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What Makes a Nation Great?

Larry Ray Hafley

If military might made a nation great, the Assyrian and Roman empires would never have fallen. If scientific education made a nation great, Nazi Germany would have ruled the world. If vast natural resources made a nation great, the former Soviet Union would be flourishing. If money made a nation great, the oil rich nation of Saudi Arabia would be strong.

The United States has all of the above measures of strength in abundance. Do those items make us a great nation? No. They only make us a country rich in the symbols and accouterments of material wealth, worldly wisdom, and physical power. They are not standards of real worth, or of true value.

You are already ahead of me, for you know what makes a nation great; you know what gives it genuine force and stability. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Prov. 14:34).

Now, apply the same rule to the church. What makes a church great in the sight of the Lord? Is it money? No, Laodicea evidently had that, but they were "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). An urbane, sophisticated, educated membership may comprise an ignorant congregation (1 Cor. 3:18-21). Thus, we may safely say, "Righteousness exalteth God's 'holy nation,' the church, but sin is a reproach to any congregation" (cf. 1 Pet. 2:5, 9). (If you doubt that conclusion, see Paul's judgment of the Corinthians — 1 Cor. 3:1-3.)

Next, attach these principles to yourself, an individual. What makes a person great in the sight of God Almighty? Is it power, prestige, position, or prominence? Absolutely not! See Luke 12:15-21; 16:19-31; 18:1-14. Remember, "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble are called" (1 Cor. 1:26). Thus, we may certainly say, "Righteousness exalteth an individual, but sin is a reproach to any person."

**“Righteousness
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see "Nation" on p. 408

Editorial

Fellowship With Denominations

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Mike Willis

The subject of Christian fellowship has been an important issue for the twentieth century. The ecumenical movement of Protestant denominationalism changed those churches; instead of being denominations at war with one another, they accepted one another as Christians with different denominational heritages. The influence of this movement spilled over into the restoration heritage. The Murch-Witty discussion of the 1930s was a “unity-in-diversity” movement.

The conversion of Carl Ketcherside and Leroy Garrett from sectarians who would not fellowship anyone except those baptized believers who opposed located preachers and colleges in which the Bible is taught was the beginning of a “unity-in-diversity” movement among the churches of Christ. That movement spilled over to influence the non-institutional churches in the early 1970s, taking about 100 younger preachers with it.

The “unity-in-diversity” movement is storming the camp of the institutional churches. F. Lagard Smith describes the move toward fellowshipping those in denominational churches as a “quiet revolution” that is a “clear and present danger” (*Who Is My Brother?* 16, 17). That movement asserts that there are Christians in all denominations with whom we should have “unity-in-diversity.”

In the 1997 *Promise Keepers* rally in Washington, D.C., Max Lucada called on Christians to quit building walls between denominations, but to let those walls come down. Mike Cope delivered a series of lessons at the Highland Church of Christ in Abilene, TX entitled “Christians Only — Not the Only Christians.” One of his lessons that has been frequently quoted is reprinted in *Wineskins* (III:3, April/May 1997). In this lesson, he explained how he came to the realization that there were Christians in all denominations. He argued from Romans 14-15 that we should have unity with one another in spite of our important doctrinal and moral differences. He closed by expressing his desire for the time when he could exchange pulpits with a local Baptist preacher. A significant number of the liberal churches of Christ are moving into the mainstream of Protestant denominationalism, recognizing as Christians those who profess faith in Christ without regard to whether or not one has been baptized.

What beliefs must be changed to have fellowship with the denominations? Let me suggest several changes that have to occur before one is ready
see “Fellowship” on p. 408

How Much Should I Give?

Connie W. Adams

That the churches described in the New Testament had a treasury made up of freewill offerings from the members is evident from several passages. Paul gave the same order to the churches of Galatia that he gave to the church at Corinth. "As I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also. On the first day of the week let each of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come" (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

This is the only passage which deals with a time when such a collection was to be made "on the first day of the week." This regular practice would prevent having to suddenly gather what was needed when Paul arrived. What was "stored up" or "laid by" in store (KJV) constituted a treasury. From this fund the needs of saints at Jerusalem would be supplied. But while this passage is the only one which states a time for such storing up, it is not the only passage which instructs us as to how collected funds were used. Paul said he "took wages" of "other churches" to minister at Corinth (2 Cor. 11:8). Churches could not provide wages to Paul unless they had funds from which to do that. The church at Philippi "sent once and again" to supply Paul's needs while he preached at Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15-16). Members of the church at Jerusalem sold property and laid the proceeds at the feet of the apostles for the care of those among them who were in need (Acts 4:32-37).

Does God Need Our Money?

The truth of the matter is that God does not need money. He owns the universe. But whatever God has required his people to do is for their own good. Jesus said "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). Giving, properly done, indicates a generous spirit which parallels the character of God. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son" (John 3:16). Paul called giving a "grace bestowed" by God on those who practiced it. "Moreover brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia" (2 Cor. 8:1, 6). Unselfish giving shows the depth of our affection. It springs not from compulsion but from the free will of the heart. In the case of relieving the afflicted it shows compassion. Liberality is the opposite of stinginess. God was not miserly in showering his blessings upon the human family, nor should we be in our giving. No, God does not need our money, but *we* need to give for our own good. In so doing we become partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4).

Giving Self First

Jesus said that in order to be his disciples we have to learn to "deny self" (Matt. 16:24). "Self-esteem" is the current rage. "I'm worth it" or
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"I'm number one" is heard again and again. Jesus emptied himself for us (Phil. 2:7). "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). Jesus taught that the way to greatness in the kingdom was to become the servant of all. When a person surrenders all to the Lord, body, soul, spirit, talent, time, and wealth, then he fulfills what is meant by denying self. God accepts what we give only to the extent that he accepts *us*.

The Macedonians had learned this. "That in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded to the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing. Imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God" (2 Cor. 8:1-5). Here were poor brethren who had so given themselves to the Lord that their giving was described as liberality and far beyond what anyone would have expected.

Notice that it was the grace of God when they gave. But it was also the grace of God when the Corinthians gave (vv. 6-7).

How much do I have to give? That is the wrong question. Remember it is called liberality. It is grace. Was God's grace generous or stingy? It is called "freely" giving. If we "sow sparingly we shall also reap sparingly" while sowing "bountifully" results in reaping bountifully (2 Cor. 9:6). Giving must be according to purpose of heart and not grudgingly or of necessity (2 Cor. 9:7). It is the "cheerful giver that God loves. Do I have to give this? No, you don't have to do it. You can refuse to give yourself to the Lord, shut up your heart against the needs of the saints and the lost who need to hear the gospel, spend all you have on yourself, and go on to Hell with the rest of the wicked. I have heard some say we ought to give until it hurts. I don't believe it. Where is the grace, liberality, and freewill in that? No, what we need to do is give until it feels good.

All are not prospered equally. The Macedonians were poor. But they taught a great lesson and set a grand example, not only for the Corinthians, for all of us. If that won't help us to decide how much to give, then the case is beyond help.

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Pure Religion Involves “Visiting” the Fatherless in Their Trouble

Randy Blackaby

Many have undertaken to write in recent years of the desperate social conditions and the moral vacuum being created by the growth of fatherless homes. Our response has been to decry out-of-wedlock births, divorce, and do-nothing fatherhood.

That is as it should be.

But one issue is often overlooked. What is the answer for those children, who through no fault of their own, must grow up without a father? What answers do we give Christian mothers widowed or abandoned by their mates?

We've done a good job chronicling the handicaps fatherless children face. Problems often include poverty, increased health problems, lower educational achievement, child abuse, greater involvement in crime, proclivities toward violence and a likelihood they will become involved in adolescent child bearing.

But do the sins of failed fathers or the crises brought on by untimely death demand a sentence of doom for their children?

Ezekiel 18 addresses the general question of sinful fathers and their children and says “the soul who sins shall die.” The prophet adds, “If, however, he (a sinful father — RB) begets a son who sees all the sins which his father has done, and considers but does not do likewise . . . he shall not die for the iniquity of his father; he shall surely live!”

Jesus said, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Indeed, we all recognize the possibility and the hope of these fatherless children learning what a good father would have taught them.

A mother working doubly hard to inculcate the word of God, children observing the lives of intact, godly families,

faith in God's ways without benefit of an earthly father's supporting guidance and experience — all are avenues of aid.

But there may be more that concerned Christians can and should do to promote, feed and build the faith and behavior of fatherless children.

The Bible is filled with commands for God's people to give attention to the needs of the orphan or fatherless. We are instructed in James 1:27 that “pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans (the fatherless — KJV) and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world.”

What does this entail? Going by and saying hello every couple of months? Taking care of their physical needs, if need be?

Yes, but more. The word “visit” is translated from the Greek word *episkeptomai* and means to look upon, care for, exercise oversight, visit with help.

We meet many fatherless children whose need is not food or clothing but spiritual guidance. They need to be pointed toward their heavenly Father.

The Lord's church today finds a growing number of fatherless children in its midst. Whether they are so because of death or divorce or the sins of one or both parents, they still should be visited (helped) in their need.

There is no circumstance of life and no environment conducive to sin for which God does not provide a “way of escape” (1 Cor. 10:13).

