

GOSPEL GLEANER

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ANOTHER TESTAMENT OF JESUS CHRIST-TRUTH OR FICTION?

Ernest S. Underwood



Some questions: Do you believe in the Almighty God of the Bible? Do you believe in Jesus Christ as the Incarnate Son of God? Do you believe that the Bible is word for word and plenary (completely) inspired by the Holy Spirit of God? Do you believe that God never lies, and that He never inspired the writers of the Bible to lie?

If you give a "Yes" answer to any of these questions, then there is no way that you can believe in and accept the television advertisement of a rather popular religion that proclaims that their book is "Another Testament Of Jesus Christ."

First of all, this so-called testament did not come into existence until less than two hundred years ago, and was written by a person with a less than desirable character. Before it was "streamlined" by later editors it contained so many grammatical errors as to show that it was written by a person who had very little knowledge of the word of God, but one with a lot of silly imagination. When its author wanted another wife he conveniently had a "word from God" to his number one wife telling her in essence to keep her mouth shut and accept that other wife.

However, aside from these and other ridiculous things that are found in the book, the book itself is an abomination to God. Read the following Scriptures from the King James Version of the Bible: "I marvel that ye are

so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-9). Does this sound like God intended to give "another testament"? Again: "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" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). More than eighteen hundred years before the "another testament" was penned, God said that His inspired word would completely equip man for every good work, whether it was doctrine, instruction, reproof, or correction. Did God make a mistake, or did He lie? If His word is inspired as the text claims, then if He centuries later gave "another testament," He misled and deceived those to whom the above passage was written.

Notice again: "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:3). Question: Did God really give us "all things" or did He not? Does one today need, or can he

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I suppose that many of us feel inadequate to some of the tasks of life. We feel as though we do not “measure up.” There is plenty of human inadequacy to go around. I rarely feel sufficient to the giant task of being “dad” to my children. There is never a time that I step into the pulpit that I feel equal to the work of preaching “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” Never do I teach a class but that I feel that someone else is better suited to the job. I am certain that the other aspects of the “work of an evangelist,” that is, the visiting, the counseling, the ministering are all marked by human inadequacy on my part.

How many of us miss “the peace that passes understanding” simply because we don’t think we can possibly be “good enough” to go to heaven? We are reminded that, “There is none righteous, no, not one,” “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:10, 23). In his book, *How Do I Know I’m Saved: A Study of God’s Grace*, Norman L. Bales noted that, “When Christians who have been faithful throughout their lives feel compelled to ask, ‘Do you think I’m good enough for God to let me into heaven?’ then it’s time to take another look at the emphasis in our teaching programs.”

Is it the Lord’s will for us that we go about burdened down with inadequacies about our spiritual lives and uncertainties about heaven? How can it be? Especially when he says, “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:35-36). Were it not for the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God we might very well lose our confidence in the mire of self-debasement.

Where would we be without God’s *grace*? Grace is the love and favor of God toward man. If we had to stand before God, either now or in judgment, on the merits of our own perfection we would have no strength to stand at all. We can have no confidence at all that we by our own goodness are at all what God would have us to be. Isaiah wrote, “But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags” (64:6). Thankfully, we stand sure upon the gift of God’s grace—Christ (2 Corinthians 8:9); by the word of his grace—the gospel (Acts 20:24), and the offer of salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

Where would we be without God’s *mercy*? Mercy is compassion for the undeserving. Vine observes that “it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.” We certainly have the need of God’s mercy (Titus 3:5). God certainly has resources adequate to meet the need of inadequate humanity. We are powerless without the mercy of God (Ephesians 2:4-7).

Where would we be without God’s *forgiveness*? Forgiveness is where God “sends away” our sins. In keeping God’s conditions of faith, repentance, confession, baptism and faithful living there is no limit to God’s forgiveness.—10820 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103





It seems at times people go to extremes and fail to come to an understanding of the truth on matters. This happens at times concerning the subject of God's commandments. There are those who think that God's commandments are too difficult while there are others who feel they are too simple. Let us consider two Old Testament examples of this kind of

thinking.

First, consider the people in the days of Malachi. God had given specific instructions about the sacrifices that were to be offered to him. He demanded the best to be sacrificed to him and rightfully so because he is God. However, the people and even the priest were involved in polluting what was to be offered to Jehovah (Malachi 1:6-14). Instead of offering the best of their flocks they offered the blind, the lame and sick. Their reasoning behind this was they considered the commandments of God a "weariness" (Verse 13). In researching the background of the word "weariness" one will find the idea of trouble. It became a burden or trouble for them to do what God had asked in the way that he desired. They felt it was too much to ask of them and was too difficult. God promised to curse them if they did not change.

Secondly, consider the man Naaman. Naaman was captain of the host of the king of Syria (2 Kings 5:1). This man was a leper. A maid who waited on Naaman's wife told her of a prophet of God who could help Naaman with his leprosy. Naaman went to see Elisha, the man of God. Elisha sent a messenger out to Naaman and told him to go dip in the Jordan seven times and then he would be healed. Naaman was angry because he thought that Elisha should have met him and done some magnificent act to heal him. In other words, it was too simple for him. Naaman wanted something spectacular to take place. Thankfully he finally agreed and was cleansed.

People today often have the same type of thinking as those in the previous examples. Yet God in his word tells us, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3). The Psalmist greatly exalts the wondrous

nature of God's commandments (Psalm 19:7-11). Jesus bids all to come to him because, "his yoke is easy" and his "burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). Rather than trying to reason one way or the other as to why we should not obey God's commandments, let us simply follow his loving guidance and enjoy the blessings he has promised.—1037 West South Street, Neosho, MO 64850

WHY WE DON'T HEAR OTHERS

If you want to listen so that you really hear what others say, make sure you're not a:

Mindreader: You'll hear little or nothing as you think, "What is this person really thinking or feeling?"

Rehearser: Your mental tryouts for "Here's what I'll say next" tune out the speaker.

Filterer: Some call this selective listening—hearing only what you want to hear.

Dreamer: Drifting off during a face-to-face conversation can lead to an embarrassing, "What did you say?" or, "Could you repeat that?"

Identifier: If you refer everything you hear to your experience, you probably didn't really hear what was said.

Comparer: When you get side-tracked assessing the messenger, you're sure to miss the message.

Derailer: Changing the subject too quickly soon tells others you're not interested in anything they have to say.

Sparrer: You hear what's said but quickly belittle it or discount it. That puts you in the same class as the derailer.

Placater: Agreeing with everything you hear just to be nice or to avoid conflict does not mean you're a good listener.

Source: The Writing Lab, Department of English, Purdue University Press, 1356 Heavilon Hall, West Lafayette, IN 47907

"Be swift to hear..." —James 1:19



THE GREAT TRAGEDY OF BEING LOST

Guy F. Hester



Of all the tragedies that men and women face in this life, the greatest is the tragedy of living and dying in a lost condition. There is coming a day when all who are lost will come to realize this fact, but then it will be too late. This will be the day of judgment. "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

If a person dies lost, having never been "baptized into Christ" (Galatians 3:27), or if he dies as an unfaithful child of God, he will live in eternal regret. This is indeed a sobering thought that most certainly deserves our careful attention.

We want to notice a few reasons why, if you die lost, it will be the greatest tragedy, and why you will wish in eternity that you had obeyed the Lord.

FIRST, YOU WILL LIVE IN ETERNAL REGRET BECAUSE OF THE SEPARATION. You will be separated from God, eternally! We read in Isaiah 59:1-2, "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." This separation from God is not only in this life but will continue on into eternity. Just think, you can never contact God. Doesn't that thought scare you?

Not only will you be separated from God but you will be separated from all good, moral, pure people. Hell is the habitation of the defiled. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and

brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). The ungodly of all ages will be there, they will be your neighbors; you will be in fellowship with them. Think about it!

You will be separated from your friends, relatives, and loved ones, who "die in the Lord" (Revelation 14:13). You will be separated from the gospel "which is the power of God unto salvation" (Romans 1:16). You will not have another chance to obey it. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:8-9). "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:48). By coming to the Lord through obedience to the gospel, you will not have to be eternally separated from him. Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). Again in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

IF YOU DIE LOST IT WILL BE THE GREATEST TRAGEDY BECAUSE OF THE PAIN. Pain from the torment of eternal hell fire! The rich man was in torment in the flames of hell. "And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame" (Luke 16:23-24). Listen carefully to the words of Jesus in Matthew 25:41, "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels."

Then, stressing the greatness of the pain of hell, there will be the pain of darkness and the gnashing of teeth. "And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 25:30). Darkness drives people insane. Just think about the blackness of darkness forever. It is no wonder that people

in hell will be continually gritting and grinding their teeth!

There will be the pain of no rest. It feels so good to rest when you are tired. But there will be no rest in hell. "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night" (Revelation 14:11). Just think of never having the opportunity to rest! And there will be no end because the worm dies not and the fire will not be put out, "is not quenched" (Mark 9:44). This brings us to our next point.

TO LIVE AND DIE LOST WILL BE THE GREATEST TRAGEDY BECAUSE OF THE DURATION OF HELL. Hell is eternal. Jesus said, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46). It is impossible for the human mind to fully comprehend the meaning of eternity. Many illustrations could be given but they would all fall short. Eternity is time without end. You will have time on your hands to reflect on past life and opportunities. To also wish, as you are tortured forever, that you had obeyed the Gospel and lived the Christian life. We often talk about "spending eternity," but you can't "spend eternity." Eternity is, and always will be!

IT WILL BE THE GREATEST TRAGEDY BECAUSE OF THE LOSS. You will have lost your soul, your most priceless possession. Notice what Jesus says about the value of the soul "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36-37).

You will have lost your purpose for being born: to glorify God in your body (1 Corinthians 6:20). To obey the Lord and live eternally with the redeemed, which is God's desire for you (2 Peter 3:9).

You will have lost heaven, that beautiful home of the soul. The place that Jesus has prepared for you (John 14:1-3).

Most of all you will have lost all hope. We are saved by our hope in Christ (Romans 8:24). We often say, "As long as there is life, there is hope." But this will not apply in hell. Over the door of hell is written – NO HOPE!

We have noticed four major reasons why the greatest tragedy of time and eternity is for a person to die lost.

1. Because of the separation.

2. Because of the pain.
3. Because of the duration.
4. Because of the loss.

If you are wise you will obey the Gospel today. Eternity will be a time of praise, joy and happiness forevermore if you die a faithful child of God.—
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THE PERFECT CHURCH

(Author Unknown)

I think that I shall never see,
A Church that's all it ought to be;

A church whose members never stray,
Beyond the straight and narrow way;

A church that has no empty pews,
Whose preacher never has the blues;

A church whose deacons always "deak,"
And none is proud, and all are meek;

Where gossips never peddle lies,
Or make complaints or criticize;

Where all are always sweet and kind,
And to all others' faults are blind;

Such perfect churches there may be,
But none of them are known to me;

But still, we'll work and pray and plan,
To make this one the best we can.

From *The Preacher's PC*

Gospel Gazette Online
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DID JESUS MAKE INTOXICATING WINE?

Allen Webster



“And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it. When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine...” (John 2:8-9).

Jesus did turn water into wine (John 2:1-11), but did He make water into *intoxicating* wine or merely sweet grape juice? The Greek word for “wine” (*oinos*) is a generic term which can mean either fermented or unfermented wine. It is the word most commonly translated “wine” (of the 29 times “wine” is found in the New Testament, 28 are *oinos*).

An examination of New Testament passages also shows that *oinos* may mean either wine or grape juice, and only the context can show which. In Ephesians 5:18, the phrase “Be not drunk with wine” (*oinos*) refers to alcoholic wine, whereas in Revelation 19:13-15 the reference to Christ treading out the winepress must refer to grape juice.

We must determine which translation fits the context, suits what is revealed about the character of Jesus, and that which does not make Him violate principles and precepts of the Bible.

“It must have been intoxicating because it was called the ‘best wine.’” This assumes that the more intoxicating a beverage is the better it is. In Bible times, they did not have sugar as we do and thus were far more interested, generally, in having a sweet drink than in alcoholic exhilaration. Today this is reversed since we have so many sweet drinks. The process of fermentation destroys the sugar (sweetness) in the juices of the grape by turning it into alcohol. They looked for ways to preserve the quality of sweetness in their drinks and prevent fermentation.

Wine drawn off before pressing is called “free run” and is better than “press wine.” Pliny, Plutarch, and Horace (ancient writers) mention that the best wine was that which was harmless and innocent. Pliny says “good wine” is that which is destitute of spirit.

Does it fit the character of Jesus to say He made alcoholic wine? Consider some common sense questions.

Would Jesus do something that would harm His body? His New Testament says, “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” (cf., 1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Brain cells die with each drink.

Would Jesus do something that would cause Him to lose control of His mind? His apostle wrote, “Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Romans 6:13).

Would Jesus do something that might cause Him to harm others while under its influence? He told us, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

Would Jesus set an example, which, if followed, could be harmful to others? (cf., Matthew 6:13-16). We must remember that intoxicating wine intoxicates! (cf., Greek *toxikon*, poison). It contains a poison (ethyl alcohol) which can cause death unless sufficiently diluted. It is a depressant drug. Can you picture Jesus handing out little packs of crack cocaine?

Would Jesus intoxicate another? If so, He violated the Old Testament: “Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!” (Habakkuk 2:15).

If Jesus made intoxicating wine and give it to others, He sinned. If He sinned, He cannot be our Savior, for a sinner cannot be a sacrifice for sin. This interpretation of John 2 impugns the character of Jesus and must be rejected!

Someone says, “The text implies that they had ‘well drunk,’ so they must have been drinking alcohol.” Someone might reply that this inasmuch says that they were drunk. Granted, in other places the word (*methusthosin* from *methuo*) is sometimes translated “drunken” (Matthew 24:49), “drunkard” (1 Corinthians 5:10), and “drunken” (Revelation 17:6, figuratively). But the same word was used in the Greek translation of the Old

Testament (Septuagint) as “*abundantly* satisfied” (Psalm 36:8), “*waterest the ridges thereof abundantly*” (Psalm 65:10), and “*my sword hath drunk its fill*” (Isaiah 34:5 ASV; cf., Isaiah 34:7; 55:10; 58:11).

If the pro-drinker insists that it means they were drunken, it proves too much for his cause, for then they would have been unable to tell whether the wine was better or worse (cf. 2:10). Further, this would have sinless Jesus making 134 gallons of intoxicating wine for those who were already drunk. Is that the Savior you serve?

Jesus made wine, but not alcohol.—P.O. Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

THE WAY OF ESCAPE

Curtis A. Cates

The apostle Paul warned of the very real danger of falling from grace (1 Corinthians 10:12), as did the Israelites in the wilderness. In verse 13, he wrote, “There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear [as is common to man, KJV]: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it.” No temptation is irresistible, nor is any person’s temptation unique to himself. Hebrews 11 is abundant evidence of persons successfully enduring the temptations and trials that are “common to man” (Hebrews 12:1-2). There is a way to escape any and all temptations, provided by a gracious God. The Devil cannot overwhelm us; we cannot say “the Devil made me do it.”

WHERE IS THE WAY OF ESCAPE? The way of escape is in Jesus Christ; “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). In Him is the way of righteousness. All of us can enter and walk the highway of holiness (Isaiah 35:8). Primitive Christianity, the divine pattern and cause of Christ, is called “the Way,” which Saul persecuted “unto the death” (Acts 22:4); he soon would be permitted by grace to enter “the Way” (Acts 22:16).

FROM WHAT CAN WE ESCAPE? Through God’s grace (Titus 2:11-14), Paul stated, we can escape temptation by avoiding ungodliness and worldly lusts. Sin brings immediate separation (Isaiah 59:1-2), and, ultimately,

eternal separation from God the second death (James 1:13-15; Revelation 20:11-15; Romans 6:23). But, thanks be to God that we can be delivered from every evil work and transgression (2 Timothy 4:18). God has provided a way of escape from the defilement of sin, the pollutions of the world (2 Peter 2:20, 22), as well as from error and those defiled thereby (2:18). And, how great is the escape from “the judgment of hell” (Matthew 23:33)!

