



Volume 20

No.1

WRONG EXAMPLE

Owen Olbricht



As the youngest in the family, I often learned from the mistakes of my older siblings. When they got a spanking for doing something that displeased my parents, I got the point that I should not do the same. Christians are to learn from wrong actions of others that are presented in the Bible not to follow them.

JESUS' TEACHING

Jesus spoke against those who were living contrary to God's teaching, sometimes with strong language. In the sermon on the Mount, He taught that His followers are not to follow certain wrong practices. He said that their righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). He further taught that they were not to:

Sound a trumpet like the hypocrites before they give (Matthew 6:2). Stand in the synagogues and street corners when they pray (Matthew 6:5). Disfigure their faces and appear to fast when they fasted (Matthew 6:16).

In His parables and teaching He included that:

Christians should not be like those who do the following:

Let the devil take the word from their hearts (Matthew 13:19). Fall away because they have not root in

themselves (Matthew 13:21). Let worldliness crowd out God's word (Matthew 13:22). Make God's word void through their traditions (Matthew 15:6-9). Cause a child to sin (Matthew 18:6). Will not forgive others (Matthew 18:34-35). Lord over others like Gentile rulers (Matthew 20:25-26). Be without a (spiritual) wedding garment (Matthew 22: 11-13).

He told His followers not to follow the hypocritical Pharisees, for they failed to do the good things they taught (Matthew 23:3). They were doing the following things wrong:

Expected others to bear heavy burdens that they would not bear (Matthew 23:4). Did their good works to be seen of men (Matthew 23:5). Made the borders of their robes wide to include more scriptures (Matthew 23:5). Chose the choice seats in the feasts and synagogues (Matthew 23:6). Loved self exalting greetings (Matthew 23:7-10). Lives that prevented people from serving God (Matthew 23:13). Took financial advantage of widows and offered long pretentious prayers (Matthew 23:14). Did not benefit those they converted (Matthew 23:15). Made ridiculous religious rules (Matthew 23:16-22). Were scrupulous in small things but overlooked more important things (Matthew 23:23-24). Were concerned with outward display but not inner purity (Matthew 23:25-29). Persecuted those who served God (Matthew 23:29-31). Self righteousness (Luke 18:11).

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Volume 20 Number 1
January-March 2004

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Mabelvale Church of Christ in Mabelvale, Arkansas and the Mountain Home Church of Christ in Mountain Home, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

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

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The Church of Sweden in October 2003, decided to create a ceremony to celebrate the union of homosexuals. At the same time, Sweden's Parliament is attempting to create a "sex-neutral" marriage law, giving full marriage rights to homosexuals. K.G. Hammar, head of the Swedish Church said: "We officially accept same-sex relations within the church. And many of us are not only glad and proud of it, but we want to talk about it." This, dear reader, is an example of humanistic religion, not the gospel preached by Jesus Christ and founded on the Word of God.

A new book (2004), by Marvin Ellison, an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church USA, says that marriage should be open to homosexuals, "as a matter of justice."

Even more alarming, on November 18, 2003 the Massachusetts Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriages. Thus, war clouds are gathering with each passing day.

Voices from numerous quarters all declare the alarming message, "The sodomites are here!" In the struggle to up-hold the right on such a controversial topic as homosexuality, it is necessary that certain matters be made clear:

1. Homosexuality is a political issue. But, long before it was a political issue, it was a moral issue. Sodomy has been a moral issue since the book of Genesis.

2. We do not hate homosexuals, as many are struggling to get out of the web of sin. There are those who have not reached the point of hardening their hearts against God and His Word. We do despise a homosexual's behavior. Their misdeeds are not any more despised than the transgressions of rapists, thieves, adulterers and liars. We will not encourage any behavior that is sinful (Ephesians 5:11).

3. Homosexuals are not the enemy. They are in bondage to the enemy. The real enemy of humanity is the Crimson Monarch-Satan himself.

4. We are not unscripturally judging. Christians must make wise and discerning judgments on the actions of others. While Jesus cautioned against unfair criticism (Matthew 7:1,2), He also demanded His disciples to "judge righteous judgment" (John 7:24). We do not judge the sinner-but the sin.

5. We must be "wise as serpents and as harmless as doves" (Matthew 10:16). This mandates we should be bold and clear in our opposition to the iniquity of homosexuality; we should also be just as bold and clear to affirm that our words are motivated and clothed with compassion and genuine care.

6. According to the Bible, sodomy is sin. Genesis 13:13 says, "But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly."

In Genesis 19:23-29 God destroyed the wicked city. There is no way that God destroyed Sodom because the citizens of the metropolis were "inhospitable" to Lot's visitors (Genesis 19:4-5). Jude 7 clears away any smoke of misunderstanding by stating that Sodom fell because of "fornication and going after strange flesh."



One of the greatest passages in the New Testament condemning homosexuality is 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. One defender of sexual perversity suggested Paul was having one of his "bad moments" when he penned those rebuking words. The defender demonstrates an example of ludicrous desperation with such a denial of the plain import of scripture.

The real sadness of sodomy is the fact of the loss of souls. Every homosexual has the potential to be righteous in God's eyes. To approve of any act of moral darkness is to bring tears to the eyes of a loving Father in heaven. However, to know of a homosexual who has truly repented, also bring tears to the eyes of God—but for an entirely different reason! (1 Timothy 2:4). Let all sinners flee from the wrath to come (Romans 1:18; 6:3,4). —PO Box 9, Hickory Ridge, AR 72347

STEPPING DOWN AS CO-EDITOR

Dennis Gullledge

With this issue of *Gospel Gleaner* I am stepping down as co-editor. This is a personal decision that I feel is best for the paper.

My association with *Gospel Gleaner* goes back to its beginning in 1985. The nineteen years that I have worked with *Gospel Gleaner* have been rewarding to me. The time comes, however, when changes must be made.

A special thanks to brother Bill Dillon for allowing me to work with him as a staff writer, co-editor and for two years as editor. I can only hope that this association has been mutually beneficial.

Gospel Gleaner will continue on under the capable editorship of Bill Dillon. Beginning with the next issue the Hickory Ridge church in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas will assume the oversight of *Gospel Gleaner*. All contributions should be sent to them, earmarked for *Gospel Gleaner*. Also, please send all correspondence, address changes, etc., to Bill Dillon at the address shown on page 7.

THEISTIC EVOLUTION

Ron Boatwright

Theistic evolution is a contradictory system of belief in which one attempts to believe in God and at the same time to believe in atheistic evolution. This is a vain attempt to try to straddle the fence. Theistic evolution is an attempt to account for the long period of time necessary for atheistic evolution to take place by allowing God to "mysteriously" extend His creation over 4.6 billion years. God told Moses in Exodus 20:11, "For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them." The creation took place in six literal days because God said so. Theistic evolution is a compromise of God's word and basically infers that God lied about what He claimed to have done.

In 1 Corinthians 15:45, we read that "The first man, Adam, became a living being." Adam was the first man on the earth, not Pilt-down man and not Neanderthal man. After God created Eve we read in Genesis 3:20, "And Adam called his wife's name Eve because she was the mother of all living." Every person now living or who has ever lived on this earth descended from Adam and Eve.

Theistic evolutionists say that the Genesis account of the creation is a myth, which is what Satan wants us to believe. They feel they must somehow reinterpret Genesis chapter 1-11 to allow for the billions of prehistoric years, which atheistic evolutionists must have for evolution to even be feasible. Most theistic evolutionists also believe that the worldwide flood in Noah's day was also a fairy tale. But we read in 2 Peter 3:5-6, "For this they willingly are ignorant of...whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." Can one be any worse off than to be willingly ignorant?

Saying that the creation and the flood accounts were mythology is an attempt to cast doubt and discredit the Bible. If Satan can create doubt in one part of God's word, he can create doubts elsewhere. We must not compromise God's word in order to accommodate the false views of evolution. We must hold fast to the perfect, infallible and authoritative word of God.—Bulletin, Robinson & Center Church of Christ, Conway, AR.



The Samaritans thought that the place of worship ought to have been Mt. Gerizim on which God had put a blessing long ago (Deuteronomy 11:29). The Jew, on the other hand, said, "Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship" (John 4:20). The Jew's were correct because God had earlier stressed that their worship was to be in the place he would choose (Deuteronomy 12:11-26). Later, the temple in Jerusalem became the place where God put his name (1 Kings 8:29, 44, 48). To worship in Mt. Gerizim was to worship in ignorance.

Jesus, in view of the New Covenant to come, showed the Samaritan woman that a change was about to occur. Specifically, he showed her that worship would not be confined to any specific nation, city, mountain or place (John 4:21). There would be no local sanctuary (temple) to which worship would be confined. All true worshippers would "worship the Father in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23).

Jesus said, "But the hour cometh, and now is," (Vs. 23), that is, something was approaching which was then in preparation. That preparation involved the work that both John and Jesus had put in motion that would culminate in the end of the Old Covenant and the beginning of the New Covenant (Luke 16:16). As long as the Law of Moses was in force the Jews were to worship God in Jerusalem on certain feast days, namely the Feast of Unleavened Bread [Passover] (Leviticus 23:5-8), the Feast of Weeks [Pentecost] (Leviticus 23:15-21), and the Feast of Tabernacles (Leviticus 23:33-44). The Law was in force during Jesus' lifetime (Matthew 19:17; 23:2-3). It would require the death of Christ to fulfill and thus remove it (Romans 7:4, 6). Jesus knew that the reality of that event was near (John 12:23). What would this change mean? It meant that men would worship God "in spirit and in truth."

WHAT IS TRUE WORSHIP?

True worship is to worship "in spirit." The common interpretation of this phrase is that worship must be in the right attitude. This, of course, is true. The problem here is that with the word "But," (Vs. 23) Jesus introduces a

contrast with his statements in verses 21-22. The question is, with what is the word "spirit" contrasted in this context?

True worship is to worship "in truth." The common interpretation of this phrase is that worship must be according to God's word. Again, this is true. It is well to point out that the denominational world does not worship according to a correct understanding of the New Testament. Although denominational worship is not in the context of Jesus' words (Protestant denominationalism did not then exist), it is in the application of Jesus' words. For example, mechanical instruments of music in the worship are nothing more than a fleshly innovation. In New Testament worship they are neither spirit nor truth. Some believe that because they were part of Old Testament worship (2 Chronicles 29:25), they must have God's approval today. Worship in spirit and in truth, however, authorizes singing alone (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16).

In keeping with the thought that Jesus anticipated a change in covenants, it may be that worship "in spirit" is the spiritual nature of New Testament worship in contrast with the fleshly character of worship under the Law of Moses (Colossians 2:20). One use of the word "spirit" in the New Testament is to show that the gospel is spiritual. Paul spoke of God, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit given life" (2 Corinthians 3:6; Cf., Romans 7:6; Hebrews 9:13-14, 24). When a person believes the gospel he receives it into his mind (heart, spirit) and it directs him into obedience to God. A Christian, then, is not of the letter [Law of Moses], but is of the spirit [Gospel, or New Covenant].

How is New Testament truth determined? Truth has been revealed through Jesus Christ (John 1:14, 17; Hebrews 1:1). God's word is truth (John 17:17). Truth is in Jesus Christ (Ephesians 4:21). Certain modern practices, which some choose to bring into the worship, have no basis in truth: Instrumental music, women in leadership roles, dancing, hand clapping, swaying, solos, quartets, choirs and praise teams (where the focus is on performance).

From this contextual analysis, the following points may be made: First, not all worship is acceptable to God. Even though the Samaritans worshiped God, they did so in

ignorance. It is possible for people today to worship God in ignorance. Second, Old Testament worship would no longer be the way to approach God - Jerusalem would no longer be the place. Third, Jesus introduced a contrast between the Old and the New covenants, and anticipated the approaching "Christian Age," wherein worship to God must be "in spirit and in truth."

WHAT TRUE WORSHIP IS NOT

True worship is not according to our conscience. Conscience is our moral judicial system, but it isn't our final moral or religious standard. Our conscience must be properly taught (Acts 26:9). A practice, such as instrumental music in the worship, may lack New Testament authority, and yet people feel perfectly good about it even though it is wrong.

True worship is not according to tradition. Traditions are beliefs or practices that have been handed down. Religious traditions are of two sources: apostolic (2 Thessalonians 2:15), and human (Matthew 15:3). A tradition may be human in origin, but not change any choice God has made in worship. For example the use of songbooks and four-part harmony, simply expedite the command to sing (Ephesians 5:19). The use of multiple cups for the Lord's supper simply expedites communion (Luke 22:17; 1 Corinthians 10:16). On the other hand, a tradition may be of men, but alter a choice God has made in worship. For example, instrumental music changes God's choice of music from vocal to instrumental (Ephesians 5:19). Choirs deviate from corporate singing in worship to a performance orientation (Colossians 3:16). Sprinkling for "baptism" alters God's choice of immersion to aspersion (Colossians 2:12).

True worship is not according to culture. The current craze to make worship "culturally relevant" is sadly misguided. The modern vision of "progress" is that women have expanded roles in the worship by preaching, leading public prayers and serving the Lord's supper. It would be wrong to deny women any role that is rightfully theirs to fulfill, but the modern desire to "unshackle" women in religion is an effort to chain them to cultural mores. Owen Olbricht makes a valid point in his book,

Worship - Life's Greatest Moments:

Christian women were told not to follow the pagan religious practices of women in culture where they lived. Paul gave them instructions that were counter-cultural. He wrote that the women were not to speak in the Christian assemblies and were not to serve as leaders in the Christian community (1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12). He did not base this on culture, but on Jesus' commandments (1 Corinthians 14:37).

Women were to be submissive, remaining subject to their husbands (1 Corinthians 7:7-9; Ephesians 5:23-24; Colossians 3:18; 1 Peter 3:1-6). He based woman's role on God's Creative order (1 Corinthians 11:7-12; 14:34; 1 Timothy 2:13-14). [p. 81].

True worship can exist only within the boundaries that God has set in the New Testament. God is seeking true worshippers to worship him. We can be sure our worship is what God desires when we are his children reaching up to him in spirit and in truth (Galatians 3:26-27).—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, Arkansas 72103.

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THE REAL TRAGEDY OF THE RECENT SUPER BOWL

Bill Dillon

FCC Chairman Michael Powell has said the Super Bowl halftime show, which ended in a "wardrobe malfunction" was offensive. Powell went on to make a just observation by saying that the rest of the halftime show was even more offensive than Janet Jackson exposing her breast, as the choreography left little to the imagination.

The question that should focus matters for us is, "Why are we upset with a bare breast, but not at the bumping and grinding of dancers in their skin tight underwear?" After noting some of the lyrics of the halftime show, "It's getting hot in her, so take off your clothes," and Timberlake's single includes the chorus, "Bet I'll have you naked by the end of this song," are we really surprised by the way it ended? Is it permissible for singers to sing about sexual intercourse and dancers to simulate it as long as no one exposes themselves?

Our culture is reaping what we have sown in allowing the seed of moral filth to be planted in the hearts of our entire society.

The real tragedy of America's Super Bowl is that an outcry would not have been made at all unless Janet had revealed herself. The entire halftime charade was disgusting, foul and morally repulsive. What should have been a Norman Rockwell movement turned out to be a Hugh Hefner experience. Shame on America. Even so, come Lord Jesus! Proverbs 14:34 still stand true.

NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE SAYS BIBLE CONTAINS ERRORS

Bill Dillon

The *Newsweek* cover story is entitled, "WHO REALLY KILLED JESUS?" (Feb. 18, 2004), and is written to undermine the expected widespread influence that Mel Gibson's new movie is going to have. The article

complains that, "Gibson set out to stick to the gospel and has made virtually no nod to critical analysis or context." If Mel Gibson wants to ignore the higher critics of the Bible and make a movie which assumes the gospel records are accurate historical documents, then, more power to him. (I have not seen the Gibson movie and these words are not necessarily an endorsement of it.)

The *Newsweek* spin says, "The Bible did not descend from heaven fully formed and edged in gilt; the gospels are the product of human hands and hearts." No serious Bible scholar has ever said or written the previously mentioned sentiment, but in writing such infantile declarations, the authors reveal what the higher critics are higher in-unbelief and oversimplification!

The Holy Scriptures did not descend from heaven "fully formed and edged in gilt" but they did come with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21).

SELF-DEIFICATIONS North Korean Ruler Receives Worship

Bill Dillon

"The communist dictator in North Korea denies the existence of God but has deified himself. Every family in North Korea is required to display Kim Jong II's picture in a prominent place. He has worshipful titles such as the Eternal Sun, Ever-Victorious General, the Sun of Life, and the Guardian Deity of the Planet. Kim succeeded his father, Kim Il-Sung, as dictator in 1994."—David Cloud

The above news item reminds me of the following story:

"Warren Buffet at M.I.T. fed into the ultimate computer, the ultimate question: 'Is there a God?' The computer, which is programmed to know everything, was asked: 'Is there a God?' The computer's wheels whirled and things buzzed, and lights flashed and at long last came the response, these words: 'There is now!'"

Self-deification? Seems to be a lot of that going around!

Another quote is enough to put both of the above

stories in perspective:

"I am absolutely sure of two things:

1. There is a God.
2. You are not Him."

I am having a "senior moment" and can't remember the source of the last quote-but it sure does fit. 1 Corinthians 8:4b says "...there is none other God but one." Let all men and machines who aspire to self-deification, realize that the job is already filled.

WHY ME, LORD?

Bill Dillon

Few, if indeed any of us, will live very long without suffering some adversity or severe setback. Life will thrust into our neatly ordered existence catastrophic matters over which we have no control. In the midst of our struggles, we can discover the reality of God in our lives.

Job suffered the loss of all that was meaningful and good to him. Job asked, "Why?" The Lord did not answer the "why", but He did reveal Himself to Job (Job 38-41). Job finally acknowledged, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee" (Job 42:5). That's it! Job came to understand that Jehovah God was greater than every question, doubt or struggle man can ever face. God does not necessarily remove your tribulations, but lets you know He is with you in them.

We come to the point, as did a suffering and persecuted apostle, that "when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

We come to realize how it was said of Abraham, "He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God" (Romans 4:20).

If you acknowledge the greatness and supremacy of the Lord in your misfortunes, then whatever you are facing will be secondary. It is a marvelous discovery to find out you can trust God beyond the limit of your understanding of Him.

Remember also that life without despair, problems and temptations would cause us to become more like

mannequins than men. Who wants to go through life as an inanimate object? It is in the hard places and difficult trials of life that we find strength for our struggles and power to endure.

Life, the bitter and the sweet, is wonderful in the company of Christ! (Romans 8:18, 35-39; 1 John 4:4; 5:4).

WHO IS A CHRISTIAN?

1. One who believes Jesus is the Son of God (Acts 8:37).
2. One who has and continues to repent of his sins (Acts 2:38).
3. One who has been baptized into Christ (Galatians 3:27).
4. One who is "Christ-like."

ARE YOU A CHRISTIAN?

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Bill Dillon, Evangelist

FINDING CONTENTMENT

T. Pierce Brown



We just wrote an article on covetousness, using the story of Ahab in 1 Kings 21 as a starting point. As important as the lesson on covetousness may be, there is a broader lesson in the story of Ahab. It shows what can happen when a person is a slave to his circumstances and is discontented. When a person allows events and circumstances to control his thinking and happiness, many bad consequences follow. This is one reason Paul's attitude in Philippians 4:11 is so valuable. He says, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." When a person has not learned that attitude of acceptance, he is almost invariably discontented in whatever state he is. He may assume that money, power, possessions, fame, good looks, success will give him contentment, but they will not. Alexander the Great had the whole Babylonian Empire. He had conquered the world, but because he could not get ivy to grow in his garden, he could not rest. This is why the statement in Proverbs 16:2 is so valuable. "He who rules his own heart is better than he who taketh a city." If one gets the idea that his present car is not big or glamorous enough he will discover all sorts of things that are wrong with it that he never thought of before. It will ride rough on the smoothest places, rattle over them or be a general headache.

We should learn to live in such a way that our happiness is not controlled by external circumstances. How does one do that? First, be aware of the truth about it. Know of God's warnings and examples in the Bible and in your own experience that show the importance of finding happiness in spite of adverse circumstances. Second, let your mind and soul be so completely motivated and directed by spiritual values that the external circumstances become relatively insignificant. For example, if you think that when you marry, you must have a big house to be happy, you will discover that getting a big house does not guarantee happiness. You can make up your mind that happiness in marriage does not depend on the size of the

house you will have. This mental state is a choice of will. You can set your mind on certain things (Colossians 3:1-2). Paul gives a list of things to think on in Philippians 4:8. "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honorable, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."

The result of thinking on these things will bring happiness and serenity, for if we think on these things, we can not think on the things that cause frustration and anxiety.

One result of living for self is that one gets tired of himself. When a man gets full of himself, he may become allergic to himself. He is self-centered, wrapped up in himself, but he has no place to go to get away. That is, he would have no place if God had not provided a way to get away from himself. Paul says in Galatians 5:24, "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its affections and lusts." So, if one dies to self and lives for Christ, he may be happy in spite of external circumstances, for he has the proper internal motivation. This is why Paul and Silas could sing at midnight in jail. In Romans 6:6 he says, "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him that the body of sin might be destroyed."

The dangers of undisciplined desires are universal. They are not confined to those who are rich or those who would be rich. They apply to any undisciplined desire, whether or not we call it coveting. The desires to have material possessions that give pleasure are God-given and right. Undisciplined and undirected by the Lord, they always lead to sin. Eve's desire for food was God-given and right. Her desire to have things that delight the eye was not wrong. Her wish to be wise was no sin. When they became undisciplined and undirected by the word of God, they lead to sin.

We should be able to see from the stories of Eve and Ahab that happiness is not in having material things, but in having an attitude of gratitude and dependence upon God with faith in His word that He will grant that which is best

for you if you love him (Romans 8:28). When God promises, "The God of peace shall be with you" (Philippians 4:9), and "The peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ," he made those promises contingent upon one being a Christian and acting like one.

There is value in our knowing how to deal with temptation, whether it is toward covetousness, or any other temptation. First, do not be like Balaam, who was urged by Balak to curse God's people (Numbers 22:6). He was offered many riches. He kept playing around with the idea of cursing them, though he already knew what God's will was, for God had told him to bless them. Temptations seem to have a hypnotic power if we keep looking at them. Second, "Flee these things" (1 Timothy 6:11). Whether the temptation is fornication (1 Corinthians 6:18), idolatry in any form (1 Corinthians 10:14), or the desire for possessions (1 Timothy 6:10), that advice is important.

Each of us has our own weaknesses. We should find out what they are, and be especially on guard to muzzle, curb, or kill them. "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out" (Matthew 5:29). Hebrews 12:1 adds one more dimension to it. After saying, "Lay aside every sin," he adds, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith." Keeping Him foremost in our minds will help in almost every situation. If one simply tries to overcome his weakness without replacing it with some positive attribute found in Christ, he will discover that he is like the man in Matthew 12:43-45 who had an unclean spirit gone out, but when he found the place empty, swept and garnished, he took seven other spirits more wicked than himself and the last state of the man was worse than the first.

The tenderness and longsuffering of God in Ahab's case and in ours is amazing. He sent Elijah to warn him, and gave him many chances to repent. In Noah's case, in Israel's case and in our case we are impressed with how gentle God is. Sometimes we stress that it is hard to get to heaven. Considered from another standpoint, we may say that God has tried to make it hard for us to go to hell. In order to be lost, we have to fight against our conscience. We have to try to eradicate precious memories of mothers and fathers, or others who have tried to lead us aright. We deliberately close our eyes to the ruin sin makes of lives.

We deliberately refuse to accept the warnings we knew are right. We deliberately shut out the picture of Christ loving us enough to die for us. God put many barriers up to prevent us from being lost. We have to break through these and many others in order to be lost. So God has tried to make it hard for us to be lost.

Perhaps the most impressive lesson we get from this story is that there will be "payday" some day. Ahab and Jezebel may have relaxed in the thought that they had covered their tracks, but they had not. Some wages of sin may be paid in this life. Venereal disease, broken homes, deaths from drunken driving and all sorts of other misfortunes often follow. Some wages may not be paid until eternity. All will be paid. However, if we accept the payment Jesus made on the cross for us, we will not have to make that payment. His whole life and death were the opposite of covetousness. He loved and gave. As we look at Ahab and Jesus we can deliberately choose the one that appeals to us the most. It is hard to imagine that one who has read this far would choose the way of Ahab, but our experience and observation leads us to the sad conclusion that some will. We hope you are not one of them, but can find contentment in following the way of the Lord.—1068 Mitchell Ave., Cookeville, TN 38501

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A CHRISTIAN

As sheep we follow Christ the SHEPHERD (John 10:1-10).

As citizens we submit to Christ the KING (Colossians 1:13).

As branches we bear fruit for Christ the VINE (John 15:1-6).

As members of the body we obey Christ the HEAD (Colossians 1:18).

As lights in the world we shine for Christ the TRUE LIGHT (John 8:12).

As soldiers we endure hardness for Christ the CAPTAIN of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10; 2 Timothy 2:3).



GOD'S DIVIDING LINE

Guy F. Hester



We are all familiar with boundary lines separating countries, states, counties, farms, etc. Every boundary must be set by constituted authority and cannot be arbitrarily changed. Sometimes bodies of water: oceans, rivers and creeks are used as boundary lines. The longest and best known boundary in our country in the

Mississippi River. This river serves as an east/west boundary dividing all the states from Minnesota in the north to the gulf of Mexico in the south.

