”

Being falsely accused is an experience few will escape in life. Great Bible personalities like Job, Joseph, David, Paul and Jesus all suffered as a result of it.

The Lord said we should pray for those who persecute or falsely accuse us (Matthew 5:44).

Let's always be at our best, even when others say untrue things about us.

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

"Ye Are The Salt Of The Earth"

Matthew 5:13



REPENTANCE

Ronnie Whittemore



Although many people may state that they know what the Bible teaches about the subject of repentance, we still need to study and rehearse the things that the Bible teaches about this subject. God places much importance and

emphasis upon repentance in the Bible. For example: John the Baptist preached repentance to the people in the wilderness of Judea (Matthew 3:1-2). Jesus' message also stressed the dire need for people to repent (Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3, 5). The apostle Peter listed repentance as a requirement for salvation on that great day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38). Even at Mars Hill, Paul preached not only "the unknown god" to the Athenians, but he also preached repentance (Acts 17:30).

Repentance has been accurately defined as: "A change of mind produced by godly sorrow which results in a reformation of life." The commandment to repent is a universal commandment. Because of the universal scope and effects of sin (Romans 3:23), it becomes necessary for the guilty to change from evil to righteousness. One of the first steps in man's reconciliation to God is repentance. Peter stated: "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord" (Acts 3:19).

WHAT IS NOT REPENTANCE? There are many misconceptions concerning this commandment of repentance. (1) Some people have the idea that repentance is "sorrow." Sorrow

or regret is not the same as repentance. Many criminals are filled with sorrow and regret as they stand before a judge and receive their sentence for the crimes which they committed. They are sorry; sorry that they were caught; perhaps even sorry for the harm and hurt that they have caused. However, sorrow is not the same as repentance. In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote: "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (7:10). Sorrow, that is, godly sorrow, precedes repentance.

(2) Others think that a simple changing of the mind without a changing of the life constitutes true repentance. However, the Bible lists several examples of people who repented in that they also changed their lives as well as their minds. Before his baptism, the Philippian jailer washed the stripes of Paul and Silas; thereby, demonstrating his repentance (Acts 16:33). The penitent believers of Ephesus showed their change in life by means of a great public demonstration. "Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver" (Acts 19:19).

(3) And unfortunately, many people deceive others and themselves by failing to admit the need to repent. These are men and women who do not actually "repent" because they do not believe that they have sinned. They may say, "If I have sinned," but will not say, "I have sinned." And there is a big difference. It takes much more than words or an emotional moment for a person to repent of his sins. He must acknowledge his sin and then change his actions as well as his attitudes. Such would describe the attitude of the Pharisees, Sadducees and scribes who stood before John at the brink of the Jordan River. They would not admit their sins and thought that being the "seed of Abraham" would exempt them from sin and destruction. However John rebuked them, saying, "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" (Luke 3:8).

WHAT IS REPENTANCE? Repentance is a "turning." Specifically and properly defined, repentance is "turning from evil to righteousness." Jesus gave the grand illustration of repentance in Matthew 21:28-32 concerning the man with two sons:

"But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Notice that Jesus asked which of the sons did the will of the father? Both changed their minds, but only one actually repented to the point of obeying the father. The difference was that the first son turned from disobedience to obedience while the second son simply gave lip service to the father and did not obey his will.

WHY ARE MEN COMMANDED TO REPENT?

Men must repent because sin condemns the soul. All men have sinned against God (Romans 3:10). Man sins either by transgressing God's law (1 John 3:4) or by failing to do right (James 4:17). The wages of these sins is death (Romans 6:23). Therefore, while opportunity is available, men must repent and obey the will of the Lord.

Men must repent because there is a great day of reckoning coming. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31). This day is reserved for judgment. The Son is the Judge (2 Timothy 4:1) and men will be judged by His Word (John

12:48). Remember the words of Jesus: "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). -200 S. Curry Pike, Bloomington, IN 47404

Book Review

GUS NICHOLS' SERMON OUTLINES

A recent acquisition of mine proved to be a real treasure. I thought I had enough sermon outline books to last me the rest of my preaching life, that is, until I secured a copy of *Gus Nichols' Sermon Outlines*. It has been re-published after thirty-six years. You may order the book from Flavil H. Nichols, 100 13th Street NE, Jasper, AL 35504-8876. Cost of the book is \$8.50, plus postage. It is soft cover, 211 pages.