So, while we must continue to preach boldly and loudly the critical role of fatherhood in the development of

continued bottom of next page

“Why Should It Be Thought A Thing Incredible That God Should Raise The Dead?”

Dick Blackford

It shouldn't. He's God! If I raised the dead it would be incredible, but it isn't when God does it. Surely the one who gave life in the first place would have no trouble restoring it when it is lost.

Christianity loses its authority, its unique position among the religions of the world, its credibility and its hope for the world if Jesus was not raised from the dead. It was on this very foundation that the apostles based their case (Acts 2:23, 36; 3:14-16; 5:30, 31). This is the miracle of the Bible. If it cannot be sustained there is no use talking about the others and we may as well throw our Bibles away and close the doors of our church buildings. For “we are of all men most miserable,” if Christ be not raised (1 Cor. 15:16-20).

The startling fact with which those disciples were confronted that Sunday morning is the same one, which after 2000 years, presents itself to you and me — an empty tomb. What shall I do with Jesus (Matt. 27:22)? By getting to the heart of the matter of salvation, we hope your heart will be pricked upon the contention of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

righteous families and make clear there is no human substitute for his position in the home, we also must be careful not to paint a picture of complete hopelessness for the fatherless child. Such would be completely contrary to the faith we hold.

Such must be discouraging to mothers and children looking for help and hope.

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Many say Jesus was a good man, one of the world's greatest teachers, but not the son of God. They can't have it both ways and they need to make up their minds. If he was a good man, could he lie about being the son of God and remain a good man? If he was not the son of God, then he was the greatest impostor and liar the world has ever known. The terms “good man” and “great Teacher” could not describe one who has played a hoax on the whole world for 2000 years. To accept this we would have to believe that single-handedly Jesus perpetrated a universal, mass deception upon all mankind. We are asked to believe that a carpenter's son was so persuasive that he convinced his own mother to take part in the lie to the point that she would watch her oldest boy be tortured, suffer, and die as a criminal for something they both knew was false. She was the only one who could save him. She was the only one who could have known for sure whether he was miraculously conceived during her virginity. Some had already said Jesus was “beside himself” (Mark 3:21). Mary could have told the authorities her son was touched in the head, has visions of grandeur, and thinks he is the son of God. Let me take him by the hand and I will lead him home and get him out of your hair.

Could Jesus have persuaded twelve men, all from different educational backgrounds and social casts to quit their jobs immediately and to go out with great zeal and preach and convert men to a doctrine they never really believed? Plus, he had the Old Testament prophecies behind everything from his birth to his death. And what of his miracles which were not done in a corner (Acts 26:26)? Even his enemies admitted the miracles (Acts 4:16). If he had failed in just one of them, they would have plastered it in the headlines of the Jerusalem Morning News.

How Some Explain The Empty Tomb

How do we account for the disappearance of the body of Jesus other than by a resurrection? Several theories have been advanced but the only serious attempt is the argument

The change in attitude and action of that little band of disciples is one of the most convincing evidential facts surrounding the resurrection. Those who feared and fled are now rejoicing that they can suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41).

that the body was stolen. But by whom? His enemies or his friends? There have been modernists on both sides. But first let us consider the argument they did not make.

“The Tomb Is Not Empty.” They could have stopped Christianity in its tracks by refuting the empty tomb and proving the body was still there. The fact that no denial of the empty tomb was ever offered is mute but convincing evidence that John told the truth. Even the authorities said the body was missing (Matt. 28:11-15). John was not wrong about the empty tomb (John 20:1-8).

Stolen By The Disciples. The Jews came up with the best explanation to be found. They couldn't have done better if they had had 2000 years to think up the best explanation. I have never been worried that anybody 2000 years after the event would be able to come with a better one, short of a resurrection, than those who were bodily present. They had the most to lose and the greatest motivation to come up with the best explanation possible. Theirs is superior to all other explanations that have been offered since. It was not a time for denial but for explaining. They had an empty tomb to account for. But even this explanation will not stand. Imagine having one of those soldiers who had guarded the tomb on the witness stand to be “cross” examined.

Lawyer: “What happened?” *Guard:* “They stole the body.” *Lawyer:* “Who stole it?” *Guard:* “His friends, the disciples.” *Lawyer:* “When did they steal it?” *Guard:* “During the night.” *Lawyer:* “And what were you doing when this happened?” *Guard:* “I was asleep” (Matt. 28:11-15). An eyewitness with his eyes closed? Going to sleep on duty was one of the worst crimes a soldier could commit. To think the governor would have approved this excuse is absurd. Soldiers cold-blooded enough to gamble over a dying victim's cloak are not the kind to be hoodwinked by cowardly Galileans who had recently fled for their lives or to jeopardize their own lives by going to sleep on duty. And to ask us to believe all of them went to sleep at the same time is ridiculous.

Even if all of them went to sleep at the same time, it is unbelievable that the disciples could have accomplished this feat so casually. How would they roll away an “exceeding great” stone so big that the three women knew they could not move it (Mark 16:1-4)? Remember also that the tomb was hewn out in a rock” (Matt. 27:60). That means there was no back door and no trap door. The entrance and exit were one and the same. And why would they take off the linen cloths and napkin? This would require additional time and would make the body more difficult to remove. Instead of being a mess, such orderliness of the tomb is not consistent with grave robbers and body snatchers. It is not in keeping with burglars, to be so neat and tidy. Did you ever hear of anyone breaking into someone's home and cleaning it up?

Furthermore, the disciples were not looking for a resurrection. Their state of despair showed they thought their hopes had ended. Mary went with spices with which to anoint a dead body. The theory that the disciples stole the body falls flat under a fair examination.

Stolen By His Enemies. When one is trying to solve a crime one of the first things to be done is to establish a motive. There could have been no motive unless it was to show they still had it in their possession when the disciples began claiming a resurrection. Since they did not refute the resurrection by showing they still possessed the body, then there is no motive. The enemies stealing it would be inconsistent with what we already know. Pilate secured the sealing of the tomb and stationed soldiers there to keep the disciples from stealing it (Matt. 27:62-67). Would these same enemies defeat themselves by stealing the body, thus making it look like a resurrection had occurred? They would have had everything to lose. They wanted to keep the body in the tomb. If they did steal it, why wasn't it produced to defeat the disciples' claims of a resurrection? Had it been possible, they would have. The fact that they did not have it in their possession is evidenced in that “a great company of the priests believed” (Acts 6:7). Likewise, this theory falls.

The “Swoon” Theory. This theory says there was no resurrection because Jesus never died. He merely fainted. Given time to rest, along with the cool tomb and spices, he revived. Remember, the soldiers made a first hand examination and “thrust a spear into his side” (John 19:34). They should have known better than anyone living today whether Jesus was dead. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus prepared him for burial. They made a “hands on” examination and saw no signs of life. They, too, would have known better than anyone living today. Remember, Jesus was persecuted prior to the crucifixion. He was beaten. A crown of thorns stuck in his brow. He had to carry his own cross. He was then nailed to it and hung on it for six hours. There would have been a considerable loss of

blood. Then his side was pierced with a spear. Having the linen garments “bound,” “wound,” and “wrapped” (note those words) around him along with 100 pounds of spices (John 19:39) would have made it virtually impossible to escape. When Lazarus was raised he had been bound hand and foot with grave clothes and his face was bound with a napkin. Jesus commanded, “Loose him and let him go.” Lazarus was unable to free himself. Being bound in these grave clothes plus the sealing of the tomb could certainly have produced an air supply problem. Soldiers are outside guarding the tomb. The “exceeding great” stone covers the entrance. In spite of all this, Jesus escapes! Such a theory insults a child’s intelligence.

Wrong Tomb. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary “sat over against the sepulcher” after the burial (Matt. 27:61). The women “beheld” the tomb (Luke 23:55). Thus, it never occurred to them to say “Oops, wrong tomb” — because of the grave clothes. If it was an unused tomb, why would there be grave clothes rolled up? If it was a used tomb there would be evidence of another burial. All the authorities would need to do was show these confused women that the body was still in their possession. They knew this wasn’t the best explanation and could be easily disproved — a very weak theory.

Hallucination Theory. This asks us to believe that hundreds (if not thousands, 1 Cor. 15:6) of disciples hallucinated at different times and places over a period of 40 days! It still fails to explain the empty tomb. The enemies could have produced the body to show that the disciples’ minds were playing tricks on them. It is hard to see how anyone could make this argument and keep a straight face.

The Cause Theory. I knew a minister in the Disciples of Christ who took this position. It looks at the resurrection figuratively. It was the “cause” of Christianity that was revived. It still fails to explain all the events that occurred. The only motive for one taking this position is that he has a bias which says everything must be explained on a natural (not supernatural) basis. The apostles and many former enemies of Christianity — those who were there — never interpreted it figuratively (1 Cor. 15:1-6). Why would so many be converted to Christianity and accept the consequences that went with it if there was not a literal resurrection?

Other Theories. The vision hypothesis, the optical illusion, etc., are all answered by the empty tomb. One must explain what became of the body, how it happened in the face of the pains taken by both the Jews and Romans to prevent the appearance of a resurrection, along with the fear, cowardice, and despair of the disciples.