I remember my grandfather's farm, when I was a boy, the line between his farm and his neighbor's farm to the east was Wilson Creek. That was the legally established line and they had every right to arrange it so that water would be the dividing line between the two farms.

In the Bible there are many dividing lines, marked by water, that were established by God Himself.

FLOOD

God made the waters of the flood a dividing line between the old world of sin and every kind of wickedness that the mind could imagine and a new world of purity. "And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5) "Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished" (2 Peter 3:6). "For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away" (Matthew 24:38-39). On the other side of the flood the people did not even know that they were under condemnation of death. However they did not have to be ignorant, they could have known because Noah was "a preacher of righteousness" and God had warned him of the destruction that was to come. "By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear,

prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (Hebrews 11:7). Noah had a need to be saved from the impending destruction, as did all others around him. Therefore, God arranged a way for him to cross the dividing line between the old world of ungodliness and come into a new and pure world.

Just as Noah was "saved by water" from the old world of sin, death and destruction, just so baptism is the dividing line today from between eternal destruction in sin to a new life of purity, holiness and salvation. The flood was a type, or figure, of baptism. "Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:20-21). Notice especially, they "were saved by water." Water was the means through which God lifted the ark from the world of the condemned and transported Noah and his family to the new world of purity. Therefore, God has chosen baptism as the means of saving us from sin and destruction in hell. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us." We must cross the dividing line of baptism to be saved from the guilt of our past sins.

RED SEA

In Exodus chapters 13 and 14 we read about the Israelites beginning their flight from bondage in Egypt by following the lead of Moses. In three days they came unto the Red Sea with Pharaoh and the Egyptian army in pursuit to destroy them. Recognizing their plight and the danger they were in, the people were perplexed, whereupon Moses said, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever" (Exodus 14:13). God made a way for them to cross and be saved from the dangerous plight. "But the

children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left. Thus the LORD saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore" (Exodus 14:29-30). Again we see that God made water a dividing line between danger and safety. In crossing the Sea, the pillow of cloud which followed them by night, came down over them and Paul says, "were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1-2). The Lord now says, He that believeth and is baptized shall be save" (Mark 16:16).

JORDAN

In 2 Kings 5:1-14 we have the account of "Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper" (2 Kings 5:1). The prophet of God told him to dip himself seven times in the Jordan river and he would be cleansed of his leprosy. But Naaman got mad and "went away in a rage" thinking that the prophet thought the water of the Jordan had some sort of miraculous power in it rather than understanding that this was God's test of his faith in Him to give him cleansing. But finally "he went down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean" (2 Kings 5:14). The water did not heal him but he had to obey God in the water to be healed. Figuratively speaking his leprosy was washed away in the Jordan. Saul was told to, "Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). The Great Physician certainly had the right and authority to put the dividing line wherever He saw fit.

SILOAM

In John chapter six, when Jesus met a certain blind man, "He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (John 9:6-7). All of this was a

test of the blind man's faith. Had he no faith he certainly would not have obeyed such a "foolish" command. But the true believer does not question or argue about any command of the Lord. The blind man recognized the right of the Great Physician to draw the dividing line wherever He saw fit. It was the Lord, not the water, that gave sight to the blind man, but he had to cross that appointed dividing line of obedience. On one side he was blind but on the other side he had his sight.

BAPTISM

Peter said, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38). Here we plainly see the dividing line between the guilt of sin on one side and remission of sins on the other. —Guy F. Hester, P. O. Box 306, Bradford, TN 38316

A Notice from the Elders of the Mabelvale Church of Christ

We have been informed of the existence of a tract titled "Shrines to Apostasy." This tract is an edited copy of an article that appeared in the *Gospel Gleaner*. The tract adds to the article a picture of the library at the Memphis School of Preaching as an example of a "shrine to apostasy." This tract also contains an advertisement for the *Gospel Gleaner* that some have taken as evidence that the elders at Mabelvale approved of this tract. We do not approve of this tract as edited. We do not approve of the implied link with the *Gospel Gleaner*. We do not believe the library at the Memphis School of Preaching is a "shrine to apostasy."

The *Gospel Gleaner* will be given a temporary rest. Look for it to return under the editorship of Bill Dillon. We have had a pleasant association with Bill and we wish him well in the future. This will be the last issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* under the supervision of the elders of the church meeting at Mabelvale.



"GASHMU SAITH IT"

B. C. Goodpasture



All that we know of him justifies the conclusion that Gashmu, or Geshem, was one of the least of the minor characters of the Bible. He was so small that most of the other insignificant Biblical characters seem to gain in size compared with him.

Who was this man Gashmu? (It may be that good men in particular and all men in general are due an apology when Gashmu is called a man. It is our settled conviction that if old Diogenes, who stalked the streets of Athens in broad daylight, with lantern in hand, in search of a man, had met this fellow Gashmu, he would have looked disappointed, shifted his tub to the other shoulder, trimmed his lantern, replenished his oil, and continued his forlorn quest.) He was an Arabian probably, an inhabitant of the wild Arabian Desert, who joined Sanballat and Tobiah in opposition to Nehemiah in his work of restoring the walls of Jerusalem. Whether he was one of the "governors beyond the river," to who Nehemiah came, and whose mission "grieved them exceedingly that there was come a man to seek the welfare of the children of Israel" (Nehemiah 2:10), we do not know. He was in sympathy with these "governors," if not one of them. He joined them in ridiculing the first efforts of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of the Holy City, and afterwards repeatedly sought to entice him to the plains of Ono, professedly for "counsel," but actually for "mischief." After ridicule, force, and compromise had failed to stop Nehemiah, they tried one other thing—slander.

The origin of this vicious slander was attributed to Gashmu. "Then sent Sanballat his servant unto me in like manner the fifth time with an open letter in his hand, wherein was written, It is reported among the nations, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel; for which cause thou art building the wall: and thou wouldest be their king, according to these words. And thou hast also appointed prophets to preach of thee at Jerusalem, saying,

There is a king in Judah: and now shall it be reported to the king according to these words. Come now therefore, and let us take counsel together" (Nehemiah 6:5-7). Gashmu and his miserable henchmen who gave publicity to his attack were prompted by dark and sinister motives. They did not care for the king of Persia. At heart it really made little difference with them whether Nehemiah was loyal to the king or not. What Nehemiah was doing did not fit into their plans. They wanted his work stopped. Their own selfish ambitions would impel them to use any means available to get Nehemiah out of the way. The slander of Gashmu was well timed and made some show of reason. But Nehemiah was undaunted. "Then I sent unto him, saying, There are no such things done as thou sayest, but thou feignest them out of thine own heart. For they all would have made us afraid, saying, Their hands shall be weakened from the work, that it be not done. But now, O God, strengthen thou my hands" (Nehemiah 6:8-9). Gashmu and those who gave voice to his lying misrepresentation underestimated the courage of Nehemiah. They did not take into consideration the source of his strength. He was not the man to quail before such opposition.

The tribe of Gashmu, unfortunately, is not yet extinct. He was not the last man to seek personal advancement through the defamation of another. He lives, in principle, wherever anyone is assailed maliciously on the authority of "they say." His name abides as a synonym of oft-quoted, but absent, authority. Anyone who takes up a slander on the slender and unreliable support of hear-say puts himself in the class with Nehemiah's accusers who so fluently quoted Gashmu. It matters not whether it has to do with someone's morals, financial integrity, or doctrinal soundness. Gashmu and his satellites did not establish their loyalty by accusing Nehemiah of treason.

From the case of Gashmu in his dealings with Nehemiah these conclusions may be drawn:

The fact that one is quoted as authority does not necessarily make him reliable.

The circumstance that a thing is currently reported does not make it true.

Accusing is not proving.

Pronouncement of condemnation is not establishment of guilt.

Professed motives are not always the dominating motives.

Even a false word will be repeated in echo.

Opposition and misrepresentation are the lot of leadership.

The taller the trees the heavier the winds by which they are tried.

Most hunters, regardless of the object of their quest, like to take shots at big game.

Discovery of the true motives prompting it will often extract the venomous fangs from the foul mouth of slander. (*Gospel Advocate*, April 11, 1940, page 340). [Photo taken from *GA Centennial Volume*, Gospel Advocate Co., 1956].

THE HOME IN CRISIS

Dennis Gulledge

You have heard the old adage, "As goes the home, so goes the nation." This is a truism that is understood by Christian and non-Christian alike. Solomon said, "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

We live in an especially critical time for the home and family. Society seems bent on dismantling, destroying and redefining the home, as we know it. Should we care? We didn't just wake up yesterday and find the home in crisis. Since the sexual revolution of the radical 1960s, a new worldview has emerged telling people that they are better off with no restrictions on their behavior. This worldview is at the heart of Supreme Court decisions: *Roe v. Wade* is about more than abortion - it's the idea that we can do what we want with no strings attached. *Lawrence v. Texas* (2003) said that homosexual conduct cannot be restricted by law.

The home begins with the joining together of a man and woman in marriage (Genesis 2:18-25). Jesus repeated

this divine plan for the home in Matthew 19:4-6. We are hearing a lot these days about "same sex" marriages. Marriage may mean nothing more than "an intimate or close union" (Webster). By this definition same sex marriage might be allowed. In this connection Barbara Streisand recently said, "When two people form a deep bond there is usually a soul connection and the soul has no gender." But, God (not Streisand or Webster) is our moral and spiritual governor.

The marital bond is basically (not solely) for the purpose of procreation (Genesis 1:28). Apparently, homosexual and lesbian couples seek to fulfill this basic need by adopting children. Homosexual "marriage" is, therefore, an oxymoron - no such thing in the eyes of God. Cultures have degenerated in the past, but not like the current American scene. Ancient Greece and Rome, at their moral worst, never legalized sodomy. No western civilization prior to today ever recognized it. But, currently in this country it is being decided that homosexual couples have a right to marry.

Why are we seeing the push to legalize homosexual unions? Basically, it is so that these people can feel good about their immoral behavior (Romans 1:26-32). Their wish is to have the law on their side saying "you can't legislate morality," and that only bigotry and hatred would raise a voice against it.

The only aspect of God's creation that was "not good" was man alone (Genesis 2:18). Adam was not incomplete simply because he lacked human companionship. He lacked female human companionship (Genesis 2:19-23). The word of God categorically condemns homosexual behavior period (Leviticus 18:22; Romans 1:26ff; 1 Corinthians 6:9ff). What was sin and unnatural 2,000 years ago remains so today. All the toleration, laws, declarations, sitcoms, celebrities, music and news stories promoting it will not make it any less wrong.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

The following sign should be above every exit of the church building - "You are now entering the mission field."

THE GREATEST COMMAND IN THE BIBLE

(Matthew 22:34-40)

M. W. Kiser



What is it? Some may think it is "baptism;" or "not forsaking the assembly;" but, we cannot obey these commands without love! In Matthew 22 we have "tempting questions and divine answers." They came prepared, with no notice. Yet Jesus gave prompt and perfect answers. They were not motivated by a love of the truth in

asking; so the Lord put a gag in their mouths with His answers. The Talmud reckoned there to be 613 laws (248 positive, 365 negative). At the time this fellow asked Jesus the question, he probably was wearing a phylactery containing this passage from Deuteronomy 6:5! We still are in desperate need to understand "love."

I. THE MEANING OF LOVE.

- A. *PHILEO* – love of emotion; impulsive and instinctive; cannot be developed by a command. (Such as love of friendship; or for a companion).
- B. *AGAPAO* – love of devotion; developed by a command of God. It actually will lead the way by loving the unlovable.

II. THE MODELS OF LOVE.

- A. God, the Father (John 3:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 2:4-5; 1 John 3:1).
- B. Jesus, our Savior (John 15:13; John 13:1; Galatians 2:20).

III. THE MANIFESTATION OF LOVE.

- A. Toward the Father (Matthew 22:37).
 1. We like to hear from those we love. (Study the Bible).
 2. We like to talk to those we love. (Pray regularly).
- B. Toward our Savior (1 Corinthians 16:22).

1. Obedience is the test of our love for Him (John 14:15).
2. We like to be with those we love (Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:25).
- C. Toward the brethren (John 13:34-35).
 1. We forgive those that we love (Ephesians 4:32).
 2. We help those that we love (James 2:14-17; 1 John 4:20-21).
- D. Toward our neighbor (Matthew 22-39).
 1. A neighbor is anyone we can help (Luke 10:29).
 2. Love does not do ill things toward a neighbor (Romans 13:10).
- E. Toward our enemies (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:20-21).

IV. THE MISCONCEPTIONS OF LOVE.

- A. Some think that love nullifies obedience.
 1. Toward "moral" commandments; consequently, "situation ethics."
 2. Toward "positive" commandments; "non-essential" (1 John 2:5).
- B. Some think that love will dispense with chastisement.
 1. The rebuking of sin and false doctrine is called "lack of love!"
 2. True love bring forth correction (Hebrews 12:6; Proverbs 13:24; Ephesians 4:15).

V. THE MISPLACING OF LOVE.

- A. Some love themselves (2 Timothy 3:2)
- B. Some love pleasure (2 Timothy 3:4; see, Luke 8:14).
- C. Some love money (1 Timothy 6:10; Matthew 19:16-22; Acts 5:1-11).
- D. Some love the world (2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John

2:15-17).

- E. Some love the praise of men (3 John 9; Matthew 23:6).
- F. Some love pre-eminence (John 14:23; Galatians 1:10).

It is the greatest because it is permanent (1 Corinthians 13:13). It is also a universal commandment, a language everyone can speak! (see again John 13:35). Are you a living example of obedience to this command of God?—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

“I believe Satan to exist for two reasons: First, the Bible says so; and second, I’ve done business with him.” D. L. Moody

**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	5:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (501) 455-2548
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Dennis Gullledge, Evangelist
Scott Perry, Associate Minister
Wayne Brewer, Hispanic Minister

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Clinton, AR.....	50.00
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PRELUDE TO REFORMATION (3)

Grady Miller



Martin Luther took his bold stand against the corrupt Roman church on October 31, 1517. His outspoken criticism of Catholic leadership and church policy found immediate, ready acceptance throughout Germany and beyond.

The Protestant Reformation. That is an historic term or label we sometimes throw about without truly appreciating all it means and stands for. Luther and his followers were protesters, railing against the corruption, worldliness and wickedness of the established church. They issued a call for reform, a sweeping and comprehensive correction of abuses that had been piling up for centuries. The Protestant Reformation was an all out campaign to transform medieval Catholicism. The Reformers were not to be satisfied with surface change, cosmetic surgery, a nip here and a tuck there. They did not intend to give the Roman church a face-lift. They meant to perform major surgery!

As we observed in our first article, reasonable men do not protest against that which is pure and right, or call themselves "Protestants" unless they have a grievance against the established order. There is no need to reform or instigate a "Reformation" unless there are abuses that need correcting.

This, then, is the second pillar post of the Protestant Reformation - the absolute corruption, the institutional depravity, the immorality, worldliness and covetousness that afflicted the Roman Church from the lowliest of priests to the Pope himself! By the 16th century Roman Catholicism had bottomed out. Good men, spiritual men, Bible-reading men were sickened and disgusted by the apostasy of Rome. They declared they had rather lose their lives in opposing the church than lose their souls by following that wicked system.

Most trees do not die and fall to the forest floor all at once. Instead, disease and decay rob the tree of strength and vitality for years and years - often from within and unknown to all - before the tree comes crashing down.

In much the same way, the Roman Church was diseased and decaying in the centuries before Martin Luther was born. The selling of indulgences, or forgiveness of sin, in order to finance the construction of St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, was simply the last straw for Luther.

Why do we call those centuries before the Renaissance and the Reformation the Dark Ages? Well, here are some of the excesses and abuses of the Roman Church that made them dark!

The Roman pontiff claimed to hold both sacred and secular power. Indeed, the medieval pope was considered to be head of the church and a ruler wielding temporal authority. As such, the papacy was regarded as any other political office, a prize to achieve by any means necessary. All the excesses and scandals of any national monarch became the rule for the pope in Rome.

Pope John VIII (872-882) was bludgeoned to death in his bed, after the poison his servants placed in his food proved to be too slow. In 974 Benedict VI was imprisoned and strangled by Bonifazio Francone, who appointed himself pope and absconded with the papal treasury. He returned to Rome nine years later, killed John XIV, and ruled as Pope until his death. Benedict IX was made pope at the age of twelve! He was so wicked the citizens of Rome drove him into exile. When he returned to power, he discovered he could not marry his girlfriend so long as he was pope, so he sold his office to Gregory VI for a handsome sum.

Simony is the buying and selling of ecclesiastical or church office, position and power. Although condemned by church councils and denounced by some popes, Roman Catholicism was a power grab, with every important position for sale if the applicant had the coin to purchase influence.

Perhaps nothing documents and illustrates the spiritual ignorance, unscriptural posture and greedy pandering for wealth and power of the Roman church than the collection of "relics" housed in Wittenberg, where Luther posted his ninety-five theses. For a fee, of course,

burning bush, bones of dead saints, a skeleton of a baby slain by King Herod, articles of clothing worn by the Virgin Mary, feathers from angel wings, and even a tear shed by Jesus when He wept over the city of Jerusalem!

Men who love the Bible will not tolerate such foolishness. Men who devote themselves to a spiritual walk, who rejoice in the spiritual reign of Jesus, will rebel against crass worldliness, superstition and abuse of religious authority.

The wretched excesses and spiritual bankruptcy of Roman Catholicism gave birth to the Protestant Reformation!—745 Riverview Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80916

WRONG EXAMPLE

Continued from page 1

PAUL'S TEACHING

In his letter to the Romans, Paul encouraged them not to follow the sinful practices of the Gentiles (Romans 1:18-32). He presented the Jews as living lives they should not follow (Romans 2:17-23), because through them God's name was blasphemed among the Gentiles (Romans 2:24). The Jew sought a sign and the Greeks sought wisdom, but Christians are to follow Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:22, 23).

He wrote concerning the rebellious people of Israel who fell in the wilderness, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come" (1 Corinthians 10:11). Peter was given as an example of someone he rebuked for hypocrisy in following Jewish traditions (Galatians 2:11-16). Paul gave Hymenaeus and Alexander as an example of those who had made shipwreck of their faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20) and Jannes and Jambres as opponents of the truth (2 Timothy 3:8).

In the book of Hebrews the warning is given, "Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God" (Hebrews 3:12). "Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall after the same example of disobedience"

(Hebrews 4:11). Esau is referred to in order to encourage the readers not to be like him in failing to receive God's blessing (Hebrews 12:15-16).

PETER AND JOHN TAUGHT

Peter gave warning to Christians not to follow sinful people such as those in the days of Noah (2 Peter 2:5) or those in Sodom and Gomorrah (2 Peter 2:6).

John gave Cain as an example we are not to follow, "We should love one another, not as Cain who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother." (1 John 3:12).

CONCLUSION

Not only did God give good examples for Christians to follow, but He also gave examples of people that Christians are not to follow. These are given for us to learn what displeases God and how we are not to live. These many examples are evidence that the teaching in the New Testament is negative as well as positive. Jesus not only wants His people to be righteous but He also expects them to avoid the sinful passions of the world.

John may have best summed up this teaching by writing, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).—305 W. Maryland Avenue, Sherwood, AR 72120

WHAT POSITION IN THE CHURCH DO YOU OCCUPY?

A giver or a getter?
A wing or a weight?
A pillar or a sleeper?
A power or a problem?
A booster or a boaster?
A supporter or a provoker?
An attendant or an absentee?
A peacemaker or a troublemaker?

—Selected

"THAT WORTHY NAME"

Bill Boyd



"Do not blaspheme that worthy name by which ye were called." (James 2:7)

Were the disciples first called "Christians" in derision by their enemies? I do not think so. Consider the following:

1. The word "Christ" means "anointed." The name "Christian"

implies that the followers of Jesus were followers of the anointed. That sounds complementary, not derisive.

2. The name "Christian" literally means "little Christ." The enemies of the church did not believe Jesus was the Christ; why then would they associate the disciples of Jesus with the Christ by calling them "little Christ." It is a poor choice for a pejorative term.

3. The word translated "called" in Acts 11:26 (CHREMATIZO) is a Greek word that is consistently used in the New Testament in reference to a divine call. In Matthew 2:12 and Matthew 2:22 this one word is translated by the four English words "being warned of God." In Luke 2:26 we read "it was revealed (CHREMATIZO) unto him by the Holy Spirit." In Acts 10:22 Cornelius was "warned of God (CHREMATIZO) by an holy angel." In Romans 7:3 the woman with a living husband who marries another is "called (CHREMATIZO) an adulteress." [The Romans may have said that if she was legally divorced she was free to remarry, but God, with only one exception (Matthew 19:9), calls her an adulteress.] In Hebrews 8:5 Moses was "admonished of God (CHREMATIZO)." In Hebrews 11:7 Noah was "warned of God (CHREMATIZO)." Hebrews 12:25 says, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake (CHREMATIZO) on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn from him that speaketh from heaven." In this passage "CHREMATIZO" is in reference to the voice that shook the earth. Except for Acts 11:26 this is every use of the word "CHREMATIZO" in the New Testament. It is always associated with a divine designation. It would do no injustice to the text to say that the disciples were first "called of God" Christians in Antioch.

4. The church in Antioch was the first congregation

where Jewish believers and Gentile believers assembled together in one body. This then is in fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 62:2 which says, "The Gentiles shall see thy glory." That same prophecy also says, "And thou shalt be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord shall name." The name "Christian" is a new name because it was used in Antioch "first." The prophecy did not say that they would be given that name by their enemies; it says it would be a name "which the mouth of the Lord shall name."

5. The same verse that says, "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" also tells us that Barnabas and Saul had been assembling with the people for a year teaching them. This would be the ready occasion for these holy inspired men to have taught the disciples by divine decree to call themselves Christians.

6. It is said that King Agrippa was mocking Paul when he said "almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian" (Acts 26:28), but the text does not say he was mocking. When Felix heard Paul preach he took it seriously and "trembled." It sounds like Festus was rather upset himself when he laid aside his iron Roman nobility and said with a loud voice, "Paul, thou art beside thyself..." Paul replied that he was speaking "the words of truth and soberness," and then turned to King Agrippa and said, "I know that thou believest." That is when King Agrippa said, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." It has the sound of a serious reply, and Paul did take him seriously saying, "I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds." If Paul took King Agrippa seriously we should also.

7. 1 Peter 4:14 does not say the disciples were reproached "by" the name of Christ, but "For the name of Christ." 1 Peter 4:16 does not say that anyone was suffering by being called a Christian, but "if any man suffers as a Christian." That is a big difference.

8. James 2:7 says, "Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye were called." I do not know how a person could blaspheme a term of derision, nor how a term of derision could be called a worthy name, but I do understand that when a person takes upon himself the name "Christian" he takes upon himself responsibility to

live in a manner that would bring no shame to the name of Christ.

These are reasons I believe that when we call disciples "Christians" we are speaking "as the oracles of God" (1 Peter 4:22). Those who say the name "Christian" originated with the enemies of the cross do so from supposition, and by supposition they tarnish the primitive glory of that worthy name. I wonder if it is sometimes said that the name "Christian" originated as a term of derision in order to excuse those who have taken denominational names of human origin to themselves.—Mabelvale church of Christ, 10820 Mabelvale W. Road, P. O. Box 345, Mabelvale, AR 72103, WmHBoyd@aol.com

DIG A LITTLE DEEPER

Bobby Dockery

One of the fascinating stories of Bible Archaeology concerns the discovery of ancient Nineveh. For a long time no one was sure where to look for the ruins of Nineveh and possible sites were a matter of considerable debate among scholars. In the early 1840's an amateur French archaeologist, named Paul Botta, hired a crew of native diggers and began excavating a likely looking mound on the banks of the Tigris River. After several weeks of fruitless digging, however, Botta concluded he was searching in the wrong place. He moved to another location. Soon afterwards, Henry Layard, an English archaeologist, began digging on the site that Botta had abandoned. With almost the first shovel of dirt, Layard struck the walls of one of the great palaces of Nineveh! If only Botta had dug a few inches deeper he would have made one of the great archaeological finds of all time and would have been hailed as the "Discoverer of Nineveh" instead of Layard!

There are many areas of life where we need to stay on and dig a little deeper:

CHURCH CHANGES. Some church members are too ready to abandon their home congregations and place

membership elsewhere if all does not go to suit them. They join a disgruntled parade of church transients who make the rounds of churches looking for a "perfect" congregation. What is needed is members who will stay and work a little harder to improve things where they are (1 Corinthians 15:58).

PREACHER CHANGES. Churches frequently fire preachers for the flimsiest of reasons. Preachers sometimes elect to leave over trifles. What is needed is a willingness for preachers and congregations to work together "for better or worse." Churches need to back their preachers and patiently help them to cultivate their talents. Instead of resigning their pulpits, preachers need to "resign" – to renew their commitment and dig deeper where they are (2 Timothy 4:15).

JOB CHANGES. Job dissatisfaction is a common fact of twentieth century life. Many who are dissatisfied with their working conditions flit unhappily from one job to another, constantly searching for a situation more nearly resembling their dream career. There are good and valid reasons for changing from one job to another, but often the problem lies within us and not with our job. We need, at times, to dig a little deeper and do our work where we are as though we are doing it for the Lord (Ephesians 6:7).

MATE CHANGES. We live in the divorcing-est generation in history! A couple marries and then when the inevitable problems arise they shrug and say, "Let's call the whole thing off." We need commitment to stick together no matter what! God meant for marriage to last for life (Matthew 19:9; Malachi 2:16). We all need to dig deeper for the happiness and fulfillment that God intends for marriage.