The introduction is written by the much loved and respected son of the late Gus Nichols, Flavil Nichols. It contains a brief reference to Gus Nichols' first preaching experience with notes, along with advice from brother Nichols on sermon outline preparation. He wrote, "All good sermons are preached from outlines—either in the mind, or in writing, or both. The outline is the 'blueprint' by which the discourse is constructed. The better the blueprint, the better the finished product may be. It is as unwise for a preacher—especially a young one—to undertake to preach a sermon without a written outline, as it would be for the average man to try building a house without a blueprint. An outline gives one confidence before his audience, and prevents too much wandering from the subject" (p. 7).

This book is recommended, not merely for the benefit of preachers, but, for every serious student of the Bible. The sermon subjects in this book are topically arranged and you will find a virtual wealth of valuable information on many different subjects, with an abundant use of Scripture in each outline. If you are looking for a valuable book to assist you in teaching a Bible class, preparing devotional talks, or, for just your own personal study of Bible fundamentals this book is just what you are looking for. -Dennis Gullledge

ARE WE REALLY DIFFERENT?

Wayne Jones

Each Sunday millions of people gather in meeting houses and claim to worship the God of heaven. They sing songs, read scriptures and listen to sermons. They may meet under the name of Baptist, Methodist or Lutheran, but the fact still remains they meet. They give of their time and money to “serve and worship” God.

However, we as members of the Lord's church, claim to be the one, true church that Jesus built. We sing songs, read scriptures and even listen to sermons. So, are we any different from the denominations? The answer, of course, is yes. By looking at the inspired Scriptures (which are our authority) we can prove this very fact.

WE FOLLOW A DIFFERENT RULE BOOK

Whereas the Baptists follow the *Baptist Manual* and the Methodists adhere to the *Methodist Discipline*, members of the Lord's church follow the Bible only. Denominations rest their faith in the creeds and opinions of men, but they claim to follow the Bible.

Peter wrote, “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue” (2 Peter 1:3). If God has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness, then why would we need a creed book written by a man or group of men? Paul commanded us that we do all things by the authority of Christ (Colossians 3:17).

WE HAVE A DIFFERENT FOUNDER

Christ promised that he would build His church: “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” (Matthew 16:18). Christ never promised to build a number of churches. The foundation of this one church is the fact that Christ is the living Son of God. Notice the words of Paul: “For other

foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Therefore, the foundation and founder of the Lord's church is the Lord himself. There was no man responsible for its beginning.

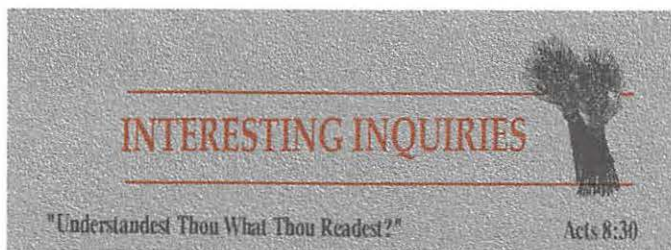
What about the denominations? The founder of the Lutheran church was not Jesus Christ, it was Martin Luther. The founder of the Methodist church was not Jesus Christ, it was John Wesley. The list is endless, but the results are the same. If one is a member of a denomination then he or she is a member of an organization founded by some man, but not Jesus Christ the Son of Man.

WE WEAR A DIFFERENT NAME

The relationship between Christ and the church is described as being the relationship between a husband and a wife (Ephesians 5:22-28). Thus, if we are the bride of Christ, then we should wear only His name. No man with the last name Smith would want his wife wearing the name Jones. The same is true when it comes to the church of our Lord. If we are married to Christ, wearing a man's name would not be acceptable.

But what about the denominations? Don't they wear the names of various men or the names given them by men? How can this be in light of Scripture? The truth of the matter is—**It Can Not!** We must wear His name if we are a member of His family and a citizen in His kingdom.

We are truly separate and set apart from the rest of the world when we become Christians. We are even set apart from the rest of the religious world. We should always hold to these truths found in God's word. Young people need these principles instilled in their minds. Consider the words of Paul when he urged the Corinthians to be separate from the world (2 Corinthians 6:17). We need to be separate from worldliness and immorality, but also from religious error and denominationalism. -P.O. Box 3, Luxora, AR 72358



IS A TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INSPIRED?

John T. Polk, II

A translation of the Bible is the inspired Word of God.