BY WHAT MEANS CAN WE ESCAPE? For one to escape, he must have knowledge; “...they have escaped...through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 2:20; cf., Romans 10:13-17; Titus 2:11-12). But, mere knowledge is not enough; one must obey Christ. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not when they refused him that warned them on earth, much more shall not we escape who turn away from him that warneth from heaven” (Hebrews 12:25). We must obey the gospel and continue to seek the means of escape. We must use the means provided by the Lord through His Word (1 Corinthians 10:13; Acts 20:32). And, we must watch and pray: “But watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to escape all these things that shall come to pass and to stand before the Son of man” (Luke 21:36; cf., 1 Corinthians 16:13).

WHY WILL MANY NOT ESCAPE? Very regrettably, most will not seek to escape but will refuse the Christ (Hebrews 12:25; cf., Luke 6:46; Matthew 7:21-23; John 6:66). Sadly, countless precious souls “neglect so great a salvation” (Hebrews 2:1-3). They will not come to the feast (Luke 14:15-24). Others are hypocrites, and thus will not escape eternal punishment for sin (Matthew 23:33). Still others are deceived (2 Peter 2:18). Dear friend, will you seek the way of escape graciously provided by a loving God? The abundant entrance into the eternal mansions awaits those who thus escape sin and its consequences.—3950 Forest Hill Irene Road, Memphis, TN 38125

THINK ABOUT IT

There was a flour miller who, after a day's work went into the commissary. Everywhere he went in the store he left little traces of flour. So, every life we touch we influence to some degree, leaving upon it some traces of ourselves.



WHAT ABOUT "HATE CRIMES"?

John T. Polk II



What is the difference between crimes and "hate crimes"?

By designating a separate category for "hate crimes" the Government may by-pass the U.S. Constitution's 5th Amendment, protection of a citizen against "double jeopardy" or being tried more than once for a crime, and resulting in multiple punishments for the same offense.

THE BIBLE SHOWS ALL SIN STEMS FROM HATRED.

The Bible makes no such distinction between sin and hate sins, for it deals in moral absolutes and human errors. All sin is "hate" sin! In Mark 12:29-31, "Jesus answered him, 'The first of all the commandments is: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (Cf., Deuteronomy 6:4-5; Leviticus 19:18; Romans 13:8-9).

GOVERNMENT HAS NO HATRED PREVENTION PLAN.

Crimes denoted as "hate crimes" (usually defined in "politically correct" terms instead of moral right-and-wrong) can bring about a Federal prosecution and punishment in addition to the State and/or local prosecution. During President Clinton's Administration, Congress defined a hate crime as:

"a crime in which the defendant intentionally selects a victim, or in the case of a property crime, the property that is the object of the crime, because of the actual or perceived race, color, national origin, ethnicity, gender, disability, or sexual orientation of any person" [Section 280003 (a) of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (28 U.S.C. 994 note)].

When this passed, where were those who said they should not legislate morality? Was this not a "moral judgment against specific crimes?" When this passed, where were the groups claiming to uphold "individual's rights?" Does this not violate the 5th Amendment which guaranteed some individual rights? When this passed, did this mean no other crime involves hatred?

Unfortunately, legally the "hate crime" label becomes little more than an opportunity for government to doubly prosecute some people for some crimes, but makes absolutely no provision for teaching "a more excellent way" of love (cf., 1 Corinthians 12:31-13:13).

Paul adds this inspired comment: "Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:10). Since all of God's commandments are aimed at eliciting love of God and mankind, and since "love does no harm" to anyone, then obeying God's law through Jesus Christ today hurts no one. Sin by definition is "lawlessness" (1 John 3:4), "all unrighteousness" (1 John 5:17), and is that which causes everyone practicing it to be "living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Titus 3:3). The world either loves its own or hates those converted to Christ (John 15:19). Hatred is the opposite of love! God's Law is certainly directed at hateful human hearts who are: lawless and insubordinate, ungodly and sinners, unholy and profane, murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, manslayers, fornicators, sodomites, kidnappers, liars, perjurers; and for them to correct their lives and "love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith" and to know "that the law is good if one uses it lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:5-11). Jesus taught His disciples to "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you" (Luke 6:27-28). He thus reverses sinful ways.

Roman Catholicism, the Church of England, and all other self-styled "defenders of the faith," who have taught violence "in the name of Christ" are perverters of truth who teach the Devil's ways and are contrary to Jesus

Christ (John 18:36; Titus 3:1-8).

Islam, and similar cult religions, are based upon hatred for their enemies, offering little or no justification for forgiveness, and teach their children so! Signs on kindergarten walls of the Palestinian group Hamas say "The children of the kindergarten are the martyrs of tomorrow." "In return for 'martyrdom,' Hamas tells the youths that their families will be financially compensated, their pictures will be posted in schools and mosques, and they will earn a special place in heaven" (page 80, from "Wired for Death" by Jack Kelley, *Reader's Digest*, October, 2001, Pleasantville, NY). Agreeing with a common misunderstanding of Judaism's "eye for an eye, and tooth for a tooth" Mohammed's *Qu'ran* (sura 2) taught:

"Fight for the sake of Allah those that fight against you, but do not attack them first. Allah does not love the aggressors. Kill them wherever you find them...Fight against them until idolatry is no more and Allah's religion reigns supreme. But if they mend their ways, fight none except the evil-doers."

WORLDLY PEOPLE HAVE TWO WAYS TO DEAL WITH HATRED.

Worldly people disguise hatred by calling it: road rage, getting even, domestic abuse, date rape, telling someone off, suing everyone in sight, sexual harassment, soaking the rich, or disrespect of parents and all authorities. Sometimes it's called "celebrating" if violent rioting breaks out in cities when their professional athletic team wins, and in Oakland, California when their team lost the Super Bowl in 2003. Win or lose, sinners will make an excuse to violently break loose with their hatred.

Worldly people also disdain, i.e. pour contempt on, Jesus Christ and all the good He taught, but then He said in John 15:17-21, "These things I command you, that you love one another. If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A

servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know Him who sent Me." Everyone who finds fault with Jesus and His way proves he/she has a heart full of hatred and needs the forgiveness only Jesus provides.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO REMEDIES FOR HATRED.

Physical Death: According to Solomon, love, hatred, and envy all go to the grave when someone dies (Ecclesiastes 9:5-6). Unless those living ("under the sun") continue the grievances, each generation should start anew.

Spiritual Life: When a sinner repents of sins (thus turning from hatred) and is buried by baptism into the death of the Righteous One, he/she may arise to walk with a new heart (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-7). This new Christian must learn "above all these things [to] put on love, which is the bond of perfection" (Colossians 3:14).

Right preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the right way will produce the right result in a sinner's life, helping the world get right with God and men (Mark 16:15-16).—125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

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| Sunday Morning Worship | 10:30 |
| Sunday Evening Worship | 5:00 |
| Wednesday Evening Bible Study | 7:00 |

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Scott Perry, Associate Minister
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ARE THERE CHRISTIANS IN THE DENOMINATIONS ?

Rob L. Whitacre



Recently, in a job interview my father-in-law asked a prospective preacher the following question, "Are there Christians in the denominations?" The preacher replied, "yes." An answer like this from a new Christian or even one who is immature I can understand, but not from a Gospel preacher.

Concerning this question please note the following facts:

First, the very essence of "denominationalism" is sinful. I am not only undenominational, non-denominational, but I am wholly anti-denominational. The word means a part of the whole. It contends the church is only part of the kingdom of heaven and not the whole. At its root is divided Christianity. It is contrary to the prayer of unity offered by Jesus in John 17. It cannot be harmonized with the unity of Ephesians 4.

Second, denominations do not worship in "spirit and truth" (John 4:24). They practice vain worship (Matthew 15:8-9), ignorant worship (Acts 17:23) and will worship (Colossians 2:23). They add to, take from and substitute man's will for God's command, implications and examples (Galatians 1:6-9; Revelation 22:18-19).

Third, denominations do not teach the plan of salvation. They do not teach one must be baptized for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38), to wash away their sins (Acts 22:16), to be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21), to be a member of the church (1 Corinthians 12:13), to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:5), to be buried with Christ (Romans 6:3-4), to put on Christ (Galatians 3:27), to obey the command of the Christ (Acts 10:48) and to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15).

Fourth, denominations do not uphold God's Word as the inspired, inherent and complete will of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17). They turn the precepts of God into a democratic system by voting on both doctrinal and moral issues. They rely upon prayer books, manuals, disciplines, confessions of faith, catechisms and presbyteries for their instructions.

Fifth, denominations are not organized according to the New Testament pattern (Philippians 1:1). Denominations have deacons who do the work of elders, women who serve as deacons, add councils, delegates,

presidents, cardinals and other unscriptural positions. They do not obey the New Testament blueprint of elders, deacons, members and preachers (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1).

"One cannot be taught error and obey the truth." Obedience is not an accident, "...but an answer of a good conscience toward God" (1 Peter 3:21). New Testament baptism requires repentance "for the remission of sins" (Acts 2:38). Anyone baptized into a denomination would first have to repent of its evils and therefore sever his line of fellowship with it.

Can a Christian be a member of a denomination? NO, absolutely NOT! A Christian, by definition, is a member of the church of Christ. Any Christian who would forsake the Lord's assembly to worship and fellowship with those who are out of Christ can no longer claim the pure and pristine name of Christ. They are erring children of God. If there are Christians outside of the church, then why did Jesus give his life for her (Ephesians 5:25)?

Any preacher who would teach and preach there are Christians in denominations should never be allowed to enter the pulpit. I commend my father-in-law for his courage to ask the hard questions, but more so for his reply to this grievous error, "As far as I'm concerned this interview is over." He certainly followed the advice of Titus who said, "For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake" (Titus 1:10-11). Oh, for men who would stand up for Jesus our Savior.- PO Box 37, Hillsboro, TN 37342.

SPANISH ISSUE PLANNED

We are anticipating a Spanish edition of *Gospel Gleaner* for the third quarter of 2003. The Spanish issue will contain the same material as our regular English issue. We plan to send the Spanish edition to those congregations that are involved in Hispanic evangelism. Let us know how many issues you can use and we will send you a bundle. It is **subscription-free**. Please contact us at *Gospel Gleaner*, PO Box 345, Mabelvale, AR 72103, or, email us at mabelval@cei-net.—Dennis Gullledge, *Editor*

WHO CAN EVANGELIZE?

Bill Dillon



Jesus knew the growth of His church was dependent upon every member of His body being mobilized to teach, preach, and reach the lost. As far as is known, not a single priest or Levite was among the originally selected apostles. Jesus used ordinary disciples as couriers of the message of saving grace.

One of the most astonishing statements uttered by the Lord was, "...the labourers are few" (Matthew 9:37). The priests in Jerusalem were so numerous they took turns performing temple ceremonies, yet Jesus said, "...the labourers are so few." The entire tribe of Levi was dedicated to religious services, yet Jesus said, "...the labourers are few."

If ever the world is going to be won to Christ, it will be done by the devout disciples in the pews. Much of the church today has become too "professional." We have promoted the "let-the-preacher-do-it-all" syndrome to the point of discouraging ordinary Christians from using their diverse talents to the glory of God.

The attitude of every Christian must be, "my business is winning souls and I work at my job to pay expenses." Satan's subtle strategy has always been to convince common believers that mission work is so complicated and winning souls so complex that only university trained experts (preachers) could do it. Are wars so complex that only generals can fight?

May God give us grace to see the fields are still white unto harvest and labourers are indeed few. Let us pray that every Christian be involved in "the Kingdom's sure increase" both on foreign mission fields as well as evangelistic efforts at home so that "the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Habakkuk 2:14).

Every Christian, every day, evangelizing in every way is the spirit we are to have if the gospel is to be shared with the lost world.—PO Box 9, Hickory Ridge, AR 72347

SLANDER

Bobby Key

The Spirit teaches that slander is an awful sin. "Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer" (Psalm 101:5). Slander is falsehood or unproven rumor maliciously told for the purpose of injuring the influence or reputation of another.

Christian people should be careful about repeating something they have heard about another. Much of our trouble in the church today is the result of this very thing. Reputations have been destroyed by slander. We are better than the buzzard that is always hungry for a carcass. The slanderer usually has bitterness and hatred in the heart and an untruth on the tongue.

We would do well to study about Gashmu in the book of Nehemiah. Slander was used in trying to stop Nehemiah from building the walls around Jerusalem. "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 heathen, and Gashmu saith it, that thou and the Jews think to rebel: for which cause thou buildest the wall, that thou mayest be their king, according to these words" (Nehemiah 6:5-6). How many times have you heard "it is reported," "they say," and the like? What Gashmu said was not true. He was engaged in the sin of slander.

Because one is quoted as authority does not necessarily make him reliable! Accusing is not proving. Men and women of honor will not believe and repeat every rumor they read or hear. A person's reputation is a fragile thing and is easily damaged. That which takes a lifetime to build may be destroyed in a matter of hours.

Those who follow Christ are told "Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready to every good work, To speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, [but] gentle, showing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:1-2). When one comes to you with an evil report about another brother in Christ, ask for proof from two or more witnesses. This is the law of both the Old and New Testaments.

(Continued on page 23)



THE LORD'S DAY

G. C. Brewer



1. *In The Scriptures.* The expression "the Lord's day" occurs only one time in the Bible. The apostle John says he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day (Revelation 1:10), and the Lord appeared unto him and sent the letters to the seven churches, etc. The way he uses the expression indicates that it was well understood by those to

whom he was writing. He made no attempt to explain to them what day he intended by the Lord's day, yet he was informing them as to the day on which these things occurred. He specified the day. It was the Lord's day. But unless the readers were acquainted with that expression they still would not know what day he meant to designate. The fact that he uses this name to point out a particular day shows clearly that his readers were acquainted with that expression. John always explained any unfamiliar term that he used, and was careful to tell us about customs to which his statements might allude. He frequently explained a figure of speech used by our Lord. (See John 1:38; 4:9; 6:1, 39; 19:13, 31; 21:23). It must be evident, then, that his readers knew well what day was called the Lord's day. The expression was in common use among Christians of that age. It is here given the sanction of inspiration. An apostle uses it. The name had been adopted in the lifetime of the Lord's ambassadors. How long they had been using it, we do not know; but the fact that none of the other writers employ this expression leads us to believe that it was at least not in common use when they wrote. Paul used the Jewish method of speech and referred to the days by their numerical designation; hence, he says, "the first day of the week." But thirty years or more had intervened since Paul wrote his last epistle when John had his apocalyptic vision. It had been nearly fifty years since Paul had given his instruction to the churches of Galatia and Corinth concerning their regular "first day of the week" practice. Some time during this period the

expression "the Lord's day" had come into use, and it had been in use long enough to be well understood, as we have seen. That would mean it had been used for several years at least.

But do we know what day the Christians of that age called the Lord's day, and, therefore, what John refers to? What day could this mean? The Sabbatarians strongly contend that this was Jehovah's rest day in the beginning; that it is often called "the sabbath of the Lord thy God"—his day (Exodus 20:10); that Christ is the Lord of the Sabbath; that, therefore, it is his day, hence the Lord's day.

This argument may sound plausible to one who hears it for the first time, one who has not given it thought; but it falls far short of proving that the Sabbath was the day John refers to, even if there were not reasons for knowing that he refers to another day.

First, the Sabbath was universally called the Sabbath by all the writers of the Bible from Moses down to John. It occurs hundreds of times in the Bible and is always called Sabbath, and is not one time called the Lord's day. John himself used the term many times in his Gospel or record of Christ's life, but he never referred to the day as the Lord's day. How does it happen that all the writers talked so much about the Sabbath from the time the law was given in the wilderness till the close of the book of Acts and not one of them ever one time called it the Lord's day?

Second, when Christ said that he is Lord of the Sabbath we must not overlook the little words "even" (Matthew 12:8) and "also" (Mark 2:28). He is Lord even, also, of the Sabbath. He is Lord of all days, even of the Sabbath day, also of the Sabbath day. If, therefore, the fact that he is Lord of a day makes it the Lord's day, then every day is a Lord's day and there could be no sense in saying the Lord's day. That would not designate a particular day.