Are you discouraged? Burned out? disappointed? Tired? Dissatisfied? Ready to move on to greener pastures? Dig a little deeper right where you are!

THREE LEVELS OF GIVING

You have to (**law**).

You ought to (**obligation**).

You want to (**grace**).

Waldo Weaning

MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE CHURCH

Brad Harrub



She sat across my desk and desperately longed for an answer. Should she respond to the invitation and repent of sins-such as missing the worship assembly (cf. Hebrews 10:25) and using bad language (Colossians 3:8)-or should she just not worry about it? This was not the first time I had been asked this question

during a counseling session. But it was the first time that I did not immediately say, "Yes, you should repent."

The young lady who was sitting across from me was suffering from a mental illness-something our society handles very poorly. Yet according to recent statistics, this woman is far from being alone. The National Institute of Mental Health estimates 22.1 percent of Americans ages 18 and older-about 1 in 5 adults-suffer from a diagnosable mental disorder in any given year. When applied to the 1998 U.S. Census residential population estimate, this figure translates to 44.3 million people. Of this 44 million, some have responded to the gospel and later find themselves requiring major treatment and medication. Today 4 of the 10 leading causes of disability in the U.S. are mental disorders-major depression, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. Many of these individuals possess unstable neural chemistry- to the degree that they are unable to function in society or distinguish right from wrong.

WHAT IS THE CONDITION OF A FAITHFUL CHRISTIAN WHO CONTRACTS A MENTAL ILLNESS? The woman's question was valid. She knew that after she stopped taking her medication she had lapsed into a condition in which she was "not herself." She had said things she normally would not say. She had treated people in a way that she normally would not treat them. Yet, she also was smart enough to realize that this was not the first time she had been through this cycle, and that it likely was not going to be the last. So where do these individuals find themselves in light of God's Word? Are they walking "in the light," or has their lack of obedience to the Gospel caused them to place their immortal souls in danger? Should I have answered her question with an immediate, "Yes, you must repent"? In evaluating the eternal salvation of these special individuals,

we must assess what ability they possess to obey God's law. If, in doing so, we deem that they are unable to discern right from wrong, how, then, can we hold them accountable? In this particular case, the individual had been without medication for over six weeks, and consequently her brain chemistry was nowhere near normal.

Mental illness often is brought about by an imbalance of chemicals (neurotransmitters) that are commonly used by the brain (i.e., serotonin, GABA). Some of these chemicals, like serotonin, are responsible for making us feel good and happy-and yet many Americans are unable to produce adequate quantities of these chemicals. You can imagine the exasperating consequences in patients who are unable to adequately regulate several of these important neurotransmitters. If the neuronal chemicals responsible for moral conscientiousness are physiologically unstable, then it is beyond the individual's capability to observe the edicts found in the New Testament. We commonly hear the phrase "age of accountability" within the church in reference to young people who have traversed from a "safe/innocent" state into a position of being responsible to God for their actions. Aside from age and physical maturity, is someone who is mentally handicapped any different from a young child? Neither has the capability of knowing and carrying out the commands of God. Does that change God's expectations? No, it does not. God does not change. But does this mental handicap change their status in God's eyes? Most assuredly! The mentally ill possess a "safe" status when it comes to their salvation, just as young children do.

Who would ever argue that infants and young children have sinned, and thus have need for repentance? They often are of such a young age that believing and confessing the name of Christ is impossible. Thus, as the examples in the New Testament demonstrate, children are not candidates to be buried with Jesus Christ in baptism for the remission of sins. While children do not come into contact with the blood of Jesus Christ, their very nature and innocence affords them safety in the eyes of the Lord. In fact, Christ Himself used children as an example when the disciples asked Him who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven: "And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, 'Verily I say unto you, except ye turn, and become

as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:2-3). David, following the death of his son by Bathsheba, informed us that the righteous one day would meet up with their children. After learning of the child’s death, David stated: “But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? **I shall go to him**, but he will not return to me” (2 Samuel 12:23, emp. added). David **knew** that one day he would see his son again—a son that had been afforded a safe condition in the eyes of the Lord. The mentally ill are no different from this young baby. They, too, are unable to comprehend and follow the instructions found in the New Testament. However, this does not mean that the mentally ill will spend an eternity in torment. They, like children, have been granted safety in the eyes of God.

WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN’S RESPONSE BE? While these numbers are staggering, the church remains eerily silent on how we should treat those who are suffering. As Christians, we need to realize that we have a role to play in caring for the mentally ill, just as we have for the physically ill. Christ never avoided individuals who exhibited signs or symptoms of mental illness. Rather, He showed compassion for them, and in many occasions healed them. Why is it, then, that we remain uneasy when people with these types of disorders suddenly affect our local congregation? As Christians, we must realize the great need for caring for the mentally ill (and their families), and we must support them as they struggle to their condition stabilized.

What should a Christian’s response be toward those who are suffering from a chemical imbalance in their brain? First and foremost, we must see it for what it is—an illness. Thus, mental illnesses should not be regarded as a weakness in the person’s character. As many can attest, mental illness is not a respecter of persons. It affects the young, old, rich, and poor—no family is immune from illness and disease. Fortunately, major progress has been made in developing drugs that can help correct these imbalances. As such, Christians should acknowledge and understand that individuals suffering from mental illness may be on a whole host of medications, as physicians try to “tweak” the brain chemistry back to a normal state. Often, this is a tightrope-balancing act of trying to find just the right amounts of a particular drug, and not having the patient’s life affected in

a negative way, or having them suffer from unpleasant side-effects. Christians also should be aware that patients must routinely have their medications “regulated,” (often in a hospital environment) as their bodies change. This is nothing for patients to be ashamed of; rather, it is simply a common fact of life for individuals suffering from this condition.

Knowing that it is, in fact, an illness, we must stop avoiding individuals who suffer from mental illness. By becoming familiar with their moods, we can better identify periods in which additional treatment may be needed. We should also educate ourselves about the mentally ill and their plight. If we are properly informed, then many of our fears, misconceptions, and prejudices will vanish. As Christians, we also must seek ways to use the talents of those struck by mental illness. Additionally, we must start praying for these individuals—that if it be God’s will, they are returned to a normal state. While every congregation cannot afford full-time counselors, every congregation should be able to help someone find competent help from caring Christians. Elders and preachers cannot (and should not) be expected to resolve all of the problems the mentally ill may face. But they should be prepared to provide names of qualified Christians who can.

Since many mentally ill individuals already suffer from profound guilt, we as Christians must not add to their guilt by questioning their faith, or judging their attendance. When Christ came upon the man with the unclean spirit, He did not admonish him for his behavior. He first healed the man. It was only afterwards that Jesus instructed the man, saying “Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee and how he had compassion on thee” (Mark 5:19). Consider the utter frustration you would feel, knowing you had involuntarily acted in a way contrary to God’s Word during a recent episode (i.e., missing services from excessive sleep brought about by your disease), but knowing if you go forward and repent that you may be acting that same way in five-to-ten months. And yet, you know the behavior is brought about because of imbalanced brain chemistry. Our goal as Christians must be to help restore these individuals to a normal state, and care for them as they are struggling to

(Continued on page 23)

WHAT LIBERALISM HAS DONE TO THE CHURCH

Max R. Miller (1925-2001)



We constantly hear of the threat of Liberalism to the New Testament church. The tone of these warnings is that Liberalism will do great damage to the church, bring about its restructuring and finally cause it to lose its New Testament identity, having joined the ranks of denominationalism. Indeed, such are

the goals of the liberal movement among us. But note that the expression of these warnings are all directed to the future of the church, expressive of what will or may happen at a future date.

Liberalism has been (past tense) working against the church. Liberalism is efficiently and consistently making lethal inroads into the church now, and, no doubt, will continue to do so for some time to come.

The Lord's church has gone through many changes in the last twenty years. Some of those changes have been for good - expanded worldwide mission programs, training its preachers in its own schools, tremendous development of property, greatly increased membership, and numerous other good works. On the other hand, many of the changes seen in the church over these years are not good. Truly, a new breed of preachers has arisen among us, and, in some places, a new gospel is being preached (cf. Galatians 1:6-7). A denominational spirit is stalking the church and desire for spiritual survival is weak. J. D. Tant often would say, "The church is drifting." Today he would say, "The church is in stampede!" This stampede into apostasy is especially prevalent in the urban churches and gaining momentum daily. These adverse changes and motions toward denominationalism and apostasy are the fruit of Liberalism in the church.

Let us look closely at the effect of Liberalism in the church and see what dastardly works it has already accomplished.

There is much confusion and frustration in the church of Christ. This Paul speaks of as being "tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the slight of men, and cunning craftiness" (Ephesians 4:14). The church gives ear to liberal forces in the church; to men who openly and without shame question or outright deny the inspiration and authority of the Sacred Scriptures. Their

introduction of the "quasi-bibles" has left many local churches in a quandary as to what truth is. The modern versions of heresy have led many away from the security of the faith because they have led them away from the word of God (Romans 10:17).

The elders of the church in too many places have stood still and have seen the church go from under their hand. Liberal "leaders" have stolen the church in many places - and the elders let them steal it! How did they steal the body? Elders of little faith or conviction, men afraid (Matthew 25:25-30; Revelation 21:8), who would not make bold decisions when such should be demanded of them by the Lord, but rather waited to hear from the church. They were afraid of the people and especially the minority, that loud and often vicious element of liberal forces. Judas got thirty pieces of silver for the Lord's body in delivering it to His enemies. The elders who have sold out to the liberals have made a worse deal than Judas! I suspect their eternal fate will be as bad or worse than that of Judas.

The influence and effect of Liberalism is robbing the church of its zeal and dedication to reach and teach the lost, baptizing them for the remission of sins (Matthew 28:19; Acts 2:38). With Liberalism's broad philosophy of fellowship, why baptize? The simple plan of salvation, as has been preached since Pentecost, is too simple and naive for the sophisticated man and woman of the twentieth century! What are many of the leading preachers in the brotherhood doing in their home congregation? On what do they place their emphasis? A social gospel; not preaching that convicts and converts sinners to Christ; themes designed not to disturb the brethren. Is not this the emphasis too often? Can we not realize that many churches in the mission field are actually converting and baptizing more to Christ than many of our big churches of the big brethren?

Liberalism has closed the ear of the church to the many warnings that are being cried out. It doesn't want the preacher to point out heresy and heretics in the local pulpit. They don't want certain brotherhood journals circulated among the members. Those who cry the warning are less desirable in the midst of the church than are the Liberals who are day-by-day stealing away the precious body of Christ.

Liberalism is developing a church that is more

concerned about its acceptance by the denominational churches in the community than its acceptance by the Lord. The denominational church and their social gospel and fruition thereof is lauded even in our pulpit. Acceptance by the denominations and the social community is a must for the liberal's restructured church. The expose of denominational error and winning the denominationalist to Christ and His church through His gospel is taboo.

Liberalism has introduced into the church a spirit of stupor, a dulling of the spiritual senses. The pall of stupor has and is robbing the church of its concern. Denominational style preaching (stories and personal experiences) is replacing book, chapter and verse in gospel preaching, but that is of little concern. There are those in the church using women in public prayers and those who know such is sinful but are not concerned enough to oppose. "Leaders" are replacing the Eldership, opening the door to every heresy and those who count themselves faithful aren't concerned enough to "contend for the faith" (Jude 3). The dulled spiritual senses do not want to fight for truth and survival. They would say, "Let us die in peace." Yes, die in peace; spend eternity in the torments of hell!

The question is not what is Liberalism going to do to the church. We should be concerned with what it already has done and is now doing to the church. Tomorrow will be too late.

"Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, men, be strong" (1 Corinthians 16:13). These are the words of a man who loved the truth and the church. The church of his day was endangered. He warns them of Satan's devices (2 Corinthians. 2:11), of Satan's ministers transformed into ministers of righteousness (2 Corinthians. 11:15), and of the sophistry of their world-oriented wisdom (1 Corinthians. 1:18-21). Let us today heed also his warnings and admonitions. Let us take our stand in the faith, let us fight the fight of faith, and let us preserve our Lord's church in its purity and power.

**IF YOU MOVE, PLEASE SEND US
YOUR CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

MENTAL ILLNESS AND THE CHURCH

Continued from page 21

reach that state. Jesus Christ did not avoid persons with these types of disorders, and neither should we. Our hearts should burn with compassion as we seek to serve.—
(Brad@apologeticspress.org)

WRITTEN IN SAND AND STONE

Dennis Gullede

Two friends were walking through the desert and got into an argument. One friend slapped the other one in the face. The one who got slapped was hurt, but without saying anything, wrote in the sand: "Today my best friend slapped me in the face."

They kept on walking until they found an oasis. Thirsty, they stopped for water. The one who had been slapped got stuck in the mire, fell in, and started drowning. His friend saved him. That evening, he wrote on a stone: "Today my best friend saved my life."

The friend who had slapped and saved his best friend asked him, "After I hurt you, you wrote in the sand and now you write on a stone, why?" He replied: "When someone hurts us we should write it in sand where the winds of forgiveness can erase it away. But, when someone does something good for us, we must engrave it in stone where it will be long remembered."

Learn to write your hurts in sand and carve your benefits in stone. Someone observed that it takes a minute to find a special person, an hour to appreciate them, a day to love them, but an entire lifetime to forget them.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103

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A LONG TIME READER

I have been receiving the *Gospel Gleaner* for a long time. I wish to help in some way for I know it is a cost to you and I pray that this small amount will help a little and may God bless each of you in the good work you are doing. Garnet Stephens, Dresden, TN.

A FRIEND SHARED A COPY

My good friend, P. D. Ash, shared a copy of your Vol. 19, No. 4 with me and I am very impressed with the articles I have read. Please add me to your mailing list. Tim R. Mason, Ph.D. Stephenville, TX.

FOUND GG IN A DOCTOR'S OFFICE

Please enter my subscription to *Gospel Gleaner*, and send 2003 back copies if available. I saw a copy of *Gospel Gleaner* in a doctor's office yesterday, and was very impressed with what I saw. Thank you for the good work. Joe Rowe, Paragould, AR.

A FINE PUBLICATION

I recently visited a congregation in your area (Malvern, AR where Tom Moore is the preacher). While there I picked up the *Gospel Gleaner* which was available on the table. It is a fine publication with sound edifying articles. Thank you for your good work, and making these good materials available to a grateful brotherhood. Darwin Hunter, Shreveport, LA..

CURRENT AND TRUE TO THE WORD

Thank you for publishing your fine paper, *Gospel Gleaner*. It serve a needed purpose in presenting articles that are current and true to the Word. The church is experiencing too many brethren who would be happy to lead us into denominationalism. I have enclosed a contribution to help with expenses. Please keep up the good work. V. Glenn McCoy, Yorba Linda, CA.

EXCELLENT AND SCRIPTURAL

I received a copy of *Gospel Gleaner* (Vol. 19, no 4) in the mail today. I was not aware of this publication, and thought it contained some excellent, scriptural articles. In fact, I read every article today, and some of them twice. I do not know who sent in my name and address, but please continue to send the publication. I am sending a small donation to help defray your cost. Is it possible to obtain back issues of *Gospel Gleaner*? Thank you. J. L. Eaton, Dumas, MS

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Thank you for all your continued efforts in taking the "sound doctrine" of our Lord's New Testament teachings to any and all who would desire a more sure understanding of scriptural and spiritual living. Your articles give food for thought...deeper thought of scriptures and pondering of weightier matters of one's life. Roxie Williams, Clinton, AR.

PRAY YOU'LL KEEP IT GOING

I am an 84 year old lady, a Christian lady. I like your paper very much. You do a good job, I pray you'll keep it going. I'd like the paper sent to my home. I don't get to go to church often. Only way I get to read the good words of this paper is my grandson and family go to a church near St. Charles, MO. They bring it to me, but not often, so I'd like it if you will send it to me. Sure is some good reading. May God bless you all. Mable Bray, St. Peters, MO.

VERY ENJOYABLE READING

Please put me on the mailing list for *Gospel Gleaner*. I was given a copy by someone in Maryland and it was very enjoyable reading. James C. Carter, Chicago, IL.

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Volume 20

No.2

A FRESH START!

The *Gospel Gleaner* is now under the supervision of the Hickory Ridge Church of Christ in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas. Sincere gratitude is extended to the Mabelvale Church of Christ for their many years of financial support and hard labor in printing and mailing out our publication. The good that the Mabelvale brethren have done will live on for years yet to come. Special thanks goes to brother Dennis Gulledge in particular for the tireless efforts he has put forth in keeping the *Gleaner* going. Dennis is a true and kind brother and much of the credit for the good accomplished by the *Gospel Gleaner* goes to him.

Special mention should also be given to the Mountain Home Church of Christ, which labored for nearly 10 years, while I preached there as pulpit minister, in financial support and encouragement for the *Gospel Gleaner*. Praise God for faithful and beloved brethren!

Both the Mabelvale and Mountain Home congregations have worked and supported the *Gleaner* for an extra long time, almost bearing the full brunt of physical and financial support themselves. The time has come to change matters and try to give the *Gleaner* a new and broader financial base of support, consequently, the *Gospel Gleaner* is seeking other concerned individuals and congregations to carry forth the work of preaching the gospel by the printed page. Believing, "A drop of ink can make millions think," the *Gleaner* is hoping that concerned Christians, who are interested in helping to publish a quality brotherhood paper which teaches the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15), will respond to this appeal for help.

The *Gospel Gleaner* is not, nor has ever been, nor ever will be, a mean-spirited publication and has no loyalties except to the truth as it is in Jesus (Ephesians 4:21).

The paper seeks to help brethren be grounded in the fundamentals of the faith so they later will not go off into religious error.

We have a mailing list of over 7,000 (a sizeable number among churches of Christ) and the mailing list continues to grow with each mail-out. The *Gospel Gleaner* has always been given away free of charge and no one connected to the paper has ever received any financial benefit. We see the publication as rendering a much needed service to the brotherhood of Christ and it surely must be worthy of support since it has continued in circulation for such a lengthy time without charging a penny! The *Gleaner* is now in its 20th year of publication.

Any concerned Christians, or congregations of God's people, who wish to render assistance in fulfilling the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:18-20) are invited to contribute to the *Gospel Gleaner*. We covet the prayers of all, and financial donations can be made to the "HICKORY RIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST." Please mark checks "for *Gospel Gleaner* fund."

Bill Dillon, Editor

Volume 20 Number 2
April - June 2004

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Hickory Ridge Church of Christ in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

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

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"Hence, before any man can deny the existence of God, he himself must be a god; he must declare that he has been everywhere and absolutely knows everything."

The agnostic is a type of infidel who says that he does not know that there is a God, as Christians believe, and honestly says, "I don't know." The atheist is the more arrogant when he says, I KNOW that God does not exist." In so saying, he holds a most ridiculous position. In order to know that, he must know everything that can be known, for is there is one thing he does not know, God may be the very One he does not know. Thomas A. Edison, in his day, is credited with saying that in scientific fields man had not "touched the hem of the garment." Tremendous advances in scientific knowledge since his day has proved him correct. Neither has man yet learned all there is to know. To know there is no God the atheist must have been everywhere in the universe, else God may be in the one place he has not been. If there are limits to the universe, man has never been able to see such, much less travel to the end. Hence, before any man can deny the existence of God, he himself must be a god; he must declare that he has been everywhere and absolutely knows everything.

Infidels deny that the idea of God ever entered the world through human reason, and that there is no such thing as divine revelation, and certainly not by experience, then how could the idea of God ever be conceived by man? If there is no God, and a man is the highest being in existence, the idea of God never would have entered the mind of man, nor would the word God be in his vocabulary. Let us now turn to a consideration of what may be termed "philosophical arguments" for the existence of God. (Do not let that term frighten you!)

THE GENERAL ARGUMENT

This is also called the intuitional argument. L. S. Keyser says, "The General Argument is the argument for the divine existence which is based on the universal belief in God and the universal religious instinct. That all nations and tribes believe in supernatural beings cannot be denied. Scientist themselves have made detailed investigations and report the above statement to be true..."

In all ages man has believed in a Supreme Being and engaged in worship. As a rule, all human hearts desire to know God. Man looks up, hence, there must be a reality to answer man's craving for God. "Every counterfeit has a genuine." Have you ever seen a counterfeit seven dollar bill? So, the many idols gods are not the originals, but counterfeits patterned after the idea of the one true God. W. L. Oliphant, Christian, in his debate with Charles Smith, atheist, gives the following information:

"Dr. James On, Professor of Apologetics, Glasgow, Scotland says, 'Man's earliest ideas of God were not his poorest. No savage tribes are found who do not seem to have higher ideas of God with their superstitions (*The Problem of the Old Testament*, p. 496). Dr. R. H. Nassau stated, 'All religions had but one source and that a pure one. From it have grown perversions varying in their proportions of truth and error.' (*Fetishism in West Africa*, p. 23.) Dr. William A. P. Martin, of Peking University, dealing with the evolutionary theory of the origin of religion says, 'It indicates what might be the process if man were left to make his own religion; but it has the misfortune to be at variance with the facts. A wide survey of the history of civilized nations...shows that the actual process undergone by the human mind is precisely opposite to that which the theory (of evolution) supposes; in a word, man was not left

to construct his own creed, but...has always been active in attempts to corrupt and obscure a divine original.'" (*The Chinese*, p. 163).

Egyptian history reveals that as the centuries passed, the number of gods increased from a few to hundreds, so the digression was not from many gods to one, but from the original one God to many. An Egyptian inscription which supposedly belongs to a period fifteen hundred years before Moses, is quoted by Dr. F. F. Ellinwood, "He has made all that is; thou alone art, the millions owe their being to thee; he is Lord of all which is, and 'of that which is not.'" (*Oriental Religions and Christianity*, p. 250). Add to these the Great White Father of the American Indian, the Supreme Being of the Aborigines of Australia, the monotheism of the ancients of Greece, Babylon, China, India, Arabia, Persia and every other ancient civilization and there is the idea of one Supreme being, before the idea of many idol gods developed.

Much more evidence could be given, but these few convey the idea that there can be only one conclusion: in the beginning of the human race, God gave to man a revelation of himself, and man has corrupted this. So man is intuitively religious and worships something, be it his own intellect. All roads lead to God.

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:45
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

Telephone (870) 697-2978 • Office Fax (870) 697-2386 • E-Mail: hrcofc@ipa.net
Bill Dillon, Evangelist



Question: In this Presidential election year, for whom can I vote?

Answer: It would take the wisdom of Solomon to decide, so we'll let Solomon speak from his book of Proverbs:

1. Proverbs 8:1 5-16: "By me kings reign, And rulers decree justice. By me princes rule, and nobles, All the judges of the earth."

The "me" is "wisdom" (cf 8:1) which is based upon the "fear of the LORD" and which hates evil, pride, arrogance, the evil way, and the perverse mouth (8:1 2-1 3). Take these qualities out of modern-day politics, and few would qualify to run for any office. God rules, and no politician is worthy of office (local or national!) who does not acknowledge God. Solomon stood out from all kings of the earth because he gave God's counsel (2 Chronicles 1:12; 9:1-12). It's too bad today that America is known for its military might and not its wisdom! And the choices now being advanced for the highest office in the land include those who don't go to church, don't study the Bible, and one who thinks that the book of Job is in the New Testament! Obviously, there's little or no wisdom in the whole crowd! It's a shame to watch the President appeal to God, and Congress sing "God bless America" when "9-1 1-01" happened, only to arise from the Twin Tower ruins and run government without God after they thought the danger had passed!

2. Proverbs 16:10-1 3: "Divination is on the lips of the king; His mouth must not transgress in judgment. Honest weights and scales are the LORD'S; All the weights in the bag are His work. It is an abomination for kings to commit wickedness, For a throne is established by righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings, And they love him who speaks what is right."

"The king" (the power broker of government, which to us would be the President and Congress) must be someone who realizes that: (1) they must choose their words carefully, and speak with God's Word in their heart; (2) honesty and integrity should be their guiding principle, and; (3) they must live by high moral standards, and not just be in the business of making laws for others to live by.

3. Proverbs 20:8: "A king who sits on the throne of judgment Scatters all evil with his eyes." Proverbs 20:26: "A wise king sifts out the wicked, And brings the threshing wheel over them."

The attention leaders give to exterminating evil from their people determines how safe their good people are. In America, criminals and terrorists abound, yea thrive, because its leaders for decades have been more concerned with what "other countries" and liberal political pundits say about them than they have been about the safety of their own good people!

The second passage above cited justifies capital punishment and surely shows the wisdom of God behind Romans 1 3: 1-4: "Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil." Thousands convicted of crimes worthy of death live at the expense of the law-abiding taxpayers, some for decades. Solomon said bring "the threshing wheel over them." Repeated offenders, certainly those guilty of violent crimes against humanity, should be put to death, or else the government bears the sword in vain. Elected officials are not wise who let criminals reign on the streets and in the courts while hard-working people live in fear. Solomon said nothing is wrong with character-profiling the "evil" and "wicked" if it makes society safe for right-doers. Judicial delinquency encourages juvenile delinquency, for without speedy execution of evil works, evil is emboldened (cf Ecclesiastes 8:11).

4. Proverbs 2 5:2-5: "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, But the glory of kings is to search out a matter. As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, So the heart of kings is unsearchable. Take away the dross from silver, And it will go to the silversmith for jewelry. Take away the

wicked from before the king, And his throne will be established in righteousness.”