The Change in the Disciples

Is it reasonable to believe that men thrust into the very

darkness of despair and cowardice could have, within a few weeks, risen to such heights of joy and courage as the disciples subsequently displayed? Their emotions were stretched from one extreme to the other. Peter had denied, cursed, and sworn that he didn’t know Jesus. Yet in just a few days he stands before thousands of those whom he had feared and accuses them of murder and boldly affirms the intention of Christians (Acts 4:19-21; 5:29).

The change in attitude and action of that little band of disciples is one of the most convincing evidential facts surrounding the resurrection. Those who feared and fled are now rejoicing that they can suffer for Christ (Acts 5:41). You can put a man’s head on the chopping block and he might be brave enough to die for something he really believes. But no man is brave enough to die for something he knows is a lie, especially when he stands to benefit in every way by denying it. These disciples were beaten, stoned and left for dead, run out of town, and were outcasts from formerly held respected positions. There was no gain in this life. One cannot find an ulterior motive on their part.

Is it mathematically possible that Jesus could have orchestrated this whole event and made things turn out so that they fulfilled all the prophecies about the Messiah and yet be an impostor? How did he get the Romans, the Jews, his disciples (including Judas), his family, and his own mother to act together exactly as they did? How did he fake the miracles (healing the sick, restoring limbs, raising the dead, calming the storm, cleansing the lepers, feeding thousands, turning water to wine, etc.)? With the Roman soldier we must proclaim, “Truly, this was the son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

Conclusion

Through the centuries the empty tomb has been the Gibraltar of the Christian’s faith and the Waterloo of skeptics. That’s why I have never worried that anyone 2000 years removed from the events would be able to come up with a better explanation. So why have many tried to explain it away? Because of wishful thinking. Once one accepts the resurrection it obligates him to live and behave in a certain way or reap consequences. It is much easier to deny it ever happened and to live a life of indulgence which so vividly characterizes our society today.

It is not incredible at all that God can raise the dead (Acts 26:8). So, what will you do with Jesus? Will you make the change which occurs at baptism and begin your “newness of life”? Remember, preaching the cross includes preaching the genuineness of baptism. Baptism is the bridge that ties us to the cross (Acts 2:23-41; Rom. 6:1-18; Col. 2:11-13; 1 Pet. 3:21).

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Sign in the Front of a Fire Station

D. Gibson



**Do Not Wait Until
A Fire Starts
To Plan Your Way
Of Escape**



I'm sure that all of us have thought long and seriously about the safety of our family should a fire occur in our home. It would be an unthinkable disaster, not only for the lives of loved ones but our home and the possessions acquired over a lifetime.

We've all bought fire detectors and placed them strategically according to articles we have read, advice from well informed sources, and the instructions on the box. Also, in most homes you will find one or more fire extinguishers. We buy fire insurance to help lighten the financial recovery. Our children are all instructed as to what action to take in case of emergency; dialing 911 and of course alternate exits. This tragedy will probably never happen, but the wise are prepared in a crisis.

But there is a fire that is not a threat, it is a promise. It will consume our home, the city we live in, the planet we live on, and the entire universe. There will be no fire detector to give us that last minute warning. There will be no fire station to answer our 911 call and no amount of water to put out the flame. We are told, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Pet. 3:10). The element with the highest melting point is Tungsten at 6116° F. It does not boil until over 8500 degrees. It is used principally for the filaments in incandescent lamps and spark plugs. We can conclude that this is the minimal temperature that this great consuming fire will produce. But, there will be no device to measure the data.

However, we can be prepared. There are things we can do now that will save us in that last day. Yes, we will lose

our earthly possessions, except for those treasures layed up in store safely tucked away in that fire-proof strongbox in heaven (Matt. 6:20-22). All necessary instructions have been recorded in a book that is widely distributed among the wise. It has always been the #1 best seller and readily available.

How strange that so many are prepared for a fire that will, by all odds, never come and so few are ready for the "big one" that will most certainly come and without warning today, tomorrow, next week, next year — *do not wait until the fire starts to plan your way of escape!*

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What Does it Mean to “Baptize”?

Tom Hamilton

When we want to know what a certain word means, we have to look at how the word itself is used by the people that speak the language in question. Of course, we could look in a dictionary or lexicon, but these reference works themselves are merely cataloged listings of how the word has actually been used.

Therefore, in regard to a theological word like *baptizo* — “baptize”, we could look in the standard Greek lexicons, which affirm the word means to “dip, plunge, immerse,” but we should also double-check for ourselves by looking at the actual usage of this word in existing Greek literature. This is especially important for theological terms, because there is always the temptation to bend the meaning of a word to support our own peculiar interpretation or theology.

The truth is to be found in how the word was used itself, whether in classical Greek, the Greek of the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT), the Greek literature contemporary with the NT, or the Greek NT itself.

Classical Greek

The literal meaning of *baptizo* is evident from its common usage in classical Greek, long before there was any biblical connection to the word. The word is used, for example of ships sinking: “Attalus observed one of his own pentere (a type of ship) which had been rammed by an enemy ship and was sinking (lit. ‘was being baptized’) . . .” (Polybius, *Histories* 16.6.2; see also 1.51.6). In an ancient medical text, one patient’s labored breathing is described in this way: “. . . *she breathed like a diver* (lit. ‘one who has been baptized’) who has surfaced” (Hippocrates, *Epidemics* 5.63).

This image of burial, especially in water, came to have figurative uses as well. It is often used to describe the greatest degree of drunkenness, the idea being that one is immersed in wine. For example, in an appeal for more moderate drinking as opposed to the previous day’s excesses, one speaker identifies himself as “one of those

who was soaked (lit. ‘baptized’) yesterday” (Plato, *Symposium* 176b). Similarly, Plato also uses the term to describe a youth being overwhelmed in a philosophical argument, “I, knowing the young man to be going under (lit. ‘being baptized’) and wanting to give him some breathing-space . . .” (Plato, *Euthydemus* 277d). We read that the rulers of Egypt enjoyed a sufficient income such that “they do not bury (lit. ‘baptize’) the people with property taxes” (Diodorus Siculus, 1.73). Likewise, Plutarch comments that the Roman emperor Galba was hesitant to declare Otho his successor, because he knew him to be “unrestrained and extravagant and buried (lit. ‘baptized’) under a debt of five million (sesterces)” (Plutarch, *Galba* 21).

Septuagint Greek

In the Greek translation of the Hebrew OT, one finds *baptizo* used in reference to Naaman. This Gentile had leprosy, but was sent word through Elisha’s servant to go and wash in the Jordan River seven times. Although Naaman at first refused to obey these instructions because they were too beneath him, he humbled himself and complied. In accordance with Elisha’s instructions, Naaman “*went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan*” (2 Kings 5:14). The picture is that of a full bath of the entire body repeated seven times.

Other Greek versions of the Old Testament use *baptizo* in Job 9:31 (“plunge me into a pit”), Psalm 9:16 (“the nations have sunk in the pit”), Psalm 69:2 (“I sink in deep mire”), Isaiah 21:4 (“lawlessness overwhelms me”), and Jeremiah 38:22 (“your feet are sunk in the mire”).

Contemporary Greek

In the secular Greek literature written at the same time as the NT, we find several examples which objectively demonstrate the real meaning of *baptizo*. The voluminous writer and Jewish historian Josephus uses the term figuratively to refer to one sinking into a deep sleep, just as we do: “sunken (lit. ‘baptized’) into unconsciousness and a drunken sleep . . .” (Josephus, *Antiquities* 10.169). In reference to the crowds of refugees that flocked to Jerusalem during

the time of the siege by Rome, Josephus says that they “flooded (lit. ‘baptized’) the city” (Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.137). In the *Jewish War* 2.476, Josephus gives a rather graphic account of a certain Simon who took his own life on the battlefield when it became apparent that his cause was lost — “he buried (lit. ‘baptized’) the sword into his own throat.” Finally, we might note Josephus’ account of the drowning of eighteen-year-old Aristobulus upon orders from his father, Herod the Great. In a swimming pool at Jericho, Aristobulus’ “friends” were “weighing him down continuously and keeping him under (lit ‘baptizing’) as if for sport, and they did not let him up to swim until they had completely drowned him” (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.55).

New Testament Greek

In the NT we find that the usage of *baptizo* remains unchanged. It invariably bears the same meaning it did in classical, Septuagint, and contemporary Greek — to dip, plunge, submerge or immerse.

First, we see that its literal meaning is preserved in texts that deal with the ritual washings practiced by the Pharisees. In Luke 11:38 Jesus’ Pharisaic host is shocked that “Jesus was not ceremonially washed (lit. ‘baptized’) before the meal.” In Mark 7:4, Jesus refers to the Pharisees’ traditional practice of “the washing (lit. ‘baptizing’) of cups and pitchers and copper pots.” In both cases, a complete cleansing is envisioned, not the mere sprinkling or pouring of a small amount of water.

In fact, the work of John the Baptist (or “Immerser”) also required more than this small amount of water. We are explicitly told that John was “baptizing in Aenon near Salim because there was much water there” (John 3:23). At the baptism of Jesus by John, we read in Mark 1:9-10 that Jesus went into (*eis*) and came up out of (*ek*) the water. The same point is made in Acts 8:38 with Philip and the Ethiopian. Some want to interpret this merely as being a trip to the waterside or a wading in the water. However, the Greek prepositions “into” and “out of” demand that we understand that the baptized persons actually went into and came out of the midst of the water.