1. **Inspired.** The Word of God is word-for-word inspired. God breathed into Adam's lungs and "man became a living being" (Genesis 2:7), SO God breathed into some men's minds "that we might know the things that are freely given unto us of God" (1 Corinthians 2:12). Thus, "all Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Those "inspired" men were the "holy men of God [who] spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21), and "these things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1 Corinthians 2:13). The words they used were "not with persuasive words of human wisdom" (1 Corinthians 2:4), and they were not to "worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak but, the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you" (Matthew 10:17-20). God revealed his word by inspiration and selected its wording for each inspired man's vocabulary, and guided its writing the same as in preaching! Paul had preached the Gospel of Christ in Corinth (Acts 18:8; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11) but stressed that his writings were equally inspired (1 Corinthians 14:37; 2 Corinthians 10:11; 13:10). Those who read his inspired words "may under-stand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:3-5), for he

claimed "we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust you will understand, even to the end" (2 Corinthians 1:13, cf., verse 14).

2. **Translation.** In the New Testament (Greek, *metatithami*) it means "to transfer two things, one of which is put in place of the other." God "changed" the priesthood of Aaron (and the Levites) into the order of Melchizadek (Exodus 28:1; Numbers 18:1-7; Hebrews 7:1-12); Jacob's remains were "carried back" to Shechem from Egypt for burial (Acts 7:15-16); and Enoch was "taken" from life to life beyond (Hebrews 11:5; Genesis 5:21-24). In each of these cases the translation gave the equivalent *as accurately as possible*. Since the Bible has been inspired by God word-for-word, when uninspired translators "translate" it they will be reflecting each word God has given in the "new" language. Once in the "new" language, punctuation, word order, capitalization, paragraphing and even adding italicized words may compliment it, but not to the detriment of its truth! The translation, thus, becomes the inspired word of God in a "new" language.

3. **Text.** One must read the Preface, Forward, Introduction, or Apparatus of a book claiming to be the Bible to know if it is indeed a translation or a deliberate and devilish "tampering" with the truth. Most "modern versions" fall into this latter category, for they have been done by those who either did not reflect the majority reading of the thousands of manuscripts available, or didn't care whether they subjectively interpreted its truth, or deliberately changed its meaning to preserve some false doctrine they wished to hold that the Bible did not teach to their satisfaction. The King James Version (1611) and the New King James Version (1979) are the only times the Majority Text has been translated into English and therefore the only versions this writer recommends as being the Word of God in English.

Why is a Majority Text important? Under the Old Law of Moses, the original writings of Moses were gone, but accurate copies were provided by God. He replaced destroyed texts (Jeremiah 36:1-4, 20-32), hid texts until they were

(Continued on page 13)


FAITH FUNDAMENTALS

"Add To Your Faith"

2 Peter 1:5

WHERE WILL YOU SPEND ETERNITY?

Guy F. Hester



In this article we wish to consider the subject *"Where Will You Spend Eternity?"* The word "where" implies that it will be somewhere. We sing a song that says, "When he calls me, I will answer: I'll be somewhere listening for

my name." It is written in John 5:28-29, "Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." Friends, there are some assemblies you can forsake, but there is one assembly that none will forsake. One song that everybody reading this can sing is; "When the roll is called up yonder I'll be there." Paul said, "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 Corinthians 5:10). I want to be very specific. The question is not: "Where will someone else be during eternity?" The question is: "Where will you spend eternity?"

The next word is "spend." Where will you spend eternity? We can also word it this way; "Where will you be throughout eternity?" To someone's mind the idea of spending eternity might suggest that there is a time limit. That is

certainly not true. You will not simply be there for a certain length of time. Eternity is forever. Regardless of how intelligent you may be, there is not a person reading this, or, for that matter, anywhere in the world who can fully fathom the enormity of eternity.

Friend, if you will be honest with God and with yourself, you will obey the gospel today. Or, if you are an unfaithful child of God, you will be restored. However, here is what some no doubt will say: "I know what you say is true and I intend to obey the gospel some day, but I am just not ready yet." What would have to happen to you to cause you to get ready? If you knew that you would die before tomorrow, you would get ready, wouldn't you? How do you know that such will not occur? (Proverbs 27:1; James 4:13-14).

We have a record of a man who had no time for God and who thought he had a lease on life, "And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" Notice carefully our Lord's conclusion concerning this man and all others of like attitude. "So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:18-21).

Those who are so bold to affirm that they are self-sufficient and have no need of God need to read Jude 14 and 15, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Ungodly sinners should read these passages and tremble. They need not think that their idle words and hard speeches will pass unnoticed by the Lord (Matthew 12:36-37).

But how do we become lost in sin? What is sin? (1 John 3:4) "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). This is the

positive side of sin, but there is a negative side. "Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (James 4:17). "All unrighteousness is sin" (1 John 5:17).