Although no one knows all about God (Isaiah 45:15; Romans 11:33), yet, anyone can know what God has revealed through Scripture and Creation (I Corinthians 2:7-13; Romans 1:18-21). It is incumbent upon the incumbents to rid themselves of the influence of the wicked and learn from God how to best run government. Remove the “dross” and the silver is purified; hence remove the lobbyists (a.k.a. “bribers”) and sycophants (a.k.a. “bureaucrats”) so that government likewise may be cleansed. It would be a coup to see government once again run by its laws and not its lawyers!

5. Proverbs 28:16: “A ruler who lacks understanding is a great oppressor, But he who hates covetousness will prolong his days.” Proverbs 29:2: “When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice; But when a wicked man rules, the people groan.”

Every politician who promises more government give-aways will increase taxation. That covetous eye cast toward what citizens have left is tyrannical, dictatorial, ungodly, and ignorant. Karl Marx was a covetous ne’er-do-well whose ideas when followed, have brought many countries to ruin and squalor. Marx violated God’s Word by (1) not supporting his family (cf I Timothy 5:8); (2) not surrendering his soul to God for salvation and worshipping God in church (cf Acts 2:38; 10:34-35); and (3) advocating a philosophy of covetousness known as “communism” (cf Ephesians 5:5). It is not God’s philosophy, but Marx’s profligacy, that has driven the ambitions of American lawmakers and judiciary for over 60 years. Peter termed the “unjust” as those who have: “a heart trained in covetous practices, and are accursed children. They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was rebuked for his iniquity” (2 Peter 2:13-16).

The “unrighteous,” including those who practice covetousness, “will not inherit the kingdom of God” (I Corinthians 5:9-10). Citizens, whose earned wealth is stolen by greedy politicians and squandered by wastrels, can tell

who is ruling, whether they are righteous or unrighteous.

6. Proverbs 29:12: “If a ruler pays attention to lies, All his servants become wicked.”

One such example was when American Government listened to the lie that an unborn baby is a non-human, fetal, blob of tissue and thereupon granted abortion rights. God’s Word still says, however, that God created people “in the image of God” (Genesis 1:26-27) with “spirit, soul, and body” (I Thessalonians 5:25). Job asked, “Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?” (Job 31:1-5). God makes people “in the womb,” but because abortion was approved by government, the murderous slaughter of innocents for 30 years has been staggering! Human life was cheapened and degraded, so that the wicked lie is now promoted saying that “animals are just as valuable as humans.” Many other such lies (or “myths”) have recently been revealed in John Stossel’s book, *Give Me a Break: How! Exposed Hucksters, Cheats, and Scam Artists and Became the Scourge of the Liberal Media*.

7. Proverbs 29:14: “The king who judges the poor with truth, His throne will be established forever.”

If the “poor” are treated fairly with “truth,” neither the politician nor his subjects have reason to change, for truth is being consistently applied throughout the land. Not the rich, “middle class,” nor the poor would feel unjustly represented. The Executive, Legislative, and Judicial branches of government should not become skewed toward the poor, though it makes good headlines. God said through Moses “You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute” (Exodus 23:3).

Solomon said, “Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). Perjury is in the land and perversity is religion, “And My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?” (Jeremiah 5:31). People elect and re-elect without God, and Government is but a reflection of its people. How does America look, now? We should always vote for God!

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EDITOR'S NOTE:

We ask our readership to note that the authors quoted in the *Gospel Gleaner* do not necessarily reflect a complete endorsement of the sources' varied viewpoints. We agree with only what we quote, believing, "Truth is truth regardless of the source." A quotation or citation from any individual means only that we agree with them regarding that one particular matter.

A VICIOUS CRIME AGAINST WOMEN BEING COVERED UP!

Bill Dillon

Dr. D. James Kennedy, president of Coral Ridge Ministries, in a January, 2004 sermon brought into the daylight a truth that has been covered up by the American mainstream media: "When a woman has an abortion, it is a very high probability that she will contract breast cancer—as a result of abortion!"

The premier medical journal in the United Kingdom is *The Lancet* and it reported that breast cancer is an epidemic in America (185,000 women each year are diagnosed with the killer disease). There were 40,000 deaths in 2003 alone due to breast cancer!

Remarkably, breast cancer is extremely rare in Third World countries. Why? The esteemed British journal said the answer was babies! A pregnant female produces excessively large amounts of estrogen (2000% in the first month). This increase in estrogen produces cells in the breast used to produce milk to feed the baby. If the baby is fed, the cells will disappear. However, if an abortion occurs, the cells stay and are extremely prone to cancer. The Hutchinson Cancer Research Center says, if a woman has an abortion before delivering, she suffers a 40% increased risk of cancer. If the woman is younger (18 years of age) and aborts the pregnancy beyond eight weeks the increased risk is 800%!

Women should realize that the media is withholding information. Organizations such as Planned Parenthood should be questioned about such public health concerns.

Then again, an organization that doesn't mind killing unborn infants may not be relied upon to tell us the whole truth on breast cancer's relationship to abortion either.

Every reader should know that abortion is sin. Jesus said, "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come to me...." (Matthew 19:14). "Children are an heritage of the Lord...." (Psalm 127:3), not fodder for the abortionists' clinics. God knew Jeremiah when he was in his mother's belly (Jeremiah 1:4,5); if by an abortion, the baby should have been killed, it would have been Jeremiah who was killed!

— (selected and adapted from Christian News
March 22, 2004, p. 2)

NEWSWEEK MAGAZINE SAYS BIBLE CONTAINS ERRORS

Bill Dillon

The *Newsweek* cover story is entitled, "WHO REALLY KILLED JESUS?" (Feb. 18, 2004), and is written to undermine the expected widespread influence that Mel Gibson's new movie is going to have. The article complains that, "Gibson set out to stick to the gospel and has made virtually no nod to critical analysis or context." If Mel Gibson wants to ignore the higher critics of the Bible and make a movie which assumes the gospel records are accurate historical documents, then, more power to him. (I have not seen the Gibson movie and these words are not necessarily an endorsement of it.)

The *Newsweek* spin says, "The Bible did not descend from heaven fully formed and edged in gilt; the gospels are the product of human hands and hearts." No serious Bible scholar has ever said or written the previously mentioned sentiment, but in writing such infantile declarations, the authors reveal what the higher critics are higher in—unbelief and oversimplification!

The Holy Scriptures did not descend from heaven "fully formed and edged in gilt" but they did come with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:21).

DNA EVIDENCE DESTROYS MORMON CLAIM

Bill Dillon

Individuals acquainted with the doctrine of Mormonism realize the Book of

Mormon claims that American Indians are the descendants of the Lamanites and Nephites. The Book of Mormon describes how these now extinct peoples emigrated to the Americas 2,600 years ago.

However, present day anthropologists now affirm that "there is no match of Jewish DNA with that of American Indians." This creates a gigantic problem for believers in Mormon doctrine. "Reportedly about 300 people have left the Mormon church partly because of evidence presented from interviewing eight scientists including a Mormon scholar." (The above information is from *Calvary Contender* and *Christian News*, 3/1/2004).

Note: Contrary to popular advertising from the Latter Day Saint (LDS) organization, the Book of Mormon teaches a false gospel and is not "another testament of Jesus Christ." Bible believers are satisfied with what Paul wrote regarding the origin of all false gospels in Galatians 1:8,9.

MADLYN'S SUCCESSOR

Bill Dillon

Madlyn O'Hair is dead. The notorious atheist is single-handedly credited with removing prayer from schools years ago. Mrs. O'Hair suffered a horrible fate as she was discovered to have been murdered along with her son and daughter-in-law. We do not rejoice in learning of the death or misfortune of anyone (enemy or otherwise) as the Bible instructs us to beware of rejoicing in the sorrows of others. Proverbs 24:17,18 declares:

"Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thy heart be glad when he stumbleth: Lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him." Mrs. O'Hair's murder was an "inside job" and her passing has been filled by Mr. Michael Newdow. Newdow has taken up the gauntlet and is resuming Mrs. O'Hair's legacy by imploring the U.S. Supreme Court to remove the phrase "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. The battle goes on. Let the reader take note of the name Newdow, for certainly we shall be hearing and reading it in the future.

WISE SAYINGS

"The big question today is not, 'Is God speaking?' but 'Are you listening?'"

—Vance Havner

"I have read of a woman who went to a psychiatrist wearing a strip of bacon over each ear and a fried egg on top of her head. She said to him... 'I've come to see you about my brother.' I have heard people pray who were conscious of other people's faults but not their own."

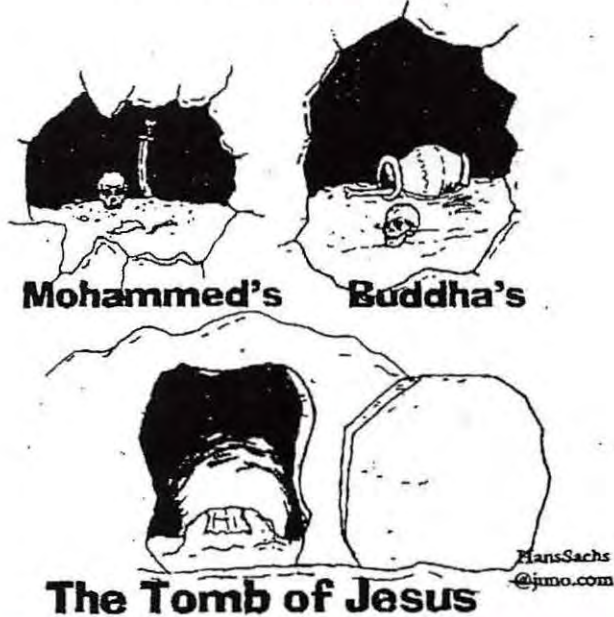
—Vance Havner

"All television is educational television. The only question is, what is it teaching?"

—Nicholas Johnson

Patrick Henry said, "Give me liberty or give me death," but now we leave out the words "liberty" and "death".

Only One Grave is Empty!





STANDING UP FOR JESUS IN ALL OCCASIONS

Guy F. Hester

"The Bible is right. It has, does, and will stand the tests of the ages. It will stand when this old world is wrapped in flames."

We sing, "Stand up, stand up for Jesus, Ye soldiers of the cross, Lift high His holy banner, it must not suffer loss." I wonder sometimes if we allow that holy banner to suffer loss because in some occasions we do not stand up for Jesus. It is easy on some occasions to stand up for Jesus. For instance, when we are with others who are standing. But when we must stand alone then it is not so easy. There are many things that a Christian should do. He should attend all services of the church (Hebrews 10:25). He should "live soberly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:12). He should eat the Lord's Supper on the first day (Acts 20:7). He should give of his means (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

One may do all of these things faithfully and yet fail to stand up for Jesus when the occasion calls for a stand to be taken. Cowardice on the part of church members will result in many losing their souls in eternity. Those who are Christians have enlisted in the Lord's army and must be willing to fight "as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3; 1 Timothy 6:12). One may as well attempt to live the Christian life without faithfulness in worship as to try to live it without a willingness to stand up for Jesus against His enemies. There are many enemies of the faith that too many Christians have tried to make an alliance with instead of fighting "the good fight offaith" as a good soldier of Christ.

SOME OCCASIONS WHEN WE AS CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS MUST STAND UP FOR JESUS:

We must stand up for Jesus when confronted by denominationalism. We must never be too timid and cowardly to stand up for the one church. There is one church

(Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13,20; Romans 12:4-5; Colossians 3:15). Denominationalism divides but Christ prayed for unity (John 17).

We must stand up for Jesus against materialism. We are living in a materialistic age. Most people are pleasure and money mad. They think more of money and ease than heaven. Even the church has become materialistic. Notice the teaching of our Savior on this subject (Matthew 6:19-21,24,33; 16:26).

We must stand up for Jesus against indifference. The Lord condemned the church at Laodicea because they were indifferent (Revelation 3:15-17). Many members of the church say, "I'm not bad. I don't curse, lie, steal, murder, etc. I'm doing alright; I don't need to attend all the services, study, help the needy, give of my means, do personal work, etc." The Lord says to such: "Because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth." How sad it will be for them in the judgment to hear Him say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matthew 25:41-46). Indifference is one of the greatest things that the Lord's people must stand up against.

We must stand up for Jesus against all worldliness. One of the greatest problems in the church today is worldliness. Divorce, once a rarity among our brethren, is now a major problem. The Bible still teaches that there is one and only one Scriptural ground for divorce and remarriage (Matthew 19:3-9). Fornication is the only ground for divorce and remarriage, and only the innocent party may remarry and this is applicable to both Christians and non-Christians. Drinking is common among some church members. Some preachers and elders are saying that the Bible does not condemn social drinking. The Bible teaches that drinking is a sin whether social or otherwise (Proverbs 20:1; Habakkuk 2:15).

(Continued on page 15)

IS IT A MARK OF MEDIOCRITY TO READ THE BIBLE?

IN SOME CIRCLES of so-called higher learning it is considered a mark of inferior ability and attainments to read the Bible. Yet among the readers of the Bible, in all ages, have been some of the ablest leaders and most brilliant minds. Witness the following:

GEORGE WASHINGTON: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible. . . . He is worse than an infidel who does not read the Bible and acknowledge his obligation to God."

JOHN ADAMS: "The Bible is the best Book in the world."

THOMAS JEFFERSON: "I have always said and always will say that the studious perusal of the Sacred Volume will make better citizens, better farmers, better husbands. . . . The Bible makes the best people in the world."

JOFIN QUINCY ADAMS: "My custom is to read four or five chapters of the Bible every morning immediately after rising. . . . It seems to me the most suitable manner of beginning the day. . . . It is an invaluable and inexhaustible mine of knowledge and virtue."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN: "I am profitably engaged in reading the Bible. Take all of this Book upon reason that you can, and the balance by faith, and you will live and die a better man."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT: "To every man who faces life with real desire to do his part in everything, I appeal for a study of the Bible."

WOODROW WILSON: "I have a very simple thing to ask of you. I ask every man and woman in this audience that from this day on they will realize that part of the destiny of America lies in their daily perusal of this great Book."

JOHN WESLEY: "O give me that Book! At any price, give me that Book of God. Here is knowledge enough for me. Let me be a man of one Book."

SIR ISAAC NEWTON: "I find more sure marks of authenticity in the Bible than in any profane history whatever."

WILLIAM PENN: "The Scriptures are a declaration of the mind and will of God. . . . They ought also to be read, believed, and fulfilled in our day. We accept them as the Words of God Himself."

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE: "Let no religious book take its place. People do not read the Bible enough."

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: "Cultivate an acquaintance with and a firm belief in the Holy Scriptures. This is your certain interest."

DANIEL WEBSTER: "From the time that, at my mother's feet or on my father's knee, I first learned to lisp the verses from the sacred writings, they have been my daily study and vigilant contemplation."

WILLIAM E. GLADSTONE: "I have known ninety-five great men of the world in my time, and of these, eighty-seven were all followers of the Bible."

JOHN WANAMAKER: "I cannot too greatly emphasize the importance and value of Bible study — more important than ever before in these days of uncertainties, when men and women are apt to decide questions from the standpoint of expediency rather than upon the eternal principles laid down by God Himself."

DOUGLAS MACARTHUR: "Believe me, sir, never a night goes by, be I ever so tired, but I read the Word of God before I go to bed."

—from *Sword & Staff*

THE ART OF WRITING

Wayne Jackson

Writing is perhaps the most important achievement that mankind has ever accomplished. Writing is first mentioned in the Bible in Exodus 17:14 when, after the Israelites had defeated the pagan king Amalek, God instructed Moses, "Write this for a memorial in a book...." Numerous other references to writing follow. Moses wrote "the words of the covenant, the ten commandments" (Exodus 35:27, 28; cf. 24:4; Deuteronomy 31:19,22; Numbers 33:2; Joshua 8:31, etc).

For many years, however, the hostile critics of the Bible claimed that the Scriptures contained an error regarding this matter. It was forcefully argued that no alphabetic script existed in the days of Moses. This was one of the arguments employed by modernists to supposedly "prove" that the composition of the Pentateuch was of a later time than Moses. T.K. Cheyene, writing in the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, contended that the Torah [law] was not written until almost a thousand years after the time of Moses (Vol. II, 1901, 2055). In fact, the modernists said the art of writing was virtually unknown in Israel prior to the establishment of David's kingdom! Within the last half century, however, these infidelic charges have been thoroughly demolished. Note the following:

(1) In 1933, J.L. Starkey, a pupil of the famed archaeologist W.M.F. Petrie, began excavations at Lachish, a city of Judah which was prominent in Joshua's conquest of Canaan (cf. Joshua 10). Among the amazing discoveries was a pottery ewer [water pitcher] "inscribed with a dedication in eleven archaic letters, the earliest 'Hebrew' inscription known" (D.J. Wiseman, *The New Bible Dictionary*, 1974, p. 705). This artifact pre-dated Moses!

(2) "The Old, or Palaeo-Hebrew script is the form of writing which is similar to that used by the Phoenicians. A royal inscription of King Shaphatball of Gebal (Byblos) in this alphabet dates from about 1600 B.C." (Charles Pfeiffer, *The Biblical World*, 1966, p. 33).

(3) In 1904-5 Sir Flinders Petrie uncovered samples of the Proto-Semitic alphabet at Serabit el Khadem in the Sinai Peninsula. These inscriptions were found in turquoise mines in which Semitic laborers were being employed. W.F. Aibright has dated these in the early 15th century B.C., though Jack Finegan dated them around 1989-1776 B.C. (*Light from the Ancient Past*, 1946, p. 126). The important fact about these particular inscriptions is that they are from the very area where God commanded Moses to "write" (Exodus 17:14).

(4) In 1949, C.F.A. Schaeffer found a tablet at Ras Shamra containing the thirty letters of the Ugaritic alphabet in the proper order. It was discovered that the sequence of the Ugaritic alphabet was the same as modern Hebrew, revealing that the Hebrew alphabet goes back at least 3,500 years (S.H. Horn, *Records of the Past Illuminate the Bible*, 1963, p. 19).

(5) In 1908, R.A. S. Macalister discovered a small limestone plaque at Gezer. It is dated in the 10th century B.C. Apparently it is a schoolboy's slate. On it is a list of farming operations for the twelve months. It is the Palaeo-Hebrew script. Professor Gleason Archer observes that "since it is obviously a mere schoolboy's exercise, it demonstrates that the art of writing was so well known and widely practiced in Israel during the tenth century that even children were being taught this skill in the provinces" (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 1964, p. 157).

And so, infidelity was wrong! Wrong again! Repeatedly wrong! And the Bible was right! Dr. W.F. Aibright, who is certainly not to be considered a conservative scholar, wrote: "Only a very ignorant person can now suggest that writing (in many forms) was not known in Palestine and the immediately surrounding regions during the entire second millennium B.C." (*Bulletin of American Schools of Oriental Research* 1935, p. 60).

—P.O. Box 55265 Stockton, CA 95205
Christian Courier (9/8 1)

YOU KNEW I WAS A SNAKE

Ronald D. Bryant

“God’s warning about sin is sufficient. No one can blame sin when it pays off”

There is an ancient story of a peasant who, while clearing a field during the Spring thaw, came upon a snake. He raised his hoe to kill it, but the snake begged for mercy. It pleaded, “I’m almost frozen; I can do you no harm.”

The peasant, moved by misguided good will, picked the half-frozen snake up and put it into his tunic, against his chest. He went back to his work. Soon the snake began to thaw and to move around with ease. The peasant was glad the snake was doing so well. Suddenly without warning the deadly serpent bit the peasant. The peasant frantically reached in and pulled the snake out, throwing it to the ground. In pain and in the anguish of death, the peasant cried out, “Why?” At the last he protested, “I did you no harm, I befriended you. I trusted you.”

As the snake slithered away, it mockingly replied, “But do not blame me. You knew I was a snake when you picked me up.”

In this very dangerous world, most know that certain choices and actions ought to be avoided. We know how unwise certain actions are. Still some choose to take unto themselves things that are dangerous and deadly. Consider the large number of seemingly intelligent people that have quite literally ruined their lives by choosing to use addictive substances—substances that alter the mind, the personality, and damage the body. They know better, but foolishly they choose to take these deadly drugs into their vitals. For a time they go on about their business, and some even think that the warnings were false, or that they have beaten the odds.

But, soon they are hooked. Though they never intended to become victims, the drugs bite like a serpent, poisoning their whole existence. They never intended to destroy their own future, etc. In time they cry out against the very drugs they used, making accusations against them. The damage and sorrow gnaws at their very existence. They are forced to struggle against those drugs the rest of their days. The drug dealers mock them saying, “You made the choice, not me.” The drugs taunt, “You knew I was destructive when you started fooling with me. Don’t blame me, you knew I was deadly.”

On a larger scale, it is vital to note that sin is no respecter of persons. What it does to one person, it will do to another. Neither is sin an accident—it is a choice. Each person freely chooses to take sin into his own life (cf. Romans 6:16-18). God’s warning that the wages of sin is death (cf. Romans 6:23), is too simple to misunderstand. Souls ruined and perishing under the weight of sins they have embraced cry out against sin, asking, “Why?” And sin, every sin, tauntingly replies, “You knew I was deceptive and destructive when you took me in. Don’t blame me.” God’s warning about sin is sufficient. No one can blame sin when it pays off.

Still, most protest when sin pays off, ruining influence, health, relationships, and future, destroying hope. Ruined by sin, men cry out, “How could you do this to me?”

Sin always mockingly replies, “YOU KNEW! YOU KNEW I WAS SIN!”

—P.O. Box 1441 1560 S. Highway V
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THE BREVITY AND MEANING OF LIFE

Andrew D. Erwin

“Knowing mortal life is merely temporary should motivate us to properly prepare for the life to come.”

The Psalmist asked, “What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him?” (Psalm 8:4). God is indeed mindful of man. Fearfully and wonderfully has God made man (Psalm 139:14)! In order for us to better understand life we must first seek to understand just how God made man.

The Outer Man (The Mortal Body)

The body which we now have is the temporary housing of the soul and the spirit. Our body is the mortal or physical part of our make-up which is limited to this world. It is made from the world and at death it will return to the world. This truth is found in Genesis 2:7, “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.” And again in Genesis 3:19, “In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, Till you return to the ground, For out of it you were taken; For dust you are, And to dust you shall return.”

Life is brief. The Hebrew writer states, “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” (Hebrews 9:27). Peter quoting from Isaiah said, “All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” (I Peter 1:24, 25). James reasoned, “What is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away.” (James 4:14). Knowing mortal life is merely temporary should motivate us to properly prepare for the life to come.

The Corinthian Question

“How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” (I Corinthians 15:35). It is futile to try to explain every detail of the kind of body we will have in the hereafter. We cannot describe what is not revealed. We know from I Co. 15:38 that there will be a spiritually raised body, and it will be just as God wished. This spiritual body will not be

given in marriage (Matthew 22:30). It will be eternal, “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” (II Corinthians 5:1). The spiritual body will be likened to Christ’s glorious body, according to His holy working (Philippians 3:21).

To the faithful student of this issue there can be no doubt as to the difference between the natural (mortal) body and the spiritual (eternal) body. Concerning the difference Paul stated, “It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.” (I Corinthians 15:44). Paul went on to say that man will bear a new image, the image of the heavenly (vv. 47-49). Then he explained we will be given this new body at the return of Christ and the resurrection of the dead (v. 50-58).

The point we must understand is that our present mortal body will return to the dust from whence it came. This is the truth. One can listen to various “rapture preachers” and be fascinated by the idea of a rapture which takes our mortal bodies and leaves our clothes behind. However, the Bible says our mortal bodies will return to the dust and we will be given a new heavenly body. There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another (I Corinthians 15:40). The text says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom, and that the perishable must be changed to imperishable (I Corinthians 15:50). Through these Scriptures we are plainly taught that these earthly tabernacles in which we presently dwell are not made to last forever. They are of the earth. They are suitable for this earth. When we pass into eternity we will be changed (I Corinthians 15:50). Of all the precious precepts revealed upon the pages of sacred writ there can be not one stated more plainly than this.

The Meaning of Life

Job once asked, “If a man dies, shall he live again?” (Job 14:4). From the truths uncovered thus far in our study we can answer a resounding, “Yes!”

(Continued on page 15)

NAKEDNESS

Max Miller
(1925-2001)

"Many women today are only a step (or layer of gauze) behind the banqueting women of Rome."

In Eden Adam and Eve transgressed God's law and in so doing became sinners. What would they do about their defiled condition and their estrangement with God? Should they cry out for mercy, or perform some great deed of penance, or perhaps flee from Eden to make their way in another land? Would it be proper for them to offer some kind of a sacrifice for their transgression? Apparently none of these thoughts crossed the mind of either Adam or Eve. The Scriptures do not indicate they made any effort at all to atone for their transgression, and of course, to flee from God was impossible. The Scriptures do tell us what Adam and Eve did as the world's first sinners.

The first thing sinners did when they realized the all seeing eye of God was upon them was to cover their nakedness. "...they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons" (Genesis 3:7). They were as much ashamed of their nakedness as they were their sin of transgression. Nakedness itself is a sin and type of shame (Nahum 3:5).

The first thing that the almighty God did for sinful man was to "make coats of skins, and clothed them" (Genesis 3:21). Did the sinners need a Savior, did they need to know of some way to appease the wrath of God toward sinners? Was there something more important to attend to? Apparently not. God does not deal in frivolous and inconsequential matters. God's first thoughts and actions were to cover the shame and nakedness of man.

The demon possessed man at Gadara went about naked (Luke 8:26-39). Yet when he met Jesus and by His power was made free from the legion of demons he became a changed man. Not only was he changed in being rid of evil

spirits, or changed in his relationship with people he had terrorized; he was changed in that he was no longer naked. The man was found "sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in his right mind."

