

The Gospel Preceptor

Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way. Psa 119:104

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God's Call to Repentance

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Our text is taken from Paul's sermon on Mars' Hill in Acts 17:21:

At the time of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent: because he hath appointed a day, in 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.

It has been said that we put too much stress on baptism, and not enough on repentance. Some people think that because we do not preach some direct, incomprehensible, inconceivable, unintelligible, intangible, mystical, mystified, better-felt-than-told sort of an operation that we “leave the Holy Spirit out” and do not preach repentance. Their trouble lies in not knowing what repentance is nor when it is preached. As for baptism, I have never been able to put as much stress on it as Christ and the Apostles did. There is not a case of delayed baptism in the Bible—not one on record—after the subject was commanded to be baptized. On Pentecost “about three thousand” were baptized that day. In Acts 8, the eunuch was baptized by the way, without waiting until he reached his destination; he did not even wait for a church to vote on him! In Acts 9, Paul “arose, and was baptized” forthwith upon being told. In Acts 16, the jailor was baptized “the same hour of the night.” The apostles evidently put much stress on the command to be baptized, to have obtained such ready response. As hard as I try, people will often delay their baptism for a time, even when convinced, and sometimes after the good confession has been made. Perhaps, I am not putting enough stress on this important command after all. But if it seems to some that too much is said on the subject, let it be remembered that it is the one command that people so universally oppose, and that preachers so unanimously ignore; hence it requires much stress on our part. You see, friend, it is necessary for us to do our part of the preaching on the subject and make up for what all the other preachers fail to do! If they would all preach baptism, as they do faith, we would not feel bound to give so much attention to it: and if the situation should be reversed, and all the preachers should begin preaching baptism and ignoring faith (even branding it as nonessential) then we would feel impelled to put the stress there. But in the midst of this skeptical, doubting, unbelieving, impenitent age I must concede, friends, that much more preaching on both faith and repentance is in demand.

The Hardest Command

Repentance is the hardest command to obey. Do you wonder if this is true? Well, it is—for it has to do with the will of man. The obstinacy of the human will has always been, and yet is, the greatest obstacle in the way of his salvation. Faith is not hard to induce unless one is determined not to believe, and in that case, it becomes one of obstinacy again. Someone said, “If weak thy faith why choose the harder side?” Unbelief is the harder side. Faith is easily imparted and “groweth exceedingly” in those who are not obstinate. Neither is baptism a hard command. When one has believed, actually, and repented, truly, he will readily be baptized. “Then they that gladly received the

word were baptized” (Acts 2:41). Impenitence is the trouble.

And thinkest thou this, O man...that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despiseth thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds ... for there is no respect of persons with God (Rom. 2:3-11).

God says stubbornness is as bad as idolatry, and rebellion is the same as witchcraft in the Lord’s sight. The impenitence that will reject all warnings of a righteous judgment is plain hardihood.

It has been said that infidels live but do not die. That is likely the truth for infidelity is a poor rod and staff in death. Someone else said that there will be no infidels in hell. The renowned French infidel, Voltaire, is reported to have screamed in his death: “O God if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell if there is a hell.” It is also said of the bold and brazen Ingersoll that he shrieked out in the clutches of death: “O, what shall become of my poor soul!” As the unbelieving and impenitent face, a leap into the dark caverns of eternity where “tribulation and anguish” await “them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth.” They reach for a hand that can save, but God has said:

Because I have called and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity: I will mock when your fear cometh; ... then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer (Pro. 1:24-28).

These are solemn words, impenitent friend, and you should heed them to “seek the Lord while he may be found” and “call upon him while he is near.” The time will come, and that soon, when you will renounce your unbelief and sue for mercy, but mercy’s day may have passed you by. “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

What Repentance Is

It is not enough to merely call upon people to repent; they must know what repentance is, in order that they may repent. Theology has obscured the subject and blurred the eyes of those who otherwise might see. It has been preached as something that God gives, a weird something from an unknown source, something a sinner should pray for, and received in strange sensations and inexplicable experiences. Now, friends, let us see if we cannot get an intelligent definition of repentance—just try to find out what this thing is that God “commands all men everywhere” to do. Men cannot do a thing unless they know what it is; nor can they do the thing that is done for them. Since repentance is commanded, it is an act of man and not of God. It is done by man and not for man.

Repentance is not fear. Many preachers seem to think so, for in their preaching they use the “fear psychology.” They take you to the sick room, then to the death chamber, then to the undertaker’s parlor, then to the cemetery, then to the land of ghostdom; and they tell you many creepy stories that make the hair stand on ends, and the knees knock, and the teeth chatter, and the blood run cold, and all sorts of creepy feelings play up and down the spine—and they think they are preaching repentance, when in fact they are preaching nightmares! No, repentance is not fear.

Repentance is not regret. Many have regretted their sins who never once repented. Men are sorry for their sins because they have been caught; because they suffer the shame or humiliation of being exposed; because they suffer the penalties of its retributive justice—but mere regret is not repentance.

Repentance is not prayer. Some prayers are an abomination in the sight of God. “He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall he abomination” (Pro. 28:9). And David said, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18). But there are people who think that all who pray have repented

and will be saved. Jesus said: “Not every one that saith unto me Lord. Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my father which is in heaven” (Mat. 7:21). It takes more than mere prayer to define repentance.

Repentance is not conviction. Now, all of you have heard the preachers talk about being “under conviction”—and they don’t know what it means themselves. On the day of Pentecost, when the first gospel sermon was preached, the people were “pricked in their hearts”—they were convicted, whether they were “under” it or not. Convicted—but they had not repented. For when these convicted Jews said to the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” Peter told them to “repent and be baptized.” So they had not repented—it takes more than conviction to make repentance.

Repentance is not sorrow. Paul says. “Godly sorrow worketh repentance.” Hence, sorrow—the right kind of sorrow—is the cause and repent and is the effect. When regret turns into sorrow, then sorrow turns into repentance.

Repentance is not reformation. It produces reformation, just as sorrow produces repentance. Reformation is the fruit of repentance. A man regrets his sins to the extent of sorrow, he repents, and reforms. Hence, repentance stands in between the time that a man becomes sorry for his sins and when he abandons his sins and begins the better course of life. “For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity; I will be sorry for my sins” (Psa. 38:18).

Then what is repentance? Friends, repentance is a mental act—the act of the mind that determines to quit sin. It is resolution; it involves the functions of the human will. Hear Jesus: “But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first and said, Son, go work today in my vineyard. He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went” (Mat. 21:29). This short parable defines repentance. The impenitent son said, “I will not.” The penitent son said, “I will.” The difference between repentance and impenitence is the difference of one word. It is the word not, and that is the word that spells the difference between rebellion and disobedience on one hand and submission and obedience to God on the other. When a man who is living in sin determines to abandon his life of sin, when he says, “I will quit sin—I will sin no more,” he has repented. How long does it take one to repent? Just long enough to determine to quit sin. So, repentance, friends, is that resolution, determination, that decision to obey God. Faith precedes it, baptism follows it. Hence, “repent and be baptized every one of you.”

The Necessity of Repentance

The absolute necessity of repentance is seen by its prominence in the divine text. Enoch, the first preacher mentioned in the Bible, preached repentance. He preached “judgment upon all” and sought “to convince them of all their ungodly deeds” (Jude 14-15). Noah preached repentance. For about a century he thundered forth the coming judgment of God upon a world utterly wed to evil and incorrigible in crime. But the world was in the grip of universal apostacy; they gave no heed and God “spared not the old world, but saved Noah, the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5). Had the world repented at the preaching of Noah, the story might have been a different one. The prophets all preached repentance. Isaiah said, “though your sins be as scarlet, I will make them white as snow; though they be red like crimson, I will make them a wool.” Ezekiel said, “turn ye from your transgressions, for why will ye die, O house of Israel.” And the first preacher that appears on the scene in the New Testament is a fearless preacher of repentance. John, the Baptist, preached the “baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (Mark 1:4). He did not preach the kind of baptism preached by those preachers today who call themselves Baptists. Let it be observed, in the first place, that Baptist was not John’s name, but his work; and in the second place, that the Baptists today do not preach John’s baptism. He preached the “baptism of repentance (growing out of repentance) for the remission of sins.” Modern Baptist preachers could not fellowship John, and he could not fellowship them. Moreover, John was not a Baptist—but “the” Baptist—the only one, and there was never another who was called such. He started no church, and belonged to no church, and was beheaded by Herod before Jesus Christ built the church—yet the effort is made to identify the Baptist church today with the

New Testament. It is a vain effort. Their own translation of the New Testament some years ago by their own Baptist scholars ruined that effort—for their scholars translated the word baptism “immersion” and the word baptize “immerse,” and translated “John the Baptist” in the term “John the Immerser.” They later discarded the translation because their scholars had taken out their name! We have a copy of this translation and will be glad to show it to any Baptist who might like see it.

So, Jesus preached repentance—but not repentance only; he preached the **baptism of repentance**. And John preached baptism—but not baptism only—he preached the baptism of repentance, and it was for the remission of sins.

One day Jesus came to be baptized of John—and John hesitated. He was preaching repentance and baptism for the remission of sins, and he knew that Jesus could receive no such baptism, as he had no sins. Jesus said, “suffer it to be so now.” That means that John was preaching it exactly right—but Jesus was an exception. He said “suffer” it. We suffer an exception, not the rule. And Jesus further said, “Suffer it to be so”—now; that one time only—and He (the Son of God) was thus the only exception to “the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.” Jesus did not receive John’s baptism—he received an exception to it.

But Jesus went forth preaching “that men should repent”—the Son of God preached repentance. He put it in the Great Commission which, as worded by Luke, reads: “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all the nations beginning at Jerusalem.” Then, beginning at Jerusalem, Peter preached repentance on Pentecost, commanding the Jews to “repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” Paul preached it on Mars Hill to the men of Athens, and told them that “at the time of this ignorance” (Gentile ignorance, when God had not given them his Oracles) God had “winked at” or overlooked, but under this gospel age none is excused or excusable, and “all men everywhere” must repent. Yes, repentance is necessary. Jesus said “repent or perish,” and there is no alternative. It is repentance here or perdition hereafter. It means—turn or burn. In the very nature of things, and in the stern commands of God through all of his preachers in every dispensation, repentance is imperative.

The Coming Judgment

Upon one occasion certain Jews came to Jesus and called his attention to a tragedy in which eighteen men had lost their lives. They appeared to think these men were sinners above others and that it was God’s judgment sent upon them. There are yet preachers who take advantage of every calamity that occurs, from cyclones and tornadoes, to blasts and floods, to preach tirades and diatribes on the judgment of God sent upon the people for their particular sins. If such were true, floods would not be confined to the Ohio and Mississippi valleys, but we would have one like Noah’s, for sin is not a local commodity. It shows just how little the ordinary preacher knows or has to preach about! Jesus answered the question by saying “I tell you, nay”—that is, no, God does not send judgments upon men in such disasters and tragedies. But “except ye repent, ye shall perish.” There is coming a time when God will judge the world, not by cyclones and floods, but by the judgment of the last day. His command is to repent—or perish. The judgment is coming. It is certain, for “God has appointed a day” to judge the world. There are two billion people that inhabit the globe today, and they will be there. The teeming millions of the past, and the unborn future will be there—he will judge **the world**. What a stupendous occasion it will be! The issue will be “righteousness”—he will judge the world in **righteousness**. The gospel, (for all of his commandments a re righteousness) will be the sole standard of judgment. There will be a separation—for the line will be drawn, sad to say, right through the families of the earth. The first family that ever lived will be divided in the judgment, because Cain will be on one side of the line and his good brother Abel on the other. Wives will be on one side and husbands on the other; parents on one side and their children on the other. Let us save our children! Repent—because he has appointed a day in which he will judge the world. Ample warning has been made. Every motive and incentive consistent with the moral and spiritual nature of man has been placed before the race. There is the **love of God**—matchless love—infinite goodness, that “leadeth thee to repent.” There is the

fear of judgment that calls men to repentance. And there is the **hope of heaven**, the climax of all incentive and inducements to lead men into the life of obedience to God. Thus, your soul stands, my hesitating friend, squarely in between the divine charms of God's love and the divine terrors of God's wrath. Repent or perish!

Uniformitarianism and The Bible

Nana Yaw Aidoo

It is essential to remember that there is often a vast difference between the facts in the hands of a scientist and the *theories* by which he explains these facts. *All of the theories of a scientist are not scientific*, in that all of their theories are not proved and some of them are of such a nature that they cannot be proved; while some of them are absolutely contrary to evidence. There are also theories, held by some scientists, which are not essential in the interpretation and manipulation of materials. Just because they are held by scientists does not mean that they are scientific. (James D. Bales, PhD.; *The Roots of Unbelief*, pg. 94).

One theory held by most scientists today and which is used in interpreting most of the facts in the hands of the scientist, is the theory of uniformitarianism or uniform continuity. This is the theory that the forces that operate on earth at present are the exact same forces that operated in every age in times past and thus the present is the key to interpreting the past. This theory was first posited in 1785 by a man named James Hutton and was popularized by his disciple, Charles Lyell. According to those who know, this theory is one of the cornerstones of geological science (take note of this when reading materials by scientists in this field).