Third, the term "Lord" in Revelation 1:10 is a different word in the Greek from the word that is translated "Lord" in Exodus 20:10, or anywhere else, when Jehovah and not Christ is spoken of. It is the same word and in exactly the

same form that Paul uses when he says “Lord’s supper” (1 Corinthians 11:20) and “cup of the Lord” and “table of the Lord” (1 Corinthians 10:21). The Lord’s day of Revelation 1:10 is, therefore, Christ’s day and could not be the Jewish Sabbath. If Christ has a day that is his in some special sense, his day in a way the other days are not his days, what day would that be? What is the most signal event in the history of our Lord’s earthly life? If the average man were asked to answer that question, what day would he suggest? What day could he suggest? If you say he might mention the day of the nativity or the day of his baptism, we remind you that he could not mention those days. He might think of the events, but he could not mention the day of either, for no man knows the day of either event. The only day that any serious student of the New Testament could think of as worthy to be called Christ’s day—the Lord’s day—is the day our Lord came forth from the tomb, the day of his triumph, the day he was declared to be the Son of God with power (Romans 1:4). The day he fulfilled the last prediction of the Scriptures concerning his redemptive work (1 Corinthians 15:4; Ephesians 4:4-8) and obtained all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18); the day he completed the evidence and proved his claim so that it might now be presented to the whole world (Matthew 17:9); the day Christ rose for our *justification* (Romans 4:25) and “abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light” (2 Timothy 1:10) and “begat us again unto a living hope” (1 Peter 1:3); the day of this great victory; the day of this crowning act of the whole glorious gospel; the day of this most stupendous event in the whole history of the world, was the *first day of the week* (Mark 16:9). The apostles emphasized the resurrection in their preaching more than any other point, and made all else depend upon this fact—Peter in Acts 2:14-36 (see verses 24-32); Peter and John in Acts 3:12-26 (see verse 15); likewise Acts 4:10; 5:31; 10:40; 13:30; 17:32. Paul hinged the truth of the entire gospel on the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12-29). The day of the resurrection—the first day of the week—is preeminently the greatest and most glorious day in the Christian calendar. Every writer mentions the day in connection with the resurrection. The writers do not forget to tell us what day it was (Matthew 28:1; Mark 16:1-9; Luke 24:1; John 20:1). For no other

event in the whole life of our Lord is the day named—neither for his birth, his baptism, nor even for his crucifixion. How natural and how appropriate that this day should by the Holy Spirit be called *the Lord’s day!*

2. *In the Post-apostolic Writings.* If any doubt remains as to what day the early Christians were accustomed to call the Lord’s day, which custom and name the apostle John approved and observed, the doubt would be removed by a study of the literature of that age. The men who were contemporary with the apostle John, who were students under him, and who were themselves men of middle age at the time John wrote Revelation, tell us that they called the first day of the week *the Lord’s day*. They also tell us how they observed that day. Some of these writings date back to within ten years of the time when John wrote from Patmos. We can cite only a very few of the many statements that might be quoted.

Ignatius, who died a martyr about the year 107 A.D., said: “If, therefore, those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord’s day, on which also our life has sprung up again by him and by his death...Let us, therefore, not keep the Sabbath after the Jewish manner and rejoice in the days of idleness...But let every one keep the Sabbath after a spiritual manner, rejoicing in meditation; and after the observance of the Sabbath, let every friend of Christ keep the Lord’s day as a festival, the resurrection day, the queen and chief of all the days of the week.” (“Epistle to the Magnesians,” chapter 9).

Justin Martyr, 110-165 A.D., said: “But Sunday is the day on which we hold our common assembly, because it is the day on which God...made the world; and Jesus Christ, our Savior, on the same day rose from the dead.” (“First Apology,” chapter 47).

Clement said: “He keeps the Lord’s day, glorifying the Lord’s resurrection in himself.” (“Stromata,” Book 7, chapter 12).

These men are not quoted as *authority* for anything except for the fact that the Lord’s day was observed in their age, and, as said, they overlapped with the apostles.—*Gospel Advocate*, May 13, 1937.



COMPROMISES IN RELIGION

(Exodus 10:24-29)

M. W. Kiser



alternatives today.

A meeting between two great leaders. Pharaoh refused to be persuaded by the authority of Jehovah (see Exodus 5:1). Pharaoh was a type of the devil. God means to save us, but Satan does not want to give up his hold (1 Timothy 2:3-4). Intermingled with the plagues are suggestions of compromise. Satan offers the same

2 Corinthians 6:16-18).

I. ONE PLACE IS AS GOOD AS ANOTHER.

A. "Go...sacrifice...in the land" (Exodus 8:25). This put God on the same level with the gods of Egypt.

B. Today we hear:

1. "One church is as good as another." But—it makes a difference what we:
 - a. Preach (2 Timothy 4:1-2; 1 Corinthians 15:1-3; Jude 3).
 - b. Believe (John 8:24; Romans 10:9-10; Mark 16:16).
 - c. Practice (John 4:24).
 - d. We are warned (Matthew 7:15-20).

2. "One does not have to be a member of the church." But—salvation is in Christ
 - a. or the church (2 Timothy 2:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:7; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:23-25).
 - b. Because God placed it there (Isaiah 46:13; Hebrews 12:22-24; 10:21; 3:1-6).

3. "It does not make a difference how one worships" (Hebrews 11:4; John 4:24; Matthew 15:7-9; James 1:26-27).

C. No one can serve God in Satan's kingdom (Colossians 1:13; Galatians 2:20;

II. DO NOT GET TOO INVOLVED WITH YOUR RELIGION.

A. "Only ye shall not go very far away" (Exodus 8:28). The closer I keep you the easier to get you back.

B. If we must be religious, then be passive about it. Don't get too involved in:

1. Church attendance (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7).

a. It is said that Henry Ford made more infidels in his day than Clarence Darrow. He gave them something else to do on Sunday.

b. Too interested in time and a half and double time; more money; than our influence.

2. Christian living (James 1:27; Titus 2:11-12).

C. Some have already made it easier on the devil to get them back, by making it easier to return to their old sinful ways (2 Peter 2:20-22).

III. DO NOT OBLIGATE THE REST OF THE FAMILY.

A. "Go now ye that are men" (Exodus 10:11). He knew the men would come back to the women and children.

B. This is a common problem today. How can we serve the Lord with no conscience about our children's:

1. Moral well being (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:1-4).

2. Spiritual well being (Joshua 24:15; Acts 10:2, 33).

C. We need to quit worrying about any animosity our children might have toward us and the

church, and start thinking about Hebrews 10:31!

IV. DO NOT MAKE ANY PROVISION FOR SACRIFICE.

- A. "Only let your flocks and herds be stayed" (Exodus 10:24). Pharaoh knew the truth of Matthew 6:20).
- B. Satan knows these three things about the gospel:
 - 1. Based on sacrifice (John 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8).
 - 2. Perpetuated by sacrifice (2 Corinthians 8:9; 9:6-7).
 - 3. Hindered by selfishness (1 Corinthians 9:12).
- C. Sacrifice is a proof of our love for family, friends, and the Lord. Jesus must be Lord of all (1 Corinthians 6:20).

It is all or nothing. There is no room for compromise. We can fight it; reject it; compromise it; or do it! A great host perished because they tried to resist God. Great truths: "I have spoken," and "When I see the blood."—104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

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SECOND BAPTISMS

William Boyd



“And it came to pass, that, while Apollos was at Corinth, Paul having passed through the upper coasts came to Ephesus: and finding certain disciples, he said unto them, Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost. And he said unto them, Unto what then were ye baptized? And they said, Unto John’s baptism. Then said Paul, John verily baptized with the baptism of repentance, saying unto the people, that they should believe on him which should come after him, that is, on Christ Jesus. When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:1-4, KJV).

This is a clear, undeniable, apostolic example of twelve second baptisms (Acts 19:7). Paul came to Corinth and found “certain disciples.” He assumed they had “believed,” but when he discovered they had “not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost,” he began to question their understanding. They were “disciples,” but disciples of what? They had “believed,” but what had they believed? They had been “baptized,” but unto what had they been baptized? Paul asked about their baptism. If their baptism was right, then their faith was right and their discipleship was right, but if their baptism was wrong, then their faith was wrong and their discipleship was wrong. That is the importance the apostles placed on baptism. When Paul learned that their baptism was wrong he taught them the truth and baptized them right—a second baptism.

BUT THEY HAD BEEN BAPTIZED UNTO JOHN’S BAPTISM, AND WAS NOT JOHN A PROPHET? “Yea,” our Lord said in Matthew 11:9, “and more than a prophet.” Not only so, but John’s baptism was an immersion in water (Matthew 3:6; John 3:23) that required faith (Luke 7:30), repentance (Acts 19:4), and a confession (Mark 1:5); and John’s baptism was “for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). There is nothing in the account of these twelve that questions their sincerity. As far as they themselves were concerned, they were baptized “to obey God,” but as far as the apostle was concerned their baptism was not right. Paul taught them to get it right. To hear some talk, you would

think that Paul was being sectarian, but I believe Paul understood this better than some of our college professors.

WHAT WAS WRONG WITH JOHN’S BAPTISM? There was nothing wrong with John’s baptism in its time. The baptism of John was from heaven (Matthew 21:25), but by the time Paul came to Ephesus its time has passed. John preached in anticipation of the coming kingdom (Matthew 3:2). He had prepared the hearts of many to receive it (Matthew 3:3), but he himself was dead before the kingdom came (Matthew 11:11, 14:10). In the days of John’s baptism, Jesus had not yet demonstrated that He was the Christ by the resurrection from the dead (Romans 1:4). The recipients of John’s baptism did not confess their faith that Jesus was the son of God (Romans 10:9-10), but only their own sins (Mark 1:5). Jesus said that “repentance and remission of sins would be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). This would be similar to what John preached, but it would also be new and distinct. John did not preach baptism in the name of Christ, but the apostles did, beginning at Pentecost. Peter said, “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ...” (Acts 2:38). The twelve at Ephesus did not know this. They believed something, but they did not believe this. They were disciples of something, but they were not disciples of Christ. “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 19:5). That is the pattern.

WHY WAS APOLLOS NOT BAPTIZED AGAIN? Apollos knew “only the baptism of John” (Acts 18:25). The Scriptures do not say he was baptized again, but they do not say he was not. Perhaps he was, but perhaps his case was different than the case of the twelve in Ephesus. I will not be dogmatic, but it appears that those who were baptized of John’s baptism before the coming of the kingdom were welcomed into the kingdom on the basis of John’s baptism when the kingdom came. Perhaps Apollos was baptized of John’s baptism while John’s baptism was still in force and before the kingdom came, while the twelve were baptized of John’s baptism after the kingdom came and after John’s baptism was no longer valid. That could explain the difference.

WHAT ABOUT DENOMINATIONAL BAPTISM? Jesus authorized no denominational baptism. With very few

exceptions denominational preachers do not preach baptism in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. They preach infant baptism, or sprinkling, or baptism as “an outward sign of an inward grace,” or baptism to join their denomination, but Jesus authorized none of these things, so none of these things can be done “in the name of the Lord Jesus.” Denominational preachers preach all this false doctrine about baptism and then ask people to be baptized to obey God. Those who respond to denominational baptism may do so sincerely believing they are obeying God, but so did the twelve in Ephesus, and Paul knew that was not sufficient. Like the twelve, these denominational people believe something, but that does not mean they believe the truth; they are disciples of something, but that does not mean they are disciples of Christ. Paul gave us the pattern. Teach them the truth and baptize them right. You cannot go wrong when you follow the pattern.

BUT WHAT IF THEY HAD LEARNED THE TRUTH THROUGH THEIR OWN STUDY OF THE SCRIPTURES AND WERE BAPTIZED BY A DENOMINATIONAL PREACHER? If they had learned the truth and responded to the truth and were baptized according to the truth, then they were not baptized by denominational baptism. There is a difference in being baptized by a denominational preacher. The Bible teaches that the baptism must be right, but it does not teach that the baptizer must be right. I agree with those who say that people do not learn this on their own very often. It is not because this is difficult to learn; baptism is one of the easiest things to understand in the Bible. It likely does not happen very often because people are listening to their preachers rather than doing their own Bible study. If their preachers teach them wrong and they believe wrong and they do it wrong it cannot be right; but if, through a study of the Scriptures, they learn it right and believe it right and they do it right, then it cannot be wrong.

BUT WHAT IF THEY REMAIN IN FELLOWSHIP WITH THEIR DENOMINATION? Then they need to get out of that fellowship and unite with a congregation of the Lord’s church (Romans 16:17; Ephesians 5:6-8). The Bible authorizes no denomination, no denominational baptism and no denominational fellowship. Those who are baptized right and then immediately unite with a human denomination are just as wrong as those who are baptized

right and later leave the fellowship of the saints for a denomination. It is the fellowship that is wrong, not the baptism. Of course, a public acknowledgement of error recognized would be in order from an erring brother desiring to be restored to the fellowship of the one church (James 5:16; 1 John 1:9).

BUT WHAT IF THEY WERE BAPTIZED FOR THE REMISSION OF THEIR SINS AND IN ORDER TO JOIN A HUMAN DENOMINATION? Then they did something wrong. It is right to be baptized for the remission of sins, but it is wrong to be baptized to join a faction that teaches false doctrine. I do not know how a person can do a right thing and a wrong thing at the same time by doing the same thing. I would not want to face the Lord in judgment having provided false comfort to those who did things wrong. Follow the pattern. Teach them right and baptize them right.

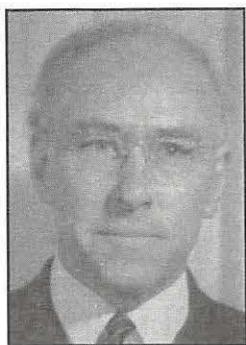
BUT WHAT IF THEY INSIST THAT THEIR BAPTISM WAS RIGHT? Teach them the truth. If they insist that they understood the truth and that they were baptized according to the truth, then it may be that they know more about their baptism than you do. “What man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him?” (1 Corinthians 2:11). You have done your duty to teach the truth. It is now a matter between them and God.

WHAT IF THEY ARE NOT SURE? Then I would teach them, “make your calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10). If we are to make our salvation sure, then we ought to make sure we are saved. One of the blessings of the Bible doctrine of baptism is the assurance of salvation it provides for the recipient. You do not rely on subjective “feelings” to know if you are saved, but on the knowledge of your obedience and trust in the grace of God. Any who are not sure about their baptism can make it sure by being baptized again. There is nothing wrong with making sure. Sometimes we drive all the way out of the driveway and then pull back in and go into the house to make sure we unplugged the coffee pot. Your soul is more important than your coffee pot. Make it sure. There is no reason to live in doubt. Assurance is blessed This would also apply to those who were baptized as young children and later began to wonder if they had understood what they were doing. The remedy for this is easy—make it sure. It does not mean the first baptism was

(Continued on page 23)

EMPTY BENCHES

Gus Nichols (1892-1975)



My ever-present benches: for a long time I thought of preaching to you, but I have been unable to find a suitable text. I have decided to preach you a textless sermon. There are many things for which I wish to commend you. I commend your faithful attendance at all the services of the church. You never miss a service even

when you are not wanted. The fact that you are neglected does not offend you. People are different: the least slight or neglect will keep them away.

I have noticed too, that you are always on time. Occupied seats are often late, but you? Never! I have noticed also that when the "Tardy Families" arrive you keep your back to the rear. You have never been known to turn around and stare at those who come in late. And never disturbed if a baby cries or if some other is naughty. You are always quiet. You are a well polished group. I have never seen one of you going to worldly movies, boxing matches, and other place of questionable propriety. You "abstain from every appearance of evil." There is not a dram-drinker, much less a drunkard among you. I have never heard an evil report against any of you.

I admire your quiet, peaceable dispositions. You never quarrel among yourselves, nor talk about one another. I have never known one of you to get mad at another bench and quit the church! You are so careful that you never offend one another. Another thing I commend you for is: You never get offended at plain Bible preaching. I have never known of your making any effort to get rid of the preacher when he condemned sin and worldliness from the pulpit. Unlike many people you are negatively a fine set.

But, positively and affirmatively, you are a failure! Your bad qualities over-balance your good ones. You are a dumb listless bunch; and therefore, my sermons do you no good. However careful and prayerful my preparation, when I arise to speak and look down into your expressionless faces, your empty gaze freezes my very soul for my sermon. You render it of little benefit to anyone. You intimidate me, and make me lose confidence in my ability as a preacher and a soul winner for Jesus

Christ.