Some people think that the only way one can commit sin is by an overt act of transgression such as murder or adultery. They do not realize that omission or a failure to do right is also sin. In many of our Lord's parables he presents the people as being lost, but not because of a sinful overt act which they had committed. For instance, the one talent man was not a murderer, an adulterer, or a thief. The only charge that could be brought against him was that he did nothing. Most people enter gradually into sin. "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2). Notice the expressions, "walketh, standeth, sitteth." First a man begins to walk in sinful company. After a while he is standing with people in sin. Then, finally, he sits with them as one of them.

What is the condition of those who are in sin? To the Gentiles Paul wrote: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Ephesians 2:12). David said, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).

The unfaithful child of God is in worse condition than he was while still in his alien sins (2 Peter 2:21-22).

In order for the alien sinner to depart from sin, he must hear and believe the gospel (Acts 15:7). Repent of his sins (Acts 17:30). Confess his faith in Christ (Romans 10:10), and be baptized for the remission of his sins (Acts 2:38). At this point the Lord adds him to the one true church of Christ; the saved are added to the church (Acts 2:41, 47).

Once in the church we are to work diligently (1 Corinthians 15:58; Revelation 14:13). Does the Bible say, "blessed are the dead which die *out* of the Lord?" No man can find such a

passage for it does not exist. Yet there are many false teachers seeking, and, in many instances, I am sorry to say, succeeding in convincing people that they can be saved out of the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul would say, "woe be unto them." These same people argue that one can be in Christ and not be in his church. That is an impossibility. The same process that puts one into Christ puts him in his church. That step is baptism (Galatians 3:27; 1 Corinthians 12:13). One cannot enter Christ or the church except by baptism. Once one has entered Christ he must remain faithful and add the *Christian graces* (Revelation 2:10; 2 Peter 1:5-8). -P. O. Box 664, Fulton, MS 38843-0664

IS A TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INSPIRED?

Continued from page 11

found by those who appreciated them (2 Chronicles 34:14-19), and had them copied by kings and believers (Deuteronomy 31:9-13, 24-26; 17:14-20). Jesus quoted these copies as accurate (John 5:37-47; 3:14-16) and the apostles so regarded them also (Acts 2:16-21, 25-28, 34-36; 3:13-26; 13:27; 26:27-28). In the first century, the Holy Spirit told Christians which books were inspired (Colossians 4:16; 2 Peter 3:15-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:27; 2 Thessalonians 2:15; Luke 1:1-4; Philemon 19), gave some the gift of "discerning of spirits" so they could tell authentic from false Scripture (1 Corinthians 12:10; 1 John 4:1-3; 2:20-21; Revelation 2:2), and access to Scriptures that they might accurately judge one's preaching (Acts 17:10-11; Luke 24:15, 25-27, 44-45). One must use a text of the Bible that represents the majority reading of known manuscripts (literal "hand-writing") evidence, or else be at the mercy of uninspired men to tell us which manuscripts are important and which are not. Jesus prayed "for those who will believe in Me through their word" (John 17:20), then gave a 100% accurate text with a 100% accurate choice of books (canon) and men must let the majority of God's text be shown in a translation and minimize their own influence of it. If not, why not? -125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

SERMON SKETCHES

"Preach The Word"

2 Timothy 4:2

OVERCOMING EVIL WITH GOOD

(Romans 12:17-21)

M. W. Kiser



This text comes from one of the most influential chapters in the entire New Testament. Romans chapter twelve reminds us of our Lord's great "Sermon on the Mount" as it likewise tells us of acceptable conduct. This passage has often, in the

absence of a preacher, been read to a congregation for the weekly message of spiritual enlightenment. Particularly this part about overcoming evil with good needs to be considered. With the presence of so much restlessness and lawlessness on hand, even among legislators and enforcement officers, it is a great temptation to wish for the right of retaliation. Such is not ours to do. Our course of action is to be exactly the opposite according to this text.

I. WHAT IS "GOOD" AND WHAT IS "EVIL"?

- A. Sin is evil and holiness is good.
 - 1. All sin: in thought, imagination, desire, purpose, deed (1 John 3:17).
 - 2. Holiness includes all good: graces, virtues, purposes and acts.
- B. Ignorance is evil and knowledge is good.
 - 1. Symbols of ignorance: darkness and night.

- 2. Symbols of knowledge: light and day.
- C. Error is evil and truth is good. (Error is false, crooked, perverse...)
- D. Selfishness is evil and benevolence is good.
 - 1. Selfishness is the violation of the second commandment (Matthew 22:39).
 - 2. Benevolence is its practice and example.
- E. Malevolence is evil and love is good.
 - 1. Malevolence is to hate, despise and curse.
 - 2. Love is to pity, sympathize and help.