Nakedness is not only sin, it is a mark of heathenism. Heathen women of Rome sat at the banquet tables bare busted. Sub-cultures of darkest Africa consisted of naked men and women. Nakedness was their style and custom.

Nakedness is the shame of our world today. Farrah F. "slipped" and "exposed" herself, according to reports. A tennis star, almost naked, "broke a thin strap" to her pretended embarrassment in a tourney recently.* "Christian" women are wearing "the split up to the waist" and "split down to the hem" dresses of modern style. Many women today are only a step (or layer of gauze) behind the banqueting women of Rome.

Nakedness, or near nakedness, is a defiance of God. Nudists do not sit at the feet of Jesus. Such shameful dress, or undress, does not indicate that one is in one's right mind. It does indicate shameful conduct, a wanton disposition, and a lustful and sinful nature. Sin cannot be atoned, the Savior stands aside, God's first will is that man be clothed and present himself decently and orderly before all others. With such a mind God will provide the way and means of salvation.

August 1979

* Editor's Note: Compare these instances of the 1970's to Janet Jackson's "wardrobe malfunction" of the 2004 Super Bowl. Some things never change.



AN OLD TESTAMENT INVITATION

Isaiah 1:18

M.W. Kiser

Isaiah was preaching to a people whose hearts were not right. They were full of lust, greed, injustice, and indifference toward God and man. In this condition they were attempting to worship the Lord, but God would not have it (vs. 15). There had to be first a cleansing of their dirty ways (vs. 16,17). God wanted them to change, and our text speaks of His gracious invitation. The matter then was just like it is today, backward! The offended party (God) is asking for reconciliation with the offending party (man). This Old Testament text has New Testament application.

I. THE CHARGE IMPLIED.

A. Sin of the most aggravated kind. Guild that is enormous.

1. "Scarlet" and "crimson" are colors far removed from white (the emblem of purity — Revelation 19:8). Consider the firmest of dyes and the least likely to be washed out by rain, dew, or laundry.
2. The bloody, destructive, and murderous nature of sin is clearly implied in these words. (see Romans 5:12-18).

B. This would therefore include every degree of sinfulness.

1. The unrestrained sinner who is open and feels no shame living in sin.
2. Ring leaders in sin who champion it for others to fill hell's highway.
3. Sinners against light, who have had example, teaching, and admonition.
4. Backsliders, who dishonor Christ in His very own house.
5. Hardened sinners, who have been at their vice a very long time.

C. Remember, the chief of sinners has already been converted, and the great doctor of souls can handle your case. Acts 9:3-6; 22:16; I Timothy 1:12-16.

II. THE GRACIOUS INVITATION.

A. "Come" is one of God's favorite words. He has already been inviting sinners to Himself. Matthew 11:28; II Corinthians 6:17; Revelation 22:17

B. The word "reason" in the Hebrew implies an authoritative ultimate as from a judge to the accused who has no defense to offer. What defense is there?

1. We cannot plead ignorance because we know better!
 2. We cannot plead necessity for evil is not God's will.
 3. We can only plead guilty because all of the blame is truly ours.
 4. We can only plead the blood of Jesus because it is our only hope.
- C. Christianity is the most reasonable religion in the world. Interested in...
1. Self preservation? Then save yourself! Acts 2:40
 2. Doing well for self? Then take care of your soul. Ephesians 5:14
 3. Believing the Bible? It is a confirmed message. Romans 1:4
 4. Loving God and man? It is the whole of this religion. Matthew 22:36-39

III. THE PROMISED BLESSING

A. The first business of Jesus is removing the deep stain of sin from our souls. Luke 19:10; Revelation 1:5

B. This is God's way of pardoning a sinner:

1. Perfect pardon — we become new. II Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 5: 26,27.
2. Complete pardon — all our sins of life and lip! Hebrews 8:12
3. Conditional pardon — Repentance and Baptism. Acts 2:38; 3:19; 22:16

C. This blessing reaches far over into eternity. Revelation 7:13,14; Romans 6:23; I John 5:11

There is salvation for everyone. If you will not come, then you are without excuse. You will come to Him in death and the judgment (Hebrews 9:27). There has never been a time or a place that God did not want a sinner to come to Him. Therefore, I know it would not be now. I urge you if you are unsaved to take care of this matter now, for it is the will of God (I Timothy 2:4; II Peter 3:9).

104 Calhoun Avenue
 Sylacauga, AL. 35150

STANDING UP FOR JESUS

Continued from page 8

We must stand up for Jesus when homosexuality is referred to as “an alternate life style.” Some say that God made the homosexual that way and that there is nothing he can do about it. He blames his sin on God. Homosexuals “shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9-11). A Christian cannot love the world nor the things of the world (1 John 2:15-17). Worldliness most certainly must be stood against by the Lord’s people. We must stand up for Jesus against liberalism. Liberalism is the greatest single threat to the church today. Liberalism is hard to define because it takes on so many faces. The best simple definition: “The undermining of the authority of the Scriptures.” What are the liberals teaching? They are teaching that there are saved people in the denominations; that one can be saved by denominational baptism; it’s not a sin to use mechanical instruments of music in worship; that women may preach, teach, lead prayer, lead singing, etc. with men present in the assembly. The Lord’s people must stand up for Jesus against liberalism.

We must stand up for Jesus against the enemy of self. Oftentimes we are our own worst enemy. Living the Christian life is not always easy. Jesus said that if one would follow him that he must “deny himself” (Luke 9:23). We must present our bodies as a “living sacrifice” (Romans 12:1-2). We may become discouraged but, “No man having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God” (Luke 9:53). Perhaps it is harder to stand up against self than any other thing because we are too much in love with self (Romans 12:3). Sometimes it is extremely difficult for man “not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think.” It is not easy to put self on the cross and Christ on the throne in our lives. We become prejudiced in favor of our own ways and beliefs. Our ways are right in our own eyes (Proverbs 21:2; 12:15). It takes a lot of spiritual strength and courage to stand for the Christ against self.

The Bible is right. It has, does, and will stand the tests of the ages. It will stand when this old world is wrapped in flames. All the world, including church members, will be judged by it. By it we will be justified or condemned. May we all live right and stand up for Jesus until we are overtaken by death.

— P.O. Box 306 Bradford, TN 38316

THE BREVITY AND MEANING

Continued from page 12

While understanding the mortality of the body we must equally understand the immortality of the inner man. The spirit will return to God who gave it (Ecclesiastes 12:7). Jehovah’s Witnesses teach the ideology of only saved people being in existence in the afterlife. However, in Matthew 7:21-22 and 25:31-46 we learn of conversations that are to take place between Christ and the disobedient in the hereafter. Every soul shall live somewhere forever according to this text. When confronted with such obvious doctrinal ignorance we must remember the inspiring hymn of our faith, “*Give Me the Bible*.” The righteous will be raised to a resurrection of life along with the unrighteous being raised to a resurrection of judgment (John 5:28-29).

Knowing that the inner man is immortal should motivate us to live a godly life. Fear God and keep His commandments for this is the whole duty of man (Ecclesiastes 12:13).

By studying Luke 16:19-31 we learn from the rich man’s life that life is not about wealth. Remember also the words of Luke 12:15, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” From casually reading these two passages we can see that life is not about the stuff. We need something more out of life. A Christian’s life should be spent laying up treasure in heaven (Matthew 6:19-21). This is where a Christian’s heart must be aimed. This should be life’s meaning.

—3980 Murray Paris Road Hazel, KY. 42049

THE POWER OF THE PRINTED PAGE

Bill Dillon

The American statesman and inventor, Benjamin Franklin, said: "Give me twenty-six soldiers and I will conquer the world." Mr. Franklin had reference to the twenty-six most powerful soldiers of any army, the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet. Here is a sample of what others have said regarding the power of the printed page:

Francis Bacon said, "If I might control the literature of the household, I would guarantee the well-being of the church and state."

Martin Luther said, "We must throw the printer's inkpot at the devil."

Robert Murray M'Cheyne said, "The smallest tract may be the stone in David's sling. In the hands of Christ it may bring down a giant's soul."

John Trapp said, "Be careful what books you read, for as water tastes of the soil it runs through, so does the soul taste of the authors that a man reads."

Samuel Zwemmer said, "No other agency can penetrate so deeply, witness so daringly, abide so persistently and influence so irresistibly as the printed page."

The printed page never flinches; it never shows cowardice; it is never tempted to compromise. The printed page never gets tired; it never gets disheartened. The printed page travels cheaply—you can be a missionary for the price of a stamp. It requires no buildings in which to operate. The printed page works while you sleep. It never loses its temper in discussion. And it works when you are gone from the scene. The printed page is a visitor that gets inside the home and stays there. It always catches a man in the right mood, it speaks to him only when he is reading it. It never answers back and it sticks to the point.

Daniel Webster uttered this solemn warning:

"If religious books are not widely circulated among the masses in this country I do not know what is to become of us as a nation. And the thought is one to cause solemn reflection on the part of every patriot and Christian.

If truth be not diffused, error will be. If God and his word are not known and received, the devil and his works will gain the ascendancy.

If the evangelical volume does not reach every hamlet, the pages of a corrupt and licentious literature will.

If the power of the gospel is not felt through the length and breadth of the land, anarchy and misrule, degradation and misery, corruption and darkness will reign without mitigation or end."

—P.O. Box 9 Hickory Ridge, AR 72347

PRINTED DYNAMITE!

While lecturing at a bookseller's convention, a University professor made this statement: "You are selling dynamite".

Nothing penetrates the minds, reaches the hearts, and turns people to Jesus Christ like the printed Word. Gospel Literature is the missionary's most effective tool of evangelism.

World population is increasing at the rate of 160,000 every 24 hours, 60 million each year. The world population is now over 6 billion souls.

Why is it that Christians seem to be slow to recognize that gospel literature is the answer? Martin Luther said that the printing press was a gift from God. The Reformation was the result of the nearly 100 books he wrote that circulated throughout Western Europe. "Faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God."

Every false cult believes in the power of the printed page. Five hundred magazines every 60 seconds (84 million yearly) roll off the world's largest printing press, owned by the "Jehovah's Witnesses." Seventh Day Adventists pour 21 million dollars yearly into the printed page in 218 languages.

When the Communists celebrated their conquest of China, their parades were lead by individuals carrying photographs of printing presses at the top of long poles with the inscription underneath.... "WITH THIS WE CONQUER".

(Continued on page 19)

The most fundamental issue ever faced by man is simply, God Is. The existence of God is, of course, a subject which every man must examine for himself. The existence of an all-powerful, benevolent, protecting Heavenly Father is the bedrock of our lives; it is the foundation upon which we, as believers, build.

Nevertheless, we are aware that there are many in today's world who reject and ridicule belief in God. This philosophy is not confined to the "intellectuals", professors, or scientists, but can be seen in many popular books, magazines, and television programs. Quite often the emphasis is that no truly educated person believes in God; instead, God belongs to the poor, the illiterate, and the unenlightened.

The inspired Psalmist best described the atheist in Psalms 14:1. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Those who would lead us to believe that they are wise are actually fools, if they deny the existence of Deity. It matters not how many degrees from outstanding universities are tacked on beside the man's name; he is simply a fool if he does not believe in God.

Certainly, this article is not a detailed examination and discussion of the existence of God; we merely want to make some observations about His presence and His work, based upon the Bible. We sincerely believe that all the proof necessary to make one believe in God is present here upon the earth and in those things that we can see and examine for ourselves.

David declared in Psalm 19:1, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." This sentiment is expressed in various passages of the Bible, such as Isaiah 42:5 and Job 12:7-10. The import of David's statement is crystal clear. Who among us can look up and observe the regulated and orderly movements of the stars and planets without realizing that there must be a guiding force behind them? The slight tilt of the earth upon its axis which gives us our seasons; the exact and fixed distance the earth revolves around the sun that insures our existence; the billions of stars, moons and planets, all constantly

moving at incredible speeds, yet never colliding; all of these things are evidence of the presence of our God, and accepted by all, except the fool! The atheist boasts that one must have a "blind" faith to accept the presence of a God, but yet how much greater faith is required to believe that this incredible universe of ours is merely the result of accident or change!

Furthermore, we need not look out into the endless expanse of space to see the handiwork of God; we may observe His presence right here upon the earth. David also affirmed in Psalm 24:1 that "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." The existence of a great Planner can be seen in every flower, every leaf on every tree, every mountain. And then, too, the crowning achievement of God's creation lives here upon the earth: Man, made in the image of God, with His breath placed within him.

When we observe the meticulous planning of the universe, the oh-so-careful attention to every detail; when we reach the point where we can appreciate the skill of the Great Architect, we can add our enthusiastic Amen to Hebrews 3:4— "For every house is built by some man; but he that built all things is God."

—745 Riverview Lane Colorado Springs, CO 80916

EDITOR'S NOTE: Brother Miller's series on "HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHURCH HISTORY" will resume in our next issue.

THE KEYS TO SALVATION

HEAR the gospel,	Romans 10:17;
BELIEVE the gospel,	John 3:16;
REPENT of your sins,	Luke 13:3;
CONFESS Christ,	Matthew 10:32;
Be BAPTIZED,	Mark 16:16 and Acts 2:38;
Live FAITHFULLY,	Revelation 2:10.



ELDER ENJOYS THE GLEANER

"I enjoy each and every issue of the Gospel Gleaner. The church really needs a paper of its kind." Jamie Boren, Dover, TN

CONGREGATIONS SENDING SUPPORT

"The Cotter Church of Christ is going to be sending financial support to the *Gleaner*." Ron Davenport, Cotter, AR

"We will try to send all the help we can to keep the *Gospel Gleaner* going." Bobby Gore, Livingston, TN

"Thank you for publishing the paper. The Elizabeth church has supported it for a long time. It's a great paper...." Vernon "Cotton" Robbins, Elizabeth, AR

"Thank you for sending us the *Gospel Gleaner*. The Trenton church is sending funds to help with the printing of the paper... .enjoy your periodical...." Trenton Church of Christ, Trenton, TN

TRYING TO HELP THE PREACHER SHORTAGE

"Having read your recent article about preachers, I know you are concerned about our preacher shortage. This work is just a drop in the bucket, but if we can save a few preachers, we might be saving thousands of souls." Mike Glenn, Crossville, TN (Editor's note: brother Glenn is involved with a preacher mentoring effort called "Lighting the Fire." He can be contacted at e-mail mglenn1023@yahoo.com).

NON-MEMBERS ENJOY THE PAPER

"I'm not a member of the church of Christ but I enjoy the *Gospel Gleaner*. A friend gives me a copy of each issue. I'm going to send some money to show my appreciation." J.D., Dover, TN

"I love receiving your publication. We need more religious papers like yours." Floy Moles, Dayton, OH

KEEP THE GLEANER COMING

"Please continue to send the *Gospel Gleaner*. We've been getting it for years. Thanks." Cecil Davis, Louisville, KY

"Received the last issue of *Gospel Gleaner* enjoying it as I have the others. Just a note to say, please keep me on the mailing list. The Hickory Ridge Church is to be commended for continuing this good paper." Bill Altaffer, Oakley, KS

"This is a good publication and I want to continue receiving it from Hickory Ridge, if and when, you continue. Please send issues to..." Peggy W. Key, Grant, AL

WANTS THE GLEANER

"I am interested in reviving the *Gospel Gleaner*." Mike Hall, Tulia, TX

CONGREGATION WANTS ON MAILING LIST

"Please add our congregation to the mailing list for the *Gospel Gleaner*. If we can, we'd like to receive two copies. North Billerica Church of Christ, Nutting Lake, MA

NEW SUBSCRIBER AT AMERICAN AIRLINES

"I am very much interested in receiving a subscription for the *Gospel Gleaner*." Deidre Chancey, Sr. Production Coordinator, American Airlines, Tulsa, OK

FHU STUDENT LIKES THE GLEANER

"I was given the January-March 2004 issue by my grandmother, Jeannette Wilkerson. I was really impressed by the articles you wrote concerning the different matters (i.e., homosexuality and self-deifications). I would like to be on your mailing list... Thank you again for your wonderful soundness in the words you write. I too am a gospel preacher. If you would like a guest article, I would be willing to submit one to you for publication. Thank you again for your soundness and thank you for putting me on the mailing list." Kyle Moses, Henderson, TN

EDITOR'S NOTE: We would like very much to have articles from students, elders, preachers, etc.

PLEASE DISCONTINUE

"Please remove our names from your mailing list. Thank you." Mike and Karen Roby, Memphis, TN

LONG TIME SUPPORTER

"Dear Bill, I received my *Gleaner* last week, and have read it through. I was pleased to see all you had written and that you are Editor. Enclosed is a check, a small donation for the paper. Bill, my prayer is May Our Lord Bless you in all your work of spreading the Gospel and grant I see you again." Grace Boles, Livingston, TN

NEW READER

"Recently my name was added to a subscription to *Gospel Gleaner* and I am guessing it was my old friend and former high school mate T. Pierce Brown that had an article in Vol. 20, No.1 issue. Anyway, I am enclosing a \$20 check as an appreciation..." W.T. Green, Sparta, TN

Note: The *Gospel Gleaner* and its staff are grateful for our entire readership, whether they respond in writing or not. We pray the publication to be a blessing to all.

PRINTED DYNAMITE!

Continued from page 16

The Catholic Church publishes 431 magazines and newspapers with a combined circulation of 25 million. All are aware of the Christian Science reading rooms.

Three million people learn to read every 7 days, 150 million a year. What shall they read? How shall they hear?

There will never be a substitute for good gospel literature. Do all in your power to spread the gospel by tracts, books, and other printed materials. Be a reader.

(selected and adapted)

BIBLE QUIZ

1. Where were the disciples first called Christians?
2. How old was Methuselah when he died?
3. How many soldiers were engaged in the dark deed of crucifying Jesus?
4. What color was the cloth draped over the Ark of the Covenant?

1. Antioch (Acts 11:26); 2. 969 (Genesis 5:27)
3. Four (John 19:23); 4. Blue (Numbers 4:6)

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

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AN APPEAL

We hope our readership will realize the importance of the *Gospel Gleaner* magazine as many already have. Please help us keep the publication going strong by sending your offering today to the:

HICKORY RIDGE CHURCH OF CHRIST

P.O. BOX 232

HICKORY RIDGE, AR 72347

Please mark all checks payable to the "*Gospel Gleaner* fund".

Additionally, the paper is seeking faith building, well written articles from brotherhood preachers and elders.

We encourage all brethren to consider sending us your journalistic contributions.

TRUTH

"I am the truth. I move in a straight line. I make no concessions. The ignorant do not know me. The prejudiced cannot see me. The intolerant disown me. I am everybody's good friend and brother. To those who try to bend me, I am as hard as tempered steel. To those who, with a pure heart, seek me, I am as gentle as a mother's caress. Only once have I been perfectly embodied in a life—just once also in a book. To know me is to enjoy the highest freedom. To reject me is to invite the most tragic doom."

W.F. Gray

THIS TOO SHALL PASS

Bill Dillon

Antiquity tells us General Scipio Africanus did not rejoice at the burning of the magnificent city of Carthage when she fell to the Imperial broad sword of Rome's iron legions in 146 B.C. On the evening of the last day of conflict, with the dirt and sweat of extended and harsh battle on his countenance, the Roman general, "burst into tears, and stood long reflecting on the inevitable change which awaits cities, nations and dynasties, one and all, as it does every one of us men." We are informed of this by the Greek historian, Polybius.

General Africanus knew all too well the heartbreaking lesson of history: "This too shall pass." This is the lesson for men and nations. The conquerors shall be conquered. As Carthage fell so also would mighty Rome someday. So it has been, so it shall be.

No wonder the ever reliable apostle Paul writes to remind God's people of the transient nature of all earthly things:

"While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen:

for the things which are seen are temporal;

but the things which are not seen are eternal." (2 Corinthians 4:18)

Will modern day mighty America learn this immutable message of the past? Time will tell.

GOSPEL GLEANER

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Volume 20

No.3 & 4

UNITED WE STAND

Guyton E. Montgomery

“It is a very sad day when there are preachers and elders more concerned about ‘policing the brotherhood’ and competing with other congregations in order to promote themselves than preaching the gospel in order to edify and evangelize”

On June 16, 1858 Abraham Lincoln stood before the Republican State Convention in Springfield, Illinois. The speech which he presented on this special occasion was later titled as his “House Divided Speech.” This great man, who was to later become the sixteenth President of the United States, understood and took from the principle taught by Christ that “a house divided against itself cannot stand” (Matthew 12:25; Mark 3:25; Luke 11:17).

What this great man understood was that in any aspect of life people must be united if they are going to be successful. This rings true especially when it comes to the Lord’s Church.

The Bible demands unity. The Psalmist wrote, “Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1). The apostle Paul when writing to the church at Ephesus admonished them to be united in their efforts and to “keep the unity” (Ephesians 4:1-13).

Paul, writing to the church at Corinth, had to deal with many problems that had crept into the congregation. Paul understood and emphasized in the very beginning of this epistle that for them to be successful in correcting their problems that they would have to be united in their work. Paul wrote unto the Corinthians, “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among

you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them which are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). The problem with the brethren at Corinth was that they had allowed contentions to enter in among them and lost sight of the priority to preach “Christ and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

It is a fearful thing today as one looks among the church of our Lord and Savior and sees the contentions that have entered. Contentions within the church are becoming so common and numerous over petty and insignificant issues. (Mark 16:15; Matthew 28:18-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:11). Many are more concerned with fighting each other instead of false doctrines which we have been commanded to watch for and stand against (Acts 20:28-31).

Do not misunderstand. There is a time for marking and avoiding false teachers. It has been commanded by God (Romans 16:17)! However, once they have been marked and avoided we should move on to other things. We should never make it our hobby to see who we can “write up” all the time. Just consider why it is that we are to “mark and avoid” false teachers? It is in order to avoid division and to promote unity (Romans 16:17)!

One may wonder why we should be alarmed. Within the past year a flyer came across my desk in the mail that alarmed me greatly. In great, big bold letters it said BIBLE DEBATE BETWEEN TWO CHURCH OF CHRIST

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Volume 20 Number 3&4
July-December 2004

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is a quarterly publication of the Hickory Ridge Church of Christ in Hickory Ridge, Arkansas.

The *GOSPEL GLEANER* is also supported financially by interested sister churches and individuals and is mailed free of charge to its subscribers.

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

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"To be a member of the church for which Jesus died, and to support it wholeheartedly, and lead your family accordingly, is to play the man, not the fool!"

The Holy Scriptures inform all readers: "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is..." (Hebrews 10:25). Also, Jesus said, "Man can not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

The question of attending church is new every generation. Perhaps, even in the apostolic church some were asking, "Why do we go?" Especially in modern times do people lack the motivation of being in the presence of other Christians due to the upsurge of "the electronic church." Other organizations have always felt the necessity of flesh and blood people associating with other like natured people. Electronic means of communication do not allow for the meaningful touch of the flesh. Why is it that politicians insist on mass gatherings for their supporters? Why will a group of men often do something a single man would shy away from? Because they know the strength and enthusiasm and power comes from numbers. Such will always be the case.

Why Should Men Go to Church?

I. The church is a school. The church is the school where men and women are trained in Christian service and character. Every day we see Christians are imperfect, thus their need of improvement and further instruction is more fully felt.

II. Man is an incurably religious creature. When the Titanic sank, the name of God was on every lip. When Shakespeare left a will, the first clause was religious in nature, "I commend my soul into the hands of God." The last words of Tennyson still ring clear:

"For tho from out of bounds of time and place,
The flood may bear me far,
I hope to see my Pilot face to face
When I have crossed the bar."

The tragedy of our time is that people are ignoring the spiritual dimensions of life—in essence committing soul-suicide. The church is the only institution that insists on the development of the true (God-ordained) spiritual life.

Friends, the peril of our lives today is that the pressure of this modernistic world will crowd the soul into a corner, blotting out the vision we and our children need of the higher life. It's beyond great to come to church, with those of like precious faith, to behold the

glory of God and then turn to life's mundane things once again, stronger and better suited to fight the fight of faith.

III. The church is, in a particular and unique manner, the way to God. Taking Sunday and spending its hours at the beach, the woods or the hills describes how many claim they get nearer to God. This is balderdash! Certainly, nature is beautiful, but the Lord declared that He, not nature, was the way to God (John 14:6). How many never come near the church building when times are good, but are found crying out God's name and calling for the help of God's people when times are bad?

It is common today to hear of indolent individuals sitting glued to their television sets and absorbing the electronic "slop operas" pushed on the public. These same misguided souls openly fling cheap shots at the church. They yak about the faults of church members (neglecting their own spotted lives, of course). They omit the importance of the church to society at large without realizing the type of character the church helps to produce is the singular hope of our faltering planet. Christ-like character, which molds honesty, integrity, fairness, courage and purity must be the bulwark of our strife torn world. Without the New Testament church there would be a slump in morals which would look like the stock market report in October of 1929, and our people, young and old alike, would be accosted by a thousand additional doors of possible degradation.

The church of the Bible is the mightiest force on earth, helping to keep at bay all the hellish tendencies trying to send our loved ones to destruction.