The symbolic usage that Paul makes of the word settles the issue. Not just once, but twice, Paul emphasizes that being baptized is like burying a dead body (Rom. 6:3-6; Col. 2:12). Therefore, just as Christ’s corpse was buried and afterwards resurrected, our old dead bodies of sin are buried in baptism and then raised to “walk in newness of life” (Rom. 6:4). While this affirms that spiritual resurrection takes place *after* the burial (i.e., baptism), and not before, as most people wrongly teach, the primary point for our present study is that baptism is indeed a burial. Just as pouring a small amount of dirt or sprinkling a few grains of soil over a corpse does not qualify as a burial, so also a few drops of water can never properly be considered an

immersion, which is what “baptism” means.

There can be no real doubt or dispute that this is the real meaning and usage of “baptism,” or that the New Testament’s use of this word is intended to require a person to submit themselves to a full bodily immersion in water for the forgiveness of their sins. You can see for yourself from every time period or area of the Greek language, this has always been the usage and meaning for *baptizo*. Anyone who disagrees can very easily prove his point by offering even one example where this is not the case, but the detractors have yet to be able to find even one example out of its hundreds of occurrences.

With all of this abundantly clear and indisputable evidence, one is made to wonder why there is even any controversy at all over the proper form of baptism. What is the theological axe these folks have to grind who wish to reject the plain meaning of the word? Why must people be like Naaman and refuse to simply do what they are told — be immersed?

Current Usage

I would be the last person on earth to try to convince people that the English word “baptize” only meant “immerse.” This is clearly not the case. Baptism is defined as an action in which water is either sprinkled or poured over someone or the person is immersed in it — immersion is merely one option. Likewise, baptism is defined as a Christian sacrament to symbolize purification and initiation into a religious organization. While I cannot dispute these English definitions of the word, I can affirm that neither definition is applicable to the NT, that is, neither one is what the NT is talking about when it uses the word *baptizo*.

It is this difference between the meanings of the English word “baptize” and the Greek word *baptizo* which creates all of the confusion. This confusion can be removed one of two ways.

On the one hand, we could insist that *baptizo* does, in fact, refer to a Christian sacrament administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, and our English word “baptize” is a perfect translation. One well-known lexicon attempts to settle the issue in this manner, defining *baptizo* as “to employ water in a religious ceremony designed to symbolize purification and initiation” (Louw & Nida, §53.41). But you can check the usage of the word itself, as we have done in this article, and objectively and honestly determine whether any passage supports this definition. One cannot help but suspect that this is a prime example of theological bias imposing itself upon the text in an utterly arbitrary and baseless manner.

On the other hand, we could acknowledge honestly that our English word “baptize” was created after the ecclesi-

“Religious” Infidels Are Still at Work

Lewis Willis

The *Akron Beacon Journal* (May 8, 1998, A6) reported that the *Jesus Seminar* has spoken again. Their latest statement might prove to be far more controversial than their previous utterances.

The *Jesus Seminar*, founded in 1985 and based in Santa Rosa, California was originally reported to include 100 scholars who worked on their projects, but the latest infidel pronouncement says that only 75 scholars were involved in their newest hatchet job on God’s Word. You will remember that in 1993, the group issued their conclusion that Jesus said only 20% of the 1500 *statements* attributed to him in the Scriptures. The remainder were supplied by his friends, according to these religious giants.

Now, after five years of analysis, the *Jesus Seminar* has issued its findings on the *actions* attributed to the Lord during his earthly ministry. Not surprisingly, they are of the view that very few of the things Jesus is said to have done in the New Testament actually occurred. To be exact, they say “*of the 176 events cataloged, . . . only 28 actually occurred with any historical probability.*” Among the events ascribed to Jesus which “*did not make the cut*” are: most of his miracles, the historical accuracy of his arrest, trial, and passion, and his resurrection.

The *Jesus Seminar* found no historical basis for Gospel stories such as Jesus walking on the water, his rebuking of the wind which calmed the sea, his multiplying of the loaves and fishes to feed the multitude, and his changing water into wine at the marriage feast in Cana. They assert that the miracle stories “*are forms of propaganda used in those days to advocate or promote a figure*” and they are nothing more than “*storytelling.*”

About the only things this group agreed on in their votes on the various incidents are: Jesus was born during the reign of Herod the Great, his home was Nazareth, his mother’s name was Mary, and his name was Jesus. “*Everything else is fiction,*” according to Robert Funk, former president of the Society for Biblical Literature. There are few accurate historical details, according to these infidels, in the accounts “*that a person named Jesus was executed during the prefecture of Pontius Pilate (A.D. 26 to 36); that Jesus was arrested after some incident at the Temple and that some Jewish officials, probably the high priest and his associates, urged Pilate to execute Jesus; that he was crucified at a place called Golgotha; that he was flogged in accordance with Roman practice; and that his disciples fled when he was arrested.*”

The Seminar further reported that “*the notion that the disciples of Jesus discovered an empty tomb . . . to be*

astical establishment had already adopted several forms of “baptism” which the NT does not mention. When the time came for the first English translations of the Bible to be made, *baptizo* was forbidden to be translated into its true meaning, “immerse,” because this would explicitly condemn and expose the practices of the ecclesiastical establishment. Instead, *baptizo* was transliterated, and it was implied that the theological meaning for “baptism” which had developed over the centuries, was intended by the NT wherever *baptizo* occurred.

It is only because people have been convinced that *baptizo* has this theological meaning that they can say such things like, “Sprinkling is just another, equally acceptable way of baptizing.” If they said, “Sprinkling is just another, equally acceptable way of immersing!” they would see this statement for the silliness it is.

Let us understand honestly and clearly what the NT is talking about when it speaks of “baptism.”

From In Christ, February 1998

unlikely.” Funk reported that “*the empty tomb story was actually created by Mark 40 years or so after Jesus died and probably had nothing to do with the original experience.*” In fact, they believe the story of the end of Christ’s life on earth is “*dangerously anti-Semitic.*”

The Consequences If This Assertion Is True?

There are some serious consequences if the *Jesus Seminar* is to be believed.

1. The most obvious consequence is that the biographers of Jesus — Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John — *were liars!* They told these incidents as *fact!* If they are not true, these men lied about these matters and are totally untrustworthy as witnesses of the life of the Lord (Acts 1:21-22).

2. Since these liars wrote the first five books of the New Testament, *their testimony is tainted, to say the very least.* How can we believe anything they wrote? John also wrote 1, 2, 3 John and the book of Revelation, all of which must now be challenged as valid, if these people are to be believed. That’s a total of nine New Testament books that are in dispute.

3. The apostle Peter, in his Pentecost sermon, preached that Jesus was approved among the Jews by miracles, wonders, and signs (Acts 2:22); that Jesus was delivered by the Jews to the Romans who crucified him (2:23); and that he was raised from the dead and that Peter was an eyewitness of this event (2:32). All of these facts are disputed by the Seminar. Therefore, *Peter cannot be trusted and 1 and 2 Peter must also be questioned as truthful.* Added to the nine New Testament books previously called into question are two more books which are wrong in their most fundamental message. *Eleven (11) books should be removed from the New Testament if these people are to be believed.*

4. Neither can we believe the apostle Paul because he also taught the story “*of the cross*” (1 Cor. 1:18ff), something the Seminar disputes. Not only must we reject Paul’s testimony to the church at Corinth, but how can we believe anything else he might say? He wrote 13 other books of the New Testament, and their truthfulness is also now in question, if the Seminar is to be believed! Let’s see, now, we add these 13 books to the 11 previously cast in doubt — that’s 24 books in the New Testament that cannot be trusted.

5. The writer of Hebrews (probably Paul) also wrote of the signs, wonders, and miracles of the Lord. So *now we add Hebrews to the list of unreliable books*, making a total of 25 of the 27 New Testament books now in dispute.

6. James was a servant of the Christ (1:1); he called him the Lord of glory (2:1); James believed in the devil (2:19, 4:7); and believed in the second coming of Christ (5:8). If James wrote of these false things, *neither can the book*

of James be trusted. That’s 26 of the 27 books of the New Testament which teach error according to the Seminar.

7. That leaves only the little book of Jude to consider. Let’s see now, Jude was also a servant of Jesus Christ (v. 1); he warned about ungodly men who deny the Lord (v. 4) — My, I hope he wasn’t talking about the *Jesus Seminar!* Jude further wrote about ungodly men and their ungodly speeches, their great swelling words, their mockery (vv. 15-18). (Could that also be true of newspaper reports that ungodly men issue?) And Jude believed the words which the apostles spoke about Jesus (v. 17). The author of this book also believed in the very things the *Jesus Seminar* said are not true, so we must question this book also. *That’s 27 of the 27 New Testament books that cannot be trusted!*

Is this possibly what the *Jesus Seminar* is trying to get folks to do? Are they discrediting the New Testament? Are the Scriptures wrong simply because the *Jesus Seminar* does not believe them? Do they perhaps desire to be the voice of religion — setting forth obligations and declaring liberties — in the place of the Gospel? Can we trust them more than the writers of the New Testament?

What’s going on here? This is just another effort to pervert God’s word (Gal. 1:6-9), and it will end with the same result: these heretics and infidels have consigned themselves to the curse of Hell which is appointed for perverters. They simply cannot please God and go to Heaven for they are unbelievers (Mark 16:16; John 8:24; Heb. 11:6). Friends, don’t fall for this unfounded, false testimony of mere men who are on their way to Hell!