II. WHO CAN OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD?

- A. Our Lord overcame it in His own life (Hebrews 4:15; 1 Peter 2:22).
- B. Joseph overcame it in his time (Genesis 37-39).
- C. Stephen overcame it in his life (Acts 7:59-60).
- D. It is overcome every time a sinner is converted! (Acts 26:17-18).
- E. It is overcome every time a backslider is reclaimed (James 5:19-20).
- F. It is overcome every time a Christian confesses sin (1 John 1:9).
- G. It is overcome with every display of faithfulness (1 Corinthians 9:27).

III. WHY SHOULD WE OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD?

- A. Because Satan is ever present to hinder us (1 Peter 5:8).
- B. Because evil men are always at work (2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Peter 2:1-13).
- C. Because our own heart is capable of being overcome (Jeremiah 17:9; James 1:13-15; Romans 7:17-24).

IV. HOW CAN WE OVERCOME EVIL WITH GOOD?

- A. By doing good in its place (Romans 12:20; Matthew 5:44).

- B. By resisting temptation to sin (James 4:7; Matthew 4:3-4).
- C. By fleeing from its presence (2 Timothy 2:22; 1 Timothy 6:11; 1 Peter 2:11).
- D. By avoiding evil companions (1 Corinthians 15:33).
- E. By remembering vengeance belongs to God (Romans 12:19; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).
- F. By thinking pure thoughts (Philippians 4:8; Mark 7:20-23).
- G. By looking forward to heaven (James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:4; 2 Timothy 4:8).

Evil is always evil, and it must be overcome. If we do not overcome it, it will overcome us. Will you this hour put Satan in his place. Not as Lord of your life, let Jesus be that (Luke 6:46; Mark 16:16; 2 Peter 3:9; Romans 6:4-5). -922 Heritage Drive, Sylacauga, AL 35150

ENCOURAGEMENT IS AGELESS!

Dennis Gullede

It is regrettable that some people approach their "sunset" years with the feeling that they have no more to contribute to the welfare of society, or, more importantly, to the progress of the cause of Christ. It is equally sad when one faces his latter days with bitterness and unhappiness; angry with the world and down on the church. How much better when, as one grows older, to find a work to do and a kind word to say.

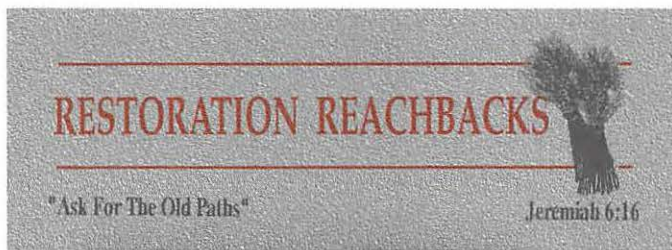
I know an older brother in Christ who is no longer able to preach full time as he once did, but now spends his time in the work of visiting. There is hardly a greater need in the church today, and many older brethren could find a ministry to fulfill in this area. A teacher of mine in graduate school some years ago was brother J. M. Powell, noted scholar in the Restoration Movement. Recently, he wrote to *The Magnolia Messenger* (Jul/Aug 1997) to say, in part, "For 70 years I have been a gospel preacher and at the age of 90 I'm more or

less house bound; my ministry is confined to writing notes of encouragement."

When older Christians spend their time in writing notes or cards of encouragement they are doing one of the greatest works; something that is not often done due to lack of effort or ability on the part of others. To them, I say, keep it up!

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

Bonham Street Church of Christ	
Paris, TX.....	50.00
Anonymous	
Jonesboro, AR.....	10.00
Mrs. C. Hamilton	
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CRITICIZING HYMNS

G. C. Brewer

In recent years we have been hearing some of our oldest hymns severely criticized and pronounced unscriptural in their teaching. The books that are now being published are forced to pass a rigid censorship, and many of the songs we used to sing are being left out. The offending songs, as a rule, are those that are supposed to favor the premillennial views, although they were loved and sung long before premillennialism was thought of as an issue among us. Many people sang these songs, or at least some of them, all of their lives and died without knowing anything about premillennialism. Where premillennialism is not already in the minds of people, I doubt that one person in a million would draw a premillennial inference from the hymnbook; but after a stanza of a hymn is quoted to sustain those views, it will always thereafter be associated with the views in the minds of the people. It is a pity to have some of our sweetest songs ruined in that way. It is a matter of serious doubt as to whether any of the authors of those censored hymns held the premillennial view or not, especially the theory about the earthly reign and the political kingdom. But we shall have more to say on this point in a future article.