IV. The church teaches the highest mission known to man. The redemption of modern society will depend on whether individuals embrace the message of "One is your master, and ye all are brethren. Love one another" (Matthew 23:8). The church will be the social conscience of our world as it tells men everywhere to live right and obey the laws of the land (Romans 12:1,2; 13:1-5; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

The church will guide her members to the most magnificent of quests, "to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

Let us as children of God set the example for all to follow and take up our cross, stained red by the blood of Christ (Matthew 16:24), and with the whole world as our field, let us pour the love of Christ into the hearts of men everywhere. The government cannot do this; nor can secular education; nor can the medical field; the church is the key to redeeming men's souls and making better the bulk of the human race. The alternative is to stupidly discard the church by overt act or quiet indifference and sink down into eternal death. To be a member of the church for which Jesus died, and to support it wholeheartedly, and lead your family accordingly, is to play the man, not the fool!

If you have not appreciated the church in the past, then seek forgiveness through gospel obedience or restoration and then go forth to conquer the powers of hell with the crown of life as your reward (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:22; 2 Timothy 4:8).

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SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

Sunday Morning Bible Class	9:45
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00
Wednesday Evening Bible Study	7:00

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Bill Dillon, Evangelist



IS GOD IN OUR GENES?

John T. Polk II

Question: My teacher told us that God is the invention of man. I thought it was the other way around. Which is right? I am confused.

Answer: Satan's work is to confuse by creating doubt and/or denying God's plain Word. The Bible makes clear this tactic of deceit in Genesis 3:1-7. In fact, the Bible makes clear which came first: God or the need for God. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Man did not invent the notion of God, rather the Creation demands the notion of God. The Bible points to the hard evidence for God's existence outside the Bible. "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible" (Hebrews 11:3). Solid, scientific study of our world ("facts") leaves true scientists in awe of God and His order. Only God could "create" (Genesis 1:1-Hebrew word "barah" means "to bring into existence from nothing") the physical world, and only God could so firmly establish the orderliness ("laws") by which it operates to sustain life (Genesis 1:2-2:7). Thus, even people without a Bible worship a higher being because the evidence promotes that conclusion.

"Faith" is conviction about the unseen based upon evidence that is seen. "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). "Science" is the study of physical phenomena by observation, experimentation, or demonstration. No scientific fact: (1) establishes a date for the Creation; (2) rules out God as the cause; or (3) supports the Evolutionary dogma of "life from non-living substances." The fact of God's existence is confident conviction based upon complete evidence contained in the "heavens and the earth." The identity of that God is only revealed in, and believed because of, the Bible (39 books in the Old Testament and 27 books in the New Testament). Hence, "he who comes to God must believe that He is [Genesis 1-3, jtpII], and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him [Genesis 4-Revelation 22, jtpII]" (Hebrews 11:6).

False "science" deals in rumor, fairy tales fantasies, fiction, myth, speculation, misrepresentation and misinterpretation of both the Bible and the Creation. Unfortunately, this class of authors has written most of the highly-publicized books, state-approved textbooks and

magazine articles that pass for "recent scientific discoveries," when in fact they are nothing more than "profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge" (1 Timothy 6:20). When fake scientists remove God from the explanation of the Creation, then they have "exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen" (Romans 1:25).

"The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1), and only a "fool has said in his heart, 'There is no God.' [1] They are corrupt, and have done abominable iniquity" (Psalm 53:1). The evidence to support the existence of God is overwhelming, because God designed it for that purpose! "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are [2] without excuse, because, although they knew God, they [3] did not glorify Him as God, nor [4] were thankful, but became [5] futile in their thoughts, and their [6] foolish hearts were darkened" (Romans 1:19-21). Only the [1] law-less, [2] defense-less, [3] virtue-less, [4] thank-less, [5] thought-less, or [6] mind-less would deny God as Creator.

This brings us to *Time* magazine, as it continues to spew: (1) doubt about anything Biblical; (2) defense of almost anything evolutionary; and (3) promotion of most things immoral or indecent. Its cover story ("The God Gene," *Time*, October 25, 2004, Vol. 164, No. 17) is contained in the article "*Is God In Our Genes?*" by Jeffrey Kluger (pp 62-72). It extols the premise of "the recently published book *The God Gene: How Faith Is Hardwired into Our Genes* (Doubleday; 256 pages), by molecular biologist Dean Hamer" (p. 65). Kluger says: "Hamer not only claims that human spirituality is an adaptive trait, but he also says he has located one of the genes responsible" (p. 65). Hamer says, "I think we follow the basic law of nature, which is that we're a bunch of chemical reactions running around in a bag" (p. 65). To Hamer's evolutionary mind, our physical bodies (including our brains) "evolved" from animals, developed ideas and thoughts caused by environmental pressures, from which the notion of "God" was produced. According to Evolution, then, boxers should be the most brilliant humans on earth, for their bag of chemical reactions probably has been shaken more than anyone else's! "Road kill," when hit, would learn not to walk

on roads. If this were the case, students could pass tests with a rap on their knuckles; children would “evolve” proper behavior only after beatings; only after accidents could factory workers “evolve” their way to a raise; only after terrorist bombings can voters “evolve” perfect government! Who jostled Hamer that he thought up this crazy idea? Was he hit in the head by an evolution textbook? If Hamer hit a pothole on the way to his lab, would he change this doctrine and blind belief?

Time magazine continually features such notions and tries to make Bible support them. This article says,

“‘[God has] set eternity in the hearts of men,’ says the *Book of Ecclesiastes*, ‘yet they cannot fathom what God has done from beginning to end.’”

To theologians in the 3rd century B.C., when *Ecclesiastes* is thought to have been written, that passage spoke to the idea that while all of us are divinely inspired to look for God, none of us are remotely capable of fully comprehending what we are seeking. Scientists in the 21st century may not disagree, provided that ‘hearts of men’ is replaced with ‘genes of men’” (*ibid.* p. 66).

Ecclesiastes 3:11 echoes the universal desire for God (Psalm 42:1-3; Acts 17:24-28). Why has this desire for a higher power been evidenced in all civilizations ever found? This cannot be accounted for by evolution, for it is not “essential for survival. It is NOT in a “gene” but an “idea,” something unknown to an Evolutionist. The notion of “God” is not caused by a gene in humans, but rather God created the gene! Hamer must be confused – he may have thought he found a “genie.” Let’s see, “mama” is a word in nearly every language. What Evolutionist is searching for a “mama” gene?” Solomon wrote *Ecclesiastes*, why does Kluger confine it to an era he feels is contradictory to “scientists in the 21st century?” Does Kluger think everything Solomon said has no meaning for “the 21st century?” What about *Ecclesiastes* 3:1-8? 1:4? 4:9-12? Does Kluger believe the rest of Scripture doesn’t agree with the latest “scientific findings?”

Kluger says Hamer’s genetic root for spirituality “is not the same as a genetic root for religion. Spirituality is a feeling or a state of mind; religion is the way that state gets codified into law” (p. 66). Who shook up Kluger’s bag of chemical reactions that he came up with this split-decision? If he stumbles going home, will he re-define these words? If “the law is spiritual” (Romans 7:14), and “religion is the way that state gets codified into law,” then religion should be spiritual! If not, why not?

If those who think they are spiritual must only endorse the New Testament as “the commandments of the Lord” (I Corinthians 14:37), then spiritual religion is the product of New Testament obedience! Again, if not, why not?

“Pure religion” (James 1:27) consists of binding oneself to God’s commandments, which are spiritual in nature (I Corinthians 2:12-13). How, then, is spirituality separate and apart from religion?

Furthermore, saints in Philippi were to “worship God in the Spirit” (Philippians 1:1; 3:3). But saints in Corinth (and “in every place”) were “the church” (I Corinthians 1:2). Therefore there is no spiritual worship acceptable to God outside the church! If not, why not? Those who separate “religion,” “church,” and “spirituality” must find Bible proof for their belief.

If a mass transit system broke down, the commuters would find other ways to their destinations. Similarly, the public education system has been derailed from faith in God, and godly parents will find other ways to educate their children. Every mother’s child has an innate desire for God that should be strengthened by evidences from Creation and Bible, and not smothered by unbelievers as a sacrifice upon the altar of a “god” known as “EDUCATION.”

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QUOTES WORTH REMEMBERING

“On Sunday go to church. Yes-I know all the excuses. I know that one can worship the Creator and dedicate oneself to good living in a grove of trees, or by a running brook, or in one’s own house, just as well as in church. But I also know that as a matter of cold fact the average man does not thus worship or dedicate himself.”

-Theodore Roosevelt

“Millions in the church today are being overwhelmed by the Trojan-Horse Ploy calling secular ideas with biblical truth. Others are easily duped by anything labeled Christian. They don’t examine everything. They don’t hold fast to the truth.”

-John MacArthur

“Today we are more concerned that people feel good than that they do good.”

-John MacArthur



SLEEP ON?

John T. Polk II

"According to 'Sleep in the City,' a study that ranks the 50 most populous U.S. metropolitan areas according to whose residents sleep best, Minneapolis tops the list, reporting 23 nights of good sleep a month. The country's most fitful sleepers hail from Detroit, with Cleveland and Nashville close behind" (*Time* magazine, November 1, 2004, "Your Time - The Cities That Never Sleep, p. 102).

COMMENTS: I'm sure the survey didn't include all those sleepers in church services, who have learned to sleep even with their eyes open! "Sinking into a deep sleep," Eutychus "fell down from the third story and was taken up dead" (Acts 20:7-10). Paul raised him up, but nothing miraculous can be done today for those who die in worship. So sleepers—beware.

Sleep is for the night (1 Thessalonians 5:7) and sweet sleep is for the "laboring man" (Ecclesiastes 5:12) who puts in a day's work for a day's wage (Ephesians 6:5-9). The wicked don't sleep well unless they hurt someone, even with violence (Proverbs 4:14-17). No wonder, then, why al-Qaeda is so foul-tempered. Is crime the reason for the showing Detroit, Cleveland, and Nashville made on the survey? Sleeping through everything productive robs people and makes them poor (Proverbs 6:9-11). Is laziness the reason for the showing for Minneapolis? More information should be forthcoming. Sleeping at the proper time and for the proper reason should refresh us all.

CUT DOWN FROM BEHIND

John Mark Dillon

The apostle Paul is the most influential man in human history except for Jesus Christ himself. As a traveling preacher he spread the gospel across the known world. His writings make up the majority of the New Testament. Paul has several problems along the way, though. One huge problem was his own people. Almost everywhere he went he was being cut down from behind, by those he should have counted on the most to help him. Much the same thing happens in the church today. The church sometimes has little or no interest in evangelism or fellowship. Those who try to do these things are cut down from behind, by other members of the church with indifference and apathy. Paul's speech to the Ephesian elders should be read carefully by anyone who expects help. Churches today are more like clubs where people make up their own rules. This is a poison deep within the church which should be avoided, (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:6;

Revelation 22:18,19). Acts 20:29 & 30, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to; draw away disciples after them."

DEVELOPING ENDURANCE

John Mark Dillon

How can a true Christian develop endurance? Paul gave the answer in 2 Timothy 3:16 & 17, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." The Word of God can build you up (Acts 20:32). No matter how much damage bad people do. Take time to study (Acts 17:11). As much time as people spend tearing you down, take twice as much time building yourself up again. As Peter said in 2 Peter 1:19, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." "Truly, God hath given unto us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtues" (2 Peter 1:3).

ON THE RIGHT "TRACT"!

John Mark Dillon

Let's face it; the average Christian has trouble talking to people about Jesus. Have you ever wished you could but didn't know how? Well, there is a way. Get a tract, in fact, get a lot of them. You can get them from your congregation or from brotherhood bookstores. Take the tracts and include them in your letters, whether private or business. Include a tract when you pay your bills. Leave one on the table at a restaurant. Give one to the clerk at the store. Keep some in your pocket at all times. You don't know when opportunity will knock, you must be ready. The Apostle Paul sent letters to different places and by this means countless sinners have been saved and countless Christians have been edified. You can do as he did. You can be a missionary out of your own home. You've heard of missions to faraway places? Well, what about being a missionary here in the United States? With the shape this country is in, we need missionaries here. What if one church member did this? It would be great. Now, what if the entire church of Christ did this? The effect would be staggering. "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations" (Matthew 28:19).

COPELAND'S PROPHECY FAILS

Bill Dillon

False prophets are in abundance in today's world and occasionally these religious pretenders over play their hand and say too much. Kenneth Copeland did on December 12, 2001. At a dedication service Copeland asserted that one billion Muslims would be converted in the next few months. His exact words were, "And there are going to be multiplied millions upon millions; there's going to be close to a billion people that have been trapped in that religion, that in the next few months are gonna come into the Kingdom of God (cheering). That is gonna happen, you watch and see what I'm telling you..." (*Christian News* 5/24/04; p. 2)

The apostle Peter said, "But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies..." (2 Peter 2:1). The Old Testament is very clear regarding the identification of false prophets:

"And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him."

-Deut. 18:21-22

By the test of Scripture, Kenneth Copeland stands guilty as a prophetic counterfeit.

ATHEIST "FLEW" FROM ATHEISM

John T. Polk II

According to the "London Times" (December 12, 2004), Stuart Wavell and Will Iredale report that Antony G.N. Flew, 81, emeritus professor of philosophy at Reading University, "been converted to the view that some sort of deity created the universe." Flew, a Methodist minister's son who became an atheist at age 15, is revising the introduction to his book, *God and Philosophy*, to reflect his newfound view.

He now says, "As people have certainly been influenced by me, I want to try and correct the enormous damage I have done. The Times article said, "Investigation of DNA, he said, 'has shown, by the almost unbelievable complexity of the arrangements which are needed to produce life, that intelligence must have been involved'."

1. Flew had the errors of his atheism position thoroughly dismantled by Thomas B. Warren in a public debate September 20-23, 1976 at North Texas State campus, Denton, Texas (*The Warren-Flew Debate*, National Christian Press, 1977). His mind-set has been to "willfully forget" the reasoning presented then (CF 2 Peter 3:3-5), and he has continued for another 28 years, which demonstrates that he hadn't opened his eyes to the abundant evidence all around him.

2. Flew still has not repented of his atheism, but has now moved away from the reason he previously used to defend his atheism. The complexity of DNA (and the rest of Creation) is overwhelming proof for the existence of God. In fact atheists are "without excuse" (they have no defense!) "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead" (Romans 1:20-21). God exists, not because Flew, or any sophist for that matter, reasons it to be so, but that human reasoning ability, itself, demands that God is the intelligence behind all Creation (CF Psalm 94:8-11).

3. At least since Flew has turned loose of his previous error, let us pray he will continue his journey and find the evidence that God "is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6).

4. Flew now sees the damage he has been doing all those years of teaching his atheism at "Oxford, Aberdeen, Keele and Reading Universities" in the United Kingdom. Would that all the atheists at these and all other government-run universities would follow Flew's example, and at least confess that they are NOT "professors" but "deny-ers", and that they are child abusers who take families' hard-earned monies under the false pretense of giving their children an "education". Instead of coming out of their "ivory towers" into the light of day for their doubts to be examined, they skulk about in the crevices of their campuses and raise the drawbridge and cut grades when challenged.

I challenge any college/university "professor" to prove in public debate that God does not exist, OR that there is no God. If they can prove it in class, why not in an auditorium?

THE PASSION OF PREACHING

Bill Dillon

“The Passion of the Christ” movie has been all the rage. The silver screen epic has received praise from numerous religious groups with comments like, “It gave me an unbelievable appreciation for the price Jesus Christ paid for the sins of the world.” The graphic film portrayal of the Lord’s suffering has had a gripping impact on the religious community, and shall also greatly touch the world community.

Pondering these matters leaves us with a truth to which we should firmly cling. As some have described the movie as “the greatest Gospel opportunity in years”, we must realize God’s revelation to man has been the Written Word and not the silver screen! However extraordinary the movie may be, the pure and simple preaching of the gospel of Christ is, and always will be, the greatest gospel opportunity available to the human race.

Remembering carefully Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 will help us to keep things in proper perspective. The silver screen will bring emotional stirrings, but the preaching of “Christ crucified” will bring evangelistic zeal.

1 Corinthians 1:18-31

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.”

Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence. But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord.” (NKJV)

GOOD ANSWER

Someone sent me this and I thought it made a simple but good point...
Since the Mel Gibson movie “The Passion of the Christ” came out,
all you hear is anti-semitism this and anti-semitism that.
So will you please tell me why there is all the fuss about who killed Jesus?

HE’S NOT DEAD!!

LOVE ABOUNDING

Guy Hester

Paul said, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God" (Philippians 1:9-11).

It seems that the apostle Paul had less criticism to offer the church at Philippi than any other church, yet he urged them to grow in love. He prayed that their love might abound more and more. The word abound suggests the idea of getting full and running over; and, of course, it is always possible for anyone to grow in love.

Not only did Paul want them to grow in love, but he also wanted them to grow in knowledge as well. In other words he wanted their love to be an intelligent love. Growth in love cannot be accomplished without a growth in knowledge (2 Peter 3:18). There can be no true or real love without knowledge. There is no such thing as "love at first sight." The more you know of some people, the *less* you are inclined to love them. Whereas, the more you know of some people the *more* you love them. This is because of the fact that true love grows out of knowledge. One of the main reasons so many marriages are failures, and we have so many broken homes is because the husband and wife were not as thoroughly acquainted with each other as they should have been before they entered into the marriage contract. Hence Paul wanted the church at Philippi to have an intelligent love by being able to distinguish between things worth of love and things unworthy of love. Christians are not to love the world (1 John 2:15). But from Colossians 3:1-2 we learn that Christians are to love heavenly things. Here the apostle says, "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." But before we can do this, we must be able to discern between things worldly, and things heavenly, which requires knowledge.

As Christians our love for heavenly things enables us to approve things that are excellent. A persons character is judged by the things he approves and allows in his speech, and his presence. It is not difficult to determine what one approves, because people think about, talk about, and indulge in the things they are most interested in. Now in these particular verses the apostle doesn't mention the objects of our love, but from other Scriptures we learn what we as Christians should, and must, love if we are to be well pleasing to God. So let us mention some of those things.

LOVE GOD

The supreme object of the Christian's love is God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matthew 22:37). In our everyday lives and in our dealings with our fellow man, we find it easy to love them who love us, and certainly for this reason we should love God supremely who loved us so much and has done so much for us. He gave us our being in this world, has supplied our every need in a temporal way, and in addition to all of this, He gave His Son to die on the cross to redeem us from sin that we might be saved eternally in the world to come. Certainly, as we consider God's great love for us we should find it easy to love Him. No wonder the beloved apostle said, "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19).

The test of one's love for God is his obedience to His will. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). The expression "*not grievous*" means not difficult. So when we do all things whatsoever God has required of us, it is only our "*reasonable service*" (Romans 12:1). There is nothing unreasonable or difficult about it. God would not be a just God had He required of His children things that are unreasonable. We get our greatest thrills and highest enjoyment from doing the will of God if we love Him as we should. If we fail to do the things He has required of us, that is abundant evidence, according to this passage, that we do not love Him.

LOVE CHRIST

Christ demands that we love Him more than we love our parents, husbands, wives, children or property (Matthew 10:37; Luke 14:26). One man said that according to this passage it would be impossible for him to be a Christian because there was no way that he could hate his own family. But the word "*hate*" as it is used here does not mean hate in the sense that we most often think of it. We know that it does not mean that we are to hate our families in the ugly sense of the word for the same Bible teaches that we are to love our families (Ephesians 5:25). Does the Bible contradict itself? Certainly not! Well just what does He mean by saying that we are to hate our parents, our companions, and our children? He simply means that we must put Him ahead of everything else in this world, or think less of everything else than we do Him. It is very inconsistent for us to say that we love Him and not do His commandments. (John 14:15). Keeping part of His commandments is no proof of love, neither is keeping all of His commandments part of the time proof that we love Him. Faithful and consistent obedience to His will at all times in our everyday lives, as well as in our worship, is proof that we love Him, and nothing else is.

LOVE THE CHURCH

In addition to loving God and Christ, the Christian must love the church. Jesus loved the church "and gave himself for it" (Ephesians 5:25), and certainly we should love it enough to give our lives in humble service to it. If we love the church as we should we will attend its services.

If we have the proper love for the church we will accept responsibilities in the work and worship. Love will cause one to prepare himself to teach a class, conduct a prayer service, serve at the Lord's Table, or do anything else to carry on the work of the church. Love for the church will cause one to give money for the growth and expansion of the work of the church.

If we love the church we will not live and act in such a way as to bring shame and reproach upon its good name in the community. If we love the church, we will be willing to sacrifice our worldly pleasures to protect the good name of the church.

LOVE THE TRUTH

People are lost who receive not the love of the truth (2 Thessalonians 2:10). If we love the truth we will search for it. Jesus said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39). In It was said of the Bereans, "These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things [spoken by Paul] were so" (Acts

17:11). Yes, if we love the truth we will accept it regardless of the source from whence it comes. Not only is that true, but if we love the truth, we will defend it at all cost (Jude 3). Then Paul tells us that the mouths of false teachers "must be stopped" (Titus 1:9-11). Those who love the truth stop the mouths of false teachers by reproving, rebuking, exposing their false doctrines and unscriptural practices (2 Timothy 4:1-4; Ephesians 5:11; John 7:7; Acts 19:8; Acts 6:9)

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

If we as Christians do not love one another we cannot be well pleasing to the heavenly Father. Paul said, "Let brotherly love continue." Then Peter said, "Love one another with a pure heart fervently." Of course, every one of us have our faults. There is none perfect, and sometimes brethren have faults that we do not and cannot approve of, and we of course, are not to love and approve their faults, but we must love the brethren in spite of their faults. If God had refused to love us until we became worth of His love, then every last one of us would go to hell. Yes we must love the brethren in spite of what they may do to us or say about us. When Jesus was dying on the cross, He prayed for those who were crucifying Him, and Paul says, "If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his." Association with brethren which results in better knowledge of them many times will cause us to love them more. Praying for people will cause us to love them. It is absolutely impossible for us to hate any one whose name we call everyday in our prayers, asking the Lord to bless them.

LOVE THE LOST

We must also love the lost. It was the love of God for the lost that sent Christ into the world to save us. It was the love of Christ for the lost that made Him willing to die for us. The only way then for us to show our appreciation for this great love for us when we were lost, is to love the lost about us enough to do what we can to save them. If I love the lost, I will preach the gospel to them and give my money to send preachers of the gospel to them, and do anything else possible to let them know of the great love of God, and the rich provisions which He has made in their behalf. Paul's love for the lost was so great that he was willing to wish himself accursed from Christ for the sake of his Jewish brethren (Romans 9:2-3). Such love for the lost caused Paul to be willing to suffer all things for their sake "that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (2 Timothy 2:10).

According to these standards, is our love an abounding love?

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FALSE RELIGION DECEIVES

Max R. Miller (1925-2001)

“Christianity is a religion, but all that is in the name of religion is not Christianity.”

The words religion and Christianity are not synonyms and do not have the same meaning. Christianity is a religion, but all that is in the name of religion is not Christianity. Many religions are wholly contrary to Christianity. It may be observed that many rituals and practices done in Christ's name are not according to His will.

Religion Can Be Wrong

Paul admitted his former religion was false. He honestly stated it was “our religion,” a religion Jews had developed to suit their own sectarian ambitions (Acts 26:4). He spoke of it as “the Jews’ religion,” a religion he zealously followed (Galatians 1:13,14). On becoming a Christian, he renounced the religion of the Pharisees.

Athenians were very religious and endeavored to honor all gods. Lest they should slight any they raised an image “to the unknown God.” Paul refutes their vain although zealous religion and declares the true God and Savior. Some of them turned to the true faith in Christ Jesus (Acts 17:16-34).

The Hebrews were religiously zealous. Paul rebuked them, not for zeal nor for being religious, but because their religion was not according to knowledge and truth; but according to their established laws of self righteousness (Romans 10:1-3).

Deceived by False Religion

James speaks of one who was religious but deceived. “If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his own tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain” (James 1:26). He was religious, yet his religion did not count with God.

Religion based on doctrines and commandments of men is empty and unprofitable before God. False religion drew worshippers to Christ in word, they gave lip service to Him, but it was a profitless religion based on the teachings of men and not of God (Matthew 15:8,9).

The Sadducees were deceived in their religious doctrines and practices. Jesus rebuked them saying, “Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God” (Matthew 22:29).

Getting Religion

True religion is something we do; not something that mysteriously happens to us. James speaks of pure religion as a religion of doing (James 1:27). God approves the religion of one who “worketh righteousness” (Acts 10:34,35). God's commandments are righteous (Psalms 119:172). God approved religion does what God commands. The **doer of the word** and the **doer of the work** is blessed of God (James 1:21-25).

Religion of Conscience

Some depend on their conscience in religion. If their conscience approves they are satisfied with their religion. If conscience is a safe guide in religion much time and sacrifice was wasted by God in giving His will to man; it too has been a waste of time for man in his attempts to know and do God's will. If conscience is a safe and true guide in religion why is one a Catholic, another a Universalist, another a Sabbatarian, another something else? Would not all God approved consciences be alike? Paul condemned partyism at Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:12,13). Jesus prayed that believers in Him would be one in the faith (John 17:21). If all were of the same mind, if all believed the same thing – wouldn't all consciences be the same and all would be as one in faith?

If conscience is a safe guide in religion, was it wrong for Paul to persecute the followers of Christ? Paul said, “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth” (Acts 26:9). He said, “I have lived with all good conscience before God until this day” (Acts 23:1). He spoke of times he persecuted Christians, giving his voice unto their death and said it was wrong, sin.

One True Religion

There is the straight and narrow road that leads to life eternal (Matthew 7:13,14). Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). The way of truth, and truth alone, leads to life in Christ.

One should examine their religion in the light of truth and realize that one possibly could be wrong, deceived by false religions. True religion is believing and obeying the commands of God as revealed in Holy Scripture. Conscience and feelings are not reliable indicators of acceptance with God.