The theory when applied to the origin of life holds that since living things exist or are produced today not by a supernatural act or a miracle, then at no time in past ages did man come to exist or was man produced by a supernatural act. It is based on this theory that so many scientists and scholars reject the Bible for it claims that miracles occurred in times past when it is so painfully obvious that miracles do not occur today. If this theory is true, then the Bible is false for the Bible stands or falls on the supernatural or the miraculous. It begins with a Supernatural Being called God, who created life on this planet by supernatural acts and ends with the promise that by a supernatural act a Man who died about two thousand years ago will come to take to heaven those who in the course of their lives were faithful to His will. The theory of uniformitarianism is so accepted in scientific thought that it was said by one Edward Clodd that the only heresy in science is the denial of continuity (ibid, pgs. 104-5). In the opinion of this writer the dogmatism as portrayed by Mr. Clodd's statement, leads to that which British scientist Julian Huxley called "scientism," which is the position (an erroneous one of course for science cannot define immaterial things such as ethics) that science is the answer to all issues of life.

We do not pretend to have all the answers and we would be foolish to deny that natural laws exist today. This writer has taught science to school kids and knows more than anyone that a ball, which returns to earth when thrown into the skies today, would under the same circumstances not remain in the skies when thrown the next day. He however earnestly contends that this "does not extend to the extreme position that denies creation and the miracles in the Bible." If we grant that God exists (even the most ardent atheistic evolutionist admits that philosophically this is at least a possibility even if not a necessity), is it strange to think that He would or could intervene in His creation? And if He can intervene in His creation, is it strange to think that He as a supernatural Being would at least act in a supernatural way? If we grant that God exists, then it is beyond ridiculous to deny that He can act supernaturally.

Furthermore, if we grant that God exists, then there are some problems for the uniformitarian as far as miracles are concerned as F. Bettex well noted (ibid, p. 98). The first is that he cannot deny the possibility of miracles.

To maintain that no miracle has ever taken place, that such a thing is impos-

sible, is nothing else than to maintain we know all the forces and laws and possibilities in the universe! For four thousand years we have noted and investigated so thoroughly every single fact in the life of the individual and of the nation, every phenomenon of nature and the universe in general, that we are able to determine what is possible and what is impossible. (ibid, pp. 98-99).

The second problem for the uniformitarian is that he cannot scientifically dispute miracles.

This was acknowledged by the great scientist Tyndall (the scientist who first explained why the sky is blue—Aidoo), who was by no means a believer in the Bible, yet admitted that if there is a God he is almighty, and can therefore work miracles; and that miracles, if there is such a thing, have nothing to do with science, but lie outside her province. Quite true, we say, and would recommend this utterance of a man of the first rank to those of tenth rank who delight in confronting miracles with science... (ibid. p. 99).

Before anyone construes the foregoing quotes as “confirmation bias,” as some “tenth rank” scientists that we are acquainted with delight in doing, we hasten to note that the same problems that uniformitarianism, if it is true, poses to the Bible and its claim of supernatural creation and miracles, also exist for Darwinian evolution. Anyone who can see through a ladder knows that Darwinists take spontaneous generation for granted. It has not been proven and dare I say it cannot be proven. Honest Darwinists admit this fact. Renowned British evolutionist, Dr. G.A. Kerkut, in his famous book, ‘The Implications of Evolution,’ listed on page six **the seven non-provable assumptions** upon which Darwinian evolution is based. He noted that “**The first assumption** is that nonliving things gave rise to living material, i.e. spontaneous generation occurred’ (as cited by Dr. Bert Thompson in “The Current Digression,” pg. 59). Note that not only is spontaneous generation or abiogenesis an *assumption* but according to this “first rank” scientist, it is **non-provable**. That is to say it has neither been observed by scientists nor is it happening today, the claims of “tenth rank” scientists notwithstanding. That being the case,

...unless it can be shown today that life is being originated from non-living matter, then one must conclude that life never came from non-life and that evolution could not have taken place...Since it is not true now, the uniformitarian must say that it has never been true. Therefore, evolution itself could not get started without a miracle, without an exception to uniformity; for something must have operated in the past to produce life which is not now operating to produce life...It is clear the evolutionist himself must violate the dogma of uniformity to even get a workable theory of evolution (Bales; ibid, pp. 99-100).

If not, then why not?

Based on the foregoing, we hold, granted God exists (we believe there is enough evidence to believe that He does) that it is reasonable to believe that He can and has intervened in a supernatural way in this world, that the Bible speaks the truth on the issue since it is clearly the work of a Supernatural mind and therefore uniformitarianism is false. One of the proofs of the Bible’s inspiration is its predictive prophecy and one such prophecy is the prediction of the theory of uniformitarianism and it being the basis for the denial of the supernatural. Dr. Bales noted that this fact should at least begin to shake the confidence of uniformitarians in their extreme position (ibid, pg. 102).

Centuries ago Peter wrote to Christians as follows: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; that ye may stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the commandment of us the apostles by the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?” We pause here to observe that the Christians would be teaching, of course, that Jesus Christ was coming again to bring salvation to the righteous and to recompense tribulation to the wicked (Heb. 9:27-28;

2 Thess. 1:6-11).

This teaching would be based on supernaturalism for if Christ is coming again it means that He is more than man. For who is expecting that in the natural course of things a man who died two thousand years ago is coming again? If He is coming again he is right with reference to what He taught for He taught that He would come again. And His coming is based on the fact that His first coming was supernatural; that death did not hold Him; that after His resurrection He ascended to heaven; and there He is to remain until the time for His second advent. All this, we say, is based on supernaturalism and constitutes a denial that things have always continued as they are now operating...But scoffers are denying His coming, and Peter said that in their mockery they would ask: Where is the promise of His coming?

On what do they base their mockery and their scoffing question? Peter states the basis for their mockery in the same verse. "Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep *all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.*" (2 Pet. 3:1-4). Peter continues and teaches, among other things, that they have ignored the evidence for the flood; that the fact that Christ has not yet come is not a sign that He will not come, but is simply a manifestation of the grace of God which gives men additional time in which to repent; and that Christ will come again and that the earth will be destroyed by fire.

The thing, however, with which we are concerned is the reason on which they are basing their denial of His second advent. They deny it because they maintain that things are now as they have always been. "All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation," this is their reason. "There is no mistake about this rendering. The Greek word *arche*, meaning 'beginning' is there used: so that creation itself is clearly meant to be involved in the continuity of present-day process. H.E. Dana, and Julius R. Mantey, state that the tense of "continue" indicates that perpetuity is implied by it. In commenting on the "static present tense" in Greek, they wrote: "the present tense may be used to represent a condition which is assumed as perpetually existing, or to be ever taken for granted as a fact." One of the references which they give to illustrate this is 2 Pet. 3:4, "While this use is rare, it is nevertheless fully significant of the genius of the tense. The idea of progress in a verb of being. This use is practically the present of duration applied to a verb of being."

These scoffers maintain that there has been no supernatural intervention in times past because they assume that the only processes which have ever worked are those which now work. Such miracles are not being wrought now. Thus they were never wrought! There will be no supernatural manifestations in the future for the processes which now work will continue to work for all time to come. They thus extend their doctrine back to include creation itself and forward to include all future events. "*Their* doctrine of 'creation,' therefore, is one which dispenses with God's interventions, and appeals to present day processes alone, as being perfectly sufficient of themselves to explain the origin and development of everything in nature. In other words, their doctrine is identical with the doctrine of evolutionists." "See, too how these people are represented as making their statements with the greatest assurance – They do not say that all things continue as 'they are held to have continued from the beginning of creation, but that they continue 'as from' ("they were" in the KJV is a translational addition—Aidoo) that beginning. They admit of no doubt upon the matter. Although they extend Uniformity back to the very beginning of creation, and thus they flatly contradict Genesis, they speak as though they were quoting 'clear and demonstrative knowledge.' Thus an illegitimate extension of Uniformity is given out, by these men, as the purest science." It reaches back through the

time of Christ and even embraces creation itself, and thus denies all the supernatural manifestations of the Bible. And, of course, if there was nothing supernatural about Christ's first coming, He was not what He claimed to be and thus He will not be coming again. (Bales, *ibid*, pp. 102-104).

That this interpretation of 2 Peter 3 is absolutely correct, we admit of no doubt because first, Christ did not give His promise to come again from creation but while He was in the flesh. Yet, notice how these mockers include creation in their scoffing statement (2 Pet. 3:4). Second, the Greek *houto diameno*, which is translated "continue" in 2 Peter 3:4 according to Strong's Greek refers to what precedes or what follows (*houto*) and also to that which stays constant (*diameno*). Thus, the scoffers are pictured as saying that all observable things are the same as since the advent of time or creation and all things will stay constant as they currently are even into the future. And third, Peter at the time of writing noted that the mockery was yet future; "...there **shall** come in the last days scoffers..." Dr. Bales further noted;

It is well to call to the reader's attention the fact that the King James translation, which clearly states this doctrine of continuity, was made in 1611, long before James Hutton, Lyell, and others popularized the doctrine of continuity. "Although no hint of the modern dogma of continuity had then appeared; our translators – with nothing but the inspired Text to guide them – produced the perfect anticipation of modernist unbelief, actually employing the very word 'continue,' which so peculiarly characterizes it today." (*ibid*, p. 105).

This ought to build our faith in the Bible and confirm in our minds that uniformitarianism as held by Darwinists is a vain philosophy masquerading as science. It is a theory, which is fallacious because of its "extrapolated generality." Like its counterpart, Darwinian evolution, it begins with and assumes something it cannot prove without a shadow of doubt. Yet it speaks with certainty as if it can. If this is not so, then the evolutionist, as we have already noted, has to deal with the problem that uniformitarianism poses to his dogma. It is interesting that evolutionists give themselves all this leeway and yet are unwilling to grant Bible believers the same amount of freedom.

For us as God's children however, the most important issue in dealing with Bible minimalists of all stripes ought to be whether or not the Bible is inspired. I maintain that this is the most important issue as far as Christian evidences is concerned and not trying to prove the historicity of the Bible. Seeking extra-biblical historical evidence means that we have to go back in time many thousands of years. And what if we do not find or there does not exist at present historical evidence for a certain Biblical account? Does that mean the Biblical record is false? I believe you can see that such an exercise is only doomed to failure. Extra-biblical historical evidence, though not a bad thing, should not be the focus of God's children. Elders and preachers need to take note of this and teach verbal, plenary inspiration to the members among whom they serve.

The most common objection to this position is that the skeptic would tend towards belief in God the more if we use extra-biblical historical evidence. To this I say if he is not convinced by the Bible's claim of inspiration, what makes you think he would be impressed with extra-biblical historical evidence? Besides, are there not external evidences for the inspiration of the Bible? If we can prove that the Bible is inspired, we need not fear any of its critics. If the Bible is inspired (it is—take its prediction of uniformitarianism as a case in point), then its message is true, its history is accurate, the miracles we read on its pages really happened and the God Who is revealed on its pages exists. Let us not be moved by the "...oppositions of science (knowledge—ASV 1901) falsely so called" (1 Tim. 6:20) but be assured that the Bible is indeed what it claims to be—the inspired, inerrant Word of God.

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“I Used to be Just Like You”

Gary W. Summers

One of our members had a brief discussion with a man whom he seldom sees. In the course of the conversation, the man effusively praised “speaking in tongues.” When told that he did not practice such, the man told him, “I used to be just like you.” Of course, the obvious response is, “No, if you used to be like me, you would still be where I am.” The reason is that what we believe is based on the Scriptures—what they teach—not on some human experience. Of course, probably few people would understand that kind of answer; so here are a few questions to ask.

First, what do you mean by “speaking in tongues”? Only two responses are possible. The first is that someone would affirm that they speak in a known language that they had never studied. The second option is to give an entirely different definition. At that point you might pose the question, “Is the Bible your authority for all spiritual matters?” If the answer is no, then there is a real problem. Ask: “Then what is your authority?” If it turns out to be their feelings, then just plainly state: “We might never come to agreement since we have two different authorities.” (And theirs, personal feelings, is the wrong one—Prov. 26:28). If they agree that the Bible is our only authority, then ask, “How does the Bible define speaking in tongues?”

Be prepared to go to Acts 2:1-12. This is the first occasion where the phenomenon is mentioned, and they are defined as languages spoken in various parts of the world. Since speaking in tongues is first defined here, the meaning will be the same anywhere else—unless there is a new or expanded definition that all can recognize. However, it does mean the same when used elsewhere, and it remains a sign to those who are unbelievers (1 Cor. 13:8-10). The Word of God, the faith, was in part; it was revealed a part at a time. But now it has been completely revealed (2 Pet. 1:3). All truth has been delivered for the perfecting of Christians. The means by which all was revealed (speaking in tongues, prophecies, a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom) is no longer needed. A scaffold is used while a structure is being built. After the building has been completed, the scaffolding is removed. The complete New Testament is the building, and the scaffolding (speaking in tongues) is no longer necessary.

Faith Healers Cannot Heal Chapped Lips

Jess Whitlock

“Let no man deceive you by any means” (2 Thess. 2:3a). No faith healer of the 21 century has restored life to a dead person. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). No faith healer of modern times has ever restored sight to one certified to be blind.

Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? And in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity (Matt. 7:22-23).

No faith healer of our age has ever restored a person with a missing leg, arm, hand, foot, toe, finger, or **hair!** Modern day “faith healers” cannot heal **chapped lips!** When one of these frauds is exposed for his puny power...they all use the same way out. Well, he simply did not have enough “faith” in order to be healed.