You never respond to a thing I preach. Though I prove by the Holy Book that you are wood for the furnace, you are as listless as ever. To preach to you is like casting pearls before swine. I should like to see you cast out, and occupied benches brought from the by-ways and slums to take your places. You are a dead, inactive outfit. Your presence is no benefit, except to fill empty, hollowed places.

You are a prayer-less group—like some folks, you never pray for me, nor any other member of the church. Neither do you pray for the advancement of the church. For you are not interested in the fulfillment of its mission to the community and to the world. It is a well known fact that you do not support the church. Not a dollar has ever been received from you empty benches! No songs, nor encouragement ever came from you. Your presence discourages the faithful who do come. Visitors (seeing your emptiness) refuse to come again—ever! Oh, you do-nothing benches. To preach to you is like preaching to a negative, pessimistic church whose sins are those of omission—A cold, comfortless, straight-backed, dead-wood congregation!

I call on you who may read this article to join me in an effort to eliminate the empty benches from the sacred assemblies, and to so live that some happy day, we can sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in heaven, where there will be no more empty benches. God bless us every one.—*The Pattern*, published by the North Main Church of Christ in Malvern, AR (September 29, 2002)

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?

HEAR the gospel of Christ - Romans 10:13-17

BELIEVE in Christ - Mark 16:15-16

REPENT of past sins - Acts 2:36-47

CONFESS faith in Christ - Romans 10:9-10

BE BAPTIZED into Christ - Acts 22:16;

1 Peter 3:21

LIVE faithfully - Romans 12:1-2

IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP THE SABBATH

Max R. Miller (1925-2001)



Sabbatarians continue to clamor and disturb over the matter of the sabbath day. They believe and teach that the sabbath, our Saturday, is the day so designated by God on which man will do no work and only worship God. The “mark of the beast,” according to Sabbatarians, is to observe Sunday the Lord’s day and worship and honor the

Son of God on that day as did the Christians of New Testament times.

It is impossible to keep the sabbath! This may seem a radical statement, but it remains. It is impossible to keep the sabbath according to the commandments contained in the Bible. Let us see why it is impossible to keep the sabbath.

For one to keep the sabbath one must refrain from certain physical activities ordinarily engaged in. One could do no work (Exodus 20:9-10). God did permit certain humane acts such as rescuing an ox which had fallen into a ditch, but sabbath keepers could not do his ordinary and usually necessary work on the sabbath day. He could not build a fire for any purpose (Exodus 35:3). They were also forbidden to bake or boil any food on the sabbath (Exodus 16:23). The sabbath keeper was confined to his home: “abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day” (Exodus 16:29). They could bear no burden on the sabbath day either in their house or from their houses (Jeremiah 17:21-22). These were restrictions—which were binding on the sabbath keepers. To violate any one of these laws was to desecrate the sabbath and not keep it holy.

There were some positive Bible commands relative to keeping the sabbath. There was the command to keep the sabbath holy (Exodus 20:8). Israelites (to whom the law of the sabbath was given, Deuteronomy 5:1-5; Nehemiah 9:13-15) were to offer two lambs without spot and of the first year for a sabbath day offering unto God (Numbers 28:9-10). Another of the positive commands was to kill those who violated the sabbath (Exodus 35:1-2). Obedience to this law was carried out to the letter. On one occasion a man violated the sabbath by going out of his house and gathering sticks to make a fire. He was arrested, brought before the people of Israel and stoned to death (Numbers 15:32-36).

It is readily admitted that one may keep part of the

commands regarding the sabbath day of the Old Testament, but one cannot keep all the commands of God regarding the matter. If one fails to keep any one of the commands “he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). One may keep the commands to do no work, light no fires, stay in his place at home, and carry no burdens—but he cannot keep all the commands relative to the sabbath law.

Sabbatarians cannot bring his two lambs before the priest of Levi for a sacrifice. That priesthood has been abolished (Hebrews 7:11-16). He may take his spotless lambs and travel over the country but he can’t find the right priest who is qualified to accept his offering. There is not a Jew living today who can trace his lineage back to the tribe of Levi and to the priesthood of Aaron. Here then is an impossibility. The Sabbatarian must acknowledge it so!

God’s law clearly stated that those who violate His sabbath would be killed by stoning. Who will kill those who violate the sabbath? If the sabbath is to be kept holy (Exodus 20:8), someone must kill all those who desecrate the sabbath. If not, why not? Will Sabbatarians assume the responsibility? Or would he have civil government to execute his fellows? Are God’s commands to be glossed over so lightly?

Now let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Sabbath keeping is not commanded of God’s people today. Christ is our passover (1 Corinthians 5:7). We are no longer under the sabbath law, that law having been made dead by the body (sacrifice) of Jesus Christ (Romans 7:1-6). The law of animal sacrifice, burning of incense, sabbath keeping, and all other laws of the Old Testament has been “blotted out.” Christ “took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross” (Colossians 2:14).

Do Sabbatarians really try to keep the sabbath. They don’t want to “stay in their place,” that is, stay at home. They want to go places—they do go places. They don’t want to observe the commands “to build no fire.” Most will fire-up their autos with ninety octane and traipse all day trying to convince others that they are really keeping the sabbath just as Moses did. Sabbatarians don’t want real “Bible Sabbath Days.” They just want a “cheap sabbath.” They can’t possible have any other kind.—*Salute* (March-April 1995)

*It is far better to forgive and forget
than to hate and remember*

“EVERY SUNDAY”

Hugo McCord

A careful Bible student asks why my translation of the New Testament (FHV) has the two words “every Sunday” in 1 Corinthians 16:2: “Every Sunday, let each one of you lay aside by himself, if he earns anything, and put it into the treasury; so that there will be no collections when I come.”

“EVERY”

The KJV, NKJV, and the ASV do not say “every,” while the NASV, NIV, and the RSV include “every.” What did Paul say? Preceding Paul’s words *mian sabbatou* (“the first day of the week”) is *kata*, a word with a variety of meanings. One of those meanings grammarians call *kata*’s “distributive use” (Thayer, 328; B-G-D, 406; Abbott-Smith, 232).

Paul Southern’s doctoral thesis at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary (Louisville, Kentucky) was entitled “The Distributive Use of *Kata*.” He cited *kata* as meaning “every” not only in 1 Corinthians 16:2, “every first day of the week,” but also in many other verses: “his parents went to Jerusalem every year” (Luke 2:41); “a certain rich man” was “faring sumptuously every day” (Luke 16:19); “appoint elders in every city” (Titus 1:5); “the appointed for them elders in every church” (Acts 14:23).

Both Thayer (p. 506) and B-G-D (p. 406) translate Paul’s words *kata mian sabbatou* “on the first day of every week.” Other citations of *kata*’s meaning “every” include “every city” (Luke 8:1, 4; Acts 15:21; 20:23); “every house” (Acts 5:42; 8:3); “every synagogue” (Acts 22:19); “every month” (Revelation 22:2); and “every day” or “daily” (Matthew 26:55).

Furthermore, since every week has a first day, the word “every” is understood in the translations that omit “every:” “upon the first day of the week...” (KJV, NKJV, ASV). Also, “every” is understood in an Old Testament verse that omits “every:” “Remember the sabbath day to keep it holy” (Exodus 20:8).

Alexander Campbell in 1826 published a New Testament translation called *The Living Oracles*, saying in 1 Corinthians 16:2: “On the first day of every week, let each one of you lay somewhat by itself, according as he

may have prospered; putting it into the treasury; that when I come, there may be then no collections.”

Barton W. Stone in 1830, having read *The Living Oracles*, wrote: “Whenever the church shall be restored to her former glory, she will again receive the Lord’s Supper on every first day of the week.”

“SUNDAY”

I used the word “Sunday” in my translation because it is used more often by people in general than “the first day of the week.” However, I was inconsistent, for I used “the first day of the week” in Acts 20:7. For the 4th edition of my translation, 1 Corinthians 16:2 will say: “On the first day of every week, let each one, if he has earned anything, lay by a contribution, and put it into the treasury, so that when I come no collections will be taken.—5535 East Evergreen #7505, Vancouver, WA 98661

GOSPEL GLEANER

21st CENTURY SERMON OUTLINES

We have printed a book of sermon outlines submitted by the editor and staff writers of *Gospel Gleaner*. This volume is 68 pages in length, 8 1/2 x 11 inches in size and contains 23 sermon outlines. It is available compliments of *Gospel Gleaner*, as long as supplies last.

It is our prayerful wish that the Bible studies contained in this book would find useful service in the Kingdom of God by those who preach and teach. We hope it will be beneficial to gospel preachers, especially preacher students. For your free copy, please contact us at *Gospel Gleaner*, PO Box 345, Mabelvale, AR 72103, or email us at mabelval@cei.net

—Dennis Gullledge, *Editor*

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LIVE & DEAD CHURCHES

Andrew Conally (1931-1992)

There is no doubt most of us want to be members of a living, growing church. Most of us can easily tell the difference and so can the Lord!

Live Churches have all kinds of problems - parking problems, lack of classroom teachers, etc. They always have more work, programs, mission opportunities, and other things than they can take advantage of - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches make constant demands on time, talent, and money. There are fellowships, services, and classes to attend. There are people to visit, delinquents to reclaim, drifters who need encouragement and admonition - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches are filled with people who are weak, neglectful, forgetful, and who need attention, but they are growing. They are concerned, prayerful, and giving - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches have preachers who are Book and people oriented. They have preachers who preach hard, exhort often, and know what's going on in the world, the church, and in the lives of many brethren - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches have elders who stretch the budget yearly to help the congregation grow. They have programs, sermons, classes, papers, missions, plans and hopes to take every member to greater heights of service, sacrifice, and finally heaven - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches have deacons that are pushers, vitally involved to improve everything the congregation is doing. They are out front, serving and helping the entire

program to get more done - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches have members that respond to challenge - the challenge of new programs, budgets, missions, and always the Word! They have people who evangelize rather than fossilize - **dead ones don't!**

Live Churches fight error and know where it is found. They are compassionate and kind. They are not only gentle and loving, but also bold and brave and afraid of nothing! They love God and hate sin - **dead ones don't!**

MARRIAGE

David Sain

Marriage is the product of love that begins as blind excitement and matures into commitment and responsibility.

Marriage is stronger than death, yet so fragile that we celebrate the achievement of staying together.

Marriage is a lot of routines, yet it needs daily attention...and never taken for granted.

Marriage is growing up and growing old together, but it is also growing in trust and contentment.

Marriage is disappointments and hurts along the way. It is also happiness and laughter along the way. But the bad times are made a little easier, and the good times are made even better, by sharing them together!—2506 Trenton Place, Florence, AL 35630

See *Gospel Gleaner* on the web at mabelvalechurchofchrist.org

**Another Testament-Truth or Fiction?
Continued from front page**

accept the words of a person known as a pope, or must one accept some so-called “another testament,” when God has declared in no uncertain terms nearly two thousand years ago that He has already provided man with *all things* that pertain to life and godliness? If these words are true, how say some that this “another testament” will help one have a closer relationship with Christ? One last passage to examine: “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19). Let those who wish to, wrest and twist this passage, but it still says what it says, namely, those who add to or take away from God’s word as given in His book, the Holy Bible, will suffer the punishment of God. The admission and/or claim that “another testament” has been written, is a statement of the denial of the Bible. How can it be otherwise?

We believe that there are many good moral people who have been “hood-winked” into accepting this false religion, and have become adherents to its cultic doctrine. However, those of us who believe the Bible must understand that these people do not believe in the God of the Bible. They believe in a god that was once a man, but evolved into a god. They, themselves, have been taught that they one day will become gods. They do not believe in the Christ of the Bible. How could they, yet accuse Him of deception and lying in giving “another testament”?

Do not be deceived by well orchestrated television advertisements. Do not accept that for which there is absolutely no biblical authority, but as the apostle Paul wrote, “Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17)—408 E. Main Avenue, DeFuniak Springs, FL 32435

THE CHALLENGE OF PREACHING

Don Deffenbaugh

Have you ever considered the difficulties in preaching, especially to today’s audiences? Think about all that the people in the U.S. have experienced in recent years. We are well dressed and housed. We have more than ample food. We are entertained. We indulge ourselves about anything we desire. We have actually experienced about everything there is to experience in this country except hunger and want.

Our society needs the gospel of Christ as much or more than any society that has ever existed on the face of the earth (Romans 1), but we are so self-centered and self-indulgent that we feel no need for it.

Now consider this people in an audience where the gospel is being preached. Do you think they are really interested? Probably not. They would rather be entertained. Clovis Chappel wrote, “A sermon that would have produced a profound sensation in the days of our fathers would put you in a profound sleep.”

Today’s preacher of the gospel must preach to a world that is also growing more skeptical and unbelieving every day. However, the preacher’s charge remains clear, “Preach the Word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove; rebuke; exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). And every faithful preacher of the gospel will take seriously this charge which was made “before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Timothy 4:1).

However we must be reminded that those who hear the Word also have a serious responsibility. Jesus said that we must take heed what we hear (Mark 4:24) as well as take heed how we hear (Luke 8:18). Don’t put all the responsibility on the preacher!—PO Box 307, Neosho, MO 64850

Second Baptisms Continued from page 17

wrong; it just means you are making sure. Here is the pattern: learn it right and be baptized right. That cannot be wrong.

BUT DO YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THAT BAPTISM IS FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS? “For the remission of sins” was stated as the purpose of baptism in the name of Jesus Christ from the beginning (Acts 2:38). Those who were baptized that day were those who “gladly received his word” (Acts 2:41). This was the pattern for every baptism that followed in the New Testament. Other terms used in the New Testament that identify the purpose of baptism are either equivalent with this or describe spiritual blessings that accompany this (1 Corinthians 12:13; Galatians 3:27). There is no example of anyone who was baptized in the name of Christ who did so without understanding that they were doing so to be saved. All this talk about the remission of sins being part of the promise rather than part of the command misses the point. Romans 6:17, teaches us to obey from the heart. There is more to this than sincerity. The twelve were sincere when they were baptized of John’s baptism, but that was insufficient. Our Lord said we “understand” with the heart and conditioned salvation on understanding, saying, “...and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them” (Matthew 13:15). The Bible never teaches that baptism is effectual without understanding, and men should not teach that either. That is one of the reasons we do not baptize infants. The remedy for those who have been baptized without understanding is simple. Follow the pattern. Teach them right and baptize them right.

SHOULD PEOPLE BE BAPTIZED TO PLEASE MEN? I have heard that some have been persuaded to be baptized a second time on the plea that it would make it easier for members of the church to accept them into the fellowship. The Bible says nothing about being baptized to please men. If they are not convinced they ought to be baptized in the name of Christ then do not baptize them. They will not get to heaven on a ruse. If they are convinced that they have already been baptized in the name of Christ, then

who are they trying to fool? There is something about this that does not quite seem honest. Perhaps I am being too harsh. Some of the early Jewish converts thought, “Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved” (Acts 15:1). Paul taught them they were wrong and refused to circumcise Titus (Galatians 2:3), but he did circumcise Timothy “because of the Jews” (Acts 16:3). Paul said, “I am made all things to all men, that I might be all means save some” (1 Corinthians 9:22). Perhaps some may have judged it to be expedient to be rebaptized with that motive, but in most cases I think it would be better to gently teach the truth and expect people to grow up.

This is not the same as cult baptism. In the not too distant past we were troubled with a cult that wanted its members to be baptized a second time before they took a position higher in the hierarchy. Of course, no one should do that because no one should be in a cult like that (Colossians 2:18-23).

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY. Acts 2:38 tells us to “be baptized in the name of Christ for the remission of sins.” The twelve at Ephesus had not done that, so Paul taught them the truth and baptized them a second time (Acts 19:1-5). That is the pattern. Teach them right and baptize them right. If they are not sure then let them make it sure. This all reminds me of the words of the preacher I know who says, “It is always right to do right, and it is always wrong to do wrong; it is never right to do wrong, and it is never wrong to do right; and that is right because the Bible is right.”—12900 Southridge Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212

Slander Continued from page 11

When our brother falls into sin, it is our duty to lift him up, not crush him down. Remember that we are all in need of Divine mercy and forgiveness. The brother is to be restored in the spirit of meekness. All the while we must be considering ourselves, lest we also be tempted (Galatians 6:1). There is enough heartache in the world without adding the sin of slander.—Via, bulletin, Munfordville, KY church of Christ.