God has given us the truth for our salvation. Let us seek and obey it.

IN THE MINORITY

During the time Noah was building the ark, he was very much in the minority – but he won!

When Joseph was sold into Egypt by his brothers, he was in a decided minority – but he won!

When David, ridiculed by his brothers, went out to meet Goliath, in size he was in a decided minority – but he won!

When Jesus Christ was crucified by the Roman soldiers, he was a conspicuous minority – but he won!

—Selected

COMPROMISE

A man starting in the fish business hung out a sign, “Fresh Fish for Sale Today,” and invited his friends to the opening. They all congratulated him on his enterprise, but one suggested that his sign might be improved. Said he, “Why the ‘Today’? Of course it’s today, not yesterday or tomorrow.” So the fishmonger removed the word. Another said, “Why the ‘For Sale’? Everybody knows that, else why the store?” And off came the words. Another complained, “Why the word, ‘Fresh’? Your integrity guarantees every fish to be fresh.” Finally only “Fish” remained, but an objector said, “Why the sign? I smelled your fish two blocks away!”

The church that tries to satisfy everybody ends up by pleasing nobody. Put up your sign and stand by it!

—J.H. Dampier

“MARK’S REMARKS”

CONDITIONS ARE GOOD – WE WILL ATTACK

John Mark Dillon

I would like to send a message to the faithful out there. I don’t mean those who call themselves “Christian” but never act like it. I mean those who stand their ground and stay the course. I heard a story once about a group of soldiers who were being attacked on all sides. Their ammunition was low and it was dark and they had no idea how many enemy troops they were up against. Their leader said to them, “Conditions are good. We will attack.” The soldiers made a charge and broke through and the enemy retreated. Someone asked the leader why he decided to attack. He said, “The cowards had long since run off. All that was left was the true soldiers. We would win if we just pushed forward.”

In times of uncertainty the true soldiers will push forward. I Kings 18:2 says: “And Elijah come unto all the people, and said, ‘How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him’, and the people answered him not a word.” When God calls, the Elijah’s will answer, all others will run off!

**No sorrow is ever too great for a Christian
whose mind is stayed upon his God.
To him comes the pledge of never failing resources
from the Fountainhead of all power,
and the certain promise:**

**“As thy days, so shall thy strength be.”
Deuteronomy 33:25**



PRELUDE TO REFORMATION (4)

Grady Miller

"Our first 'pillar post' is the absolute priority of the Bible as the divine standard of religious authority."

In this short series of articles we have singled out three "pillar posts" that made the Protestant Reformation possible.

If we must pick a date to mark the beginning of the Reformation Era, 1517 will do just fine. It was on October 31st of that year that Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-Five Thesis to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. But we have seen that important developments predated Luther's courageous stand and were harbingers of upheaval and revolution.

Our first "pillar post" is the absolute priority of the Bible as the divine standard of religious authority. The centuries before the birth of Luther witnessed new, dramatic developments that were opposed by all the might Roman Catholicism could muster — the translation of the Bible into the native languages of the common man, the exposition of the Scriptures by "lay preachers" that bypassed the traditions and dogma of the priesthood, and the appeal to Bible authority over church authority.

The second "pillar post" was brought to light as men began to read the Bible in their own language and interpret it for themselves. The corruption, worldliness and wickedness of the established Roman Catholic Church stood in marked contrast to the purity of the New Testament church. Good men, spiritual men, Bible-reading men were sickened and disgusted by the apostasy of Rome. They began to clamor for reform and rejected the apostasy of Rome.

The third "pillar post" that made the Reformation possible concerns the changing climate and prevailing conditions in 16th century Europe. Cannot the student in the 21st century look back and see the providential blessing of God in the revolutionary change that swept through the Old World?

Oranges do not grow in Colorado. You won't find a rosebush in the middle of a busy interstate highway. Just so, there had to be just the right conditions — social, economic and political — that enabled the Protestant Reformation to take root and grow.

Certainly, the Roman church had encountered dissidents and critics before the time of Martin Luther. The

papacy was able to put down every serious threat to its complete domination and monopoly. Sometimes the Roman church silenced critics by superior "scholarship." Church authorities controlled every university, maintained the only libraries, and dominated every council that determined policy and procedure. Top-notch scholars loyal to Rome dismissed the contrary positions of dissidents and branded them as heresy. Civil authorities enforced Roman church law as the law of the land. Indeed, temporal authority and church authority were one and the same. Heretics were persecuted, banished and executed.

But with the dawn of Renaissance and the stirring of Reformation, the power structure of the previous centuries cracked, crumbled and then collapsed.

The Atlantic empires of England, France and Spain, along with the robust economies and/or imperial designs of Switzerland and the German states supplanted the medieval powers of Venice, Genoa and Milan. The discovery of new lands — indeed, a whole new world — opened new vista of opportunity and provided new sources of revenue. The nameless, faceless serf asserted his claim for dignity, individuality and independence. Petty religious squabbles took a backseat to new, secular concerns. Rulers put the interests of their own subjects, empires and ambitions ahead of the dictates that issued from Rome. Brilliant thinkers no longer limited themselves to medieval theology and church law, but gave their full attention to science, exploration and discovery of "new" truth.

In some ways, this is a "chicken or the egg" dilemma with its question of "Which came first?" Did the rise of nationalism and the advent of Renaissance make the Protestant Reformation, or did religious revolt lead to a secular upheaval?

At any rate, we happily acknowledge the providence and purpose of God in preparing the way for religious reform. Just as Jesus came into the world "in the fullness of time" (Galatians 4:4), or when everything was made ready for His birth and ministry, the believer sees the work of God leading up to the age of the Protestant Reformation.

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SEVEN WAYS TO OVERCOME DISCOURAGEMENT

2 Corinthians 4:1-17

Marlon Winninghan

“When we set forth ourselves in the common spirit of selfishness so often seen in the modern church, we really do not have much to talk about that is faith building.”

The Apostles occupied a unique place in the historical revelation of God's Great Scheme of Redemption. They are listed in Scripture as ambassadors for Christ to whom God had given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). Jesus had personally selected twelve of the Apostles to be with Him during His earthly ministry in order to train and equip them for the greatest mission ever given to any group of elite forces (Matthew 10:1-4; 28:18-20). With the exception of the Apostle Paul, they were eyewitnesses to His Majesty (2 Peter 1:16-18; 1 John 1:1-4) and even he, as an Apostle called out of due season, was an eyewitness of the risen Savior and was taught the Gospel by Him (Acts 9:1-9; Galatians 1:11-12).

One would think that men who had personally witnessed what they did and who occupy such privileged positions in the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19:28) would never become discouraged in their earthly assignments. Whether or not they ever did become personally disheartened, there are holy hints that they remained motivated in their course to finish it with joy.

In our text (2 Corinthians 4:1-17), there are seven truths that perhaps kept Paul in the tireless mode of keeping on keeping on. We can use them for personal motivation in overcoming personal discouragement in serving our Lord.

DISCUSSION:

1. “As we have received mercy, we faint not” (verse 1).

A. Paul considered himself as an unworthy recipient of God's grace and mercy (1 Timothy 1:12-16).

B. As a result, Paul labored under the “debt principle” (Romans 1:14-16).

2. He worked to meet God's approval “by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God” (verse 2). We must remember that it is God's approval that we are seeking, not man's (2 Timothy 2:15).

3. He kept focused on the right message: “For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake” (verse 5). When we set forth ourselves in the common spirit of selfishness so often seen in the modern church, we really do not have much to talk about that is faith

building. In my life as a Christian, I have never seen such a spirit of selfishness and pettiness in the church. We see far too much glory seeking among preachers and childish, spoiled attitudes among the brethren.

4. Paul recognized where the power came from: “...the power may be of God, and not of us” (verse 7). When we seem too weak in an increasingly hostile environment toward true Christianity, we remember Paul's words in Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

5. As Paul labored under the debt principle, he also labored under the death principle: “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (verse 11). The Lord not only taught us how to live for Him, but also how to suffer as a Christian (1 Peter 2:19-21; Matthew 16:24-26).

6. Paul relied on the motivating power of the resurrection and that in all things God would be glorified (vs. 14,15): “Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you. For all things are for your sakes, that the grace, might through the thanksgiving of many rebound to the glory of God.”

7. In view of the resurrection, Paul was renewed in the inner man and kept his focus on the eternal (vs. 16-18). “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”

CONCLUSION:

I suppose that if we keep before us the fact that our earthly tabernacle must be put away and that we have a home in heaven, we will be motivated to overcome discouragement (2 Corinthians 5:1). We also need to remember that: “...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. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:10-11a).

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Introduction

1. Every place has to get its name from something or somebody. Many of our cities and counties got their names from the politicians and settlers of a bygone era. A trip through a biography is often a very revealing factor in learning all about such places.

2. Sometimes the meaning of a name is unknown to us. And when we define the word, we know there is interesting history behind the name. Such is the case with the valley of Achor.

3. The name means, "trouble". It is a valley between Jericho and Ai. It got its name from the trouble brought upon Israel by Achan.

4. Achan means "troublesome". How he lived up to his name is given in Chapter 7 of Joshua. (Relate the story.)

5. Let us learn some lessons from this story that we might keep others and ourselves out of the valley of trouble.

Discussion

I. Sin cannot be hid from the eyes of Jehovah.

- A. Our God sees all. Heb. 4:12; Psa. 90:8
- B. Sin is a source of divine displeasure. Isa. 59:1, 2. Heb. 12:14
- C. There is only one way to cover sin. Psa. 32:1, 2

II. Temptations and sins are common to men.

- A. There was nothing unusual or exotic about Achan's sin. Covetousness and greed are common sins even today. I Cor. 10:13; Lk. 12:15; Eph. 5:3 (NIV says, "not a hint" of it!) Col. 3:5
- B. Mark the progressive nature of Achan's sin. He "saw, coveted, took". Psa. 1:12; Jas. 1:13-16.
- C. Achan knew what he was doing was wrong, otherwise why would he hide the stuff? He should have prayed about the matter before hand. That would settle things fast. Psa. 139:36, 37; Matt. 6:13

III. A man can steal from God.

- A. We know that everything belongs to God. Psa. 24:1; I Cor. 10:26
- B. Note the classification of things: "accursed" and "devoted."
 - 1. Everything combustible was to be consumed by fire.
 - 2. All the metals were to be consecrated to God.
- C. Achan took for himself what belonged properly to The Lord.
 - 1. Will a man rob God? Mal. 3:8
 - 2. The first sin in the early church. Acts 5:1-11.
 - 3. Some may have in their personal portfolios what belongs in the treasury of the Lord's house! I Cor. 16:1, 2.

IV. One member can cause trouble for the whole church.

- A. The whole nation suffered the defeat over Achan's action.
 - 1. He marched to a different beat. 2,000,000 to one!
 - 2. Was he the only one who was tempted to this sin?
 - 3. The whole camp experienced the agony of defeat.

B. The church can suffer defeat over the actions of one member.

- 1. A preacher who does not pay his debts.
- 2. An elder or deacon who is a business cheat or a womanizer.
- 3. A member who is worldly-acting in such a way as to bring reproach upon the whole congregation. I Cor. 5:6- "a little."

C. Who made you the exception?

- 1. That you don't need to attend, give, and be active?
- 2. That you don't have to watch your attitude (sour, negative, uncooperative) or mouth (gripe, grumble, and gossip)?
- 3. Does this church suffer defeat in its efforts because of some hump in your tent floor?

V. God is not to be blamed in the presence of defeat.

- A. We have a "conditional" promise of success. I Cor. 3:6; Matt. 28:18-20. "Go comes before lo". There must be a sowing before reaping. II Cor. 9:6, 7. What does Matt. 6:33 say? "Added" when?
- B. Note Joshua's strange language. He almost sounds like the people of Israel. "Would to God." Num. 14:2; 20:3 The solution was not to be found in prayer but in purging!
- C. The gospel is still the power, but who hinders us (the church) that we do not obey it. Rom. 1:16; Gal. 5:7

VI. We are to have no sympathy with wrongdoing.

- A. The assignment was given to all. His family had to have known. He either was assisted or observed by them. They concealed it.
- B. There is to be no palliation of sin on our part! Prov. 17:15; Isa. 5:20; Jer. 8:11; Ezek. 13:22; Mal. 3:17; Rom. 1:32; II Jn 11.
- C. We all have a responsibility in discipline. Heb. 10:24; I Cor. 5:4

VII. The judgment of God comes.

- A. In times past-always on sin and iniquity.
- B. The final day has been appointed. Acts 17:31; II Pet. 3:9
- C. Termination in hell. No extorted confession will stop it.

Conclusion:

- 1. Such is the story of Achan and some lessons from it.
- 2. Are you and your family in the valley of trouble today?

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THE IDENTITY AND PERPETUITY OF THE CHURCH

Foy E. Wallace, Jr.
(1896-1979)

"The scheme of human redemption as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christianity."

The gospel plan of salvation is in itself the proof of divine revelation. The first chapter of the Ephesian epistle sets forth supernatural origin of the scheme of redemption. In the third chapter the apostle writes of the revelation which "when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge"—the inspired knowledge of the gospel—"as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." The scheme of human redemption as foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament is fulfilled in Christianity. It could not have been originated by man; it cannot be a human plan (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

The same apostle in the first and second chapters of Corinthians contrasts ancient human philosophy and the divine wisdom of the gospel in the new testament. In former ages no eye had seen, no ear had heard, and no heart had known the things revealed by the Holy Spirit through the men whom God had immediately inspired to reveal them (1 Corinthians 2:1-9). The revelation of the New Testament came through the "earthen vessels" of inspired apostles (2 Corinthians 4:14), whose knowledge was not the information of natural men (1 Corinthians 2:10-11); for natural men could not receive the knowledge of these things through natural channels of information. Philosophers and scientists are natural men, and they can by natural means receive the knowledge of natural things; but spiritual things are revealed things—revealed by the Holy Spirit through spiritual men, the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ—and scientists cannot by natural means discover them.

Through chemical experiments, the chemist may receive scientific information, but he cannot receive the things of divine revelation through his natural experiments. The geologist can receive sedimentary information through his geological discoveries, but he cannot receive the knowledge of the things of divine revelation through his natural research. The astronomer by the telescope and spectroscope may receive astrophysical information through the science of astronomical investigation, but he cannot know the things of divine revelation through natural investigations.

The purpose of the present treatise is to observe the church as the product of divine wisdom and revelation.

(1) The church as a manifest of divine wisdom (Ephesians 3:9-10).

As the heavenly firmament declares the glory of God and his creative handiwork (Psalm 19), so the spiritual institution manifests, by exhibition, its divine origin—that it is the manifold wisdom of God, comprehensive of the various features of the divine plan, making perceptible to men (verse 9) the unfolding of an eternal purpose.

Divine revelation versus human prudence is seen in the existence of the church. It is not a natural institution. It could not have been designed by the human mind. Hence, the divine architecture is exhibited, manifested, in the church. As a building exhibits the skill of the architect, the church as a spiritual institution manifests the wisdom that is divine, not human. "Which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence" (Ephesians 1:8). "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3).

The comprehensiveness of the church is here made to be coextensive with the whole scheme of redemption (Ephesians 1:10-11; 20-23). The dignity of the church as the body of Christ, its grandeur as the building and habitation of God, including the Jew and the Gentile in one spiritual commonwealth, in which realm "elective" grace is conditioned on obedience and character rather than respect of persons by omnipotent partiality, and all of this by a foreordained plan—a fore-approved plan—"according to his will", the revelation of which is the gospel (Romans 16:25-26); and it exalts the church to the highest sphere of divine knowledge and wisdom, beyond the prudence of men to devise or the power of the human mind to plan.

(2) The perpetuity of the church—Hebrews 12:23-28.

The church being coextensive with the scheme of human redemption will be in existence as long as time endures.

1. The kingdom stands forever—Daniel 2:44-45. The kingdom of Daniel's prophecy is identified in Mark 1:15 and Matthew 16:19 to be the kingdom of Christ—the church. Daniel said it would "stand forever." Jesus said the "gates of hades shall not prevail against it." Paul called it a kingdom which "cannot be moved." If not the same, one cannot be moved to allow the first to continue—so an irresistible force would come in contact with an immovable object!

Jesus connected the church and the kingdom (Matthew 16:18-20); Paul connected the kingdom with the church (Colossians 1:13, 18), and again represents the church to be the kingdom (Hebrews 12:23, 28).

2. The church throughout all ages—Ephesians 3:10, 11, 21.

The passage says "to him be glory in the church throughout all ages." But the glory of Christ is not confined to the earth (John 17:5; Luke 24:26). So the glory of the church may not always be or have been confined to its visible existence on the earth (Luke 18:8). The glory of the church may be lost in apostasy. As the holy Shekinah was not present in the tabernacle (Haggai 2:1-3), so of the church—its glory may depart. Daniel 8:12 refers to truth "cast down to the ground," which indicates the state of apostasy.

(3) The divine characteristics of the church – Matthew 16:16-20.

The setting up of the church of Christ on the earth was the culmination of all the plans and the purposes of God from the beginning to the end of time (Ephesians 3:10, 11, 21). It was the inauguration of a kingdom not of the world – “now is my kingdom not from hence” (John 18:36) – but the “kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 16:19). Here the kingdom of Christ is paralleled in a sense with the world kingdom of Rome, but infinitely grander in character, scope and power. The origin of the kingdom of heaven and its perpetuity on the earth “throughout all ages, world without end” imparts to it divine characteristics attached to no other institution.

1. The origin of the church – Ephesians 2:14-15.

The church is referred to as the “one new man,” a divine creation. The physical creation was perfected in Adam, the spiritual creation was perfected in the church, the new creation (Colossians 1:13-18). The church came into being by an act of creation and by the exertion of divine and direct power as was exerted in the physical creation (Ephesians 1:20-23; Colossians 1:16-18). The miracles of attending the inauguration of the church bear testimony to this fact (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2:1-4; Ephesians 4:8-16). But miracles were provisional, not permanent. The miracle of creation did not become a part of the created world, but the means of creating the world; so the miracles connected with the inauguration of the church and the revelation of the gospel did not become a part of the revealed will of God, but the means of revealing the will of God – they were provisional, not permanent. The miracle of creation gave place to natural law, and the miracles in the beginning of the church gave place to spiritual law, the revealed word of God.

The law of procreation, is the law of propagation, the established law of the universe of all realms – every seed after its kind. “Let the earth put forth . . . herbs yielding seed . . . after their kind . . . and the earth brought forth . . . yielding seed . . . and trees bearing fruit wherein is the seed thereof, after their kind” (Genesis 1:11-12). This is the unvarying law and order in the natural world.

2. The seed of the kingdom – Luke 8:11. The law of propagation applies to the spiritual realm as definitely as to the natural and operates according to the same principle. This fact is made fundamental in the parable of the *Sower and the Seed*. Luke’s application of the parable reads: “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). Matthew represents the good seed as “sons of the kingdom” (Matthew 13), so the word of God is the “seed of the kingdom.”

3. The new birth is by seed – 1 Peter 1:23-25. Jesus said to Nicodemus: “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Peter explains how such a birth is produced: “Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God” (1 Peter 1:22). Paul says it is “by the gospel” (1

Corinthians 4:15). James says “by the word of truth” (James 1:18).

4. The law of the Spirit makes free – Romans 8:1-4.

Here it is declared that *law* not miracle, operates in the spiritual realm; it is “the law of the Spirit,” the gospel, that makes one free from sin.

5. The propagation of the truth – John 8:32. The principle by which the church, or kingdom, is maintained and perpetuated is by preaching the truth, not by fleshly succession.

Where was the church when the truth was cast down? Take the illustration of the wheat in the pyramids of Egypt – the seed had not been propagated for centuries, but in a perfect state of preservation, and when planted it produced the same wheat, after its kind. That is what such passages as Luke 8:11, Matthew 13:23, 38 and 1 Peter 1:23-25 mean. The visible succession of the church, fleshly succession, is not essential to “shall stand forever” and “shall not prevail against” – for the kingdom exists in the *seed* just as the wheat lived in the seed preserved in the Egyptian granary for centuries. The church is perpetuated through a succession of visible congregations, and if it is lost to sight in the centuries, the *seed* of God’s word that produces it is in a perfect state of preservation – therefore, in the *seed* the kingdom has its existence, and the word will bear fruit after its kind, as in the beginning (Genesis 1:1-12).

(4) The voice of history. The Bible teaches that the church of Christ, the kingdom of Christ, was established on the Pentecost of Acts 2, and history joins with revelation in affirming this truth. Such historians as Orchard, Mosheim, William Smith, Fausett, Fisher, Schaff, Benedict and Armitage testify to this fact. The beginning of the church is thus established by the prophecies of the Old Testament, the teaching of the New Testament, and by the voice of history.

These same historians bear testimony against the so-called church succession of denominational bodies as being the New Testament church; and they are but a few of the many historians of all denominations who testify against the doctrine of an unbroken line of church succession through human denominational organizations.

The New Testament has left unmistakable marks of identity on the true church, and any church professing to be such must offer these credentials.

THE ESSENTIAL PLACE OF THE WORD OF THE LORD

Ronald D. Bryant

“All that desire to be in a right relationship with God must build on the right foundation – the words of Christ, both hearing and doing them.”

It is an old, oft quoted, and familiar text, yet it is one we dare not ignore or diminish. Jesus said, “*Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven*” (Matthew 7:21). These words are powerful and straightforward. One needs help to misunderstand them. In elaborating further Jesus described a judgment scene, “*Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*” (Matthew 7:22-23). He then clearly stated the vital place His words are to have in the lives of men. He used the analogy of two builders and the house each built. He drew attention to the two very different foundations upon which the houses were built. His words are pointed and memorable, “*Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall*” (Matthew 7:24-27).

Two builders are described. They were equally skilled, equally conscientious, and equally capable. Yet, one house stands while the other house falls. What was the difference? (Even our small children know the answer to this question). One man built his house upon the rock and it stood secure in the face of the storms of life. The other man built his house upon the sand and it did not stand, it could not stand, in the face of the storms of life. Jesus described one as a “wise man...” He elaborated that the wise man was the man who “*hears these sayings of mine*

and does them.” He identified the “foolish man” as the person who “*hears these sayings of mine and does not do them*” (Matthew 7:24ff). The lesson: All that desire to be in a right relationship with God must build on the right foundation – the words of Christ, both hearing and doing them.

In another text, it is written, Jesus said, “*He who rejects Me, and receives not my words, has that which judges him – the word that I have spoken will judge him in that day for I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak*” (John 12:48-50). In this passage facts about the Day of Judgment are clearly stated. It is stated that all will be judged by the same standard, the words of Jesus. That being true, it is appropriate and loving to insist that the standard by which we shall be judged should also be the one by which we live. It also follows that while men may refuse the will of God and may foolishly choose to live by a different standard, in so doing they do not and they cannot cancel out the word of God. God’s word remains the same, stands unaltered, and continues to judge the present actions of all men, and all men will be judged by it on the Day of Judgment.

Basic to the proper regard for the Scriptures is its fundamental place in life. It is the standard by which we are to live. It is to be sought to direct our paths, educate our minds, control our hearts, determine our actions, and motivate our praise and service. Because it lives and abides forever, there is no justification for anyone to turn away from it and in its place to embrace human directives. Human wisdom and human reasoning is not the standard for spiritual guidance. Human agendas are not a basis for spiritual life, nor guide for faith and practice. If we long to be one with God, it is imperative we abide in the words given through Christ.

One additional thought: Our tendency is to seek our own will. We tend to resist the requirement that we should be yielded to God. Even in spiritual matters, where we must be yielded to God, too often we are determined to

focus upon and to seek after things that we like or want. Focusing upon and pursuing those things which we want leads us to self-centeredness and away from God. The danger of self-deception is a daily reality. To be deceived and satisfied in and with our own way is an easy path to follow. The danger it poses is very real, yet, we are so soon blind to it. Additionally, there are no easy answers, nor easy solutions to these tendencies. However, there is an answer and there is a solution. The answer and our hope rest in our personal desire and determination to seek after God and the things of God. Our need is to seek after God that we might be confronted, on a daily basis, with His majesty and holiness and our own sinfulness, to the end that we might know our need before Him and then know and embrace that which He provides.

God revealed Himself in His Son and in His word. The purpose of the Scriptures is to lead us to God. When will we learn the indispensable nature of the word of God?

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UNITED WE STAND (CONT. FROM FRONT COVER)

Guyton E. Montgomery

PREACHERS and it was being held at a local Baptist Church. Debates have their place and purpose. In fact, many have been converted and taught to know the truth because of debates. However, how does it look for the church, for which Christ died (Ephesians 5:25), for us to be airing our problems and differences in such a public fashion. There are those outside of the church looking in that get the impression that we can't even agree among ourselves. This is exactly what Paul meant when he wrote that we are to be "in the same mind and judgment" (1 Corinthians 1:10).

How are we to obtain the kind of unity that the Bible calls for? By returning to Biblical principles. We need more brotherly love for one another (Romans 12:10; 1 Thessalonians 4:9; Hebrews 13:1). Brotherly love means that we are going to think the best of one another until we have a compelling reason not to do so. Brotherly love means that we will handle differences and problems as the Bible necessitates (Matthew 18:15-17).

Christ tells us here how we are to handle our differences. We are to first go to the one that we have a problem with. If it then cannot be settled we get two or three witnesses to go with us. If it still is not settled it is then and only then that we take it before the church. Far too many times individuals are so quick to be the first one to "write" something or someone up that they never go to the individual to try and reconcile the problem. The words of Christ here are not a request or suggestion, but a command given to each one.