It is true that many miracles recorded in the New Testament were done on the basis of one’s faith. Consider the miraculous cure of the leper (Matt. 8:2-4); the man who had been infirmed for 38 years (John 5:1-9); the woman with an issue of blood for 12 years (Matt. 9:20-22); the man with a withered hand (Matt. 12:10-13); a damsel possess of a spirit (Acts 16:16-18); a man born crippled (Acts 3:2-9); and the man sick of palsy for 8 years (Acts 9:32-35). Compare all of those actual healing with what takes place in modern day performances of “faith healers” that cannot heal **chapped lips.**

There were those who were healed in the first century on the basis of the faith of some

other. Consider the nobleman whose son was sick (John 4:46-54); the centurion's palsied servant (Matt. 8:5-13); Peter's mother-in-law (Luke 4:38-39); the sick of the palsy in bed (Matt. 9:2-8); Jarius' little daughter (Luke 8:41-55); the man who was dumb then enabled to speak (Matt. 9:32-33); the woman who had a daughter vexed of a devil (Matt. 15:22-28); one who was deaf and had a speech impediment (Mark 7:32-37); and a blind man (Mark 8:22-26). Will the followers of modern day "faith healers" claim their own followers do not have enough faith?

In several instances of New Testament healing there was **no faith in the one healed!** Recall the man with an unclean spirit who said to Jesus "Let us alone" (Mark 1:23-26). Yet, Christ cast out the unclean spirit. Another man was dead, but Christ had compassion on that man's mother, and restored him to life (Luke 7:11-17).

Tabitha became sick and died (Acts 9:36-42). How much faith does a dead corpse have that they can live again? Remember the man possessed by a legion of devils (Mark 1:2-20)? That man was naked and had to be bound. That man had no faith in the Lord Jesus. Still, Christ cast out the evil spirits. Lazarus had been dead for four days, and Jesus spoke the words: "Lazarus come forth..." (John 11:35-45). Just how much faith did dead Lazarus have that he would overcome death? Eutychus is the name of a young man who fell asleep during a preaching service. He fell from a third story window to his death. (Acts 20:8-12). Paul fell on him and embraced him, and the young man came to life! How much faith did that dead corpse possess? These are questions that deserve an answer!

The apostles could raise the dead (Acts 9:36-42). Modern day "faith healers" cannot! The apostles could instantly heal the sick (Acts 9:33-34). The modern day "faith healers" cannot! The apostles could strike false teachers blind (Acts 13:8-11). Modern day "faith healers" cannot! If modern day "faith healers" have what the apostles had; then they should be able to do what the apostles did! If not, why not? May I say one more time that the "faith healers" of our day cannot heal **chapped lips?**

Are You a Member of the Church?

Nathan Brewer

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

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

Many Different Churches

There are many different churches in the United States, all claiming to exist by Christ's authority and to follow Him. These denominations wear different names, teach different things, and worship differently, yet they all claim to be biblical. This causes a great deal of confusion. Did not Jesus promise to build only one church? Indeed, He did. Yet, most people today think that belonging to a denomination is the only way to be a Christian. For example, a couple of years ago my family and I were in a waiting room during my sister's surgery. As we waited, my father read a book of sermons. This caused a woman sitting beside him to ask if he was a preacher. When he answered that he was, she asked, "Which denomination?" Her only conception of Christianity was denominationalism. It occurred to me that if this woman had lived back in the first cen-

ture when the apostles were still alive and teaching, she never would have asked that question. Do you know why? Because back then denominations did not exist! So, why do they exist now?

Why Denominations?

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

This was a noble effort, but it did not go far enough. Instead of simply going to the New Testament and restoring the church contained therein, they attempted to reform something that was never right to begin with. By stopping short, they still did not have the church of Christ. Their efforts resulted in the confusion we know today as denominationalism. These man-made churches plague the world and are a great hindrance to the cause of Christ.

Which One Is Right?

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

- **Worship:** The New Testament church engaged in a very simple worship which consisted of five acts. Those are preaching, or teaching (Acts 2:42), partaking of the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7), giving (1 Cor. 16:1- 2), praying (Acts 2:42), and singing without the accompaniment of instrumental music (Eph. 5:19). These five things were done each first day of the week without addition or subtraction.
- **Teaching on Salvation:** Many false doctrines abound concerning the soul's salvation, but the Bible plainly teaches acts of obedience must be performed to please God (Mat. 7:21-23). These things are faith or belief (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), repentance (Acts 2:38), confession of Jesus Christ as God's Son (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and baptism in water (Mark 16:16). When these commands are obeyed from an honest heart, one is saved from his sins and added to the church Jesus built (Acts 2:41, 47).
- **Name Worn:** Have you ever stopped to think that the names “Methodist,” “Presbyterian,” “Lutheran,” and such are never used in the New Testament to describe the followers of Christ? The term “Baptist” was used of John because he came preaching and baptizing, but that name was never applied to a follower of Christ. Man-made names such as these denominational titles are not appropriate to wear as a true disciple of the Saviour. Peter stated in Acts 4:12: “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Those who are the saved do not wear man-made names such as Lutheran, Baptist, or Methodist—they wear Christ's name. This is why disciples of Jesus in the New Testament and today are known simply as “Christians” (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Pet. 4:15-16).
- **Church Government:** Local congregations of churches of Christ are to be overseen by a plurality of men known as elders or bishops (Phi. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1- 7). They may also have men serving as deacons or servants under their oversight. The elders are the shepherds who keep watch over Christ's flock while He is in heaven. If congregations do not have men who are qualified to be elders (see also Tit. 1:6-9), then, they must work to develop men who are qualified and able to fill that void.

With these identifying marks, one can locate the church of the Bible today. If a congregation worships as the church of the first century did, if it teaches what the New

Testament teaches, if its members wear the name of Christ to the exclusion of men's names, and if it is organized as the church found in the Scriptures, then you have found the church Jesus established. If you are a member of some other religious body, we beg you to locate the church of the Bible and be simply a Christian who worships and works according to the New Testament pattern.

“Relationship, Not Religion”

Dub McClish

Some time ago a denomination in Dallas, Texas, advertised its aim as “relationship, not religion.” When I read it, I thought, “At last, truth in advertising!” Actually, most of the religious groups that claim to be “Christian” have been placing “relationship” ahead of “religion” all along, but seldom do they advertise it. In fact, some of them may not even recognize that they are doing so.

What does their slogan mean? I infer that it means that their principal aim is to encourage good human relations. The slogan implies that the church members are free to believe and practice whatever pleases them in religion and to behave about any way they choose in their daily lives—as long as they maintain good “relationships” in so doing. A further implication is that they will not be “burdened” with any dogma, doctrine, or requisite practices (especially if they are taught in the Bible, no doubt).

This “version” of “Christianity” is one of the many sorry ends of the old slogan, “It makes no difference what you believe, as long as you're sincere.” If “relationship” supersedes religion, one may keep his third wife who has had four husbands as long as the two presently have a “good relationship.” In this creed it matters little what one believes about the Creation, baptism, the way God has directed men to worship Him, or the verbal inspiration of the Bible. Such are irrelevant as long as one knows how to “get along” with others.

The greater tragedy is that some congregations that wear the name, “Church of Christ,” have adopted just such an emphasis. Some congregations now boast of being havens for those involved in adulterous marriages. If these groups were honest, they would no longer use *Church of Christ* on their signs. We are beginning to see integrity in this regard in some. Max Lucado renamed his Oak Hills Church of Christ in San Antonio “Oak Hills Church” in 2003. Some of us have for years begged the elders of the North Richland Hills “Church of Christ” near Fort Worth to take this step. It is at least approaching honesty in this regard. Its marquee read on one occasion, “If you are looking for an independent community church, call ____ - ____.” To no one's surprise, NRH recently announced it would begin conducting a service on Saturday nights which will feature instrumental music and the “Lord's supper.” Those apostates who are zealous to lead the church into fellowship with the denominations consistently soft-pedal doctrine in favor of an “irenic (peaceful) spirit” toward and relationship with men.

No one can deny the importance of correct relationships. However, even a neophyte in Bible teaching cannot miss its primary emphasis on the right relationship with God. It is not possible to be rightly related to one's fellow man if he is not rightly related to God. The correct order is always peace with God, then peace with man (Mat. 10:37; Luke 12:51–53; Acts 5:29; et al.). There is no peace with God without respect for the authority of His Son (Mat. 17:5; Heb. 1:1–2; 5:9; et al.). Only when one has the **right religion** (as defined by the New Testament) will he have the **right relationship** with both God and men.

Editor's Travels

We were scheduled to preach at Yukon, Oklahoma on Sept. 5, but our son, Nathan, and his youngest child were tested positive for the Chinese Plague. We had been with them on Friday, so we quarantined, and worshiped at home on Sunday. Landry, Nathan's twin brother, contacted it on Saturday. On Labor Day, we visited the clinic and Sherlene was positive and I was negative. Sons, two daughters-in-laws, our daughter, and 4 grandchildren, fell to the Chinese Virus. That ended our trip to Chillicothe, Texas on Sept. 12, where I was to preach. On Sept. 19 I preached at Yukon, Oklahoma and on Sept. 26 we ended the month at Chillicothe and I preached on that day.

“What Saith The Scriptures?”

Harrell Davidson

We are confident, that due to the subject matter, there may indeed be those who disagree with us, as most of the questions are judgment questions. This, then, will probably precipitate other questions. We are not going to list the qualifications of elders here. Our readers should find such qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. 1 Peter 5:1-4 ought also be taken into consideration.

Question: If an elder's wife passes from this life must he resign from the eldership?”

Answer: This question is one that has precipitated much discussion over the years. There are some who will disagree with the writer while there are others that will agree. We think that we have seen most of the major arguments that have been presented by our brethren over several decades.

In our judgment there is not a **yes** or **no** answer to the question at hand because of circumstances that accompanies this situation. Many wish to look at the word “must” and dismiss all other things almost entirely. Let us change the question for the moment and reflect upon this from another perspective over which there has been very little disagreement as far as we are able to tell. If an elder's child or children dies does this disqualify him? This presupposes that his child/children were faithful to him, and thus unto the Lord, in order that they helped him qualify to be an elder. Titus 1:6 indicates the following, “...having faithful children...” 1 Timothy 3 adds another dimension to this equation and gives us the reason why an elder should have believing children. Notice the reason for this qualification in verses 4 and 5. “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?).”

If an elder has ruled well his own house with his children in subjection with all gravity to the head (father/elder), having accomplished this, in clear demonstration before the entire congregation, if that child dies, has he failed to rule his house well? We think almost everyone will answer that he is not forced by the Scripture to resign from the eldership. Consider the matter, that an elder must not be a novice, thus one of some age, and his children may have already departed from the home scene altogether. People would then look at how he reared his children. All other things being equal, the congregation would recall how he reared those children. With the passages above in mind, and if we were to take the position that to be an elder one **must** have faithful children in the house, then many good men would never be appointed to the eldership to begin with.

It is our studied judgment that if his wife departs this life, it does not in and of itself disqualify him any more than the death of a faithful child would disqualify him.

Remember that we mentioned **circumstances** that accompanies this question. If such an elder believes that he is no longer qualified due to his mate's death then by all means he should resign. If the congregation reasons that he resign then he should do so. Let us remember that the “husband of one wife” was written during the time of polygamy. What Paul is stating is that an elder must be a one wife man, that is, he could not have two wives at the same time and be an elder. Thanks for the question.

Brother Davidson answers readers' questions in this column each month. If you have Bible questions, you may email them to him at: wd4lar@gmail.com

\$1,000.00 Reward Offered

We will pay \$1,000.00 to anyone who can produce a New Testament passage telling one to “Pray The Sinner's Prayer” in answer to the question, “What must I do to be saved?”

“Son, Remember”

Fred E. Dennis

The two significant words that stand at the head of this article were spoken to a poor, lost soul in Hades. He had wasted his day. “Of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these, It might have been.” There are so many things we ought to remember. We ought to remember that the first man was Adam. So many **smart** men in our day do not remember that. They are **smart** beyond that which is written. “And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul” (Gen. 2:7). “And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). Yes, this is the beginning of the human family. God made the first man. This is the only satisfactory explanation of the origin of the species. Remember that.

We should remember that it was not good for man to be alone, so God made him a helpmeet (Gen. 2:18). And it might be well to remember that God did not make him two or three wives, but **one**. That was God's original order. That is God's order. Let us not forget that. More than one wife at a time are too many wives.

We should remember that this man and woman were placed in a perfect environment. They had everything to make them happy. They were permitted to eat of the fruit of the garden. There was no prohibition. They must not eat of the fruit of that one tree. We should remember that God said that if they ate of this they would die. Of course it is hardly possible for us to forget that more than two hundred generations of the human family have gone down to their graves because of sin. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12).

Let us remember that our fore parents fell through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. Yes, the fruit of that tree was pleasant to the eyes, it was good food, and a tree to be desired to make one wise (Gen. 3:6). The devil knew how to work the woman and man for their fall. He has lost none of his ingenuity. He is trying to drag us down to hell through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Is it any wonder that a loving and merciful Father continually warns his children of the danger (1 John 2:15-17).

But let us remember that our foreparents had no sooner fallen when God began the preparation for redemption. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Gen. 3:15). After four thousand years of the history of this old world had rolled into eternity, God sent this seed to this sin-cursed earth. Yes, he came to bruise the head of Satan. He was miraculously conceived and brought forth of a virgin. This was all in God's plan. The devil would like even to discount this.