THANK YOU FOR SUBSCRIPTION

My husband, Harry and I wish to take advantage of your offer (in the *House to House, Heart to Heart*) of the publication, *Gospel Gleaner*. We are members of the Church of Christ in Seneca, Missouri. I am Dennis Steel's aunt. We are very proud of Dennis & Janie spending retirement years to the Great Cause, helping the lost to find the only way to eternal life. Thank you for this subscription! Ruth Cope, Seneca, MO.

A VERY GOOD PAPER

We receive a copy of the *Gospel Gleaner* here at the Chesapeake church of Christ in Chesapeake, Virginia. It is a very good paper and I would like to receive a copy for myself at my home address please. Thank you and may God bless you in your work. Also you will find attached an article that if you feel is useful you may use. Curtis Graves, Chesapeake, VA.

THANK YOU FOR THE SERMON OUTLINES

Thank you for the giving of your Sermon Outlines to the Students. Signed by the faculty and students of the Memphis School of Preaching, Memphis, TN

CONGREGATION ENJOYS GG

We want to thank you for sending us the *Gospel Gleaner*. Our congregation enjoys it very much. It always has very fine articles that enlightens us on different things that faces the brotherhood. Keep up the good work. Visit us if you are ever in our area. Wishing you Godspeed (in your work). M. D. Kirkpatrick, Tiptonville, TN. *Editor's Note:* Brother Kirkpatrick is one of the elders of the church of Christ in Tiptonville, TN.

ENJOYS GG VERY MUCH

Please note my change of address with the next issue. Thank you very much. I enjoy the *Gleaner* very much. L. T. Gurganus, Parrish, AL.

PASS IT ON

Please send me the *Gospel Gleaner*, I will pass it on after reading it. Roy Rogers, Gahanna, OH.

THANKS FOR THE BOOK!

Thanks for the Sermon Outline Book! Keep up the good work and "be not weary in well doing." Thanks for the book. Signed by the students of the Florida School of Preaching and Brian Kenyon, instructor, Lakeland, FL.

GG USEFUL IN PREACHING

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ our hope. I am a gospel preacher in the church of Christ in my area. Your publication will be very useful to me in my teaching of the gospel. It will help edify the saved. It will help to teach the lost. I am therefore begging you to put my name on your mailing list so that I can receive the *Gospel Gleaner* magazine regularly. If you can also send me old/back issues of the *Gospel Gleaner*, it will also be very helpful. It is only eternity that can measure the good that your periodical will do to me and those that I teach the gospel if you send it to me regularly. I look forward to receiving the *Gospel Gleaner* magazine regularly. Andrew Osatohamwen, Edo State, Nigeria.

ENJOYS GG

I enjoy the *Gleaner* so much and I would like you to send my sister the *Gleaner*. She enjoys good reading. Keep up the good work. Eva Wilson, Boaz, KY.

DON'T MISS YOUR COPY

I am Periodicals Librarian at Freed-Hardeman University. I am checking on the status of publication of *Gospel Gleaner*. Our last copy is volume 18, No. 3 for July-Sept. 2002. Has number 4 been sent yet? I just want to make sure we don't miss our copy. Thanks. Teresa Hanger, Periodicals Librarian, Freed-Hardeman Library, Henderson, TN.

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GOSPEL GLEANER

Volume 19

No.2

FOR WE BE BRETHREN

Tom Moore



You will remember from your study of the Scriptures that the herdsmen of Abraham and the herdsmen of Lot were bickering among themselves over inadequate grazing for their herds (Genesis 13:5-7). Abraham stepped in and said, "Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdsmen and thy herdsmen; for we be brethren"

(Genesis 13:8). Abraham said that there should be unity and goodwill between brethren. Abraham then in the following verse gives a solution to the problem.

Strife is forbidden in the Scriptures. "Strive not with a man without cause, if he have done thee no harm" (Proverbs 3:30). "The beginning of strife is as when one letteth out water: therefore leave off contention, before it be meddled with" (Proverbs 17:14). "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife: but every fool will be meddling" (Proverbs 20:3). "Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the end thereof, when thy neighbor hath put thee to shame" (Proverbs 25:8). "He that passeth by, and meddleth with strife belonging not to him, is like one that taketh a dog by the ears" (Proverbs 26:17). "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying" (Romans 13:13). Strife (variance) is one of the "works of the flesh" (Galatians 5:20). "Let

nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3).

What causes strife among brethren? *Hatred* - "Hatred stirreth up strife" (Proverbs 10:12). We will miss heaven with this attitude (1 John 3:15). *Pride* - "Only by pride cometh contention" (Proverbs 13:10). Pride causes men to be contentious about their opinions. *The Scornful* - "Cast out the scorner, and contention shall go out; yea, strife and reproach shall cease" (Proverbs 22:10). A scorner is one who mocks or derides people, always giving people a hard time. *The Contentious In Spirit* - "Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. As coals are to burning coals, and wood to fire; so is a contentious man to kindle strife" (Proverbs 26:20-21). Some people just love to add fuel to the fire. *Anger* - "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression" (Proverbs 29:22). The more angry a person is the less reasoning and thinking he does. *Trouble Maker* - "Surely the churning of milk bringeth forth butter, and the wringing of the nose bringeth forth blood: so the forcing of wrath bringeth forth strife" (Proverbs 30:33). There are some who are always wanting to stir up trouble - forcing wrath. *Ungodly Ambition* - "And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest" (Luke 22:24). Self-exaltation causes strife among brethren. *Refusing To Grow*

(Continued on page17)

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Has there ever been a time when the Lord's teaching on covetousness is more needed than today? Before you finish reading this article some wealthy financier will count his profits from illegal or ill-gotten gain, some young woman will sell her body for a few dollars and some preacher will have decided to sell his soul and the souls of his hearers for a paycheck.

The tenth commandment of the Decalogue states, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's" (Exodus 20:17). The previous nine commandments deal with outward actions. The tenth deals with the inward thoughts. Covetousness is a sin of the heart.

Covetousness is from the Greek word *pleonexia*, meaning, "to fix the desire upon...whether things good or bad; hence, to long for, lust after, covet" (*Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words* [1966], Vol. 1, p. 266). In ancient Greek culture it was a common word basically meaning "arrogant greediness." In sacred history it was the first sin in the garden of Eden with Adam; it was the first sin of Israelite occupied Canaan with Achan; it was the first in the the Jerusalem church with Ananias, and it crept by stealth into the circle of Jesus' own disciples with Judas Iscariot.

Covetousness is the common, but "respectable" sin of our age. It is common, but rare indeed is the person who will ever admit to being covetousness. It is respectable in that covetous men are sometimes found in positions of leadership and authority in the Lord's church, contrary to the qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3:3).

Covetousness is an older word that occurs more often in the King James Version of the Bible than in other translations (Mark 7:22; Luke 12:15; Romans 1:29; *et al*). In the Hebrew language it basically means "dishonest gain" (Exodus 18:21). To covet is to desire something that belongs to someone else. It is also to desire something or someone to which one has no right (Exodus 20:17; Joshua 7:21).

By way of contrast to the sin implied in the word, it is sometimes used in a good sense as when Paul told the Corinthian church to "covet earnestly the best gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31), and to covet prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:39). We sometimes say to our brethren, "I covet your prayers."

There are different kinds of covetousness. First, there is covetousness for material things, money and for the things which money can buy (1 Timothy 6:10). Second, there is covetousness of status or position (Luke 22:24). Third, there is the benefit that false teachers receive in promoting their own covetous schemes (2 Peter 2:3). Paul was not of that stripe (1 Thessalonians 2:5). Fourth, there is covetousness for persons (Matthew 5:28). The very essence of covetousness is the desire to have what is forbidden. It is the giving of rein to desires that violate the laws of God and man (Ephesians 4:19; 5:3; Colossians 3:5). Fifth, there is



covetousness for power (Acts 8:18-19).

For the purposes of this article I will refer to covetousness as a criminal. The work of a criminal is well known. Jesus said, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). What are the crimes of covetousness?

COVETOUSNESS STEALS DEVOTION TO GOD

Paul twice names covetousness as equal to idolatry (Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5). Idolatry is putting something else in the position which God alone should occupy (Exodus 20:3; 1 John 5:21). If one's sole desire is to obey God he will not replace Him with things. If God is given His proper place, things will have their proper place. In the words of Augustine, "Let not these occupy my soul; let God rather occupy it" (Confessions, x.51).

A dime is a small coin, but if it is held close to the eye it will block out one's vision of the sun. When one is covetous he loses sight of God in his desire to get more.

COVETOUSNESS KILLS DESIRE FOR CHRIST

The rich young ruler found a roadblock on his path to eternal life that robbed him of the Savior (Matthew 19:16-22). Even though the word covetousness is not used in this passage, its effect is clearly seen. Jesus taught the power of the "care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches" to choke the word from our lives (Matthew 13:22).

The word choke has many definitions, but in this parable it means to suffocate. The thorns that kill one's desire for Christ ["the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches" (Matthew 13:22); "the lusts of other things" (Mark 4:19), and, "pleasures of this life" (Luke 8:14)] represent those individuals with divided loyalties toward Christ (Matthew 6:24).

COVETOUSNESS DESTROYS PROPER PRIORITIES

The rich farmer in Jesus' parable lost all sense of priority in his life (Luke 12:16-21). His crops went from being his living to being his life. He traded real gold for fool's gold. Thus, Jesus introduced this parable with the

warning, "Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" (Vs. 15).

It should be noted that the acquiring of things is necessary for life. It is by the wise acquiring of things that we support our dependents and ourselves. Without acquisitiveness we become lazy and shiftless creatures (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10). But, when acquisitiveness gets out of proportion it becomes covetousness (Luke 12:21). Covetousness is the sin of thinking more of getting than of giving (Acts 20:35).

COVETOUSNESS COUNTERFEITS HAPPINESS

Solomon wrote, "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity" (Ecclesiastes 5:10). At the heart of covetousness is the idea that things bring happiness. It says, "If I had this thing, I would be happy." Epicurus once said, "If you want to make a man happy, add not to his possessions, but take away from his desires." If possession of things brought happiness this would be the happiest age in history.

This is not to say that things do not matter. To have enough to eat, a good home and reasonable comforts are the things for which we all strive (1 Timothy 5:8). If we don't have we can't help others (Luke 19:8; Ephesians 4:28). It is to say, however, that happiness is not wrapped up in these things (Philippians 4:11; 1 Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5).

CONCLUSION

There are two kinds of relationships in this world: First, there is the "I-it" relationship that we have with things. This is where covetousness thrives. Second, there is the "I-thou" relationship that we have with God, others and ourselves. Contentment is not found in the "I-it" relationship. It can only be found in the "I-thou" relationship. If these things are what they ought to be we will covet nothing - there will be nothing to desire that we do not already possess.—10822 Mabelvale West Road, Mabelvale, AR 72103



A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH

Guy F. Hester



choices we make.

Why did the omnipotent and omniscient God, who wants man to be good, make man so that he could choose evil? It is true that God wants all men to be good, but good that is chosen is the highest and best goodness that there is or can be. In order for a man to choose to be good, there must be power and freedom to choose evil. What virtue is there in obeying God if in our nature there is no inclination to do otherwise.

Man is guided by his will, not blind instinct. One of the sad things about man is that he sins. One of the great things about man is that he is capable of sinning. Man chooses between good and evil, there can be no neutrality. Jesus said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matthew 12:30). Our decisions decide our destinies; they are, as far as we are concerned, a matter of life and death!

What are some of the decisions that we are faced with in this life that are a matter of eternal life or eternal death? Let us notice just a few.

A CHOICE OF MASTERS, GOD OR MAMMON. "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24). We can choose God, the one who has the power to give or take life. The one who provides us with every good thing that we enjoy in this life (James 1:17). We can choose Him, before whom we all must stand and give an account in the day of judgment (2 Corinthians 5:10). Or, we can choose mammon. Mammon is a word which means riches, that part which remains when we depart this life.

Paul said, "For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out" (1 Timothy 6:7). You have never seen a hearse pulling a U-Haul.

Money can buy almost anything, but it can't buy happiness nor a clear conscience. Money can pay our fare to almost any place we want to go, but Heaven. We must not trust in riches. Paul went on to say, "Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). Riches choke out God's word (Matthew 13:22).

THE CHOICE OF WAYS, THE STRAIT AND NARROW OR THE BROAD WAY. Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it" (Matthew 7:13-14).

Every one of us is traveling in one of these two ways. The way is narrow in contrast to many ways that are wrong. Though the way is narrow it is wide enough for all to enter in through Christ. He said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6). The way is strait because it demands deliberate choice and discipline. The Lord said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me" (Matthew 16:24).

The broad way is the way of indifference and indulgence. It requires no fight. Christians are told, "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1 Timothy 6:12). It requires no diligence (2 Peter 1:5-11). The broad way requires no running, but we must "run with patience the race that is set before us." The Hebrew writer said, "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before

him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

A CHOICE OF FOUNDATIONS, ROCK OR SAND. Again, in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).

The rock foundation is the way of obedience and steadfastness. It suggests the idea of hearing and doing. We are commanded, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (James 1:22). This foundation is Christ Himself (1 Corinthians 3:11).

In contrast, the sand foundation is the way of folly, self-deception, and ruin. This would be those who only have a pretense of religion, or those who are rendering lip service only (Matthew 15:8-9). According to our Lord, we can honor Him with our lips and yet our hearts be far from Him.

A CHOICE OF KINGDOMS, CHRIST'S OR SATAN'S. Paul said, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1:13). All who have been translated into the Kingdom of Christ are in His church because they are one and the same (Matthew 16:13-18). This is an unshakable kingdom (Hebrews 12:28). This is the kingdom that, when Jesus comes again, He will deliver up to God the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24-26).

We have before us *The way of life and the way of death!* You must make a choice—right now you are choosing life or death, heaven or hell—which will it be?
—E-mail: g.hester@juno.com

*Most footprints in the sands of time
were made by work shoes*

THE COMPLAINER

W. E. Vine in the *Expositor's Dictionary of New Testament Words* lists a word found only one time in the New Testament. It is the Greek word *mempsimoiros*, which is translated "complainer." "These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their lusts (and their mouth speaketh great swelling words), showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage" (Jude 16).

It comes from two words, *memphomai*, "to blame," and *moira*, "a fate, lot." Hence, the complainer blamed those around him for his unhappy lot in life.

We all know that there are things in life that need correcting and changing. We appreciate the person who loves us enough to point out things that would improve our character. Most of the time we can recognize a genuine complaint that is given in the spirit of love and for the sake of improvement. It is sad, however, when we become noted for complaining, for always playing the role of pointing out deficiencies, exposing faults, showing wrongs, complaining of slights, and telling in general how bad our lot is.

The church is not without her complainers. We should each take a close look at our own lives and see if our conversation concerning the church is more complaint or compliment. It reveals something to us if most of our talk at home and to other brethren is complaint—nothing is right, everything is wrong.

"No one is friendly up there!"

"All they're interested in is money."

"The classes are juvenile and the teachers are boring."

"The sermons are too long."

"They always sing old songs."

"They always sing new songs."

Let's be honest with ourselves and see if we have fallen into the role of the "complainer."

"Finally, brethren...whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).—*Glad Tidings Of Good Things*, March 6, 1996, Jacksonville Church of Christ, PO Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND? (1 Timothy 4:13-16)

Allen Webster



In our fast-paced, gotta-be-there-in-a-hurry, should-have-been-done-yesterday world, few take time to think deeply about spiritual things. Life goes by in a blur and we just try to hold on without getting run over. It makes for shallow, superficial lives. The Bible commands us to meditate upon the Word (1 Timothy

4:15).