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The Constant Battle With Immorality

Andy Alexander

We must not get comfortable in a world of sin. We must be like Lot who was “oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) . . .” (2 Pet. 2:7-8).

The world in which we live, late 20th Century America, is morally deteriorating. Technologically, physically, and economically society seems to be advancing, but spiritually we are declining. Immorality abounds. Deviant behavior and actions that once were rarely mentioned in public, except to condemn, are now openly discussed, joked about, and promoted. Filthy language (cursing, sexually explicit, etc.) is frequently used by both men and women. Satan is working non-stop to encourage all these evils and he especially works to bring these evils into the lives of Christians.

We want to notice various forms of immorality that are present in the world, how Satan works to bring these evil acts into our lives, and what we must do to combat this error.

Various Forms of Immorality

Many forms of immorality are socially acceptable and to oppose them is to be narrow-minded, unloving, or worse yet, an extremist. The term “extremist” is used to prejudice the minds of the general population. It is a term similar to the term “anti” used by liberals in the church to paint those of us who demand Scriptural authority for all practices as hate-mongers and orphan-haters. Let us notice some of these socially acceptable forms of immorality.

Homosexuality is emerging, not only as acceptable, but almost the “in thing” to practice. A recent segment

on *20/20*, an ABC news magazine show, interviewed a number of older women coming out of their marriages claiming they were lesbians and did not realize it till later in life. Hugh Downs and Barbara Walters portrayed them as mixed up, perhaps confused, and sympathized with them in their situations (aired 12-4-97). The television show “*Ellen*” openly defends and promotes the gay/lesbian lifestyle. Men kissing men and women kissing women is now spot-lighted on prime-time television. Among those of us who are older, few would have ever thought such would occur!

The President and Vice-President of our country are very supportive of the homosexual lifestyle. Many public schools in larger cities are catering to the homosexuals. Classes are offered which promote the lifestyle as normal and anyone who would oppose it on moral grounds is generally castigated. An Indiana school recently allowed a poster promoting sympathy and understanding for homosexuals to be displayed in a high school classroom. Regardless of society’s acceptance of it, homosexuality is and always has been wrong. From the beginning God created man and woman for one another (Gen. 2:18-24). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed and homosexuality was one of the sins that led to their destruction (Gen. 19; Jude 7). This sin is also condemned in the New Testament and only those with a dishonest heart would deny that these plain teachings from God’s

Sin has consequences. It is addictive in nature, takes us farther than we want to go, and keeps us longer than we want to stay. When we sow to the flesh we will reap a harvest (Gal. 6:7-8).

word condemns their sexual deviancy (Rom. 1:26-28; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; 1 Tim. 1:8-11). Homosexuality is a present evil and making great inroads into our society.

The sin of adultery is also very prevalent in America today. Those in the world act as if it is no sin at all. They see it as a freedom given to them by the courts of the land. Many divorce and remarry at will, never giving thought to the fact that they are committing the sin of adultery. So prevalent is it that some preachers in the conservative churches of Christ are promoting it by twisting the Scriptures to accommodate those living in it. Other preachers are encouraging this sin by accepting those who teach this error and looking on these false teachers as faithful brothers in Christ while casting out those who oppose and expose the teachers of error. Jesus said in Matthew 19:9, "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery." Divorcing your mate and marrying another is a sin (Rom. 7:2-3). God calls those who do so "adulterers" and "adulteresses" and they are plentiful in our society today.

Another commonplace sin in twentieth century America is the sin of drunkenness. Everywhere we turn in this land there is some refer-

ence to drinking and usually it is placed in a positive context. Commercials, billboards, and television shows picture drinking alcohol as the socially acceptable thing to do. The elite in society enjoy it. The up and coming generation all drink intoxicants and are portrayed by the media as having no trouble with it.

It is taken as a given that people drink intoxicating beverages and when someone turns down a drink he is considered strange or thought of as "the designated driver." Teenagers watch their parent or parents drink, learn from them, then quickly put into practice what they have learned. Some parents are now renting their graduating sons and/or daughters rooms in motels for drinking after special events like homecoming game dances and proms. They claim their children will drink with or without their approval, so they want them to be safely off the streets while they do it. Such illogical thinking pervades much of society today, but it illustrates how far our society is getting from biblical principles that were instilled two or three generations before.

The Bible condemns the recreational drinking of all modern intoxicating beverages (1 Pet. 4:3). The Proverbs warn of the dangers of alcoholic consumption (Prov. 20:1; 23:29-35). Disease, divorce, abuse, death, and misery accompany those who drink, but still there are preachers in the church who will encourage and condone its use by their weak and compromising preaching on the subject.

Immodest dress is commonplace in the world today and especially in the United States. Commercials, television programs, retail stores, ad campaigns, magazines, various types

of uniforms (sports, cheerleading, twirling costumes, swimsuits, etc.) and fashion designers all promote this sin. We are constantly bombarded with immodest and indecent dress. Both males and females are guilty of this sin. However, God's word speaks clearly of the type of dress that Christians are to be seen in, modest, seemingly apparel which befits people professing godliness (1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 5:16).

Abortions performed in mass quantities is another abomination in this land. About half the people of the United States believe that a woman has the right to choose an abortion. Among the other half of Americans is a large group that does not care either way, thus they lend their support to the abortionist. Bible principles condemn the practice of abortion.

Jeremiah says that he was known by God before his birth, while he was still in the womb (Jer. 1:5). David proclaims the Lord knew him before his birth and that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made" (Ps. 139:13-16). Abortion is the murder of an unborn baby and many are hardened to the point of unconcern toward this evil. Why? The reason is likely twofold. One, because it is so prevalent; secondly, they are so far removed from a knowledge of God's word which enlightens us to know that it is a moral evil.

Another common and growing sin in our day is the sin of gambling. This sin comes in many forms. Casino gambling, wagering on horse and dog races, state lotteries, raffles, bingo games, and employees in businesses and offices betting on the outcome of various sport's events are some of the ways that this sin is committed today. The promoters of this sin include schools, governments, denominational churches, and many charitable organizations as well as those in the gambling industry itself.

Principles contained in God's word prove gambling to be sin. It survives off of greed and is nothing more than theft by consent. Just as killing someone in a duel is murder, taking someone's money in a poker game is stealing. Stealing and greed are both wrong and should be abstained from by every Christian (Eph. 4:28; Col. 3:5). Because so many "reputable" organizations use gambling as a source of revenue, it is generally seen as a harmless form of recreation.

One last common sin of our day that we want to notice is dancing. The dance comes in many different types and some appear to be innocent and even healthy. Schools promote dancing at very early ages and culminate with the Jr./Sr. Prom in the spring of the year. There are sweetheart dances, homecoming dances, and birthday parties where dancing is practiced. Satan begins breaking many people down at very young ages to accept this evil. Parents encourage their children not to be shy, but get out on the dance floor as if the dance is something that is good for bringing young people out of their shell. Dancing is a lascivious act and is condemned as a work of the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).

Satan's Tactics To Promote Immorality

We have noticed various forms of immorality that are frequently practiced in the world. Homosexuality, drunkenness, immodesty, dancing, gambling, abortion, and adultery are not only practiced by many people, but also most of these sinful acts are looked upon as normal and healthy for all ages and both sexes. These sins are also accepted by many people who claim to Bible-believing Christians.

How does Satan work to bring these sins into our lives? His primary tool is the lie (John 8:44). He deceives us in various ways and uses those close to us to aid him in his battle.

One of his methods of destruction is familiarity. Why did we spend so much time looking at these various sins? Because they are so common. Since this is so, there is the danger that we can reach the point where we are not upset or disturbed by any or all of these perverse acts. Seeing these sins from day to day, we can become accustomed to them or become comfortable around them. They can then more easily worm their way into our lives or the lives of our loved ones and souls will be lost. This is one of the hideous schemes of Satan. Familiarity causes relaxation. Our guard drops and we fall into Satan's trap.

We must fight back. We must not get comfortable in a world of sin. We must be like Lot who was "oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds) . . ." (2 Pet. 2:7-8). Preachers, elders and Bible class teachers must teach the truth on these evils and do whatever

possible to keep Christians from relaxing in this sin-filled environment.

Satan will also use our family, friends, and loved ones to soften our attitude toward worldliness. Sometimes children or grandchildren become involved in one or more of these sins and attitudes that once stood firm begin to weaken. Satan is making headway among God's people especially in the sins of dancing and immodest dress through this avenue. We must not let the world become our standard. The modern dance is a lascivious act whether performed by one of my family members or not. Compromise in this area will not help bring them out of this sin, but rather, will encourage them to continue in it.

Immodesty is wrong no matter whose friends or loved ones participate in it. The fact that sports are involved does not change this sin, it only makes it more public and more damaging to the cause of Christ. Teachers of God's word must not fail to send a clear signal so all may be warned and souls may be saved. We must use principles and examples contained in both the Old and New Testaments to establish what is modest and immodest, then urge all members of God's family to abide in the teaching and to discipline those who refuse to adhere to the divine standard (Gen. 3:21; Exod. 28:42; Isa. 47:2-3; 1 Tim. 2:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:1-6; Gal. 5:19-21; Matt. 5:13-16; Luke 17:1-2).