Our hymns should, of course, be scriptural in their teaching; but in criticizing hymns we nearly always fail to recognize "poetic license." We try to make the language too literal. We do not allow for imagery and figures of speech. We want to strip the language of all garnishing and ornamentation. We become too technical and literalistic. Often we have a *naïf* who does not have the soul of the poet trying to criticize and

improve poetry. And that is about as bad as having a man who is color-blind to censor the work of an artist, or having a man who cannot discern between tunes or tell one tone from another pass upon the performance of a musician. If we applied the same technical and literalistic test to the language used in sermons that we subject our songs to, some of the most eloquent flights would be ruled out and some of our most effective sermons would be ruined altogether. In fact, some of the most beautiful expressions used by preachers are often borrowed from the hymnbook. If we applied this critical test to the Psalms and other poetic parts of the Bible, we would render them ridiculous. And poor indeed would be the literature of the world if we should allow ignorance and a legalistic, literalistic spirit to censor it and to strip it of all rhetorical ornament, poetic imagery, and pictorial embellishments.

There are very few songs that could be taken literally in all that they say; and there are very few, if any, people who ever attempt so to understand them. They suggest a thought in poetry or present an idea in picture form.

Years ago we sang a song the chorus of which declared, "I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hand." ["I Shall Know Him," by Fanny J. Crosby, DG]. This song was in one, at least, of the *Gospel Advocate* books—a book edited by that great orator-preacher, T. B. Larimore, whose soul was full of tenderness, love, poetry and music, and who was entirely too great to countenance a quibble. The song was a favorite with many people, and I have seen Christians shed tears as they sang it and visualized the time

When my life work is ended and I cross the swelling tide, When the bright and glorious morning I shall see, I shall know my Redeemer when I reach the other side, And his smile will be the first to welcome me.

Chorus:

*I shall know him, I shall know him
And redeemed by his side I shall stand;
I shall know him, I shall know him,
By the print of the nails in his hand.*

Then in the congregation where that song was sung to the delight of many, and of that scholar and scriptorian, T. B. Larimore, there

came a preacher who did not have either the knowledge, the character, or the soul of a Larimore, but who had all the egotism and censoriousness that usually characterized even a quibbler, and he forthwith stopped us from singing that song. It was unscriptural, he said. Evidently poor Brother Larimore did not know that! "The prints of the nails" will not be in Christ's hands when we see him! He will not have hands or flesh! Who had thought he would? Who had literalized that expression?

But we had to give the song as a sacrifice to the preacher's misunderstanding. And now such lack of knowledge often has to be appeased and that song left out of our books. The song is not so good that we cannot afford to lose it, but that critical spirit is lamentable.

That great Bible scholar, J. W. McGarvey, based a sermon upon that very song, and the title of the sermon is, "The Prints of the Nails." It is in the book entitled, *On the Lord's Day* (page 41). This again shows the difference between a scholar and a thinker and a quibbler or uninformed person. Let us read a few words of that sermon:

There is a very beautiful and touching hymn the chorus of which terminates with the words, "I shall know him by the print of the nails in his hand." The author seems to have conceived that when she enters heaven she will see before her a great host of glorified beings, among whom she may not readily distinguish her Savior. The thought seemingly arose from John's declaration that "we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." But she imagined that he bears in heaven, as he did when he appeared to doubting Thomas, the prints of the nails in his hands. The conception, whether true to the reality or not, is a very touching one; for it supposes our exalted Redeemer to continue through all eternity wearing the mark of the keenest pain which he endured in the work of our redemption.

We are apt, in considering the crucifixion, to be shocked most severely at the thrusting of the Roman spear into the Savior's heart, and the stream of mingled blood and water which gushed forth. But that cruel deed gave him no pain. His life was already extinct. We shudder, too, at the driving of the iron spikes through his hands and

his feet; and no living person can adequately conceive the torture inflicted when the tender nerves of these extremities were thus lacerated. But this pain, though excruciating beyond all expression, endured only for a few awful moments.

It was when the cross was erected and put in its place that his most extreme and enduring torture began. His whole weight was suspended on the two spikes which had been driven through his hands, and this continued for six dreadful hours. Well, then, does the hymn writer select the prints of the nails in his hands as the badge of his supremest physical agony. If that badge shall be kept visible before us in heaven, how deep and constant will be the glow of gratitude in our hearts, and how constant and full of the stream of praise that will flow from our lips!