WHAT IS MEDITATION? In Eastern mysticism, Yoga, and Transcendental Meditation, meditation refers to a passive state of “emptying the mind.” In the Bible, meditation is active. It involves concentration, alertness, and energy. The Old Testament word *muse* is a synonym for “meditate.” It literally means to “mutter” as when working on a problem (cf. Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:12-16). The word *meditate* is used only twice in the New Testament (here; Luke 21:14). The verb (*meletao*¹) means, “to attend to” (A-S) or “imagine” (Strong). A more vivid definition is “to revolve in the mind” (like a display in a jewelry store). In 4:14, Paul says to Timothy, “Don’t be careless about the gift² you received.” In 4:15 he says, “Be constantly careful about these things.” The English word *meditation* literally means, “to be in the midst of something” (just the opposite of mystic withdrawal). The second clause of 4:15, “Give thyself wholly to them,” literally reads, “Be in these things” (Acts 6:4; 1 Corinthians 16:15; 2 Corinthians 8:5; Titus 2:14), and could be paraphrased “be absorbed in them.”

UPON WHAT SHOULD CHRISTIANS MEDITATE? Our thoughts will be filled with something (cf. sports, boyfriend, spouse, making money, grandchildren). What are my free-time (daydreaming) thoughts about during an average day? Do spiritual things find their way into my heart and speech constantly, occasionally, or rarely (read Luke 6:45)?

Christians should meditate upon the loving-kindness of God (Psalm 63:3, 6, 7). “Under his wings” is a reference to the temple’s Most Holy Place that housed the Ark of the Covenant. Overshadowing the ark were two cherubim with outspread wings. This was the place of God’s presence. Only the High Priest could enter the Most Holy Place, and

that only once a year. But David said that God’s faithful child could enter the “Most Holy Place” of God’s presence at any time and stay as long as he wanted. We live under the “shadow of His wings.”

Christians should meditate upon the labor of God (Psalm 77:11-12). We can look up at God’s handiwork and see God’s hand (Psalm 19:1).³ Our meditation comes from a thirst for God (Psalm 143:5-6). Christians should remember that they have been delivered from bondage (cf. Deuteronomy 5:15; 1 Corinthians 11:23-32).

Christians should meditate upon the Law of God (Joshua 1:8;⁴ Psalm 1:2; 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 97-99). This is both constructive and preventive.

Christians should meditate upon the lovely things of life (Philippians 4:8). The word think (*logizomia*) means, “to make a reckoning as on a ledger” or to “by all means consider.” We grow like our thoughts; we cannot entertain impure thoughts without being corrupt, and we cannot think good thoughts without being better. Meditation precedes; works follow. Honest (*semnos*) means “reverend, venerable, grave, or serious.” Lovely (*prospiles*, only here in the New Testament) means “pleasing” or “agreeable.” Of good report (*euphemos*, also only here in NT) literally means, “to say well.” Virtue (*arete*) is found nowhere else in Paul’s letters and in only two other New Testament references (1 Peter 2:9; 2 Peter 1:3).

WHAT EFFECT WILL MEDITATING HAVE UPON OUR SPIRITUAL LIVES? *It will set our souls on fire* (Psalm 39:3; Jeremiah 20:9; Luke 24:32). Meditation upon a wrong done will set a soul on fire with revenge (Romans 12:19-20). Meditation upon the possessions and talents of others may set a soul on fire with jealousy (Proverbs 27:4). Meditate upon filth and the soul will burn with lust (1 Peter 2:11). Meditate upon the truth, and the fires of love and zeal will be kindled (Titus 2:14). The fires that build us up or destroy us are lit in the soul, fanned by meditation. The flame matches the musing involved. Hearts on fire are made bold. Paul’s heart was “stirred within him” when he meditated upon the idolatry of Athens (Acts 17:16). *Stirred*⁵ means “provoked,” “aroused,” or “greatly distressed.” In the next chapter, Paul is pressed (*synecho*) (18:5) in the spirit which means “held together.” The

whole phrase could be translated “constrained by the Word” (cf. Acts 4:20; 1 Corinthians 9:16-17; 2 Corinthians 5:13-15).

It will make us glad (Psalm 104:33-34).

It will strengthen our souls (Acts 20:32). A bee’s simply touching a flower doesn’t put honey on our table; it must go deeply inside to draw out sweet nectar. Likewise it is not necessarily the one who reads the Bible the most, but the one who prays and meditates upon divine truths the most that will be the strongest Christian. Meditation makes Christianity real—it takes it out of the realm of the theory into the realm of practicality. The subconscious mind is a fire-less cooker where ideas simmer while we “loaf.” Newton was loafing when he saw an apple fall and “discovered” gravity. While finding peace for his soul, Galileo watched a lamp swing and got the idea of the pendulum swinging as a means of measuring time’s passage. While relaxing in the kitchen, Watt saw steam lift a teakettle lid and conceived the steam engine. We, too, may get more out of two hours of meditation than fourteen sermons. (We still need the sermons!)

It will make our “profiting appear to all” (4:15; cf. 4:6; Matthew 5:16; Philippians 2:15-16). Profit (*prokope*⁶) means “a cutting forward; an advance.” It could be translated “progress.” When we spend time meditating upon the Word, others will notice our “advancing.”

“Let the words of my mouth, and the mediation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer” (Psalm 19:14).—PO Box 520, Jacksonville, AL 36265

Endnotes

¹ From *melete*, “care;” the stem of the verb is *melo*, “to care for.” In 4:14 “neglect” is the verb *amelo*. Thus there is a play on words in the Greek which is lost in English.

² Perhaps the “gift” (Greek, *charisma*) of prophecy, or prophetic preaching.

³ Declare (*caphar*) means “to score with a mark as a tally or record, by implication to inscribe;” showeth (*nagad*) means “to front, i.e. stand boldly out opposite; to announce.”

⁴ Depart (*muwsh*) means to “recede.”

⁵ *Paraxyno*, only here and 1 Corinthians 13:5.

⁶ Aside from this passage it occurs only in Philippians 1:12, 25, where it is rendered “furtherance.”

THE KIND OF CHURCH THE WORLD LIKES

Bill Dillon

The world and the church have always been “at odds” but there is a church the world likes:

1) A church that has an honorable reputation (Revelation 3:1).

2) A church untroubled by inward heresy, or outward opposition (Galatians 2:4-5).

3) A church well spoken of by outsiders (Luke 6:26).

4) A church that winks at moral evils in the community like gambling, drinking, drugs, and others. The church that “rolls over and plays dead” to the world’s demands is dead in God’s sight (Revelation 3:1-2).

5) A church that pulls punches in preaching the word (2 Timothy 4:1-4).

6) A church whose members live like those in the world (2 Corinthians 6:17-18).

7) A church that doesn’t practice discipline and withdrawal of fellowship from the disorderly (1 Corinthians 5:1-13).

8) A church that compromises the truth on alcohol and gambling, for fear of offending sinners (Mark 16:15-16; Galatians 3:26-27). Jesus said, “Upon this rock I will build my church” (Matthew 16:18). “The churches of Christ salute you” (Romans 16:16).—*Mountain Home Messenger* (January 9, 2002)

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WHY IS NOTHING SECURE?

John T. Polk II



What can "the gospel" do with so much turmoil and trouble unraveling lives?

The world has always tended toward the chaotic, since created mankind sinned in it (Genesis 1:31; 3:9-19). It is God of whom it is said: "You have made the earth tremble; You have broken it; Heal its breaches, for it is shaking" (Psalm 60:2). And occasionally, when someone, who seemed to have the world at his feet, is taken down, humanity "will gaze at you, [And] consider you, [saying: 'Is] this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms...?'" (Isaiah 14:16). Our personal worlds are shaken by what once seemed unshakable: divorce (no parental constant), home abuses (no personal protected "space"), abortion (no maternal love and devotion to each child), company "downsizing" (no income constant), wars and crime (no safety constant). In fact, police and metal detectors in schools, militia presence and intimate searches in airports, stacks of quadruplicate forms in pharmacies, mountains of government regulations on marketable items all prove one thing: people do not trust people to do right. Our own personal safety has become our focus instead of helping others. From the Second Amendment, U.S. Constitution of 1791 which said, "A well-regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed" to Police & Fire Departments in every community; from locks on house doors and windows to computer virus detectors & Internet firewalls; of this we may be certain: there is nothing on earth of which we may be totally certain!

WHY IS "SECURITY" NOT SECURE? People want to hear "security," whether truth and facts are on their side or not. This is reflected in the following:

Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, the "Iraqi Information Minister," as American tanks rumbled into Baghdad, was telling many microphones, "We are in control," he said. "They are in a state of hysteria. Losers, they think that by killing civilians and trying to distort the feelings of the

people they will win. I think they will not win..." Safwan Intaher, a legal researcher who was relaxing after work on Monday at a coffee shop in downtown Cairo, Egypt, said: "He makes us feel better." (From Knight-Ridder Newspapers, Washington Bureau, April 8, 2003) Al-Sahhaf disappeared from the public April 8, 2003. Other "Sahhaf-isms:"

"They're not even [within] 100 miles [of Baghdad]. They are not in any place. They hold no place in Iraq. This is an illusion... they are trying to sell to the others an illusion."

"We made them drink poison last night and Saddam Hussein's soldiers and his great forces gave the Americans a lesson which will not be forgotten by history. Truly."

"No! We have retaken the airport! There are no Americans there! I will take you there and show you! In one hour!"

"Their forces committed suicide by the hundreds...The battle is very fierce and God made us victorious. The fighting continues."

"Yesterday, we slaughtered them and we will continue to slaughter them."

The Devil falsely guarantees: no fault sin (Genesis 3:4, 9-19); guardian angels to protect from life's dangers (Matthew 4:5-7 [Psalm 91:11-12]); or that "godliness is a means of gain" (I Timothy 6:5-6); that there will be no final Day of Judgment (Acts 17:30-31). Because people see only "surface" security, they completely ignore the truth spoken by our Creator's word. "There is no truth in" the Devil, and all who lie are his children, not God's children (John 8:44-47).

MORE WORLDLY EXAMPLES SHOW INSECURITIES: "Entertainment" is derived from TV programs which graphically depict the agony of rejection most school children and adults try to avoid (e.g. types like "Survivor," "Bachelor," "Bachelorette," "Married by"). It is ludicrous to think a solid "relationship" of any worth can be based upon one in a couple only being glad not to be rejected by the other couple member! This makes it fear-based, not a giving relationship. However God's Word says: "Love has

been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:17-19 NKJV). The only secure human relationships are those grounded in love as God intended it to be (Matthew 19:1-10; Colossians 3:18-25).

Politically, representatives who uphold Federal/State Government control over every aspect of life are elected by people who will: remain a "voting bloc" continually frightened by threats to deplete and/or shake-up Social Security; tolerate intrusive personal searches at airports and schools; pay for cars having a plethora of mandated self-limiting equipment; desire total regulation of air, water and food; let government and/or insurance companies determine health-treatments and medications-all "guarantees of health and safety." However God's Word says: "There is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Romans 13:1); "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29); and Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar learned "the Most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He chooses." (Daniel 4:32). All government programs and medical schemes that obscure God's hand from the peoples' sight are Devil-centered and not God-centered.

Societally, people: buy armloads of insurance policies for material possessions and lives; load courts with lottery-like litigation; want government doles and minimum wage increases without work; expect passing school grades without learning, and undeserved scholarships. They all seek one goal: material security. However God's Word says: Jesus said, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). God decreed men should work for a living (Genesis 3:19); share with the needy (Ephesians 4:28); and refuse to support the lazy (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Reward without earning it destroys self-esteem and society! In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus taught that earth's treasures cannot be completely protected on earth. The only lasting investment is what is given in

heavenly service. Economic "ups and downs" are man-made, but heavenly investments have only "ups."

Religiously, some mistakenly use (1) wars and rumors of wars to signal the end of the world; (2) "once-saved-always-saved" to teach a "security of the soul"; (3) material prosperity to secure one's spirituality and God's blessing; (4) "heroic deaths" to secure salvation in eternity; (5) worshiping God to entertain humans. However God's Word says: (1) The End and Judgment will come unexpectedly (1 Thessalonians 5:1-4); (2) practicing righteousness (known as "obedience") makes one born again (1 John 2:29; 3:7; Romans 16:25-27); (3) material gain is not godliness (1 Timothy 6:5-10); (4) not dying for someone else, but appropriating Christ's death for one's own self gives hope in eternity (John 15:12-14; Hebrews 5:8-9; Romans 6:1-12); (5) "spirit and truth" rule (John 4:24; Colossians 3:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26; 1 Thessalonians 2:4).

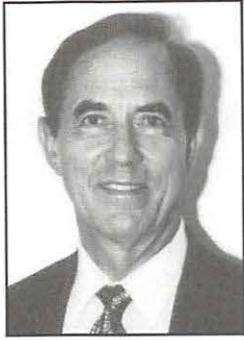
THERE IS NO SECURITY WITHOUT GOD. Religious and government leaders ordered Jesus' tomb to be made "as secure as you know how" (Matthew 27:62-66), but to no avail (Matthew 28:1-6). Government leaders surround themselves with "defenders" yet know no true security (Job 24:22-24). General Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964) said: "There is no security on this earth, there is only opportunity." Job said life's uncertainties are in God's hand, whether a person is weak or strong (Job 21:22-26, Cf. verse 30).

Without God, there is no guarantee of tomorrow (Proverbs 27:1), continued jobs or business (James 4:13-17), good health and prosperity (Luke 12:16-23), or salvation (2 Thessalonians 1:7-10).

The only true security lies in the fulfilled covenant and promise God made to Abraham, which gives hope for now and in the hereafter to those whose obedience places them "in Christ" (Galatians 3:15-29; Hebrews 6:9-10; 10:19-31; 12:1-11). This gives security of the soul, not soil, that regardless of events on earth which may jeopardize life or cause death, one's soul is committed to God (Luke 23:46; Mark 10:28-30). Paul declared, "godliness is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8). —125 The Trace, Dover, TN 37058

SINFUL NATURE?

Owen D. Olbricht



Is man born with a sinful nature? Did human nature become corrupted and sinful because of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?

The New International Version (NIV) and its recent revision, *Today's New International Version* (TNIV), interpolate without justification, "sinful nature," into the biblical text,

a theological statement instead of a translation. In these versions the Greek word *sarx*, meaning "flesh," is rendered "sinful nature" in the following passages (Romans 7:5, 18, 25; 8:3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13; 13:14; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 5:13, 16, 17, 19, 24; 6:8; Ephesians 2:3, 11; Colossians 2:11; 2 Peter 2:10, 18).

Sarx appears in the Greek New Testament around 151 times. In most of these passages, "sinful nature," could not possibly be the meaning. Jesus became *sarx*, "flesh" (John 1:14); his "flesh" is our bread of life (John 6:51), which we must (spiritually) eat to have life (John 6:53-56). Jesus' "flesh" did not see corruption (Acts 2:31). He was a descendent of David (Romans 1:3) and the patriarchs according to the "flesh" (Romans 9:5). Jesus was God revealed in the "flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16) and was put to death in the "flesh" (1 Peter 3:18). Why not use "sinful nature" in these passages if this can be the meaning of *sarx*?

When *sarx* is used to refer to the earthly nature of man, it means his "fleshly passions," which can be either good (Acts 2:26) or bad (Romans 8:7). Because these passions generally include evil purposes, the most frequent meaning, when this occurs, is the negative aspects of these passions.

Even though *sarx* has various meanings, such as, physical tissue, the fleshly body, mankind in general, fleshly passions, etc., not one major Greek lexicon, dictionary, or encyclopedia defines it, "sinful nature." The closest possible reference to a "sinful nature" is Paul's statement, "sinful passions" (Romans 7:5). He did not write, sinful "flesh," *sarx*, but sinful "passions" *pathemata*. The "Law," not the "flesh," is what aroused the "sinful passions" by working through the members of the body.

When referring to this part of the human nature lexicons give the following definitions: "*flesh* is the

willing instrument of sin, and is subject to sin to such a degree that where flesh is, all forms of sin are likewise present, and no good thing can live in the *sarx*." In giving possible ways it can be translated, "sinful flesh," is suggested, but nowhere is "sinful nature," used.¹ "In Paul's thought especially, all parts of the body constitute the totality known as *sarx* or *flesh*, which is dominated by sin to such a degree that wherever flesh is, all forms of sin are likewise present, and no good thing can live in the *sarx*."² "Sinful flesh," but not "sinful nature" may appear in the definition in some lexicons.