Another tactic used by Satan is time. He leads us to believe that we have plenty of time; therefore, if we choose to engage in some particular sin, we will have time to repent. In fact, some people commit sin with full knowledge of what they are doing, but intend to participate for only a little while, then they will repent and leave it alone. Satan deceives them into thinking that what they are doing is not all that harmful and that they will be able to participate for a little while, then quit. Consequences and influence are forgotten.

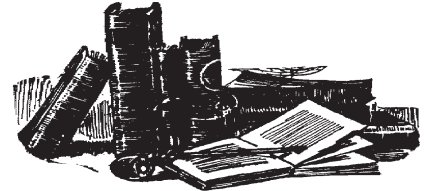
King David could have had this attitude when he committed adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11). However, sin has consequences. It is addictive in nature, takes us farther than we want to go, and keeps us longer than we want to stay. When we sow to the flesh we will reap a harvest (Gal. 6:7-8). One fact about sowing and reaping is that we reap more than we sow, and another is that the fruit is not fully realized until some time in the future. When parents allow their children to sow wild oats, they seldom think about the fruit that those wild oats will produce. Often the fruit is drunkenness, fornication, unwanted pregnancy, death due to drug overdose, and in the end — a lost soul.

Categorizing sin is another maneuver used by Satan. He deceives us into thinking that the sins we or our loved ones commit are trivial. We tend to categorize sins much like the Catholics. Those viewed as less harmful are tolerated

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while more harmful ones are condemned. Of course, the sin that we are committing is a "trivial" sin and we truly do not like to refer to it as sin. Watching filthy movies or television shows is acceptable, but if a brother goes to a strip bar or nude club, then he is a vile reprobate. What is really worse, watching someone strip on a screen or on a stage? We must recognize sin for what it is and seek to destroy its influence in our lives and the lives of those around us (Rom. 12:1-2).

Conclusion

Local churches of Christ should not tolerate these sins. These sins ought to be exposed as sin and the brethren warned about their destructive nature. Those who refuse to heed the warnings and rebukes of faithful Christians should

be disciplined for their own good and the good of the congregation (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6-14). Preachers must cease not to warn. We must "preach the word" and be faithful in our work as ministers of Christ (2 Tim. 4:2-5).

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Thinking About the Family (2)

Greg Litmer

Over the years there have been many occasions when I have been asked to talk to different married couples who were experiencing problems in their marriages. On many other occasions my input was not sought or wanted, yet I could stand on the side lines and watch as another family disintegrated. Even those who are Christians are not immune to these kinds of problems and it seems to be happening more and more all the time. Very few congregations of any size and that have existed for very long have escaped the heartache that comes from watching a beloved married brother and sister decide to go their separate ways in violation of God's word. Very few congregations have escaped the pain of watching a family that is loved by all degenerate into unhappiness, bitterness, and disharmony. These kinds of things take place rather frequently. Sometimes you can see it happening. Other times there is no obvious indication that something is wrong until it is too late to help.

What kind of problems seem to come up most often? I would have to agree with most experts (and I do not put myself in their company; I simply have the benefit of being able to read what they say) that the number one problem in marriages is money. Sometimes problems arise that have to do with the intimate side of marriage. At other times moral issues come up, when one or the other desires to engage in activities that are sinful. There are problems with the children and how they are to be raised. Sometimes couples just don't talk to each other and when they do talk, it is not about things that really matter. There are a host of different problems that can and do come up.

It has been my experience that in each and every situation that has led to an unhappy marriage, or even to the dissolving of a family, there has been a failure to abide by



Ephesians 5:21 where Paul wrote, "Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." The word translated as "submitting" (*hupotassomenoi*) has an interesting etymology. Originally it was military in meaning, describing the coming together of troops for battle under a commanding officer. Each individual soldier was to understand and stay in his proper place in the formation as instructed by his superior. Eventually the word came to mean subordination in any relationship under discussion. If a person was "submitting," he was placing himself under the influence of authority and that could be a person or a position, as far as obedience was concerned. There was the subjection of

one's will to that of another. This could be either voluntary or involuntary. If I were to be captured by an enemy and forced into a life of slavery, there would be submission, but it would not have been entered into voluntarily. But when we talk about the kind of submission required by the gospel of Christ, we are talking about submission entered into by choice. I voluntarily submit myself to Christ. I voluntarily submit myself to the oversight

of the elders of the congregation of which I am a member. Indeed, I voluntarily submit myself to my brothers and sisters in Christ.

There is another aspect of *hupotassomenoi* that needs to be considered. In some instances, and context would make this determination, it goes beyond authority and involves the "motive" behind the submitting. It involves as unselfish concern for the desires and the wishes of another, even when that other person has no real authority over you. It is the antithesis of selfishness. Paul, in Ephesians 5:21, was instructing the brethren to voluntarily "submit" to one another, meaning to always take the needs and feelings of others into consideration even more than ourselves. He was

telling them and us not to be selfish, not to always demand our own will and our own way. That kind of attitude was necessary one to another in the body of Christ; can we not see how important it is in the family relationship at home? In fact, Paul goes on in Ephesians 5, and shows how it works in the home. In verses 22-25, we find, “Wives, submit yourselves unto you own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church and gave himself for it.” In verse 28 we read, “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.”

Whenever there is a failure to “submit” one to another in the home, problems will arise, and this lack of submission is selfishness. Yes, money often creates major problems in a marriage, but how? Several different scenarios related to this have been played out in families over the years. Sometimes there is a wife who is not satisfied with what the husband is able to provide monetarily and she becomes bitter. Sometimes there is a husband who will not work to provide for his family. Sometimes both of them work and live way beyond their means or their needs, hence there is constant pressure to make more money. If one of them gets sick or loses his job, then they are in deep financial trouble. You don’t have to look too hard to see that selfishness plays a role in each of these situations.

I have been aware of times when, through no fault of their own, families have gotten into significant money problems. There may have been an accident, sickness, a layoff, or some other unfortunate occurrence. Even as the situation became very difficult, it did not create problems between the husband and the wife because each one was more concerned about the feelings and needs of the other. They were submitting one to another. So instead of fussing and fighting, they pulled together to confront their difficulties.

On occasion, problems will arise in a marriage that have to do with the intimate side of the relationship. If there is no physical cause creating the difficulty, then it seems that most often it is possible to trace the disturbance back to a failure to embrace and abide by Ephesians 5:21, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.”

In 1 Corinthians 7:1-5, some very basic principles dealing with this side of marriage are set forth. Paul wrote,

Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband

render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto her husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinence.

There have been instances where the intimate side of marriage has been used as a weapon. What I mean by this is that one or the other will defraud the mate, depriving him of his God-given right, until the other one gets his own way about some matter. Surely we can all see that such behavior is as ungodly as can be and in direct violation of the principle of Ephesians 5:21, and many others.

I have had people tell me over the years that they no longer find their mate physically attractive or appealing. Sometimes the mate, thinking only of himself, has allowed his physical appearance to deteriorate, no longer even trying to make himself particularly clean, much less attractive to his spouse. Sometimes it is just that the complainer thinks the grass is going to be greener on the other side. They don’t stop to think that maybe the stretch marks came from the bearing of children or that little bit of a belly, no matter how hard you try to hold it in, is just nature’s way of saying you are getting older. Instead of thinking of what a joy it is to go through all of those stages of life together, they think only of the physical things which are not what true love is all about anyway. So often this kind of complaint and problem has its birth in just plain selfishness and a failure to understand Ephesians 5:21.

How many marriages of brethren over the years have been torn asunder by adultery? More than I care to think about. When all of the rationalization has been done and all of the excuses have been given, 99.99% of the time it boils down to selfishness. How can there possibly be unselfish concern for the desires and the wishes of the spouse when adultery is committed? How can the one guilty of such a thing be considering the feelings and the needs of his mate? This is all part and parcel of “submitting one to another,” and the Holy Spirit through Paul used marriage to illustrate how it is supposed to work in Ephesians 5.

I have known of marriages among brethren destroyed because of moral issues. One or the other decides he wants to engage in some activity that is contrary to God’s word. It might be drinking, or gambling, or pornography, or any one of a number of other things that Christians should stay as far away from as possible. When the one spouse refuses to violate God’s law to placate the selfish and unholy desire of the other, trouble comes. But who causes the trouble? Is it the one who refuses to sin or the one who demands his own way, even to the extent of trying to lead his spouse into sin with him? These kinds of things are the result of a

Fleshly Relatives: Delight or Dilemma?

P.J. Casebolt

Both the Bible and society recognize the advantages, privileges, and responsibilities of fleshly relationships. These relationships can be the cause of much delight, or they can put us in a dilemma from which we cannot, or will not, extricate ourselves.

“But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Tim. 5:8). Husbands, wives, parents, and children enjoy a relationship that is as old as the human race, and a source of delight which cannot be duplicated by any other means. By virtue of this relationship, we even obtain an extended family which comes under the heading of “in-laws.” While these in-laws can also provide their share of dilemmas, we automatically extend and receive blessings which can be realized in no other way.

By virtue of inheriting privileges which belong to fleshly relatives, we also inherit responsibilities which are primarily ours. It may have been that because of this relationship, Barnabas entertained a responsibility to (John) Mark which the apostle Paul did not have (Acts 15:37-39;

Col. 4:10). It is sometimes easier to say what we would do concerning someone else’s relatives than what we would do if they were of our own household.