And no sooner had this Son come into the world than the devil tried to get rid of him, and he is still trying it—and the sad thing is that he succeeds in getting him out of the lives of so many. But God preserved the life of his Son. He was taken into Egypt, and later God called his Son out of Egypt. And do not forget that this was all according to prophecy, and remember that he was born in Bethlehem according to prophecy. But when he was brought out of Egypt he dwelt in Nazareth. Yes, the prophets had said that he would be called a Nazarene.

And remember that he was taught to work. He was brought up at the carpenter's bench. Thus God's Son dignified honest toil. We can do the same. Do not be afraid nor ashamed to work. Jesus called honest, humble workingmen to be his apostles. Paul could make tents when it was necessary for him to do that.

And do not forget where Jesus spent his time when he visited the big city when he was **a boy**. He was found in the temple. He was sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them and asking them questions. He thought his parents should know where to look for him. He had to be about his Father's business even at this early period in his life. So many of our children (and older ones too!) are lost to the cause of Christ when they go to the big cities. Now thousands are moving to our great industrial cities to

make “big money.” Some make the money, but with all their making they forget Jesus. How sad!

But Jesus went back to Nazareth and was subject to his parents. Dear boys and girls, remember this worthy example. He left us an example that we should follow in his steps. And then when he was about thirty years of age he traveled sixty or seventy miles to do something that most of the sectarian preachers of our day treat lightly and as a nonessential. Yes, he traveled this great distance to be immersed; and let us remember that he said he was thus doing to fulfill all righteousness without submitting to this command of high heaven?

And remember that immediately after his baptism he was driven into the wilderness, and there he met the devil in open combat. And remember how he did it. Jesus put the devil to rout by the word of God. That is the only way to whip the devil. You cannot whip him with a carnal sword, but you can with the sword of the Spirit. “Son, remember.”

And do not forget that after his baptism he went about doing good. He was busy healing the sick, cleansing the leper, casting out devils, raising the dead, and preaching the gospel, telling people that the kingdom of heaven was at hand. Yes, the kingdom of heaven was at hand in the days of Jesus. He taught his disciples to pray for the coming of the kingdom. And let us remember that about fifty days after the death of Christ the kingdom came with power. Never again do we have the disciples looking forward to the coming of the kingdom after its coming on the first Pentecost after the death, burial, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. We hear them talking about being in the kingdom from then on (Col. 1:13; Rev. 1:9).

Let us remember that Jesus came to seek and to save that which was lost. Before going back to heaven he gave the law of salvation. This gospel of the kingdom was to be preached to every creature under heaven. Then the ones who would believe this gospel, repent of their sins, confess Christ, and be baptized would be saved. Do not forget that this is the law that Christ gave. (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47). Remember, he gave this law to his apostles, and we can turn and read of their acts in the book of Acts, and there we learn how they understood this law. They preached the gospel of Christ, thus making believers, and these believers were told to repent and be baptized unto the remission of sins.

And remember this law is still in force and will be till time shall be no more. Remember that obedience to the gospel makes Christians only and only Christians; that to be anything but a Christian you have to do less or more than obey the gospel of Christ. Why not be satisfied to be a Christian only? Keep right on remembering Jesus, and then go home to heaven in the sweet after while. Remember to live right and worship right, and Jesus will be waiting at the end of the road to say: “Well done.” Blessed consummation!

The Godhead

W.R. Craig
Introduction

Three times in the New Testament, the term *Godhead* is used to describe Jehovah God, His nature or Godhood. That God has revealed Himself in the Bible is a fact accepted by all who believe that the Bible is of Divine origin. The Bible tells Him that He made Himself known to man through the material creation: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork” (Psa. 19:1) and “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse” (Rom. 1:20).

The Bible in addition to setting forth that truth, tells Who God is and gives as much information about Him as He wants men to know. With that thought in mind, our lesson is intended to call attention to some of the things the Bible says about; without such information we can never know Him (cf. 1 Cor 1:21).

The Threefold Character of God

A careful consideration of the divine record will reveal that God appears before the universe in a threefold attitude—viz., Creator, Lawgiver, and Redeemer. Each of these relations reveals and involves many of His excellencies, but in each department three are most conspicuous.

1. As Creator we have wisdom, power and goodness.
2. As Lawgiver, we have justice, truth, and holiness.
3. As Redeemer, we have mercy, condescension, and love.

It should be further observed that in all of these attributes He is infinite, immutable, and eternal.

Unity and a Plural Manifestation

The unity of God is affirmed in many parts of the Bible, as, for example, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4), yet in this sublime and incomprehensible unity there is also embraced a three-fold personality. In Genesis 1:1, the verb *create* is singular, that while the name *God* is **plural**; and it may be here, that the Holy Spirit is endeavoring to guard the readers of the Bible against the extremes of polytheism and unitarianism.

The Divine nature is essentially and necessarily singular, while at the same time plural in its personal manifestations. Thus we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, all possessing one and the same nature.

Some conceive of God as a mathematical; and since a thing cannot be both mathematically singular and plural—one and three at the same time and in the same sense—they accordingly deny true and proper Divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit. This is the dispute that resulted in the Nicene Creed. That view is **not in harmony** with the Scriptures (Col. 2:9; John 1:1; 2 Cor. 2:10-11; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; and Heb. 9:14).

Some Characteristics of God

1. Creator (Gen. 1:1).
2. Spirit (John 4:24).
3. Omiscient (Acts 15:18; Rom. 16:27)
4. Omnipotent (Gen. 17:1; Rom. 16:27).
5. Omnipresent (1 Kings 8:27; Psa. 139:7-10; Jer. 23:23-24; Acts 17: 27-28).
6. Abundant in loving kindness (Exo. 34:5-7).
7. Will not justify the wicked (Exo. 23:7; Heb. 2:1-3).
8. No respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).
9. Looks to the poor and contrite (Isa. 66:2).
10. Uses wicked men to destroy His enemies and to punish the unfaithful (Isa. 10:5-7; Jer. 51:20; Psa. 76:10). Jehovah is not dependent upon men's willingness to obey Him in carrying out His purposes and in accomplishing His ends upon the earth, as these passages very clearly indicate.

Some Inferences and Conclusions

God makes no experiments; and He never repents as men do (1 Sam. 15:29). He, therefore, is never disappointed in any issue or contingency that can possibly arise. It follows, then, that when God is said to repent, it is only by a figure (anthropopathy) in condescension to man's imperfections (Gen. 6:6).

His own nature is the constitution of the universe, according to which all things were created and all laws and enacted. The *principle* is underlying the *laws* by which He governs the world are immutable as the nature of God, and as enduring as His eternal throne. *Principle* is the fundamental basis, or this which determines the nature of anything. While *law* in its ideal is the statement of a principle of right in mandatory form, by competent authority, with adequate penalty for obedience.

Law is the medium through which a *principle* is applied. The *law* is enacted and can

be repealed, which the *principle* is eternal and remains immutable. So, God's will is the only proper standard of rectitude (John 4:34; Matt. 7:21).

Sin Cannot Approach God

Since sin entered the world, God has only dwelt on earth in sanctified in an temple and places of worship (Ex. 20:24; Deut. 12:5; Eph. 2:19-22). Only those, then, who are sanctified can rightly hope to be saved (Heb. 12:14; John 17:17; Eph. 1:13; Mark 16:15-16; Eph. 5:25-27; Matt. 5:8).

The Gospel Preceptor

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Go Stand and Speak

Gene Hill

Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, And laid their hands on the apostles, and put them in the common prison. But the angel of the Lord by night opened the prison doors, and brought them forth, and said, Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life (Acts 5:17-20).

The immediate context of this passage is Acts 5:1-11 in which Annanias and Sapphira lied to the Holy Spirit about the amount of their gift and died as punishment. The manner of the passing of this couple had a profound effect not only on the church but the community as well (5:11). The work of apostles was so magnified by this event (5:11) that the opportunities to demonstrate signs and wonders increased (5:12) and church membership multiplied. Note the credibility this gained the apostles amongst the local population (5:15-16) which drew the attention and response of the Jewish leadership (5:17-18).

Let us note the purpose of miracles. They were to prove the Deity of Jesus (John 3:1-3; 20:30-31; Acts 2:22), to confirm the Word to hearers (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:1-4), to verify a true apostle (2 Cor. 12:12), and finally, to fulfill prophecy (Mat. 8:17) (*Fishers of Men*, Lesson Three). The miracles performed by the apostles in Acts 4 and 5 plainly achieve the intended results with no room for misunderstanding (4:12-22; 5:28; Mat. 27:24-25). Remember how the Jewish leadership responded to the healing of the lame man (Acts 4:13-22). They saw the change in Peter and John (4:13), knew they had been with Jesus, could not gainsay the miracle even acknowledging it (4:14, 16), but refused to respond to the testimony of the evidence literally standing in front of them.

So far in Acts we have two public sermons preached by the apostles: the founding sermon in Acts 2:14-40; the sermon following the healing of the lame man (in the temple) in Acts 3:11-4:2, which brought about the first confrontation with the Sanhedrin as recorded in Acts 4:3-22. In these events, we find three records of explosive growth. First, in Acts 2:41, of some three thousand souls being added. Next, we find the number increasing to, or by, five thousand in Acts 4:4. *Multitudes* is used to gauge the increase of souls in Acts 5:14. What did the angel of the Lord tell the apostles to preach when he said, "Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life?" (5:20). Whatever it was, it must be according to Scripture (Luke 24:44-48; 1 Cor. 15:3-4).

The manifestation of the miraculous was the ongoing proof that the messenger and the message was from God (Mark 16:17-18; Acts 2:4, 6, 22; 3:7, 12-13; 4:9, 14; 5:5, 10, 12,

16). The manifested ability was consistently attributed to the working of God (2:14-22; 3:6; 4:10; 5:30-32). It follows then that the message they preached in all situations, was in fact from God (John 14:16, 26; 15:26-27; 16:13). In freeing the apostles from prison, the angel admonished the apostles to reenter the temple and speak “all the words of this life.” We now turn our attention to that topic.

The apostles merely continued the practice of Jesus speaking in the Temple (Mat. 21:23; John 18:20). It is also accurate to state that they continued His preaching. Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68; 14:26). Peter, standing up with the eleven in Acts 2, sought to answer the question, “What meaneth this?” (2:12), which was asked about the outpouring and manifestation of the Holy Ghost in verses 1-11. He told them that the events of which they were witnesses were a fulfilment of Joel’s prophecy in Joel 2:28-32, that in the last days the Spirit would be poured out, that wonders would be seen before the great and notable day of the Lord and that those calling on the Lord would be saved (Acts 2:16-21).

Peter then charges his Jewish audience with cruelly murdering Jesus of Nazareth, one who was approved of God as they knew (2:22). Their cruel hands were used by God to carry out His counsel (2:23), and God raised Him up (2:24). Peter even calls their King David as witness that the Lord would be resurrected and not see corruption (2:25-28). Jesus fulfilled the prophecy that the fruit of his (David) loins would sit on David’s throne. Peter applies this to Jesus’ resurrection, ascension, and coronation (2:30-35). Given this, it would then be reasonable to conclude that the words of this life the apostles were commanded to preach would include at least the following information.

Paul teaches that death, by sin, entered upon the whole of the human race (Rom. 5:12-14). The occasion was the transgression of Adam and Eve in the Garden (Gen. 3:6-8). The consequence of that sin involved the immediate loss of fellowship with God (Isa. 59:1-2), spiritual death (Rom. 5:12), and being cut off from access to the Tree of Life, which resulted in the loss of physical immortality (Gen. 3:22-24).

However, reading the account in Genesis 3, we see the beginning of the unfolding of the Scheme of Redemption. The coming Seed of woman would defeat Satan after receiving a minor wound but would crush Satan in the process (Acts 3:15). We likewise see, by implication, the first blood sacrifice for sin in Genesis 3:21, which God used to dress Adam and Eve with coats of skin. It is safe to say that skin generally comes from the bodies of animals. Since the blood of animals would be used to atone for sin (Heb. 9-10), which were only offered in prospect of the sacrifice of Jesus (9:11-15; 10:9-10, 22; 13:12; 1 Pet. 1:22), and since God assured them death would follow transgression, and they did not die, it can be inferred that an atoning blood sacrifice for their sin was offered.

Imagine yourself standing at a vantage point that provided you a clear view of either the door to the Tabernacle or, later, the appropriate gate to Solomon’s Temple. In this scenario, you are in a time when Israel, as a whole, was reasonably faithful. What you would see would be an ongoing stream of supplicants arriving with animal sacrifices for sins and even for peace offerings or sacrifices of thanksgiving. Think of the number of animals being offered. The blood that flowed from that stream of animals was tremendous. The point of all of this was to illustrate the sinfulness of sin and the need to be assured of sanctification and fellowship with God (Rom. 7:7-13). The Law demonstrated the sinfulness of sin. What is more, every year the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies twice on the Day of Atonement: once for his own sins (Lev. 16:1-14) and then for those of the nation (16:15-16). Somewhere in all of this, the faithful perceptive Israelite would have to proclaim as did Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24).

The plan of God from before the foundation of the world was for man to be restored to fellowship with God his creator as Adam was in the Garden (1 Pet. 1:13-21). Only the holy can stand before God and be in fellowship with Him (1:15-16; Hab. 1:13; Exo. 33:1-11).