Brother McGarvey did not attempt to say that this would be literally true. It may be only a fanciful conception, but it signalized the fact of our Lord's suffering and rejoices in the salvation he thus procured for us. With a great soul like McGarvey it is "beautiful and touching," but with an uninformed critic it is a falsehood! (*Gospel Advocate*, February 13, 1936, p. 146).

THE BIBLE LIVES

Generation follows generation—yet it lives.
Nations rise and fall—yet it lives.
Doubted, suspected, criticized—yet it lives.
Condemned by atheists—yet it lives.
Scoffed at by scorners—yet it lives.
Betrayed by fanatics—yet it lives.
Wrongfully accused, misquoted—yet it lives.
Yet it lives—as a lamp to our feet.
Yet it lives—as a light to our path.
Yet it lives—as the guide to heaven.
Yet it lives—as a guide for our youth.
Yet it lives—as a comfort to the aged.
Yet it lives—as food to the hungry.
Yet it lives—as drink to the thirsty.
Yet it lives—as rest for the weary.
Yet it lives—as light for the ignorant.
Yet it lives—as salvation for the sinner.
Yet it lives—as grace for the believer.
To know it is to love it.
To love it is to accept it.
To accept it is eternal life.

via Cleveland, TN

TRUTHS NOT KEPT BY “PROMISE KEEPERS”

J. A. McNutt

In 1990 Bill McCartney, who was serving as head football coach at the University of Colorado launched his “ministry for men,” later called “Promise Keepers,” calling on men to observe the moral, spiritual and ethical values that every Christian man was obligated to practice from his first day as a child of God. He is to be highly commended for many of the virtues that he advocated and has promoted, but there are some dangerous errors that are involved of which we should be aware, lest many souls should be lost. Some are attracted to large and successful programs, but blind to the flaws that exist in national movements that gain notoriety and favor among the multitudes. Are you willing to consider some of the biblical truths that the “Promise Keepers” are failing to keep?

DANGERS OF ZEAL WITHOUT KNOWLEDGE

Coach McCartney, who admits that he is lacking in knowledge relative to theological matters, recommends that the “Promise Keepers” consult their “local Pastors” for the interpretation of the Bible, thus surrendering the right of the individual's ability to read, understand and follow the scriptures for himself. This reverts to a priestly or pastor system of official interpretation contrary to 2 Timothy 2:15.

The “Promise Keepers” are committed to love of God and clean living, but they do not keep or uphold the Biblical doctrine of baptism “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38; Acts 22:16).

They do not keep or maintain the distinctive nature of one spiritual body or church, over which Christ rules as head, or that this one body or church is composed of all Christians, but they approve of and fellowship all denominations (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, 20; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:4).

They do not exalt the name *Christian* as the one divine name by which the early disciples were called, designating them as followers of Christ (Acts 11:26; 1 Peter 4:16).

They are not committed to the observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of each week (Acts 20:7).

They are committed to the false doctrine of salvation by faith only, before and without baptism, whereas the Bible teaches that we become the children of God by faith, when we are baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:26-29).

In the early days when Christians knew who they were and what they believed, we would never have considered any affiliation or compromise with a group no matter how large, successful or popular they had become when they were guilty of the fatal errors of the “Promise Keepers.” A movement that started out with many noble motives and objectives has been infiltrated by sectarianism and denominational errors, based on Calvinism and Neo-Pentecostalism. Christians cannot afford to compromise with a movement that rejects God's plan of salvation and will cause souls to be lost through their disobedience. Elders, who are feeding your flocks? -2426 Lacosta Drive, Bartlett, TN 38134

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Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Office Fax (870) 425-8118
E-Mail: church@centuryinter.net

Bill Dillon, Evangelist

WHAT ABOUT CHRISTMAS?

Gus Nichols

Here are some undeniable facts about Christmas.

1. There is no proof that Christ was born on December 25th. But the glorious good news is the fact that He was born as our Savior, that He came down from heaven to seek and to save the lost (Luke 2:8-12).

2. Christ should be just as precious to us as if He had been born on December 25th. In fact, He should be more precious to us than if He had been born yesterday. If He had been born only yesterday, we would know nothing of His wonderful life, His miracles, His teachings, His death for our sins, His resurrection and ascension into heaven.

3. Another fact worthy of consideration is the fact that we can rejoice in Christ, as Christians and believers in Christ, on December 25th, just the same as on the other 364 days of the year. We do not have to cease to be happy in Jesus at "Christmas" just to be different from others. Paul says, "Rejoice in the Lord always" (Philippians 4:4). This would take in Christmas the same as all other days of the year.