In summary, after a discussion of this aspect of "flesh," Schweizer wrote, "Hence the flesh is not a sphere which is to be differentiated from other earthly things and which is intrinsically bad or especially dangerous. It becomes bad only when man builds his life on it."³

McDonald correctly observed, "Yet, 'flesh'—*sarx*—is not a mere name for man's weakness as a creature of God. True, the flesh is corruptible (1 Corinthians 15:53, KJV) and subject to death (2 Corinthians 10:2). Nonetheless, Paul gives a more positive ethical content to his idea of *sarx*. Thus, while flesh is not sinful, it is that part of man's nature which gives sin its opportunity. It provides sin with its ready basis of operation. *Sarx* is that element in man upon which sin impinges and to which it attaches itself. In broad sweep, then, while Paul does not teach any Gnostic notion of the essential evil of matter, he does regard the flesh as somehow permeated by the presence of evil, which issues in the 'works of the flesh' (cf. Galatians 5:19; etc.)."⁴

The problem with giving *sarx* the meaning "sinful nature" is that this is a theological expression on which a false doctrine is built, that man is born with a sinful nature because of the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Instead of flaunting their nakedness because of a corruption in their nature, they realized their nakedness and covered themselves (Genesis 3:7-10). When they ate, their blindness to morality ended and they became like God, knowing good and evil (Genesis 3:22).

Anyone can corrupt the goodness of his nature, but no one is born with a "sinful nature." "Truly, this only I have found, that God made man upright, but they have sought out many schemes" (Ecclesiastes 7:29, NKJV).

Endnotes

¹ “sarx” F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 2nd edition, based on revision of Walter Bauer’s 5th edition (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), 744.

² “sarx,” Frederick W. Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, 3rd edition, based of Walter Bauer’s 6th edition (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2000), 915.

³ “sarx,” Eduard Wchweizer, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. VII, Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich editors, translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley, (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. 1971), 135.

⁴ H. Dermont McDonald, *Commentary on Colossians & Philemon* (Waco, TX: World Books, 1980), 102.

The Bible is a record of the struggle of twice-born men to live in a world run by the once-born.

—A. W. Tozer

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THE SIN OF A BAD ATTITUDE

Bill Dillon

Men and women of God who would not think of gambling, drinking or committing an act of fleshly evil, may otherwise be guilty of a sour disposition with an envious, bitter or negative frame of mind. An individual may quote scripture, pray fervently and have an unblemished attendance record at worship services, yet may possess such a critical and negative attitude about life that others actually wish to avoid them.

Are sins of the flesh less harmful than sins of the spirit? The sin of a bad attitude can cripple, if not kill, the progress of the Lord’s church in any community.

A weak brother may have the foulest, most profane tongue of anyone in the town and the church would not want him to serve publicly in the worship assembly. Rightly so! But if a brother has a sour spirit and is known to be a habitual discourager of others, he shall be used!!!

Regardless of daily news, sorrowful circumstances, or stormy weather, each of us has a duty to show ourselves true men and women of God and be of good cheer.

The Bible says:

“...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4).

“For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4-5).

Jesus also said, “In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

May our faith in God cause us always to see all circumstances in as favorable a light as possible and let us have a happy readiness to go onward in life.—PO Box 232, Hickory Ridge, AR 72347

THE CHAMPION’S CREED

I am not judged by the number of times I fail, but by the number of times I succeed. And the number of times I succeed is in direct proportion to the number of times I can fail and keep trying!—Tom Hopkins



THEOLOGY VERSUS THE GOSPEL

Earl I. West



The religious world has much to say about “theology.” This word, coming from the Greek words *theos* meaning “God” and *logos* meaning “word” or “study” literally indicates nothing more than a “study of God.” Innocent as this may appear, however, the word in its modern usage carries a number of implications that are subversive and contradictory to the whole spirit of the New Testament gospel. Beneath the surface and primary meaning of the word there is carried the idea of speculations and philosophies about God originating with man. This subtle evil is in sharp contrast to the word “gospel.” for this word, from the Greek *euangelion*, means literally “good news.” The gospel is the good news which is centered in Christ; it is the news of our salvation and redemption in Jesus.

THE DIFFERENCE. Walter Scott, outstanding pioneer preacher of a hundred years ago, put the difference between “theology” and “the gospel” like this: “The preaching of the gospel is the preaching of the effects, commands, promises of and about Christ. Theology, on the other hand, is the speculation about these facts.”

When one preaches the gospel, he tells men that Jesus died for our sins; when he preaches theology he speculates as to how the death of Christ brought about the redemption from sins. Preaching the gospel, he tells sinners it is for the remission of sins; preaching theology he speculates as to how this is done. Preaching the gospel, he quotes the scriptures as the final authority for his statements; preaching theology, he enjoys quoting from the philosophers and theologians.

There, briefly, is the difference between the two. The one is a preaching of what the Bible says; the other a preaching of human speculations about what the Bible says. The one is calculated to move men to obey the gospel and be saved. The other is a device by which man

“reasons” himself out of doing what God says.

AN AUTHORITATIVE RELIGION. It is basic to the understanding of the scriptures to recognize that the religion of Jehovah has always been an authoritative religion. God is invested with all authority, his rule is not to be questioned. He must be obeyed, not merely speculated about. Men must submit to him for no other reason than that he is God.

In the Old Testament Jehovah sought to impress his people with the fact and absoluteness of his authority. Man was to have dominion over everything—except man! God reserved for himself the dominion over man.

A tree of knowledge of good and evil was placed in the Garden of Eden. Man was told not to eat of the fruit of that particular tree. God gave no reasons for the prohibition, so the power behind the command lay wholly in the person of God. Obedience to the law would indicate man’s respect for God; disobedience his disrespect. Obedience or disobedience always denotes the attitude of mind and heart.

Abraham, in Ur of Chaldea, was commanded to leave Ur and go into a land which God would show him. No reason was given for the command. It had promises attached to it, but God gave no explanation as to why he wanted Abraham to go into a strange country. Similar dealings were had with all the patriarchs.

AUTHORITY INVESTED IN MOSES. In setting up national Israel, God gave authority to Moses, requiring the people to follow him fully. “And Jehovah said unto Moses, Lo, I come unto thee in a thick cloud that the people may hear when I speak with thee, and may also believe thee forever” (Exodus 19:9). Jehovah purposed to convince the people that he was working through Moses, and that they should in no way doubt or question any law which Moses might give. He did not intend to prove or explain every command; he did not expect to give the reasons he might have behind each requirement; no angel from heaven would come to demonstrate to each Israelite that God had

such and such reasons for demanding such and such actions. The only proposition God wanted to demonstrate was that he was working through Moses—let no man doubt or question that!

“Certain sons of Korah rose up before Moses, with certain of the children of Israel, two hundred and fifty princes of the congregation, called to the assembly, men of renown; and they assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Jehovah is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the assembly of Jehovah?” (Numbers 16:1-3). This was rebellion. It was rebellion against God. The guilty ones were punished by destruction. No other course would have been logical or possible.

MOSES AND CHRIST. Turning from the Old Testament to the New we discover that the supremacy of Moses as an authority was to be discontinued and superseded by the counterpart of Moses, Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The “law” came by Moses; grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The significance of the Transfiguration scene is to be found in the fact that Jesus was supreme over Moses and Elijah, representative of the law and the prophets. “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him,” said Jehovah (Matthew 17:5).

The conflict Christ had with the Jews arose largely out of the fact that they were insisting on a continuation of the authority of Moses, whereas Jesus was declaring that authority was not in him. A new kingdom was to be inaugurated; a new nation set up. Physical Israel was to disappear as God’s chosen people. In its place should come spiritual Israel, the church, the kingdom of Christ. The rule of Moses was ended; the authority of Christ was to be recognized as absolute and supreme.

Significantly, the only proposition which the New Testament undertakes to prove is that implied in Jesus’ question to the Pharisees, “What think ye of the Christ? whose son is he?” (Matthew 22:42). If Jesus be the son of God, then he has all authority. Men must obey him because he is God’s Son. God selected four men—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—to write biographies of Jesus from different points of view. Each of them however

made it the chief end of his writing to prove that Jesus was the Son of God. John closed these biographical records by saying, “these are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name” (John 20:31). And Matthew quoted Christ as saying, “All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18).

When the disciples went out preaching from the day of Pentecost on, the message they preached was based on the authority of Christ. The expression they used, “in the name of Christ,” always denoted the authority of Christ. In the name of Jesus men and women were commanded to repent and be baptized (Acts 2:38). In the name of Jesus miracles were wrought. This was possible only because men were acting “in the name” or under the authority of Christ. In view of that the writer of Hebrews well says, “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them. For it the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard” (Hebrews 2:1-4).

ENEMY OF THE AUTHORITY OF GOD. To the authority of God the response which Jehovah has always demanded is faith and obedience. Faith is the acceptance of what God says; obedience is the acting upon this thing which has been accepted. The Christian religion is built upon a platform of faith. “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7). We are saved by faith—the faith which obeys God (Acts 15:9; 1 Peter 1:22). When God speaks and man believes God and does what He says, we have the substance of the religion of Jehovah; that is what it is all about.

Yet to prevent this simple obedience to God by faith, Satan has always had his devices. Human speculation and philosophy (theology) is one of these devices. When God commanded Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he did not explain why he gave such a command. The warrant for obedience was the authority of God. The response desired was faith and
(Continued on page 23)



BLOCKING HEAVEN'S GATE

(Matthew 23:1-3)

M. W. Kiser



Is there anyone you would like to see in Hell? We would probably answer in the negative; but have we ever contributed to a person dying lost? Ungodly people often wish this upon others. Jesus brought this serious indictment against the Pharisees of His day. Let us consider how we could be guilty of doing the same.

I. BY DENYING WHAT THE BIBLE TEACHES ABOUT HELL.

- A. They deny its existence. Most who believe in God, don't believe in Hell. Most who believe in Hell don't believe there is the possibility that they will go there! The Godhead taught it (2 Peter 2:4; Matthew 5:22); Redemption implies it; Heaven suggest it; and Judgment demands it!
- B. Some would deny the Biblical explanation of:
 1. Where it is [say it is the grave] (Hebrews 10:27-29).
 2. What will be found there [torment] (Luke 16:28).
 3. How long it will last [eternity] (Mark 9:47-48).
- C. Some would deny its extent. They claim it just for the devil and his angels (Matthew 13:42, 50; 25:41; 23:15, 23; Revelation 21:8, 20:15).

II. BY BEING INDIFFERENT TOWARD SOUL WINNING.

- A. Some are indifferent toward alien sinners; failing to believe that those who die in their sins will be lost (John 8:21-24; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).
- B. Some are indifferent toward erring brethren: They can fall from grace, and unless

converted, will be lost (2 Peter 2:20-22; James 5:19-20).

- C. Some are indifferent toward their own soul. They fail to acknowledge responsibility in this matter (Romans 10:13-17; Ezekiel 3:17-21).

III. BY BEING A HYPOCRITICAL CHURCH MEMBER.

- A. The Nominal Christian. Morally good, but their personal interest comes first (Revelation 3:1; Matthew 6:33).
- B. The Worldly Christian. They look starched and ironed; but they need to be washed (1 Peter 4:14-16; 1 John 2:15-17).
- C. The Compromising Christian. He will not stand up for what he believes; High doctrine and low practice do not go together.

IV. BY FAILING TO OBEY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

- A. Some probably don't obey because they are stubborn.
 1. You are telling others that it is just not important (Romans 14:7).
 2. You are saying to one and all, "I don't love Jesus" (John 14:15).
- B. Some don't obey because they have a hardened heart.
 1. They are comforted about friends being in hell (Revelation 21:8).
 2. We leave this world with a different thought (Luke 16:27-28).
- C. Some are just waiting on a better time to do it.
 1. Instead of "today," they say "someday" (2 Corinthians 6:2; Acts 24:25).
 2. Many will die with good intentions; but take others with them!

V. BY ROBBING PEOPLE OF NEEDED ENCOURAGEMENT.

- A. Some are just not sure that the Lord wants them (Matthew 11:28-30).
- B. Some are convinced they are just too sinful (1 Timothy 1:15).
- C. Some are almost persuaded. It is with them, not a matter of knowing, but of obeying. They need to know that "now" is the time (Acts 2:37-40).

I hope that none of us have been guilty of blocking the gate of heaven to someone who wants to go; for if we have, then we are guilty of helping someone be lost in hell! By turning every point around, we can help folks go to heaven. —104 Calhoun Avenue, Sylacauga, AL 35150

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PRELUDE TO REFORMATION (1)

Grady Miller



The most convenient and obvious date for the launch of the Protestant Reformation is October 31, 1517. It was on that date Martin Luther, hardly known outside the immediate circle of German churches, monasteries and universities, nailed his ninety-five thesis protesting the chief Roman Catholic fundraiser—the selling of indulgences—to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg.

If we must pick a date to mark the beginning of the Reformation Era, 1517 will do just fine. In the weeks following Luther's courageous act all Germany boiled over. The Ninety-five Thesis were printed and distributed throughout the country. The Catholic hierarchy soon realized this dispute was more than a "squabble among monks," as Pope Leo X tried to dismiss it. With Luther leading the charge in Germany, Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, the Anabaptists in Switzerland and John Calvin in France, the totalitarian dominance of the Roman Catholic Church was broken in much of Europe. The Protestant Reformation ushered in a new day, a new age of religious freedom.

Momentous change doesn't just happen, not all at once. Lightning rarely crackles in a clear, blue sky. Instead, we see the unmistakable gathering of storm clouds, feel the freshening wind and notice the change of temperature before the thunderstorm breaks upon us. Just so, there were many important developments that precede the Protestant Reformation. There were other brave reformers in the centuries before Luther who paved the way for his work and made possible his contribution.

Many of the most important factors contributing to the success of the Reformation are beyond the scope of this study. After all, the focus of the *Gospel Gleaner* is Bible study, church history and restoration principles. Still, we need to realize that 16th century Europe was ripe for change, a radical reformation, reaching far beyond the all-important issues of religion. The Atlantic empires of

England, France and Spain were growing in power and influence, while Venice, Genoa and Milan were declining in importance. The discovery of new lands – indeed, a whole new world – opened new vistas of opportunity. New sources of revenue challenged the dominance of the landed gentry and nobility of the Old World. The nameless, faceless serf, tied to the land and kept in peasantry for centuries, began to assert his claim for dignity, individuality and independence. The Renaissance sparked increasing interest in secular concerns, and that explosion of learning, discovery and the arts stood in stark contrast to the narrow and petty agenda of church officials.

PILLAR POSTS OF THE PROTESTANT REFORMATION

This series of articles will examine three significant developments in the centuries before Martin Luther that made the Protestant Reformation possible. We may liken these developments to a foundation, upon which Luther and others built. Or, to view it another way, consider that the Reformation of the 16th Century rests upon three grand pillar posts, each one leaning upon and drawing strength from the other.

First, there is the absolute pillar of the Bible, the recognition that the authority of the Word supersedes every one and every thing. The plowman in the field, the priest in the cathedral and the Pope in Rome are all subject to this divine authority. Even more far-reaching, the plowman has as much right to read and interpret the Bible as any church official. Therefore, the Bible must be readily available, freely translated into every language, and the final arbiter of every religious question.

Second, there is the recognized and widely acknowledged corruption of the Roman Catholic Church. Reasonable men do not "protest" against that which is pure and right, or call themselves "Protestants" unless they have a just grievance against the acceptable order. There is not need to "reform" or instigate a "Reformation" unless there are abuses that need correcting.

Third, there has to be the proper climate and

prevailing conditions that make Reformation possible. Oranges will not grow in Colorado. You won't find a rosebush in the middle of a busy Interstate highway. The careful Bible student knows that Jesus came into this world only when "the fullness of the time had come" (Galatians 4:4), when everything was ripe and ready for the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His kingdom. So, too, there were many historical developments – and, I believe, the unfolding of God's providential purpose – in those years leading up to the Protestant Reformation.