Jesus is preached as the quickening force bringing all that are dead in sin into spiritual life (Eph. 2:1; John 10:10). All accountable humans are lost because of their life choices

based on fleshly desires (Eph. 2:3-4; Rom. 6:23). God quickens us (makes us alive) and raises us from being spiritually dead in Christ (Eph. 2:4-6; 1:19-20). How is this done?

Paul says we are chosen to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth by being called by the Gospel (2 The. 2:13-14). Being taught of God (John 6:44-45) and believing in Jesus as the Christ (8:24), we willingly repent of our sins (Luke 13:3), confess Him as Lord (Mat. 10:32-33), and are immersed for the remission of sin (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38). When we obey the Word of the Lord (16:30-31), He becomes the author of our salvation (2:47). We are saved from our sins because He has washed us from our sins in His own blood (Rev. 1:5; Acts 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4, 16-18). We are sanctified by the Lamb in His blood through obedience to the truth (1 Pet. 1:22; Heb. 9:21; 10:22; 13:11-12).

Just prior to the Lord's ascension, He charged His apostles that they were to speak His Word throughout all the world and that He would be with them (Mat. 28:18-20). Part of that commission was to teach the disciples what He had taught them and would, through inspiration, yet teach them. Paul commanded Timothy to find and teach faithful men able to teach others also. The command to go and teach is just as valid today for us as it was for the apostles and Timothy. We are to stand and speak only those things and all of those things commanded for mankind to become faithful Christians and to be able to work and worship as God has directed and then to gain heaven.

To go stand and speak all the words of this life is simply to sow the seed of the kingdom in the hearts of as many as we possibly can. It is done by literally standing and speaking, but also by any and all methods that do not violate any other command of God.

The church is a teaching institution with a message imparted only by teaching. May each of us realize our task and privilege to speak forth the unsearchable riches of Christ.

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All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise indicated.

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“Soft” and “Hard” Preachers: What is the Difference?

N.B. Hardeman

“Then came his disciples, and said, Master, knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?” (Matt. 15:12). Now stop and analyze the conditions. The Jews of Christ's day were divided into three denominations: Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes. Of the three, the Pharisees were far more prominent. They were the elite, the bon tons, the upper tens of their day, and for Christ to speak against them was to them abuse and ridiculous as well as preposterous. After they had spoken these things, the disciples came and said, “Lord, you gave offense to the Pharisees. You have offended the leading sect of the day. And they are up in arms against you.” Now, notice Christ's answer: “Every plant which my Heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13). That's the answer Christ gave when the disciples told Him the Pharisees were offended at the doctrine He had thus spoken.

Brethren, I have often wondered what on earth I might say that would not be offensive to someone. If I preach there is a God, the atheist is offended. If I preach Christ as the Son of God, the Unitarian is offended. If I preach He was born of a virgin, all modernists are offended. If I preach against apostasy, our Baptist friends are offended. If I preach that immersion is God-ordained, Methodists, Presbyterians, Lutherans, and

Congregationalists are offended. If I preach against the popular sins of the day, the socialites and the clubs are offended. If I preach about giving, all the old, stingy tight-wads in the church are offended. Brethren, what on God's earth can I preach without offending? You just name it, and I will oblige myself that somebody will be offended at the thing thus said.

Characteristics of a Soft Preacher

A man who preaches soft preaches the truth, but has it mixed with error to such an extent it is impossible to tell where he stands. He preaches the truth in an apologetic manner. He is ever fearful of offending some dear friend and thus he carries no conviction. Like chief rulers, he loves the praise of men more than the praise of God. He has never learned what Paul said, "If I seek to please men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10). He preaches the truth in a general way so that he gets exactly nowhere. He is a preacher with a multiplicity of words; he is not intentionally unsound, but never gets to the point. He can "pace all day in the shade of a tree."

Characteristics of a Hard Preacher

The man who is considered hard preaches truth unmixed with error, in a firm and positive manner. He cares not for the person of any man. Having convictions, he contends earnestly for the right and exposes error regardless of friendly ties. He gets to the point and the audience knows what he said and where he stands. A preacher is known not only for what he stands by, but also by what he stands against. I have often said that I would be ashamed of myself if I could not make clear my attitude toward any matter affecting the peace and happiness of the church on a postcard. I pray that our attitude toward all affairs may ever be such as will cause his smiles to be upon us.

Popular Associations with Religion

Lee Moses

In the late eighth century B.C., the king of Assyria sent military forces against Jerusalem, Judah's capitol city and religious center (2 Kings 18:7). Assyria was the dominant world power, and had already overthrown the northern kingdom of Israel, taking those rebellious kinsmen of Judah into captivity (17:6-23). A officer called Rabshakeh, serving as spokesman for the Assyrian forces, approached Jerusalem's city walls to threaten Hezekiah king of Judah, and to demand his surrender and submission. Rabshakeh claimed that Judah had no substance on which to base their confidence (18:19). He even claimed that the Lord would not prove helpful to Judah in this circumstance. To prove his point, Rabshakeh asked, "But if ye say unto me, We trust in the LORD our God: is not that he, whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath said to Judah and Jerusalem, Ye shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem?" (v. 22).

Rabshakeh displayed a misunderstanding of God in his supposedly rhetorical question. He believed that because these various places and instruments of worship had been removed, the Lord would not bless Judah. However, God had commanded that the people were to worship in a specific place and in a specific manner:

Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD...Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee (Deut. 12:11,13-14).

Rabshakeh displayed a gross misperception of God and of religion. There were associations that he believed had to be included for religion to be complete. Yet for religion to be God's religion, those associations **had** to be removed. The popular associations with religion that exist today may not be the same as they were in Rabshakeh's day.

But there are new and multiplied popular associations with religion. As was the case

with Rabshakeh, when these popular associations with religion are removed, many **feel** that they are not worshipping God.

There are many who feel that religion is incomplete without man made additions to music in worship. Most people have come to expect a musical extravaganza in worship, replete with mechanical instruments, choirs, soloists, and such like. If these “essential elements” are not present in worship, people will assume that the worship must be inferior. Yet God gave specific instructions regarding music in worship: Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord (Eph. 5:19). Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

From these and other passages, one can see that the music in worship is to be vocal (particularly “singing”), spiritually instructive, and interactive. When a church does not add to this, they do what is pleasing to God. When a church sees any additions or changes present and removes them, they do what is pleasing to God.

Many believe that a church must have one man “in charge,” who is to be called “The Pastor.” They are also convinced that a church must be part of a larger organization that regulates and oversees the church. Yet a plurality of elders is to be installed “in every church” where there are qualified men (Acts 14:23; cf. Titus 1:5 -9). It is this group of men who collectively serve as shepherds, or pastors (1 Pet. 5:1-4). It is they, not a larger organization, who have been given the charge to oversee the church (Acts 20:28; cf. v. 17). Deacons are to serve under the eldership (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8-13). When a church ensures that they are following this Scriptural pattern of organization and no other, they do what is pleasing to God.

Most people want their church to observe special holy days, or holidays, such as Easter and Christmas. Yet such things are not part of the Christian religion, because they are not part of the New Testament. Special days had been part of the Old Testament; but in light of Christ’s abolition of the Old Testament, the Colossian church was commanded, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Col. 2:16-17). The New Testament was now the only standard by which the Colossian church, or any church, could be judged (John 12:48; Col. 3:17). The churches of Galatia were falling into apostasy; as Paul by inspiration laments, “Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain” (Gal. 4:10-11). God instructs particular acts of worship to be offered on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:2), but He does not attach special significance to any particular day of the year. When a church likewise refuses to attach special religious significance to any particular day of the year, they do what is pleasing to God.

Rabshakeh thought that King Hezekiah would bring God’s displeasure upon Judah because Hezekiah had removed what some thought to be essential elements of religion. But contrary to this opinion, Hezekiah “did that which was right in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 18:3). And the Lord showed His favor on Hezekiah and displeasure with Assyria when His angel destroyed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers that were preparing to attack Judah (19:35). Although some may **feel** that their associations with religion must be included for religion to be effective; the Lord will show His favor on you if you choose to disregard the popular associations with religion, and choose instead to please God (1 Thess. 4:1).

The Gospel Preceptor Goes Where a Man May NOT

These are a few countries whose residents visited the www.thegospelpreceptor.com in Aug. 2021: Thailand, Singapore, Russian Federation, China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Egypt, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Jordan, State of Palestine, Libya, Iraq, Kuwait, Sudan, Somalia, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Syria Arab Republic. You will note that they are Communist or Moslem countries. In many Moslem countries, a man entering to preach Christ would be killed. We are preaching the Gospel around the world on the internet **where a man may not go.**

Links to Bible Study Resources

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Spiritual Perspectives - Gary Summers

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Salvation From Sin

Thomas Allen Robertson

Within the heart of every man is a desire for salvation. It may be vague, suppressed, or ignored, but it is still there—this desire for cleansing, this longing to be better than one is. When one comes to face death, then most keenly, if never before, this desire is felt. This is true even of the atheist. As one infidel is reported to have cried out on his death-bed, “O God, if there be a God, save my soul, if I have a soul, from hell, if there be a hell!”

This desire for salvation shows man's need for it. Although some may try to deny their sin, and may talk of how good they are, the fact is that all men are sinners. They were not born so, but became so. God made man upright, but man “sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29). Man's soul is from God (Eccl. 12:7) and He is the “Father of our spirits” (Heb. 12:9). Where is the man so bold as to say that God created a sinful spirit and gave to man a depraved nature? The very opposite is true. Men are sinners, not because they are born sinners, but because they go astray (Psa. 58:3). “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6). And again, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear” (Isa. 59:2).

In the New Testament Paul teaches the same truth (the sinfulness of all mankind) and states why, “What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin” (Rom. 3:9). Why are both Jews and Gentiles under sin? Because they were born that way? Not at all, for Paul again says, “There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no not one” (Rom. 3:10-12).

As a man fails to seek God, to do good, to live as God would have him live, he departs from God, he goes astray, and is numbered with the sinners. There are many who fail to realize their sin because they think of sin only in terms of the ungodly, the immoral, the outcast; whereas the Bible teaches that the man who has failed to obey the gospel, even though he is a good moral man, is nevertheless a sinner and needs to be saved. Cornelius (Acts 10 and 11) is an example of such a man. His moral character would doubtless measure up with the character of any man alive today: he was “a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.” But he was not saved; he was not a Christian: his sins were yet upon him. He had to send for Peter who would tell him “words whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.” Usually people think of such a man as Cornelius as being

saved because of his character. But such is not the case. No matter how morally good a man may be, he is still a sinner until he has become obedient to the gospel of Christ.

If a man continues in sin, does not seek God, does not obey the gospel, the ultimate penalty for his sin is death. Such a man will come into the final judgment of God unprepared. He is certain to hear the words of the Lord, “Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41). In Hell there is due punishment for all those who reject (or neglect) the great salvation which Christ makes possible.

Even though the punishment of the wicked is set forth and described in the Bible, it is not God's wish or desire that any should perish. God has spared no pains, not even to the saving of his own Son from the horrors of the crucifixion, to make salvation possible. “For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that who so ever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). And Christ himself freely laid down his life that men might be saved. He committed the plan for man's redemption into the hands of his apostles and “ascended into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high.” It was on the first Pentecost after his ascension that Peter and the other apostles began to tell the lost and dying world the terms upon which Christ would release them from their sin, and save them from eternal ruin.

When Christ died on the tree of Calvary, he paid the ransom price for the sins of the world. He tasted of death for every man. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered: And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

Christ paid the penalty for our sins. “And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). “Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Pet. 2:24). And again, “He died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves; but unto him who died for them and rose again” (2 Cor. 5:15).

Christ's death was an atonement and a reconciliation; it atoned for man's sins and brought man back to God. It revealed the love of God for all the race. This salvation, however, provided by God through Christ, must be accepted by man. God made man a free moral agent, and set before him the choice of doing right or doing wrong. Man can follow God's way, or he can follow his own way. He has the power to either accept or reject the salvation God has offered. God does not rob man of his free will, but leaves him absolute power to make up his own mind.

When we turn to the New Testament which contains the gospel of Christ we find that men were saved by (1) Hearing the gospel (Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 10:17). (2) Having faith in Christ (John 8:24; Acts 8:37; Heb. 11:6). (3) Repentance of past sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9). (4) Confession of faith in Christ before men (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37). (5) Baptism into Christ (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-7; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21).

After one has obeyed the gospel—has been baptized into Christ—he then must continue in the things commanded by Christ; in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship and in good works. (Matt. 28:20; Acts 2:42; Eph. 2:10; 2 Pet. 1:5-11) Thus, in this way, a man's sins are forgiven; he becomes a child of God, a member of the church of Christ, and has a promise of a home in heaven “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1 Pet. 1:4).

Will you not render obedience unto the Gospel of Christ and live, as God would have you to so you might become a partaker of the salvation which Christ died to purchase for **you**?

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Becoming a Child

David Ray

Children are such a blessing. When young couples are considering having kids, they'll usually be told by other parents how much having children will change their lives, usually for the better. There will be good times and bad; kids can be a joy and a pain! This is because they have certain characteristics that make them such. It's no wonder then that sometimes Scripture encourages us to become like children, and sometimes it teaches us not to. What, then, are the characteristics of a child that we should and should not apply?