4. Instead of revealing the date of the birth of Christ, God has revealed the day on which He was raised from the dead—the first day of the week (Mark 16:8-9, Luke 24:1-47). God does want us to especially celebrate this day. It is a day called the "Lord's Day" (Revelation 1:10, 1 Corinthians 16:2, Acts 20:7). In it we are especially rejoiceful and glad.

5. We should show our faith in Christ, in His birth, in His life, in all He did for us, and is doing for us, in every proper way...but we should not deceive others into thinking we are celebrating December 25th as the birthday of Christ.

6. When all the facts are considered, there is nothing to prevent our enjoying the holiday season just ahead called "Christmas." We can do this without celebrating "Christmas" as the birthday of Christ.

7. Finally, it is proof of the Divinity of Christ to find Him so popular in the world

nineteen hundred years after His birth that the civilized world wants to celebrate His birth whether it knows the date or not. Thank God for our Lord and His coming into the world, regardless of the exact date of his birth.

MY RULES FOR LIFE

George W. DeHoff

1. I try never to say anything behind a man's back that would give me the least embarrassment to say to his face.
2. I try never to speak back to personal critics. Friends do not need to hear the defense, and enemies would not believe it.
3. Every day I greet every person I see with a smile and make a special effort to do so if the person is poor or in unfortunate circumstances.
4. The first thing when I awake in the morning, I plan what my duty for the day is and try to go beyond it.
5. Every day I read from the Bible and some other good books. Feeding the mind and soul is more important than feeding the body.
6. I try to pay every debt I owe on time and always save something from every paycheck, however small.
7. I like people and never harbor any malice or hatred toward any person in the world. I have yet to be anywhere that I do not like, as I go with the intention of liking the place.
8. I am a confirmed optimist, believing that even in this life evil men will be punished by their own unhappiness, and good men will be rewarded. "It's better further on."
9. I try to close each day as if it were the last day I'd be on earth, closing the books on all regrets, worries and annoyances.
10. The last thing I do at night is to count one by one the blessings of the day. This makes me so thankful and happy that I soon drift into pleasant sleep. In this spirit, I hope to close life's journey and drift into eternity.

READERS' RESPONSE

"How Readest Thou?"

Luke 10:26

RECOMMENDED AT PREACHER'S LUNCHEON

Recently at a preacher's luncheon I attended, a preacher friend told me about your paper and recommended it very highly. Would you please put my name on your mailing list as per above address? I will greatly appreciate it and send my best wishes and prayers for your continued success in the Lord's work. Thank you very much. O.D. Giles, New Hope, AL.

LONG TIME READER

I have enjoyed reading the *Gleaner* since its inception. The *Gospel Gleaner* is well written and easy to follow. I have been reading my parent's *Gleaners'* over the years and I would very much appreciate your adding my wife and I to your mailing list. Brother Dillon was once the preacher at my congregation back home and all of the brethren there appreciate his work for the *Gospel Gleaner*. Matt and Sharon O'Bryant, LaFayette, GA.

THANKS FOR SENDING GG

Thank you so much for sending the *Gospel Gleaner*. They're usually taken the same day they are put on the table in the foyer. We are sending this check to help pay for the printing and postage. Keep up the good work! Olen & Peggy Loomis, Murfreesboro, AR.

TIMELY, IMPORTANT, SOUND

I wish to commend you for your commitment to printing timely, important, and sound material. I enjoy reading *Gospel Gleaner* as often as possible. For that reason, I wish to be placed on the mailing list to receive this fine publication at your earliest convenience. I look forward to enjoying your articles very soon. Thank you for your time. Brandon Rader, Lexington, KY.

FIRST TIME READER

I received my first copy of *Gospel Gleaner* and I am thrilled to get it. A friend told me about it. I'm going to read it from cover to cover. I will be looking forward to getting it regularly. Thank you so very much for sending it to me. Laura Clark, Trenton, TN.

WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE GG IN ALASKA

I just returned from Arkansas and got acquainted with your church paper *Gospel Gleaner*, and I sure would like to receive it up here, so include my name on your list. I was visiting in Harrison, Arkansas and attended the Bellefonte church. Thank you. Marjorie Brinkley, Anchorage, AK.

GG DOING A GREAT WORK!

Enclosed is a contribution. I have seen copies of *Gospel Gleaner* off and on for some time and like it very much. I would appreciate receiving your paper. Believe you are doing a great work. Keep it up, and God bless you. Louis C. Bell, Ferguson, MO.

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