If we are to have unity we must put away our petty jealousies and envying. This is what the Bible warns us against and says to put away from our lives (Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; Galatians 5:26; James 3:14,16). We should rejoice for one another when there are those that are capable (sometimes more capable than ourselves) are working in order to strengthen the Lord's Kingdom.

In order to have unity we must put away all gossiping and backbiting (2 Corinthians 12:20). We must use our tongue for good and not for that which is displeasing to the Lord and will cause division (James 3:5-8; 1 Peter 3:10).

We should always be like the apostle Paul in that we are "set for the defense of the Gospel" (Philippians 1:17). We need to "mark and avoid" those that cause division and teach false doctrines (Romans 16:17). However, just as great as we have the responsibility to fulfill these duties we have the responsibility to promote unity, peace, and harmony within the Lord's Church. "A kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation" (Matthew 12:25).

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BROUGHT FROM THE DEAD

T. Pierce Brown

The question we are raising is, "If Jesus had the power to raise himself, why did he not do so? Why is it stated over and over that it was God who brought him back?"

Jesus said of his life in John 10:18, "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Why, then, did angels need to come and roll back the stone? Why did he not simply exercise the power he demonstrated when he raised Lazarus? Why did the author of Hebrews say in, Hebrews 13:20, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant?" Why did Peter say in Acts 2:24, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it?" There are several other places that specifically state that God raised him from the dead.

As far as we recall, we have never read an article on the subject, or heard it discussed. Perhaps the reason is that no one has found a clear answer in the Bible. Perhaps it has been deemed insignificant. We think it possible that there is a significant reason, though not clearly spelled out, but wonderful in its implications. It involves the whole magnificent plan of salvation, or God's purposes in man's redemption.

Before the foundation of the world, the Son of God, being in the form of God decided to "empty himself" and take upon himself the nature of man (Philippians 2:6-8). 2 Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." Isaiah 53:5 says, "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed." These verses and many others suggest to us that while Jesus was acting as "surety"

for us, dying in our place as if he were the worst of sinners, he could not properly demonstrate the power he had to do many things. He indicated this quite clearly in Matthew 26:53-54, "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

While he was in the tomb, he had not yet "entered into his glory" (Luke 24:26). Though he said in Matthew 28:18 that he had "all authority in heaven and on earth" even then he was not exercising his power as King of King and Lord of Lords, nor was he functioning as our "great high priest" (Hebrews 4:14). So it should not be hard to see that although he had the power or authority to take his life up again, just as he had the power to lay it down, he did not exercise that power, for he was deliberately taking the place of condemned sinners. It would not have been fitting for him to break the prison bars of death and come forth under his own power, for he was under God's judicial condemnation and waited for God's judicial release from that position.

The words in Hebrews 13:20 "brought again (anagagon ek) from the dead" remind us of that fact. It is similar to the expression Paul used when he was in prison with Silas. Instead of leaving on his own initiative, as he had the power to do, he said, "Let them come and fetch (exagagetosan) us out" (Acts 16:37). In our opinion, it is possible that he used this expression in Hebrews instead of what he frequently said elsewhere, "God raised him from the dead," because he wanted to emphasize this very point. That is, although Christ was God in the flesh, he always submitted to his Father, and took the proper position at the

proper time, in the proper way. When he took the position as a human, to bear our sins, he acted as a suffering servant. When he took the position as our Great High Priest, he took his blood into the Holy Place and offered his blood as an offering for our sins. When he took the position as King of King and Lord of Lords, Peter said of him in Acts 2:36, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” It was only in the correct order, after he had died and been “brought back” again from the dead that Paul says about him in Philippians 2:9, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.”

In summary, we think that although the Bible does not clearly set forth in logical and unmistakable sequence, the exact reasons Jesus did not come forth from the grave by his own power, the thoughts suggested above clearly indicate that he always functioned in the proper time and the proper place in a way that would glorify God and give us an example that we should follow in his steps (1 Peter 2:21). Paul demonstrated this attitude in 1 Corinthians 9:11-12 when he indicated that he had the right or power to demand of them support, but did not exercise that right.

Surely we can see that even in what might seem to be a trivial and insignificant question or problem, there may be lessons of importance for us. For we should have the same attitude toward always doing the things that are appropriate and pleasing to God that Jesus had. We may have the ability or power to do some things, but should not do them if it is not appropriate or fitting.

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GOD’S PLAN OF SALVATION FOR EVERYONE

1. Plan in the mind of God before the creation of the world. Ephesians 3:10,11
2. Revealed to the apostles and prophets of the New Testament by the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 3:1-5
3. Provision for salvation made in Jesus Christ. 1 John 4:15
4. Christ paid the redemption price at Calvary. Wages of sin is death. He paid the debt.
5. Man has a responsible part in his salvation.
 - a. Except one believes one will die in their sins. John 8:24; Hebrews 11:6
 - b. Must repent of sins or perish. Acts 17:30
 - c. He must confess his faith that Jesus is the Son of God. Cf. Acts 8:37
 - d. His sins must be remitted, washed away in the redeeming blood of Jesus. Acts 2:38; 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21
 - e. Becoming a Christian one must live a virtuous life.

“As God’s people, it is so wonderful to look at that time when we made a choice to follow the path less traveled.”

The last three lines of the Robert Frost poem, “The Road Not Taken” are:

“Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –
I took the one less traveled by
And that has made all the difference.”

Just as the great poet remembers the time when he came to a point where the two roads diverged in a wood, each of us comes to those points in our life where we look, and the paths open in two directions. We must choose. Which shall we take?

It is not a new dilemma. Eve faced it (and took the wrong path) in Genesis 3:1-6. Joshua faced it. He told the people, “*Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve,*” Joshua 24:15. Esther faced it. She said, “*If I perish, I perish*” (Esther 4:16b). Daniel faced it. “*Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to God, just as he had done before*” (even though it had been decreed that anyone doing so would be put to death (Daniel 6:10b). The Apostles faced it. Jesus said, “Come,” and they followed Him.

As God’s people, it is so wonderful to look at that time when we made a choice to follow the path less traveled. We were, at one time, faced with the roads that led in two directions. Isn’t it a tremendous feeling to know we have chosen the right way? We should rejoice every day that God showed us the way ... that He guided us by the Holy Word in the direction we should go, that He lifted our burdens to walk with Him.

We, as Christians, should be the happiest of people because, as the poem says, “And that has made all the difference.” How has it made a difference? Matthew 7:13-14, *Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow is the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

The difference in the roads is destruction or life. It is a wonderful feeling to know you have chosen life, isn’t it? Oh ... you have taken the right road, haven’t you – the one less traveled by, the one that leads to life?

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LOTTERY FOR EDUCATION?

John T. Polk II

“We couldn’t in good conscience take the money.” Gale Pooley, co-founder of North Star Public Charter School in Eagle, Idaho, on school officials who turned down \$10,000 from the Idaho State Lottery in order to set a moral example for students. North Star is the first Idaho school to turn down lottery funding” (“Quotables & ‘Toons,” page 16, *World* magazine, October 23, 2004).

COMMENTS: It’s refreshing to hear of those who withstand the mudslide of immorality throughout our society. NOT ALL MONEY IS ACCEPTABLE! Sin is oftentimes sheltered under the umbrella of: “It’s for a good cause.” How about it when a “good cause” doesn’t want such funding? What would sinners use for an excuse if more “good causes” rejected profits from pandering? A state-run lottery is a tax on poor people by appealing to their baser nature of covetousness (Luke 12:15-21). Gambling, itself, is an effort to avoid earning one’s living as God decreed (Genesis 3:17-19; Ephesians 4:28).

Under Moses’ Law, certainly God didn’t want sinfully-obtained money offered to Him. “You shall not bring the wages of a harlot or the price of a dog to the house of the LORD your God for any vowed offering, for both of these are an abomination to the LORD your God” (Deuteronomy 23:18 NKJV). Samaria was condemned by God for doing this very thing (Micah 1:7). The church of Christ should not have in it “anything that defiles or causes an abomination or a lie” (Revelation 21:27). Paul warned the Corinthians that “the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons” (I Corinthians 10:20). The cause of Christ and goodness will continue, not because it receives support by means it condemns, but because it is blessed by God (Psalm 37:25; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15).

A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE ON ABORTION

Daniel Page

Discussions of controversial subjects seem to saturate the media. In addition to debated political issues, social issues are also debated with intensity. Homosexual marriages,” the role of church and state, and other issues are playing a particularly high role in this year’s discussion. One issue that is sure to factor into this discussion is abortion.

In February of this year, Fox News published a story on the abortion debate. In support of abortion, the author wrote, “I am pro-choice in the full realization that it is a terrible thing to take a human life...I also realize that if a woman cannot say ‘everything under my skin is ‘me’ and mine to control,’ then there is no foundation for individual rights. If people have no right to control their own bodies, then such rights as freedom of speech become non-equiturs.” With little doubt, this is one of the most used arguments in defense of abortion. Those supporting abortion feel that everything under the skin of the woman’s body belongs to her, and, consequently, she has the right to do whatever she wants with “her body”. However, for those of us who want to honor our Creator and Lord, there is much more to this issue than what is represented in the article.

In 1 Corinthians 6:15-20, Paul addresses an issue that gets to the core of the abortion debate. At Corinth, some Christians were using their bodies in sinful ways. In response, Paul addresses sexual immorality and the ownership of one’s body. Paul writes, “Know ye not that our bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot? God forbid...Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body” (1 Corinthians 6:15,18). When we become Christians, we enter a very special relationship. This relationship involves a commitment to the Lord that incorporates both the spirit and the body. Paul urged the Corinthian Christians to consider their new life in Christ to be a membership with Christ. Paul describes this special relationship by saying, “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of god, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians

6:19-20). This passage instructs Christians to avoid sinning with their bodies because they have been bought with a price – the blood of Jesus Christ. Being bought with the blood of Christ, both our spirit and our body belong to the Lord. Therefore, Christians are no longer to think in terms of “everything under my skin is mine.” Instead, we surrender ownership of both our body and our spirit to the Lordship of Christ.

Secondly, our membership with Christ requires that we no longer think in selfish ways. Paul emphasizes this by teaching, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:4). As Christians, we are to avoid selfishness by allowing the well-being of others to play an important role in our decisions. Consequently, parents must not just think about their own goals and desires. They must consider others in their decisions, including their unborn child. Because it does not respect the life and well-being of unborn children, abortion is a selfish act, and must be avoided by Christians.

For Christians, the ability to look beyond ourselves is at the heart of the abortion debate. Biblical teachings recognize that life begins at conception (Jeremiah 1:5). Being under the ownership of Christ, we must respect the life of our unborn children. As many are discussing the role abortion should play in our society today, may we influence our culture as shining lights that reflect the high value of every human life. May God bless us as we do this through submission to His ownership of our souls, bodies, and our lives.

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A DEFINING MOMENT!

David G. Wilson

"I believe that this is clearly a defining moment in our nation's history. Lines have been drawn and the battle has begun."

We all have defining moments in our lives. We make decisions or events happen that determine the course in which our lives will take. I believe nations also have defining moments that shape their history. In our nation today a number of issues have brought spiritual matters into discussions and debate. Take for example the tragedy of 9/11 where we had to face the uncertainty of life and many were left searching for cause and reason and needing to be comforted. Most recently we have had the events of the halftime show of the Super Bowl (2004) in which obscenities were viewed by the general public, and we have the issue of homosexual marriages being fought in our courts. These matters alone should touch our hearts and cause many to consider what Christ has done for us. All of these issues and many more that I have not mentioned have brought spiritual matters to the conscience of the general public and have opened a door of opportunity to those who are spiritually minded to teach and proclaim the gospel. I am reminded of the words of Christ in Matthew 9:36-37 in which He states, "the harvest is truly plentiful, but the laborers are few."

There are those who would suggest that our nation has reached the point of no return in regard to moral issues. I beg to disagree.* The fact that moral issues are being debated shows there are many who still hold to the moral principles of the Bible. News reports have shown some members of Congress meeting with high-ranking officials in radio and television to express concerns about what was being shown and broadcast in their programming. Substantial increases in fines and penalties have been discussed as a means to deter some of the obscenities that are presently being aired. There is growing opposition and an outcry against same sex marriages. Some of our lawmakers are working to make a law that would define marriage as between one man and one woman.

I believe that this is clearly a defining moment in our nation's history. Lines have been drawn and the battle has begun. Satan will not sit idly by as steps are taken to regain higher moral standards. We should expect an all out war against the forces of evil in the days that are ahead. However, in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles and an impossible task, we should remember the words of Christ found in Matthew 19:26 when He states, "with God all things are possible."

The obvious question that each of us would ask would be, "What can I do?" Please allow me to make a few suggestions:

1. Contact our senators and congressmen and express to them that we expect them to uphold and support any laws that are morally right according to scripture. There

have been news reports in which some of our elected officials have made the comment on homosexual marriage that they don't agree with it but they do not believe the government should get involved in private issues. Brethren, that is political double talk aimed at trying to please all the voters without having to make a stand. The person that makes this statement is either afraid to make a stand or has no conviction to make a stand on. Either of these dispositions is unacceptable for a so-called leader of our government to have. Making a stand on moral issues is not forcing a state sponsored religion on anyone or taking anyone's rights away. However, not making a stand on moral issues will lead to the continued moral decay and ultimately to the demise of our nation. In Psalm 9:17 we read, "The wicked shall be turned into hell, all the nations that forget God."

2. Learn all you can about the candidates running for office in any election. Where do they stand on moral issues and are they willing to make a stand for them? Then let your voice be heard by voting.

3. Whenever possible, give support to scriptural organizations that promote moral standards and help fight legal battles.

4. Most importantly, PRAY. In I Timothy 2:1-3 we are instructed to pray for all men, for kings, and all who are in authority because this is pleasing to God. Make no mistake, God's kingdom will exist and continue to endure regardless of the direction that our nation goes. Christianity existed long before democracy and God deals with nations as He pleases (Daniel 4:25). But it is pleasing to God for us to pray for our nation and our leaders. I would like to encourage each one of us to make a habit of praying for our nation and our leaders every time we pray. "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (James 5:16).

Let us not miss this window of opportunity to answer the call that has been afforded us to spread the gospel of Christ and promote moral standards in these defining moments of our nation.

In closing, we all should understand that before we can change our nation, we must first look at ourselves and ask, "Are we right with God?" Have I obeyed the gospel and am I living the kind of life that the Lord wants me to live? This could be a defining moment in your life as well as in our nation's history.

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** Editor's Note: Brother Wilson's article was written before the 2004 election in November. The election results would seem to bear out his judgment as correct.*

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PLEASED WITH THE GLEANER

Dear Brethren, Just read a copy of the "*Gospel Gleaner*." I liked it and especially was pleased with the articles (Vol. 20 No. 2 April - June 2004). Would like to be on the mailing list. Thank you. God bless." Roy O. Goodmiller

Dear Brethren, In July I moved from State College, PA to Denison, TX. I am working with the church here in Denison. I would like to continue to be on your mailing list and receive the publication. Please make the following address change to your list. As always, thank you for your continued steadfastness to the Faith and your stand for doctrinal soundness." Michael Wilk, Denison, TX

Dear Sir, I recently visited a congregation and while there I picked up one of your *Gospel Gleaners*. I read it and I love it. Will you please add me to your mailing list." Mrs. Stella Grant, Charleston, S.C.

GLEANER HELPING IN WOMEN'S PRISON

Please put me on the *Gospel Gleaner*'s list to receive your publication. I am involved in a Bible study with women in prison - one of the ladies was converted in prison - she's a very strong Christian. She receives the *Gospel Gleaner* and

she passes it on for us to read. I enjoy it very much. I'm sending a small contribution. Thank you." Katie Thomason, Paragould, AR.

BUNDLE REQUESTED

"Brethren, I have enjoyed the *Gospel Gleaner* for quite some time. Your "Fresh Start" looks great! Is there any way I could get a bundle of 15-20 to pass out to interested brethren here?" John Brown, Flatwoods, KY

DOES NOT MISS AN ISSUE

"I don't want to miss an issue of the *Gospel Gleaner* if I can help it. My new mailing address is below." Nannie Philpot, Wartrace, TN

"Dear Bro. Dillon, It was so nice to receive the *Gospel Gleaner* again. I enjoy it so much and don't want to miss an issue...the *Gospel Gleaner* is worth a lot to me. Thank you so much." Nina Bottoms, Pocahontas, AR

PLEASE DELETE

"Gentlemen: I do not wish to subscribe now. Please delete my name from your mailing list. Thanks." Lowell S. Karrsker, Dongola, IL

"Please remove me from your mailing list. Thanks." David Brewer, Bremen, GA

HARD WORK APPRECIATED

"Bill, May God bless you for the hard work you are doing as His servant to His church both local and national." Jerry & Betty Phillips, Jonesboro, AR

PLEASE ADD

"Please add me to your mailing list for the *Gospel Gleaner*." Fay Smith, Hardy, AR

ANOTHER NAME SUBMITTED

"Please put me on the mailing list to receive "*The Gospel Gleaner*". Joe Dukes, Pell City, AL

ADDRESS CHANGE FOR CONGREGATION

“Bill, Please note our address change. We received the bundle of papers of the *Gospel Gleaner*. We are eternally grateful. Thanks for your help. I pray that the work is going well.”
Tom O’Neal, Hardy, AR

SMALL CONGREGATION REQUESTS GLEANER

“Dear Brethren, My name is Robert Rushmore. I have recently accepted the work in New Freeport, PA. We are a struggling congregation of 18 members. I would like to begin receiving your paper on a monthly basis for the edification of the members here. We would probably only need ten papers.” Robert Rushmore, New Freeport, PA

GLEANER OFFER IS UNBEATABLE

“Thank you for the opportunity to receive the fruit of your labors for the cause of Christ. It is appreciated very much. I shall look forward to your publication to enhance my quest for truth and the sharing of the same. Your time is appreciated and your offer is unbeatable. Thank you for offering these materials at no charge.” Herb Carnagey, Sun City West, AZ

THANKS FOR SENDING GOSPEL GLEANER

“Thanks so much for sending the *Gospel Gleaner*. My husband enjoyed it so much. He died of cancer June 21st. He would pass it on to our preacher, so no use sending it any more. I may be moving soon. So thanks for sending it to him for so long.” Dorothy Lewis, Poplar Bluff, MO

GLEANER IS GOOD SOURCE

“Thanks for the *Gospel Gleaner*. It is a very good source of information. God bless the work.” Charles Maxwell, Cookeville, TN

CONTRIBUTIONS COMING

“This is a request to be placed on your mailing list of *Gospel Gleaner*. Enclosed is a small contribution toward expenses for the publication. Lord willing, further contributions will be forthcoming. We are members of the Washington Avenue Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas.” Harold Baugh, Jonesboro, AR

GLEANER IS ON THE RIGHT TRACK

“Dear Mr. Dillon: The publication of the ‘*Gospel Gleaner*’, to what I have read and what I have asked about, it is a publication that anyone, should be able to sit down and read. And hopefully a spark will ignite in their soul. And they will want to understand more of what the inspired men of God wrote down in scriptures for all man kind. That hopefully the translation will be one, that has stayed in line with true meaning of the original text of each author of what we all call the Holy Bible. Am so happy to know there are fellow Christians that not only want to do things in the right way, but the spiritual way. That you have found this medium is not only giving fellow Christians encouragement, but sound doctrine and foremost the truth...” Wade Miller, Mt. Pleasant, TX

WANTS BACK ON MAILING LIST

“Brethren – Please add me to your mailing list. At one time I received the GG regularly, but two moves evidently has interrupted it. Also, please send me some info on how I may obtain back issues. Many thanks, Grace & peace.” McGarvey Ice, Smyrna, TN

PLEASED WITH OUR APPROACH

“Dear Bro. Dillon, I am terribly remiss in my expression of gratitude for the work you all are doing. Have been “laid-up” with back injury for the past four months, and have some arm trouble, making writing difficult. Am especially pleased with your approach to the current issues (election in general) and would appreciate very much your adding three more names to your mailing list.” Lucille Krantz, Ashland City, TN

INADVERTENTLY DROPPED

“Dear Bill, I think I may have been inadvertently dropped from the mailing list for the paper, due to my move to Center Point in Birmingham. Below is my address; I want to continue receiving the paper...” David W. Hester, Pinson, AL

PLEASE SEND GLEANER

“Would you please send me your monthly paper entitled the *Gospel Gleaner*? Thank you very much.” Mary Ellen Friend, Ravenswood, WV

LIKES GOOD SOUND MATERIAL

Friends, Yes, I'd be pleased to read good, sound material as the *Gospel Gleaner*". Phil Glover, Pulaski, TN

ADD MY NAME

Dear Brothers in Christ: Please find check enclosed for \$15.00. Please add my name to your list." Edward M. Kimble, St. Louis, MO

ENJOYS THE PAPER

I really enjoy the paper! Keep up the good work." Hayden Childs, Haleyville, AL

Note: The *Gospel Gleaner* and its staff are grateful for our entire readership, whether they respond in writing or not. We pray the publication to be a blessing to all.

The *Gospel Gleaner* depends upon the generosity of its readership to continue publication. Why not make a contribution today?

BIBLE QUIZ

1. Who was released from prison by an angel?
2. Who advised her husband to steal a vineyard?
3. Concerning what man did Paul say, "He did me much evil"?
4. How long did Job live after his trouble?

1. Peter (Acts 12:6-9)
2. Jezebel (1 Kings 21:15)
3. Alexander the coppersmith (2 Timothy 4:14)
4. 140 years (Job 42:16)

CONTRIBUTIONS RECEIVED DURING THE PAST QUARTER

1. Anonymous , Memphis, TN	500.00
2. Arlington Church of Christ, McMinnville, TN	75.00
3. Cushing Church of Christ, Cushing, OK	25.00
4. Church of Christ (Pierson St.), Three Rivers, MI.....	20.00
5. Martha J. Kimble, St. Louis, MO	15.00
6. Jeffrey Kelley, Thomasville, NC	25.00
7. Anonymous, Germantown, TN.....	250.00
8. John Dale, Murray, KY	25.00
9. Lillian Miller, Livingston, TN	25.00
10. M/M Doug Cannon, Livingston, TN	50.00
11. Eva & Marshall Johnson, LaFayette, GA	25.00
12. Walter Buckley, Maynard, AR	25.00
13. Dollie Paschall, Puryear, TN	25.00
14. Harold Baugh, Jonesboro, AR	25.00
15. Charles Maxwell, Cookeville, TN	10.00
16. Gracie L. Orange, Hermitage, TN	15.00
17. Jack Richardson, Ash Flat, AR	15.00
18. James D. Cox, Tustin, CA	100.00
19. James W. Berry, Montgomery, AL	20.00
20. Charles R. "Chic" Gunter, Johnson City, TN	100.00
21. Cushing Church of Christ, Cushing, OK	25.00
22. James D. Cox, Tustin, CA	100.00
23. M/M Hubert Plumlee, Oklahoma City, OK	40.00
24. Wade Miller, Mt. Pleasant, TX	100.00
25. Nina Bottoms, Pocahontas, AR	20.00
26. Katie Thomason, Paragould, AR	25.00
27. Antioch Church of Christ, Blue Springs, MS	100.00
28. Jerry Phillips, Jonesboro, AR	20.00
29. Fay Smith, Hardy, AR	10.00
30. Cotter Church of Christ, Cotter, AR	150.00
31. Garnet Stephens, Dresden, TN	20.00
32. Pendleton Church of Christ, Pendleton, IN	225.00
33. Melvin & Helen Ferguson, Obion, TN	400.00
34. Mrs. Lloyd S. Krantz, Ashland City, TN	50.00
35. Arlington Church of Christ, McMinnville, TN	75.00
36. James D. Cox, Tustin, CA	100.00
37. Frank & Martha Williams, Seminole, OK	25.00
TOTAL	2,855.00

WISE SAYINGS

“Current church growth theory has opened the door wide for (all sorts of) antics. It sometimes seems as if P.T. Barnum is the main roll model for many practitioners of church growth these days.”

-John MacArthur

“There is no need to be worried by facetious people who try to make the Christian hope of ‘heaven’ ridiculous by saying they do not want ‘to spend eternity playing harps’. The answer to such people is that if they cannot understand books written for grown-ups, they should not talk about them. All the scriptural imagery (harps, crowns, gold, etc.) is, of course, a merely symbolical attempt to express the inexpressible. People who take these symbols literally might as well think that when Christ told us to be like doves He meant that we were to lay eggs.”

-C.S. Lewis

“Evil is the real problem in the hearts and minds of men... it is easier to denature plutonium than to denature the evil spirit of man.”

-Albert Einstein

“God is the true origin of the species.”

-Don Garlington

WORKERS FOR THE HARVEST

John Mark Dillon

It seems, sometimes, the most of the work done in the church and for the church is done by just one person or by a small group. Everyone else seems to sit there passively. This should not be, but it is. What can be done to remedy the situation? Very little, to be honest. The ones who do work must accept this and learn to do more with less. You can't control others but you can control yourself. You can learn to budget your time better. You can prepare yourself to be self-reliant. You can look through the Bible for examples of people who stood alone. David stood alone against Goliath (1 Samuel 17). Job stood alone against his friends. The prophets often had to stand alone. Paul was with a small group during his travels. God's work has always been done through a few quality individuals. Understand, you are working for God. God will reward you though the church might not. A few quality individuals can have a huge impact if they learn to work smart. Take some time to learn what you yourself, can do for God. Matthew 9:37. *“Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few.”*

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GOSPEL GLEANER

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