Don't be Immature

In Matthew 11:16, Jesus compared His generation to immature “children...saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.” The point to consider here is that children have not yet matured to the point that adults have (or should have). While it is generally inappropriate for any adult to act like a child, spiritually speaking Christians should never be characterized as such.

Don't be Unknowledgeable

The Hebrews author scolded the Jewish Christians to whom he was writing in Hebrews 5:12-14, reminding them that they ought to be teachers, but needed someone to teach them. He said “ye....are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” Spiritually they were small babies that couldn't handle solid food, even though they had been Christians long enough that they should've known the word well enough to teach it. Many of our religious friends, while claiming to follow Jesus, have little to no knowledge of His Word. And sadly, this describes the Lord's church these days too.

Christians are to “desire the sincere milk of the word, **that ye may grow thereby**” (1 Pet. 2:2, Emph. DR). We shouldn't remain spiritually needy like a child. God expects us to grow, just like parents expect their children to grow physically, mentally, etc. It is very unbecoming of a Christian (who has been one for many years) to be so unknowledgeable in the Word. This neediness causes Christians to be susceptible to false teaching. False teachers will not survive in a biblically knowledgeable and sound congregation. They'll move on to a weaker one.

Don't be Naïve

Closely related to lack of knowledge is naivety. Children are very impressionable and susceptible to the teaching of others. This can be a positive trait (as we'll see below); but it can also be very dangerous. Young children don't yet know how to question the validity of what they're taught (e.g., evolution taught in public schools). “Newborn” Christians have the same vulnerability. It's so easy for them to accept whatever they're taught because they like the teacher and they don't know the Word well enough to refute error.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:15, “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.” He becomes a child of the ones who taught him falsely. Paul commanded “That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and

cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14). Picture **your** child being stalked by these predators! A child needs to grow out of his naivety, and so do new Christians. Strong, seasoned-veteran Christians don’t fall prey to these things; they aren’t naïve anymore! But the deceivers are still out there and always will be. So, every Christian needs to grow beyond this trait (again, Heb 5:12-14; 1 Pet 2:2).

Don’t be Childish

Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13:11, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” While this is dealing with a more specific topic, it presents the fact that people are expected to grow out of our childishness. Have you? Did you do anything as a child that embarrasses you now? We know that we all did! Hopefully we grew up and grew out of those things.

But have we grown up spiritually? Are you stronger and more mature in the faith now than you were ten years ago? Five years ago? Last year? Or did you hit a plateau in your past where you felt you didn’t need to grow anymore? There are old Christians who are still very childish in their biblical knowledge and in their actions. Are you still a child spiritually?

Don’t be Disobedient

Ephesians 2:2-3 says, “...we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature [i.e., habit – DR] the children of wrath...” We were offspring of wrath (anger, impulse, violent emotion); we were sinful, disobedient, in need of punishment and correction! Children eventually grow out of this and are able to control and discipline themselves. So it should be with Christians. We have been saved from the “childhood” of sin by our obedience to the gospel of Christ and must continue to grow in our understanding of and obedience to Him.

Don’t be Malicious

“Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children...” (1 Cor. 14:20). While all children will disobey their parents from time to time, the idea of maliciousness is to be purely and consistently bad, evil, wicked, depraved, vindictive, etc. Most children are not this way. They haven’t yet developed hatred and maliciousness like many adults have.

Be Pure; Not Yet Defiled

Children don’t have the prejudices against certain people or things that adults do; they have to learn them from adults. For example, children don’t understand or practice racism. As a child I recognized different skin colors, but never considered that one race was supposedly superior to another (as some unfortunately believe). Young children don’t recognize racial differences like that.

Be Eager to Learn

Children are like sponges, soaking up all the new information. As kids they have so much to learn, and hopefully as they get older they continue to desire to learn more. Christians should be the same. 1 Peter 2:2 says “as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word that ye may grow thereby.” A new Christian, like a child, should be eager to learn, studying and asking questions, learning new things every day. But this attitude should **never** die in a Christian! We’ll never know it all!

Be Humble

In Matthew 18:1-6, the disciples asked Jesus, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” Jesus took a child and said, “Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child shall be greatest in the kingdom.” And in Matthew 19:14 He said, “of such is the kingdom of heaven.” A child hasn’t yet become so proud and arrogant that he won’t humble himself and accept that he’s under the authority of parents, teachers, and adults in general (cf. elementary school vs. high school)!

Be Obedient, Not Rebellious

We know that children don’t **always** obey; but they also aren’t completely rebellious or set in their ways yet. 1 Peter 1:14 says “As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance.” Also Eph 5:1—“Be ye

therefore followers of God, as dear children.” Children follow their leaders, not blindly, but trusting, based on their parents’ knowledge of life and their love that the child feels. God’s children follow Him for the same reasons. We know that He knows everything about life and loves us, desiring the best for us (cf. John 10—the good shepherd).

We Are All Children

In a sense, all humans are children of God. We were all created by Him; we’re all descendants of Adam and therefore all children of God (physically).

More specifically, all humans are spiritual children. But children of whom? Either of God or of Satan. 1 John 3:10 says “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.” You’re a *child* of whomever (or whatever) you follow. In John 8:44 Jesus said, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” And here, God says there’s no middle ground (you’re either a child of His or a child of the devil) and that if you are not doing righteousness, you are not His child (you’re obviously lacking in these “childlike” qualities). So, whose child are you?

Sound Doctrine

George E. Darling Sr.

Several years ago I heard Brother C.R. Nichols tell the following story: “When a lad I heard a church member tell an illiterate man, with a large family, who wanted to preach, to ‘continue farming,’ your speech will bring adverse criticism and hurt the church.” The man replied: “I must preach the gospel. Even though they make fun of me, I will preach the gospel. If they put me in jail I will preach the gospel through the key hole. If they put me in a barrel I will preach the gospel through the bung hole.” That brethren, is the kind of determination that these men have and that kind of commitment will get the job done as they prove their valor by contending for the faith, but now the purpose of my coming is to speak on “Sound Doctrine.”

Let me say in the beginning that Sound Doctrine is the only doctrine that should be preached. I cannot conceive of anyone preaching anything, save the doctrine of Jesus Christ and His apostles. There are many wonderful definitions of the word “sound.” That it means wholesome, healthful doctrine. Today we can appreciate even more than ever the necessity of keeping the church pure, always in the defense of sound doctrine. God has always had a message for His messengers; and now as always, that message must be kept pure and delivered, as it is, without alteration, modification or apology,

But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1). Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him. Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar (Pro. 30:5-6). If thou put the brethren in remembrance of these things, thou shalt be a good minister of Jesus Christ, nourished up in the words of faith and of good doctrine, whereunto thou hast attained. But refuse profane and old wives’ fables, and exercise thyself rather unto godliness (1 Tim. 4:6-7).

Note, right along with the commands to teach sound doctrine, the good doctrine, there are warnings against the fables that corrupt sound doctrine. There is no substitution for preaching the truth. We have more job holding preachers in pulpits today than we have ever had before. To withhold God’s Word is to sin against Jehovah, defraud the people and show oneself a cringing coward and a time server, “I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:1-2).

I visited a congregation a short time ago and talked with one of the members about some things that I had heard of that the congregation was doing that I questioned. He answered: “Maybe some of the things we are doing are not in accord with the scriptures but I’ll tell you one thing, this congregation is doing more now than it has ever done before. Our contributions have tripled. We have doubled our attendance. We

are “Marching for the Master and are doing **Great Things!**”—we used to use the slogan “Great things for God” now it is just “Great Things.” The preacher welcomed the visitors, and insisted they sign the Guest Register in the foyer (“foy-ya”), bragged on the members and thanked them for their presence! Named all of the sick in the community, giving the details of their illness, room number in the hospital, and addresses where they could send cards, gospel meetings in the area, etc. He spent about 22 minutes for announcements and 18 minutes for preaching the Word of God—and then apologized for going overtime on the sermon. There is a definite trend to substitute a ceremony for preaching the Word. We must attract large crowds, enroll great numbers and spend millions. Maybe the church is on the march, but too many who are marching with us have no conviction and would not know Sound Doctrine if they heard it and certainly would not tolerate it. “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:3).

Now to Our Lesson

Brethren, of this I am sure, God intended for us to teach a doctrine and he intended that doctrine be sound. It was sound when he gave it and it is our responsibility to keep it that way. Only sound doctrine will save souls. There has always been a tendency to drift away from sound doctrine to a corrupt system. This can be seen in Paul’s warnings to the church at Thessalonica, the Ephesian elders and to Timothy (2 Thess. 2:3-7; Acts 20:23; 2 Tim. 4:1-4).

This so called unity movement that is being ramrodded by Ketcherside—Garrett and that crew of God denying perverters of the gospel is simply the old doctrine of “it doesn’t make any difference what doctrine we follow, sincerity is the criterion.” Surely sincerity is a virtue, but it is not a test of sound doctrine. Paul’s letter to the churches of Galatia shows the danger of turning from sound doctrine to a perverted doctrine. It happened so quickly that Paul was “amazed.” Members of the Lord’s church today need to recognize that we are no more immune to false teachers than the Galatians were. To me this is what needs to be emphasized today. It is obvious that people today, both in the church and out of the church do not appreciate sound doctrine, and a failure to appreciate will cause us to fall away and be damned (2 Thess. 2:11-12). I do not expect a denominational preacher to appreciate sound doctrine however one would think that every member of “the pillar and ground of the truth” would uphold it, but you know as well as I, many do not. They will compromise and apologize for the preaching of the truth; fail to live it and will persecute the man who has the courage to preach it. Popularity, social prestige, the love of money and friendship with the world has pulled many a church member into hell.

When a man can write several pages in defense of something he is doing or has done without quoting a single verse of Scripture and correctly applying it, that man has little appreciation for sound doctrine. When brethren refuse to discuss issues and problems that trouble the church also shows a lack of appreciation of sound doctrine. Brethren in the past who loved the truth were willing and ready to discuss their problems. Today not only are they unwilling to discuss but when they speak they refuse to be recorded.

Another indication of the lack of appreciation for sound doctrine in the church is the fact that some are not willing to defend the truth nor allow it done. Elders will not grant the use of church buildings nor lend their endorsement for a debate.

Let me quote a statement from the pen of J.D. Bales in his book *Christian, Contend for Thy Cause*, page 18: “Those who oppose the right kind of religious debating are either weak in the faith; afraid of their own position; afraid of the consequences of standing for the truth; or they are uninformed on the particular question under discussion.” This I believe is in harmony with sound doctrine.

Today we hear from every quarter, “don’t oppose the other man’s religion.” They criticize for criticizing and condemn for condemning. They say that we should never say what is right or wrong in religion lest we be guilty of judging and try to hide behind Matthew 7:1, then turn right around and have the unmitigated gall to criticize “negative preaching.”

It is a fact that our greatest dangers in the church has been and I guess always will be

from within. The false teachers of Galatians 2:4 were on the inside and were corrupting sound doctrine. It was an inside job. The most dangerous ones today are not the avowed enemies of sound doctrine but those who are unconscious of the fact. And in many cases it is not their fault. Strong Christians are not made on “Blue John” or the skimmed milk of the Word, but from the meat of the Word. Paul knew what was needed when he said, “Preach the Word!” Speak the things that become sound doctrine. We need men who are willing to put their necks out and their heads on the chopping block. Men who are converted to the truth and who will take a stand. Preaching about the high cost of gasoline; the visiting nurse program or the cost of peanuts in China is not, at least in my way of thinking, speaking the things that become sound doctrine. We need preachers who are known for their ability to “contend earnestly for the faith” and not for being among the 10 best dressed men in the city.

Thank God, we do have men today, among them a host of young men of stalwart character, with deep convictions who would suffer themselves to be beheaded before they would deny the Lord or compromise His Word at any point or condition. May God’s blessing attend them!

Our growth in the past has not been due to expensive church buildings, we haven’t had them until recently. It has not been because we had the best educated preachers, for we have not had them. Our growth has been due to the **power of the gospel**, Preach the Word Brother—

Reprinted from *The First Annual Bellview Lectures, 1975, Pensacola, Florida, “Remove Not the Ancients Landmarks.”*

Sacred Imagination

G.K. Wallace

Pastor A. G. Ward, in telling what the Baptism of the Holy Spirit did for him, says, “Another blessed result of the coming of the Comforter to my heart has been that I have learned to cultivate the faculty of sacred imagination and to realize the unseen.”

We are of the opinion that the gentleman is right in one respect, and that is about his imagination. However, it is not the Spirit that creates this imagination but his imagination creates in his mind and heart what he believes to be the Baptism of the Spirit. Since the Bible plainly teaches that the Baptism of the Spirit was for a specific purpose and that purpose having been fulfilled, it of necessity ceased, we know then that the gentleman is overworking his imagination.

To further show you that this is a matter of perverted brain, you will please notice the following:

Joseph Smith, the father of Mormonism, got the Holy Spirit and “imagined” the angel Moroni gave him some plates on which was written the book of Mormon.

The Spiritualists claim they talk to the dead by the power of the Spirit. The dead are called up and with them they converse face to face. It looks as if some one’s imagination is working overtime here.

Mr. Nazarene gets the Holy Spirit and jumps and shouts but can’t talk in tongues. He has the same Holy Spirit that Mr. Pentecostal has but no tongues. He also says that Mr. Pentecostal cannot talk in tongues.

Mr. Quaker gets the Holy Spirit and neither jumps nor shouts but only sits quietly. He says all the noise and talking in tongues is not of the Holy Spirit.

Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, through what she claims was the Spirit of God, gave to the world Christian Science. This so-called science denies that there is anything that is material. Sickness and death, it says, do not exist. This is all an illusion. It seems that when folk get their imagination started there is no end to what they may say and do.

Charles T. Russell imagined he was called of God to give us his materialistic doctrine.

R. H. Boll, Charles M. Neal, et. al., imagined this was all true and have taken up with the same. Jorgenson, Boll, and others say that their theory is not that of Russell but we

are prepared to show that their theories are as much alike as two boys born of the same mother. The theories are that close akin. Only their fathers can tell them apart.

Mrs. White says she was called of God by the Spirit, to give us Adventism.

But, alas, our missionaries begin to work their imagination. Virgil Smith, after using his imagination as to what the Bible teaches on the question of the Holy Spirit, got one of his converts—namely Joano Nunes—to the point where he imagined he had the Spirit. This unusual occurrence came after they had spent some time in repeating, “The Lord is good—the Lord is good.” Then some of them talked in tongues. We wish some of these fellows who have such good imagination would show us the scriptures where God ever authorized anyone to agonize in prayer for the Holy Spirit. Where is an example of anyone getting down and crying, “The Lord is good—the Lord is good” or as the Pentecostals do, “Thank you, Jesus, Thank you, Jesus.”

All the above testimonies of the Holy Ghost folk contradict and yet each can prove his point, because he has the witness within himself. He feels it, therefore he knows it.

Well, somehow we believe the pastor mentioned above, is right. It is a work of imagination.

God destroyed the antediluvians for a too free use of their imaginations. “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5).

Moral: Stick to the work of God and quit following your imagination.

“How Can Daddy Leave the Store?”

Roy Mason

A business man is often too busy running **his** business to pay any attention to the **Lord's** business. A little boy once asked his mother, “Will Daddy go to heaven?”

“Yes, son. What makes you ask such a question?” she replied.

“Well, Mother, how can he ever leave the store?”

That father couldn't leave his store to go and worship God with his family, so the little boy wondered how he could ever leave the store to go to heaven.

But rest assured, my friends, that Papa will leave the store when death comes and calls his name. Yes, and **you** may get too busy with your little affairs to pay attention to the Lord's affairs. But when death calls, you **will** give up your little affairs and you will find that, after all, they are not so very important.

A Bible Question For You...

See if you can find the following in your Bible: **A Community Church, The Nazarene Church, A Cowboy Church, The Baptist Church, The Methodist Church, The Pentecostal Church, The Lutheran Church, The Roman Catholic Church, The Christian Church, The Assembly of God, The Mormon Church, The Episcopal Church, The Seventh-Day Adventist Church, or The Presbyterian Church.**

If you cannot find them in the Bible, why are you remaining in a church that God will root up? “But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up” (Matt. 15:13) Every single church listed above will be consigned to hell on The Judgment Day. Those churches are abominations, founded by men—not God. “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh *but* in vain” (Psa. 127:1).

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“Mainstream Churches” are Sinful

The time for recognizing division has come—again. The steadfast, doctrinally sound remnant of the church, in widely scattered (and mostly small) pockets across our land, must mark mainstream churches of Christ as the apostates and sinners they are. God's Word commands us to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather **reprove them**” (emph JCB). The multitudinous “ministries” of the “Social Gospellers,” their flirtation with the world, and their embrace of doctrinal error aims to “gain thereby the recognition of the conflicting sects about us, to become popular, and be considered orthodox and really one of the branches of the church,” to quote one of them. Such a statement is nothing short of heresy, and the Biblically ignorant masses in mainstream churches of Christ are no longer merely bidding Godspeed to apostates—they themselves are apostate.

These “Mainstream Churches” are **not** in “**ERROR.**” They are plain vanilla “**SINFUL!**”

Answering The Atheist

J. Early Arceneaux

One of the favorite illustrations used by the evolutionists has to do with the automobile. They point to the modern automobile as an example of how evolution works—there was first the two-cylinder horseless carriage, then came the four cylinder car, the six, the eight, and finally the twelve. As the car developed from a crude, primitive buggy into the modern gleaming twelve-cylinder machine, so man developed from his crude, animal existence into the modern creature of intelligence and understanding.

But was the development of the car *evolution*? Not at all. The car did not evolve; it was developed. Each one of those improvements was the result of intelligent oversight and planning; each new bit of progress in the automotive field came about by the invention of intelligent men, not by chance at all. Now here would be how it would have to happen to make it fit the evolutionists picture:

If you had one of those old two-cylinder cars, and one day it simply ceased to be a two-cylinder car and automatically, spontaneously, and without a single reason for doing so, became a four-cylinder car; and then the four-cylinder car should one day of its own accord, and without the intervention of a single tool in anybody's hand become a six-cylinder car; and then an eight, and a twelve—well, if you can conceive of that happening, then you're probably a ripe prospect to join the school of the evolutionists. For that's the way they think.

There is a difference between evolution and development. Nobody questions the idea of development. We all recognize that it is true. A man first built a canoe out of a log; that was his original boat. Then one day he stuck a pole up in that log, and put a sail on it. That was the sailboat. Still later on he built a steam engine, and put that engine in the boat to give it power. That was the steamship. After a while he developed a gasoline engine, and put that engine in a different kind of boat—one that would sail in air rather than in water. That was the airplane. Then he developed jet motors and rockets. But each stage of development was brought on by intelligent supervision and intervention, not by a spontaneous process of fortuitous forces, as evolution would have us believe.

Age of the Earth

The age of the earth is another of those matters on which the unbeliever thinks he can confound the Bible student. They boldly declare that geology contradicts the Bible as to the age of the earth. But just where in the Bible is there any indication as to the age of the earth? Do you think the Mosaic account of creation tells when the earth began? Read it again. Let the atheist set the age of the earth's beginning as far back in antiquity as he wants to—a million years, a billion, a trillion, a quadrillion—and there is not one word in the Bible that says it did, or did not, begin at that time.

When does the Bible say the earth began? It **doesn't** “In the beginning God...” That's the first expression in the Bible. I dare any geologist, evolutionist, or anybody else to go one minute back of that! Let them put “the beginning” as far back as the human mind can conceive it, and still **God** was the One who began it. Does anyone think the earth started before “the beginning?”

“In the beginning God created...” We look about us. Everything we see or can imagine to exist shows us the hand of a Creator. Even the material, manufactured, things of this earth show clearly that there was intelligence and planning back of their creation. The thought, the idea, the mind is behind every gadget of civilization. Take a simple watch for an illustration. Here is a human invention, a piece of workmanship. Ask an atheist how this watch came to be. And listen as he tells you that nobody made the watch, that it simply “evolved.” let him describe to you how the watch was once a turnip, and just kept on growing, and growing, and turned into a tomato, and then into an ear of corn, and then into a pocket knife, and then into a watch!

Then ask this unbeliever about how the earth came to be. And listen as he tells you how this great universe (infinitely more intricate and delicately balanced than the finest watch ever made) **wasn't** made at all, but just “**evolved.**” He will laugh at the idea of design, order, or purpose in the universe. To him it seems perfectly rational and

reasonable that the great universe should **evolve** out of **nothing at all**, that its great bodies should move through the heavens in breath taking precision and regularity, keeping each its own orbit and each its own sphere with split-second timing, and that all of that **“just happens!”**

When we gaze into the heavens we look upon stars that are incredible distances away. Astronomers tell us that some of these stars we see are so distant that it takes millions of years for their light (traveling at 186,000 miles per second) to reach us. Space is literally sown with suns, planets, moons, and heavenly bodies, some of them of such magnitude as to stagger the imagination. I was reading only recently of one of these stars so big that if it were placed in our solar system, it would engulf our whole sun, reach to the earth, and clear out to the orbit of Saturn. Our earth is 92 million miles from the sun, yet this one planet is bigger than our sun, earth, and all the planets revolving around the sun put together! It takes our earth 365 days to make a complete circuit around the sun. Yet Neptune is so far away that 164 years (not days) must elapse for Neptune to complete its orbit. And the whole solar system is just a pinpoint in the universe. There are millions and millions of other solar systems like this—suns like our sun (which is a very small star) and stars without number. Yet space is so immense that these heavenly bodies are about as crowded as would be three gulls having the whole Pacific Ocean to themselves.

But David said, “The fool bath said in his heart, There is no God” (Psa. 14:1). The psalmist didn't say how big a fool such a man is, but we can pretty well imagine. Here he stands on this tiny grain of sand, our earth, struts and boasts, and says, “There is no God!” You know what he does? He **assumes** that there is no God. That assumption is based on his fantastic egotism—the opinion that he knows everything, that he has all knowledge. For if there is one single truth that he does not know, that truth might be the fact of God's existence. If there is one single spot he has not explored in all the heavens, that spot might be God's habitation. Only a fool can be an atheist. There is no other explanation for atheism.

The “I Thought” Religion

Ernest S. Underwood

In 2 Kings 5, there is an interesting account of a man who was a leper. His name was Naaman. This man was sent to a prophet of God that he might be cured of his leprosy. The prophet told him to go dip in the River Jordan seven times and he would be cleansed. The Scriptures then record, “But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the LORD his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper” (verse 11).

We see in this man's actions an attitude that is all too frequent in today's world. God plainly tells man what to do that he might be saved from past sins, yet man says, “Behold I thought...” The end of the story in Second Kings is that the man finally did as God commanded and was healed of his leprosy. Let us look at some characteristics of the “I Thought” religion.

It is the religion of excuse. God had told Abraham that He would be with him and bless him. When Abraham and his wife Sarah traveled to Gerar, Abimelech took Sarah to himself because Abraham had said, “She is my sister.” Upon learning the truth, and fearing what God would do to him, Abimelech confronted Abraham and wanted to know why he had lied to him. Abraham's answer was, “Because I thought, surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will kill me on account of my wife” (Genesis 20:11).

It is the religion of ignorance. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the church of the Lord, even to the point of giving his vote for Christians to be put to death. Later, after his conversion, and when he was preaching to Agrippa, he recounted those times. In Acts 26:9 his words are recorded: “Indeed, I myself thought I must do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth.”

It is the religion of presumption and substitution. Look at Naaman again. When told to dip in the River Jordan, he became angry. He didn't like the command. He had already decided what he wanted the prophet to say and to do. He presumed that this would be acceptable to God, for it was certainly what he wanted and expected. Next, he wanted to substitute. If he had to dip in a river, why not do so in one of the rivers of Syria? After all, one river is as good as another, isn't it? Naaman failed to realize that God doesn't negotiate His truth.

What about the religion that you practice? Is it the religion with sound biblical authority, or is it one of excuse, ignorance, presumption or substitution? We need to heed the admonition of 2 John 9-11:

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

Let us honestly ask ourselves, "Is the religion that I now believe and practice validated by the Holy Scriptures, the religion set forth in the New Testament, or is it an 'I thought,' or a 'this is what I was taught by a priest or pastor' religion?"

“The Other Comforter?”

Jerry C. Brewer

Gospel Minutes (GM) is a weekly mainstream periodical that has a reputation among churches of Christ as a source of sound teaching—a reputation that is not deserved. For years, the editors of *Gospel Minutes* have teetered between truth and error, and misusing and misapplying Scriptures to fit their theories, while mainstream churches pass out hundreds of copies each week to gullible members.

The current co-editor, David Thurman, is no exception. The following question was printed in *Gospel Minutes* Oct. 4, 2019: “Dear Mr. Thurman: Please explain John 14:16. Who is this other comforter? I thought Jesus was and is our comforter. J.T. AZ”

Thurman replied:

I will let Jesus answer this question directly. “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you” (John 14:16-17 NASB). Jesus has just told the apostles that He would soon leave them (John 13:33, 36) and they were upset by the news (John 14:1). To relieve their fears, He promised them the Holy Spirit to be the comfort and helper in His absence.

This same Spirit is promised to all who are saved. “Peter said to them, 'Repent, and each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'” (Acts 2:38). Every person saved has this comforter (the Holy Spirit) within. The Spirit lives in us giving us comfort and encouragement while we await our eternal home in the presence of God and Jesus. Jesus did not want to leave His apostles (and all others who were saved) alone in this world. So, He promised a comforter (the Holy Spirit) to be within us to give us peace and confidence as we navigate the Christian life.

With apologies to John F. Rowe, “So much sophistry in so small a space we have not, in a long time, seen in a sectarian sheet of the deepest dye.” Whether brethren are absolutely ignorant, have no desire to learn the truth, are simply too lazy to study, or merely regurgitate Pentecostal doctrine is a question not easily answered. Whatever the cause, David Thurman teaches false doctrine in *Gospel Minutes*.

Thurman couples Peter's promise in Acts 2:28—“the gift of the Holy Spirit”—with Jesus' promise to His apostles in John 13 and 14. **Neither promise** was made to

mankind in general. Both promises have been treated elsewhere in this work, so, suffice it to say that **both** refer to the miraculous. The Comforter was the Holy Spirit Who imparted power to the **apostles** on Pentecost (cf. Mark 9:1; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4) and “the gift of the Holy Spirit” is **not** “a comforter (the Holy Spirit) to be within us to give us peace and confidence...” The gift of the Holy Spirit was miraculous power imparted to Christians in the first century by the laying of an apostle's hands. What Peter quoted from Joel (Acts 2:17-21, cf. Joel 2:28-32) was miraculous power and that was **never given** to “every person saved”—then or now.