Our next installment will examine the "rediscovering" of the Word of God that made the Reformation possible.—
745 Riverview Lane, Colorado Springs, CO 80916

FOR WE BE BRETHREN
Continued from front page

As A Christian - "And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). Those who won't grow become carnal, thus cause strife. *Not Sound In Doctrine* - "If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife..." (1 Timothy 6:3-4). It is not those who stand for the truth that cause strife but those who do not. *Envy* - "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work" (James 3:16). Envy is a great evil.

How do we prevent strife among brethren? *Do our best to avoid strife* - "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18). Avoiding strife must be our goal. *Be Slow To Anger* - "A wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife" (Proverbs 15:18). *Study* - "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to

be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). We can do no better than we know, and we seldom do as well as we know. *Practice the "Golden Rule"* - "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them..." (Matthew 7:12). So many troubles would be solved if we would all live by this important philosophy. *Be Longsuffering* - "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forebearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye" (Colossians 3:12-13). *Be Peacemakers* - "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matthew 5:9). Action is required! Beloved, let us not be the cause of strife, for "we be brethren."—823 North Main Street, Malvern, AR 72104

HIGHLIGHTS FROM CHURCH HISTORY

COLUMN REVIVED

Many of our readers will remember this column which was a recent addition to *Gospel Gleaner*, featuring articles on church history by Max R. Miller. It was a short running department, ending prematurely with brother Miller's death late in 2001. Max Miller was an excellent student of the Bible who had a wonderful knowledge of church history. I remember him as being well read in all areas of history, and this was reflected in his writing. We miss him and we miss his column. It has been over a year since this department last appeared.

With this issue of *Gospel Gleaner* we are reviving the department, *Highlights From Church History*. We have invited Grady Miller to resume the work of his father in this area. Grady preaches for the Pikes Peak Church of Christ in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He was editor of *First Century Christian* from 1995, until it suspended publication at the end of 2002. Grady Miller is an excellent student of church history in his own right. His deep love for Jesus Christ and his church, along with his rich knowledge of history make Grady the logical choice to write this column. We think that you will find his articles both interesting and informative.—
Dennis Gullledge, *Editor*.

WORK OF LAW

T. Pierce Brown



In Romans 2:12-15, we find a reference to ethnic groups (ethna) which did not have the law, yet did by nature the things contained in the law and were thus a law unto themselves. Then in verse 15 Paul says, “Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another.”

Most commentaries and translations which I have checked seem to think “the work of the law” is to be understood as “the works which the law requires.” The NIV translates it as “the requirements of the law.” I think they are wrong.

The expression “the work of the law” is from the Greek, *to ergon tou nomou*, and does not mean the same as “the deeds of the law” in Romans 3:20. There are at least three reasons to conclude this. First, “work” in Romans 2:15 is singular; “deeds” in Romans 3:20 is plural. Second, the article is present in Romans 2, suggesting that Paul is talking about the Law of Moses, whereas it is not present in Romans 3, suggesting the possibility that he is talking about law in general. It is true that the absence of the article does not always mean he is not talking about the Law of Moses. Having read every case in which the article is absent, I conclude that although the Law of Moses may be indicated by the context of the verses under consideration, it is still the principles of law that are in his mind and not the specific Law of Moses itself. Third, the most significant reason I do not think “the work of the law” means “the requirements of the law” or “the works which the law demands” is because those two latter expressions simply mean “the law.” If “the requirement of the law” were written on the heart of the Gentile, he would have the law written on his heart, and would be under the law just as much as the Jew. Paul specifically denies this. It does not require a particularly astute person to realize that the Gentiles did not know the requirements of the law, either because they had them in a book or on their hearts.

Since the language specifically says, “the work of the law” let us inquire what is the work or function of the law. We can see that “the deeds of the law” are deeds which the

law requires of us. But “the work of the law” is not a work the law requires of us, but a work which the law does for us. What are some things the Law of Moses did for the Jew? First, it was a tutor to lead the Jews to Christ. Did that purpose inhere in what was written on the Gentile heart? If so, I am at a loss to see how, nor have I ever heard of a person who did. Second, the law gave a knowledge of specific things that were sins. Paul would not have known that it was a sin to covet if the law had not revealed it to him (Romans 7:7). Could that have been the thing that was written on the heart of a Gentile? I see no evidence in or out of the Bible that Gentiles were aware that it was a sin to covet. There must be some other work of the law that Paul had in mind. Is there some other thing the law did for the Jew that could be written on the heart of a Gentile? Yes, the law emphasized that man is justified in doing right and man stands condemned if he does wrong. Note that the thing that is written on his heart is not the law, which tells what is right or wrong, but “the work of the law,” or an effect of the law which causes a man to want to be justified and not condemned. There is no man, no matter how wicked, that does not seek to be justified in what he does. It is written on the heart of every man. If you had asked Hitler why he murdered the Jews or Sadaam Hussein why he invaded Kuwait, they would have sought to justify themselves because there was written on their hearts the realization that men should do right and not do wrong.

This “work of the law” is neither the law itself, “the requirements of the law” (which amounts to the same thing), nor the conscience. God also gives every man a conscience, but it is not produced by the law. But there is a thing produced by The Law of Moses (or any other specific set of laws) that was written on the heart of the Gentiles who did not have the Law of Moses. That was the sense of “oughtness” which every man has. Even an atheist admits that men ought not do many things. Without an admission of the reality of God, no one can sensibly explain why everyone in the world has a sense of “should” or “should not.” But the fact that they cannot explain it does not mean that it is not written on their hearts, for God wrote it there. Note carefully that the specific things a person should or should not do must be prescribed by law. That is not written on the heart of man. No Gentile could tell whether he should offer a bull or goat on an altar. However, he has written on his heart the sense of

moral responsibility. This is the work of the law, whether we speak of the Law of Moses or any of God's other laws. When God speaks, man has a sense of moral responsibility. That is not the only work of the law, but it is the work of the law to impress upon man a sense of moral responsibility. Without a specific law, such as the Law of Moses, God wrote that sense of moral responsibility on the heart of every man. That fact is too universally recognized to permit serious debate.

Notice how the last part of Romans 2:15 bears out this conclusion. Since the work of the law is written in their hearts—that is, since they have a sense of moral responsibility and know that the things that are right are praiseworthy and things that are wrong merit condemnation—their conscience bears witness and accuses or defends them. Every person in the world believes certain things to be right. He believes other things to be wrong. When he does that which he thinks to be right, he shows “the work of the law” written in his heart and his conscience bears witness to it, upholding or defending him. When he does that which he thinks to be wrong, he shows “the work of the law” written in his heart, and his conscience bears witness to it, accusing him or condemning him. The conscience cannot be trained to do anything different from that. It only has those two functions, and all the knowledge one may get will not change those functions. Paul had as good a conscience before he learned God's will as he did afterwards. Teaching did not affect the nature or function of his conscience. It only changed the things he considered right or wrong.

So, neither the law nor the “requirements of the law” were written in the heart of the Gentile, but “the work of the law” was. That is, they had a God-given ability to have a sense of moral responsibility. This caused them to “do by nature” (verse 14) many of the things contained in the law. It does not say, imply or suggest that the Gentiles, who have not the law, do by nature all the things contained in the law. We know that they did not. However, we know that people from any ethnic group we have observed have a sense of moral responsibility that causes them to obey many of the principles contained in the law.

Those who have that sense of “oughtness” and obey it are a law unto themselves. When they fail to do that which they understand they ought to do, they stand condemned, even by their own conscience. This should not lead one to

conclude that when anyone does what he thinks he ought to do, he is justified from his sins. We could prove that is not so in many ways. That a person may sin without the Law of Moses is clearly evident, for Paul says, “Those who sin without law shall perish without law” (Romans 2:12). For a person to do what he thinks is right in 100 cases cannot possibly pay for his guilt in doing what he thinks is wrong in another case. A man is always justified when he does what is right, but that does not mean “justified from his sins” or forgiven for having done wrong things. We err greatly when we think “justified” always means “just as if I had never sinned” or is forgiven. God is said to be justified under some circumstances (Luke 7:29), but by no stretch of imagination can it be assumed that it refers to his being forgiven of sins. However, that would take another article to deal with that subject. The point of this one is that the “work of the law” cannot mean “the things required by the law” but refers to something that the law does for the Gentile in his heart that the Law of Moses did for the Jew. The only thing that fits the picture as I view it is the sense of moral responsibility all men have.—1068 Mitchell Avenue, Cookeville, TN 38501

SPANISH EDITION PLANNED FOR THIRD QUARTER ISSUE

As we announced in our first quarter issue for 2003, we are planning a Spanish edition of *Gospel Gleaner*. The Spanish edition will be released concurrent with our regular English issue for the third quarter. It will contain the same material as our English issue. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to teach the gospel to an ever increasing Hispanic community in this country. We view this as an open door of opportunity that God has laid before us.

The theme for this issue will be: “What Think Ye Of Christ?” It will be composed of articles touching on the various aspects of the deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

If you, or the congregation where you worship, are engaged in a Hispanic ministry we hope you will take advantage of this opportunity. *Gospel Gleaner* is **subscription-free**. All you need to do is to let us know how many issues you can use, and we will send you a bundle. Please contact us at *Gospel Gleaner*, PO Box 345, Mabelvale, AR 72103, or, email us at mabelval@cei.net.—Dennis Gullledge, *Editor*

A UNIQUE CHURCH

Hugo McCord



All that is involved in the Lord's simple promise, "I will build my church" (Matthew 16:18), is beyond human comprehension. From everlasting to everlasting is its scope. Fascinating and gripping is a study of the universe's greatest institution. In a realm alone it stands by itself, unique, solitary, a *sui generis*, a *monogenes*,

the only one of its kind.

NOT UNIQUE IN LANGUAGE. The word on Jesus's lips in his promise to erect his church, *ekklesia* (a "called-out group"), was not unique, and by itself it has no religious or sacred meaning. To the Greeks a group of people "called out" for a town meeting or to see an Olympic race would be called an *ekklesia*. Luke employed the word where it is translated not "church" but "assembly." Also, just as an unlawful assembly could be styled an *ekklesia*, so a lawful assembly the Ephesian townclerk designated as an *ekklesia* (Acts 19:39). Furthermore, a large group of Israelites (called out of Egypt by Moses into a wilderness) Stephen described as an *ekklesia* (Acts 7:38, mistranslated "church" in the KJV and the ASV).

To us the word *ekklesia* becomes exceedingly important because Jesus used it to refer to those people whom he would call out of the world to live only for him (Matthew 11:26-28; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15). They would be sinners called by the gospel to a new life of righteousness (Romans 6:1-17; 2 Thessalonians 2:14). The idea Jesus presented is of the highest importance, but the word he used to set it forth was not unique.

UNIQUE IN FIVE WAYS. There are at least five ways that the New Testament church is in a realm to itself, the one of its kind.

A Display of God's Wisdom. "The eternal purpose" which God purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord for a long time "was not made known to the sons of men" (Ephesians 3:5, 11). From of old, men knew from what the prophets had said that something stupendous was coming. "Many prophets and righteous men desired to see" and to hear about what God was planning (Matthew 13:17). But no eye had seen, nor had any ear heard, and no heart had imagined the things God had "prepared for them that love him"

(Isaiah 64:4; 1 Corinthians 2:9). Prophets themselves "sought and searched diligently" to no avail until "the fulness of time" had come (Galatians 4:4; 1 Peter 1:10). Even angels were in suspense, but they were not lacking in interest. The divine plan of the ages they desired "to look into" (*parakupsai*, just as Mary "stooped and looked" into the tomb) (1 Peter 1:12; John 20:11).

That the Gentiles, also a part of God's creation and precious to him, should, along with the Jews, be "fellow-heirs, and fellow-members of the body, and fellow-partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel" was a glorious revelation (Ephesians 3:6). In due time the uncovering of the eternal purpose was made known by the Spirit to the "holy apostles and prophets" (Ephesians 3:5). Then that combined group of sinners, Jew and Gentiles, now redeemed and forgiven through the gospel, now brothers together in one family, now members of one body, the church, that unified called-out group the angels in heaven could finally see!

As a result they praised God for his matchless wisdom in effecting so glorious a prophet. As a quilt on exhibition at the state fair, displaying a lady's careful and beautiful handiwork, gives glory to its maker, so the church, without blemish and without spot, is a living exhibit of what God is able to perfect. The many strands of his divine wisdom are reflected brilliantly when one's eyes fall on the incomparable church. Nothing like it is known to man or angel.

Its Purchase Price. That combined group of called-out peoples, the whole family in heaven and on the earth, living and dead, before or after the cross, that group was paid for by the Savior's blood (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 3:15; Hebrews 9:15; 11:40). Church members have been redeemed, not by corruptible things, as silver and gold, but by the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without spot and without blemish, foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:18-19).

In the moonlight of Gethsemane, with Jesus' face on the ground, displaying "strong crying and tears," being in "an agony," with his sweat like "great drops of blood falling down upon the ground," praying the Father who loved him to remove the impending blood-letting, nobody could ever ask, "Could God have thought of any other way to save

sinner? to buy the church?" (Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:44; Hebrews 5:7).

Truly the purchase price of the church is one of its unique features. Genuine church members praise him who loved them and washed them from their sins by his blood (Revelation 1:5). They cannot understand how an alleged Christian denomination can be so unappreciative of Calvary as to purge from its hymnals any reference to blood.

Its Membership. Church members have a quality belonging to no other organization: they are a saved group, enjoying the assurance that their sins have been forgiven. From their souls their guilt has been placed on the head of Jesus as a scapegoat. Thank God, he has carried their sins "into the wilderness" far away (Leviticus 16:20-22). A God whose word is sure has promised that their iniquities he will remember no more (Hebrews 8:12).

One does not join the church. Instead, after he is saved, the Lord adds him to that called-out group. When one has believed, repented, confessed the Savior, and has been baptized, he is pronounced saved (Acts 2:36, 38; 1 John 4:15; Mark 16:16). A sinner is active in obeying these commandments; when they are done, he is passive as the Lord adds him to the church (Acts 2:47).

The church does not save; it is the saved. Only the Savior saves, and the saved ones make up the church. From the birthday of the church until now, day by day as sinners are being saved they are being added to the church.

J. D. Tant was asked if only members of the church would be saved. His reply was, "Not half of them." In truth, there are two salvations: one from past sins, and one into heaven (1 Peter 1:9; 2 Peter 1:9). When one has been saved from past sins, that salvation is forever and will never be cancelled (Hebrews 10:14). But that saved person, even though a church member, if he misbehaves he falls short of the grace of God (Hebrews 12:15), and will no more go to heaven than the backsliding Israelites could go into the promised land. To them God swore that they would not enter into their rest (Hebrews 3:18). "They were overthrown in the wilderness," and are set forth as a warning to church members lest they fall short of going to heaven (1 Corinthians 10:5-11). "Wherefore, let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

Its Namelessness. The New Testament church is unique in that it has no proper name. Denominations have proper names. The word "denominate" means to "name" something. But the New Testament church is nameless. Though it is called the house of the Lord, the family of God, the body of Christ, and the kingdom of Christ (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 1:22-23; 3:15; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 3:5-6; 1 Timothy 3:15), yet it has no proper name.

Individual members of the church do have a proper name. That name is not "disciple," though they are disciples (Acts 9:1). That name is not "brethren," though they are brethren (Acts 9:30). That name is not "saints," though church members are saints (Acts 9:32). Their proper and divinely given name is "Christian" (Acts 11:26), but to call the church the "Christian Church" is to give it a proper name, not known in the Bible.

To speak of the New Testament church as the "church of Christ" is right, as it is to speak of it as the "church of God" (Romans 16:16; 1 Corinthians 1:2), but neither is a proper name. To speak of "Church of Christ" congregations and of "Church of Christ preachers" is to denominationalize the church which is unique in that it is not a denomination (a named society).

Its Destiny. The last of five features of that divine organization that is like none other is its eternal destiny. No institution except the Lord's church can survive the physical death of its members. But the divinely built church is so constituted that its membership is enjoyed in this life and even more abundantly in eternity. Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come (1 Timothy 4:8). Faithful church members, adding the Christian graces, will "never fall. In this way the entrance to the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will be richly provided" (2 Peter 1:5-11). "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Ephesians 3:21).—5535 E. Evergreen, #7505, Vancouver, WA 98661

*Nobody ever outgrows scripture;
the book widens and deepens with our years.*

—C.H. Spurgeon