When we are faced with a dilemma that arises because of a fleshly relationship, we may have to look to our spiritual relationship with the Lord in order to resolve such a dilemma. Under the law of Moses, when a relative put you in a position where you were tempted to deny the Lord, you had the unpleasant but plain responsibility to side with the Lord (Deut. 13:6-11). And other households in Israel were to “hear and fear” and allow “no more any such wickedness . . . among you” (v. 11).

In my own personal experience, I am noticing a trend which seems to be developing into a pattern of alarming proportions. An isolated case may not imply a trend, but when several such instances arise in different congregations within a short period of time, it is time for alarm. And the Lord is concerned over even one instance when it concerns the welfare of his children (Luke 15:4-10).

Digression among the Lord’s people has always alien-

failure to apply Ephesians 5:21.

Problems with the discipline of the children? Why is it that some couples refuse to sit down and talk out their differences about how certain parental responsibilities should be handled? Could it be that one or the other is determined that it will be his way or no way? I understand that the man is the head of the family, yet at the same time I recognize that Ephesians 5:21, “Submitting yourselves one to another” also applies to his relationship with his wife: and not just hers to him. The woman was created as a help “meet” for man. That means complementary

and compatible in every way. If her opinion isn’t worth anything, than neither is the man’s. When there is genuine submission, real concern for the desires and the wishes of the spouse, these kinds of problems won’t prove to be problems for very long.

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ated not only brethren, but also fleshly relatives. It was so among the Israelites, it was so in the first and 19th centuries, and it has been so in the 20th century. But as a rule, families were divided because of their personal convictions with respect to those issues which divided brethren and churches. Now, I see families being united, but united in doctrinal error due to fleshly relationships. Some can discern truth from error, and in the past have taken their stand for truth, but now they are taking a position which is influenced by their fleshly relatives and not by truth.

In the majority of these cases, I am noticing that it is the children who are having an adverse effect upon their parents, instead of the other way around. Traditionally, whether by human tradition (Matt. 15:3), or by divine tradition (Deut. 6:7), the parents and grandparents have exercised influence upon children and grandchildren, not vice versa.

I can sympathize with relatives who face the dilemma of seeing other relatives identified with false doctrine and practice, and who are forced to decide between their loyalty to the Lord and loyalty to fleshly relationships. And any relative who puts another relative in the position of having to deny the Lord in order to please man is not a relative who loves either his Lord or his own relatives as he should. Paul said that charity "seeketh not her own . . . but rejoiceth in the truth" (1 Cor. 13:5, 6). If we claim to love God, then we prove that love by keeping his commandments (John 14:15, 23). If we love our fleshly relatives, our brethren, or our neighbors, we will do what is best for their souls, not that which is convenient or popular.

Are we the only ones who ever faced the dilemma of having to decide between our love for the Lord and our love for relatives? Certainly not, and neither should we think that the Lord will make an exception in our case.

David's own son, Absalom, "stole the hearts of the men of Israel" and usurped his father's throne (2 Sam. 15:6ff). David mourned for Absalom to the extent that Joab had to

rebuke the king because he was showing more concern for his son than he was for those who had remained faithful to David (2 Sam. 19). When our relatives put us in such a dilemma, the best way out is to side with the Lord and those who are on the Lord's side (Exod. 32:26-29).

The apostle Paul loved his kinsmen in the flesh so much that he would have sacrificed himself on their behalf (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1-3), but he gave up his fleshly relationship with all (Phil. 3:7, 8) of its benefits in order to win Christ (Gal. 2:10-14). And Jesus himself taught that if we deny him in favor of any fleshly relative, that he will deny us before the Father (Matt. 10:32-39). In any such dilemma, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

Not only can I sympathize with those who face a difficult decision with respect to fleshly relatives, but at least in this one area, "I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus" (Gal. 6:17), figuratively speaking. So, allow me to offer some advice which may help others to resolve their dilemma.

"Rebuke not an elder, but entreat him as a father; and the younger men as brethren; the elder women as mothers; the younger as sisters, with all purity" (1 Tim. 5:1, 2). Paul referred to both Timothy and Titus as his sons "in the faith" (1 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4).

I come from a large family, and it is a wonderful thing to see peace, unity, and love in either a fleshly family or in the Lord's family (Ps. 133:1). And when possible, our spiritual relationship in Christ enhances even a delightful fleshly relationship. But if we have never known, or must forego the delights of a fleshly relationship, we can have multiplied numbers of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters in the family of God in this life and eternally in that life which is to come. But the rich man did not want his own fleshly brethren to follow him into torment (Luke 16:28), and fleshly relationships will not hinder our status in the resurrection (Matt. 22:30).

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Kenneth R. Hoyle: My Friend

1927 - 1998

Truman Smith

If my memory serves me right, it was in 1957, while I was preaching for the Lacey Lakeview Church of Christ in Waco, Texas that I first met Kenneth and Sammie Hoyle. While Kenneth had been preaching full time for some five years prior to that time, he and Sammie had moved to Waco where he had gone into secular work and was preaching part time. Though I do not recall the exact time or place of our first meeting, I am almost certain that it was at a gospel meeting somewhere in the Greater Waco area, for wherever there was a gospel meeting in progress, if it was at all within driving range, Kenneth and Sammie were in attendance. As a matter of fact, they would often drive many, many miles to hear the gospel proclaimed in such efforts. As many of you know, those were the years before institutionalism and related issues had brought about the major division among the churches of Christ. His first full-time work with a non-institutional congregation began in Borger, Texas in 1960. They always remembered with much fondness the pleasant years spent in their work at Borger. Kenneth was a Texas preacher. He also did local work with such churches as La Porte, Nacogdoches, Rosenberg, Texas City, and West Orange. However, in 1991 they left their native state of Texas and moved to Louisiana to help in the establishment of a faithful church in the city of Lake Charles. They started meeting in the Kinder Care Learning Center, where they met for nine months before finding the present meeting place, 3919 Auburn Street, a facility belonging to a denomination. They were able to purchase that place in May 1993. Sammie said that this work was Kenneth's "joy and crown." She said, "He was never, never happier, for unity and love abounded and it was all based on 'a thus saith the Lord.'"

However, it was while engaged in the work in Lake Charles, Louisiana that he developed a very strange type of pneumonia, and though they were able to bring the pneumonia under control, it had weakened his body to the point that he became unable to recover from the damage it had done. He struggled for forty days in the Intensive Care Unit of St. Elizabeth Hospital in Beaumont, Texas. His

faithful wife, Sammie, was ever by his side. Finally, when he had used up all of his strength to fight any longer, on February 25, 1998, his immortal spirit slipped away from his body and went back to God from whence it had come more than seventy years ago.

Kenneth was born on September 12, 1927 near Abbott, Texas. He and Sammie met in Hillsboro, Texas and were married there on June 1, 1947. They celebrated their Golden Wedding Anniversary last year. Two adopted children, Jan and Lynn, preceded Kenneth in death. After waiting many years from the time they were married, two lovely daughters, Karen and Mary, were born to them. Now they have six grandchildren and two very fine sons-in-law, David Kibodeaux and Norman Harrison.

Kenneth Hoyle was my friend. I cherish the memories of the many precious moments we spent together discussing Scripture, worshiping and working together for the cause of Christ. We both served on lectureships and gospel meetings in places where we were each located through the years. We spent many happy hours together, visiting and conversing socially along with our wives. He was a joy to be with and a true fellowlabourer in gospel work. I never knew a more dedicated soldier of the cross. His wife, Sammie, was a faithful companion. I do not remember ever seeing Kenneth at a gospel meeting without Sammie by his side. And they *worked together* in the Lord's work. Upon learning of his passing, I had difficulty controlling my emotions, for I knew how we would miss him. And, I knew that the ravages of ill health had brought to an end the life of a good man and the work of a fine preacher of the gospel at a time when the likes of him are sorely needed.

There were six speakers at his funeral service which was conducted on February 27: Norman Harrison, Tim Paschall, Tony Noll, Carl Vernon, Hayes Reneau and Larry Ray Hafley. David Kibodeaux led congregational singing. A grave side service was held for him in Hillsboro, Texas on Feb-

Gambling Versus Love of God and Man

Ron Halbrook



Though gambling has become socially acceptable and legal, it is not right according to what God teaches us in the Bible. God teaches us to love him with all the heart, mind, and soul, and to love our fellowman as we love ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40). Everything else God teaches us depends on these two principles (v. 40).

“Love” in this sense comes from a Greek term, *agape*, referring to the highest kind of love: a love based on principles of truth and right, and a love seeking the best interests of its object rather than mere self-gratification.

Since love of God and of fellowman must be the motives for all our conduct, how do these two principles relate to gambling? God teaches us that we may receive gain in ways which demonstrate love to all parties to any transaction. We may receive gain in the following ways: (1) the process of labor (Eph. 4:28), (2) exchange of goods and

services (Matt. 13:45-46), (3) gifts (Matt. 6:1-4). Each of these methods of receiving gain is honest, showing respect for principles of truth and right and for the welfare of all parties involved.