“The Thing That Hath Been...”

The Cycle of Apostasy

Volume 1 is now posted on our Website at:

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**Jerry C. Brewer
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Elk City, Oklahoma 73644**

The Power of God's Word

R.L. Whiteside

There is saving power in the word. An angel said to Cornelius, “Send to Joppa, and fetch Simon, whose surname is Peter; who shall speak unto thee words, whereby thou shalt be saved, thou and all thy house” (Acts 11:13-14). “Wherefore putting away all filthiness and overflowing of wickedness, receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). “I am not ashamed of the gospel: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth...” (Rom. 1:16).

Of course, no one thinks there is power in the material of which the Bible is made. The power that leads men to Christ are the thoughts, the ideas, the motives, presented in the word of God. There is power in a thought; and power in a motive. By words, men move men, even whole armies and nations. Men's thoughts have been powerful enough to overthrow kingdoms.

If we want men to act a certain way, we try to fill them with thoughts and motives tending to lead them in the direction we want them to go. If we can fill people full of God's ideas, God's thoughts, we will induce them to do God's will. In this way God works in people to get them to live different lives. It is through the mighty power of the word that men are drawn to Christ (John 6:44-45).

I was born in 1941, at a time when great Gospel preachers were in their prime and through that decade, and those following, they thundered the old Jerusalem message from every nook and cranny in this country—from the civic halls of places like Dallas, Houston, and Nashville, to the “country crossroads” like Taylor, which thrived 10 miles of where I now live and where by Grandfather was baptism into Christ in 1952. I have witnessed much in my lifetime, but I am most grateful for association with some of the greatest minds the church have ever had. I have sat at the feet of men like Foy E. Wallace, Jr., V.E. Howard, Leroy Brownlow, W.R. Craig, and W.S. Boyett, all of whom have laid aside their battle-scarred armor and taken their flight to realms of day. I revere the memories of those men for their love of the Truth and thank God for the privileged to learn for them. I have always regretted that I never got to hear men like Marshall Keeble, J.D. Tant, and N.B. Hardeman. We shall never see their likes again. — Jerry C. Brewer —

Recommended Reading: *The Thing That Hath Been (Vol. 2)*

Gary W. Summers

The title of this book comes from Ecclesiastes 1:9:

The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is no new thing under the sun.

Certainly, there is nothing new under the sun when it comes to errors being promoted in the camp of the faithful. This book's subtitle is: "The Cycle of Apostasy." What happened during the era of the judges also happens in the Lord's church—just not as frequently. But there are many similarities occurring today compared to what happened 200 to 250 years ago.

The two issues headlining division back then were missionary societies and the introduction of mechanical instruments of music. Today, those have returned and brought many other innovations with them. The same ineffective and weak arguments are being used today as then—and with many of the same results: The voices of those holding closely to the Scriptures are being ignored. Pleas for Biblical soundness not only go unheeded; they are often treated with contempt.

This book is, perhaps, the most valuable, "right on the money" analysis and warning to churches since Ira Rice's *Ax on the Root* series, published in 1966, 1967, and 1970. This book was published just months ago in 2020, and its second edition is now available. The best news is that it is free (although this reviewer thinks sending \$5.00 would be a nice gesture). Jerry Brewer is the author, 308 South Oklahoma Avenue, Elk City, OK 73644.

"An Emerging Denomination"

This first chapter seeks to define what is meant in the book by the phrase *mainline churches of Christ*. Of course, some congregations still believe and hold fast to the Word, but many of the rest find themselves in a state of flux and maybe are not too sure where they are. Some of these remain where they used to be, but some are a long way down the road to being a denomination—the very thing churches of Christ have historically sought diligently to avoid becoming.

Brother Brewer provides eight characteristics of mainstream churches (1). The one that really struck a chord with this reviewer (and probably most of those who read this publication) was the second one: "Churches who may not preach error, but willingly fellowship churches and preachers who do (1 John 1:6-7; 2 John 9-11)." This has become an insoluble mystery to many of us over the past two decades—especially since many of those in this category once stood where we do and used the same Scriptures as authority for their stance! But now we find a spirit of compromise among those who once stood firm (they know who they are). The church has been and is being weakened.

"When the Floodgate Was Opened"

Many occasions for opening the floodgates to apostasy could be cited (and are throughout the book), but what causes the problem is one's view of authority. Does silence authorize or prohibit Christians from engaging in various activities? The rationale for the first choice is provided by W.K. Pendleton (20). At a meeting in Lawton, Oklahoma on Nov. 17, 2003, Lynn McMillion, President and CEO of *The Christian Chronicle*, was asked three times: "Is the silence of the Scriptures permissive or prohibitive?" Most of us know what he believes, but he refused to answer. The reasons why are analyzed (21-22).

Chapters 3 and 4

These describe some of the current apostasy that is occurring. Some of these parallel previous conditions. Brother Brewer quotes quite often from the volumes Earl West wrote—*The Search for the Ancient Order*. A frequent technique was simply to introduce something without making a fuss over it. When someone opposed it, they were credited with being unloving and divisive. Isaac Errett was one of these. He set forth ten articles concerning what the church teaches and practices (41-46). Even though

many of the points were Biblical, they had the appearance of a creed, and most brethren rejected them as such.

Pentecostalism

Anyone who does not think we are faced with the specter of Pentecostalism in the church has not been paying attention. For years, many Pentecostal groups believed that people were baptized in the Holy Spirit in modern times (usually evidenced by “speaking in tongues”). In the 1960s and 1970s, many in the church began to teach the concept as well. Pat Boone led the charge with such beliefs, but others followed soon.

[Editor’s note: Your congenial editor and reviewer ran into this situation in the very first congregation with which he worked. Two song leaders and their families (all of them hard workers) had involved themselves in this error. After several months of praying and studying, the congregation had no choice but to withdraw fellowship from them. They had many good qualities, but adhering to the truth was not one of them. He also recorded Pat Boone at the Civic Center in Pittsburgh in 1973. Some brethren tried to speak with him but were denied access.]

John Wesley first began to teach in the United States “a direct influence of the Holy Spirit on man’s spirit” (53). Mac Deaver began to run with this position in the 1990s, but he is not alone. Sunset School of Preaching and several “Christian” universities also have instructors teaching the same thing (60-66).

Chapter six considers what the Scriptures mean by being “spirit-filled”; a number of preachers and churches are to the point of saying that the Spirit enables Christians to do various things separate and apart from the Word. This is an error that has already infiltrated many congregations.

“Christian” Universities

Chapters 8 and 9 deal with the current status of “Christian” universities. Many of us have known for decades that a university, a college, a high school, middle school, elementary school, kindergarten, or preschool is not the work of the church. By what authority would the church teach mathematics, history, science, or English? The work of the church is to educate everyone concerning the gospel of Jesus Christ. In 1947, David Lipscomb wrote in the school’s lectureship book: *The Christian college is intended to help mothers and fathers bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Brewer 89).

Many brethren used to understand that the school was an adjunct of the home—not the church. For that reason, schools ought not to be supported by churches—but by individuals. In fact, Ohio Valley College once had, as part of its charter or by-laws, that they could not receive checks from churches. Any they received from churches had to, of necessity, be returned. And they were serious about this decision because the very next item stated that the previous provision could never be changed. Most “Christian” universities today are happy to take money from churches—or the government—or corporations. Anyone who knows the story of “Play On, Miss Bertha” will find an accounting of it on pages 100-101.

More on universities is examined in the next section—with a particular focus on “the pornography in the art department” at Freed-Hardeman University, which remains supported by the Henderson Church of Christ and the Bible faculty at the university—not to mention the institution’s president, David Shannon. One can only imagine the degree of jaw-dropping amazement and awe that would be expressed by N. B. Harde-man and other former godly men about something so obviously wrong.

How the information came to light is retold with information provided by Kerry Sword, whom this congregation supported in Kiev, Ukraine for 25 years. Two articles written on the morality aspect of their actions, by this reviewer, are also included. The presentation is rather lengthy (104-40), but it is well worth reading. Brother Sword is accurate in his descriptions; nevertheless, he has been much maligned in the area.

Schools of Preaching

These too are not as trustworthy as they were in years past. One of the schools examined is Sunset, which has had problems for years regarding Marriage, Divorce, and Re-

Marriage. Many congregations have also reported problems with graduates teaching error on the Holy Spirit. Brewer points out that former Sunset instructor, Richard Rogers (whose class on Old Testament History and Geography course was inspirational when this writer listened to the tapes years ago) endorsed Terry Rush's heretical book, *The Holy Spirit Makes No Earthly Sense* (150). The reader will be surprised by the teaching that has found its way in what were once "conservative" schools.

The Social Gospel

The author not only defines what the social gospel is (183-89); he shows from various church bulletins that the emphasis in mainline churches seems to be going that way. Also included is a study of the word, ministry, as used in the Scriptures (199-200). Chapter 12 takes a look at various "societies among the churches of Christ," including the Churches of Christ Disaster Relief Effort (CCDRE) (206-10). What do Christians actually know about this organization? Chances are the material presented here will come as a surprise to most brethren. Some comparisons are made to previous institutions of one century ago.

Fellowship

Now all of these departures are disturbing, but the most insidious problem is discussed in chapters 13-14. Why is it the worst problem we face? The reason is that we know liberals like Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly, and Rick "Abihu" Atchley are going to come along. We know we will face a few men who are not so flagrant, but who are leaning the same direction. But what we have not seen in such abundance in previous years are the number of preachers and brethren who will fellowship false teachers.

In the last twenty years, those who would have never been fellowshipped previously are now endorsed either implicitly or explicitly. Why doesn't it make sense to people to correct someone when he has taught error? Why would a preacher appear on a program with a person who has been associated with liberalism for 35 years? Why would someone speak on the same program as another person who has written a book denying the doctrine of hell? Who could have imagined that anyone would do such a thing? Yet it is being done. If the most conservative among us fellowship men who are known for their errors, what does that mean for the future of the church? Isn't he who justifies the wicked an abomination to God (Pr. 17:15)? No one ought to say to the wicked, "You are righteous" (Pr. 24:24-26).

Brewer also includes important chapters on brotherhood periodicals, newsletters, and youth ministries. He has collected a tremendous amount of information, which brethren need to read, and it would not be surprising to learn that a volume 3 might be forthcoming (although this material is very thorough). Some will not agree with every point made, but if it causes them to evaluate their practices, it will be worth it. (*Spiritual Perspectives*, Vol. 19, No. 30, July 25, 2021, Published by South Seminole church of Christ, Winter Park, Florida).

Lies and Deceptions

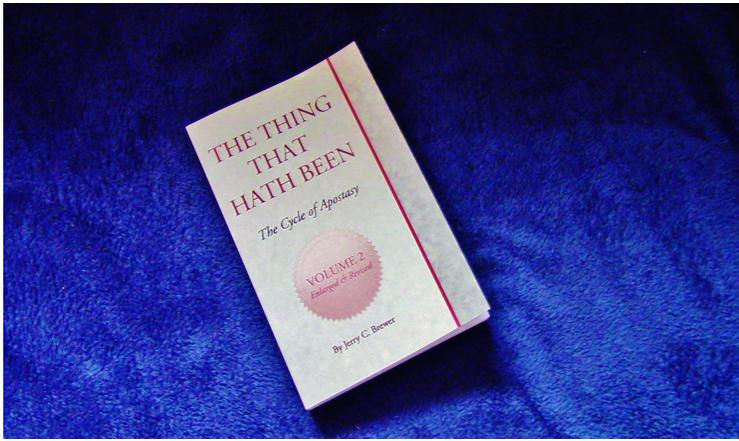
Philip Smith

Satan was the first liar. His lie separated Adam and Eve from their beautiful home in Eden (Gen. 3:22-24) and from God Himself (Gen. 2:16-17; Isa. 59:2; Eph. 2:1). Liars are the children of the Devil (John 8:44) and not the children of God, for God is a God of truth (Deut. 32:4; Titus 1:2).

To lie is to deceive. The Psalmist wrote, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in His holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully" (Psa. 24: 3-4).

Deceit is placed among sins such as fornication, envy, murder, malignity, backbiting, and disobedience to parents (Rom. 1:29-32). Moses warned the Israelites that they should not steal, deal falsely, nor lie one to another (Lev. 19:11). The Corinthians were rebuked because they defrauded one another (1 Cor. 6:8). The book of Revelation is very clear that no liar shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but will be cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 21:7-8). Let us walk honestly as in the day that we might, when this life is over, enter into that eternal home of the soul.

“The Thing That Hath Been...”



The thing that hath been, it *is that* which shall be; and that which is done *is that* which shall be done: and *there is* no new *thing* under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this *is* new? it hath been already of old time, which was before us (Eccl. 1:9-10).

Apostasy is the bane of God's people as Israel in the shadow of Sinai.

And when the people saw that Moses delayed to come down out of the mount, the people gathered themselves together unto Aaron, and said unto him, Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; for *as for* this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him. And Aaron said unto them, Break off the golden earrings, which *are* in the ears of your wives, of your sons, and of your daughters, and bring *them* unto me...And he received *them* at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These *be* thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt...To morrow *is* a feast to the LORD. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play (Exo. 32:1-6).

“The Thing That Hath Been...” The Cyclical of Apostasy Volume 2, Enlarged and Revised By Jerry C. Brewer

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