Gambling is a wager on some chance event, with the result that the “winner” takes gain from others without respect for principles of truth and right and without seeking the welfare of all parties involved. Therefore, gambling is a means of taking dishonest gain. The fact that the other participants agreed to take part does not mitigate the dishonesty involved, any more than “kickbacks” in a business deal are mitigated from dishonesty by the agreement of the parties involved. Gambling is an exercise in covetousness, seeking mere self-gratification without regard for truth and right or the best interests of everyone involved.

Gambling is sinful, an offense against God and a curse to our fellowman. Because all of us have sinned from time to time, whether through gambling or other deeds, God sent his Son into the world to die for our sins (Rom. 3:23; John 3:16). The death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Cal-

ruary 28 with Billy Dollar, a long time friend, conducting the service. It was there that his frail body was laid to rest. Yes, we will miss our friend, but we “sorrow not, even as others which have no hope” (1 Thess. 4:13). And, “Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Rev. 14:13).

Just here I wish to make a sincere plea to our vast brotherhood. Through all of those years, Kenneth and Sammie Hoyle gave their lives to the work of spreading the gospel. And, like so many, they just trusted the Lord for their future. The only income Sammie has is a Social Security check she is to receive each month, which is not very much. But

with the help of her two wonderful sons-in-law, she will not go hungry. However, she hopes to raise enough money to build a small, modest home on a daughter’s place. If there is anyone reading this who happens to have a little money to spare, you may send it to Mrs. Kenneth R. Hoyle, 4310 Dean, Lake Charles, LA 70605. Sammie will very much appreciate just whatever amount you might be able to send. If you are unable to send any funds, but would just like to write her a cheerful note, please do so. And let us all remember her and her good family in our prayers.

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vary demonstrates both the justice and the mercy of God: Sin was punished (justice), but punished in a way which extends forgiveness to sinners (mercy). Thus, God proves himself to be “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:26). Since God does not force anyone to receive this gift of his grace, we may choose to receive it or to reject it. We receive it by faith in Christ when we repent of our sins (a change of heart resolving to turn away from sin), confess our faith in Christ as God’s Son, and submit to immersion in water (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:38; 8:35-38; 22:16; Rom. 10:8-10; 6:3-4).

As a fellow-traveler from time to eternity, I urge you to turn away from gambling and to do everything in your power to convince others to turn away from it. Such a course is based on our love for God and our fellowman because we recognize that gambling is a curse to the human heart, to the home, to the church, and to the nation. Our lawmakers act contrary to the love of God and fellowman by legalizing gambling. Churches debase God’s standard of morality by promoting it. All who participate in it act to the detriment of themselves and others.

There are no winners in gambling, whether it be in casinos, at the races, in bingo parlors, or in lotteries and raffles. No such activities meet the tests of true love for God and our fellowman.

(Note: The computer service I use allows unsolicited advertisements to be sent out in the e-mail boxes of its subscribers. I recently received such an ad offering information on “How to be a Winner” at gambling. The e-mail addresses of others in the group who received this ad were listed at the top of the message. I responded by sending the basic message in the above article to the sender of the ad and to the other addresses listed. I have received both positive and negative responses to my message, but this is another way to scatter the precious seed of God’s Word.)

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**The A.D. 70 Theory —
A Review of the Max King
Doctrine**

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“Nation” continued from front page

If either a nation or a church is going to be exalted, if they are going to be great, their individual members must be pure, holy, and righteous. Neither the nation nor the church can be exalted if you and I are not righteous before God. That is a sobering thought. One thing is for sure — if we want a great nation, and if we want to be part of a good church, we know where to start.

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“Fellowship” continued from page 2

to extend fellowship to those in denominations:

1. *One must believe that one can be saved without water baptism.* One cannot speak of “Christian fellowship” with those in the denominations unless he believes that they are Christians. The New Testament teaches that one becomes a Christian when he obeys the gospel. The obedience of faith includes repentance of one’s sins and immersion in water for the remission of one’s sins. Most groups will admit that one must repent of his sins in order to be saved (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 2 Pet. 3:9), but most Protestant denominations reject the idea that water baptism is essential to salvation. The Scriptures describe the purpose of water baptism in the following words:

He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:16).

Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Acts 2:38).

And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 22:16).

The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

When one is baptized, his spiritual state changes. He ceases being an alien from the commonwealth of Israel and becomes a fellow-citizen with the saints in the kingdom of God; he ceases being outside of Christ and without hope to being in Christ with the one blessed hope; he changes from a sinner to a saint, an unbeliever to a believer, one who rejects Christ to a disciple of Christ.

Inasmuch as the denominations teach that one can be saved without being baptized, they have not taught men how to become Christians. The denominational plan of

salvation through faith only is contrary to divine revelation (Jas. 2:24). Those who call for Christian fellowship with those who teach salvation by “faith only” must give up their belief that one must be baptized in water in order to have the forgiveness of his sin, to enter the kingdom of God, and to be in Christ.

2. *One must believe that one's salvation is not effected by the worship that he offers.* The Lord has always revealed how he wishes to be worshiped. If there were no Bible pattern for worship, the sin of idolatry could not exist (Gal. 5:20). The fact is that God has revealed in both the Old and New Testaments that only that worship which is offered according to the revealed pattern is pleasing to him.

God rejected the worship of Cain because it was not offered “by faith” (Gen. 4; Heb. 11:4). He rejected the worship of Nadab and Abihu because they brought “strange fire” which God had not commanded (Lev. 10:1-2). The worship of Saul was rejected because it was not offered by God's designated priests (1 Sam. 15). The worship that Jeroboam I set up in Bethel and Dan was a sin (1 Kings 12:25-32). Jesus taught that true worship must be offered to the Father in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24).

The divine pattern for worship includes these five items: (a) the weekly observance of the Lord's supper (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 11:17-34); (b) Prayer (1 Cor. 14:15; Acts 2:42); (c) Congregation singing (1 Cor. 14:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16); (d) A contribution taken on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2); (e) The preaching of apostolic doctrine (Acts 2:42; 20:7).

The denominations have departed from the worship revealed in the New Testament in a variety of ways. Rather than having congregational singing, they use choirs and other professional (or semi-professional) singing groups that entertain the assembly (accompanied by clapping to show their approval of the entertainment). The singing is accompanied by mechanical instruments of music and instrumental solos. The Lord's supper is not observed on the first day of every week, but once a month, once every six months, or once a year, sometimes in conjunction with a special foot washing service. Prayer may be offered in the name of Mary (as in Roman Catholicism). Contributions are taken at every service without regard to which day of the week it is and usually several contributions per service. The preaching that is done is usually woefully thin in Scripture, consisting more of heart warming stories and anecdotes. In addition to the changes in revealed worship, most churches will also allow theatrical performances, speeches by prominent political figures on political issues (such as Jesse Jackson speaking in Black Baptist Churches), and many such like things.

However, if one is going to extend fellowship to the

denominations, he must accept that these departures from revealed worship do not endanger the souls of men or break fellowship with the saints.

3. *Teaching the doctrines of men does not affect one's salvation.* The early apostles were absolutely charged with preaching the gospel of Christ, without addition or omission. The early apostles were to teach what “I (Jesus) have commanded you” (Matt. 28:20). They were to teach “apostolic doctrine” (Acts 2:42). They were charged not to teach any other doctrine (1 Tim. 1:3). Timothy was charged to give attention to his doctrine in order to save himself and those that hear him (1 Tim. 4:16). Peter commanded that one speak as the oracles of Christ (1 Pet. 4:11). John told men not to transgress the doctrine of Christ and warned those who did that they did not have fellowship with God (2 John 9-11). Jesus warned of the danger of teaching for one's doctrine the commandments of men saying,

This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. . . . But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch (Matt. 15:8-9, 13-14).

Many such like Scriptures can be offered in support of the same truth. Those who depart from revealed revelation are guilty of sin and in danger of eternal damnation.

To have an on-going fellowship with the denominations of men, one must reject this concept. He must be willing to accept that water baptism is not essential for salvation, can be administered by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion, and can be administered to unbelieving infants. He must tolerate the doctrine that says God predestined some to eternal life and others to eternal damnation without regard to anything foreseen in what man does. He must tolerate the Catholic doctrine about the Virgin Mary. He must not draw lines of fellowship over the doctrine of babies inheriting the guilt and sinful nature of Adam. He must tolerate those who deny the inspiration of the Bible, the virgin birth, and the resurrection of Jesus, for Protestant churches contain those holding these various positions.

Conclusion

To fellowship those in Protestant and Catholic denominations, one must give up his belief in what the Bible teaches. He must give his belief that water baptism is essential for salvation, that there is a pattern of New Testament worship, and that it makes a difference what one believes and practices. One cannot maintain purity of faith and extend the hands of fellowship to those who deny the faith once for all delivered to the saints.

6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

Preachers Available

David F. Sims, 114 Double Horn, Stephenville, TX (254-968-5089): I am looking for work in Texas, but will consider moving out of state as well. I have attended Florida College and Tarleton State University. I have been preaching for a small group in the local town of Hamilton since January '97, but I am ready to move. I have also worked with other area churches. I am 21 and not married. I am willing to take a part-time job to supplement my income if the church is unable to provide sufficient support. I am willing to work with any group no matter how small, provided they are willing to work and grow. If your church simply needs an assistant evangelist or a temporary preacher, I am willing to fill that role. I am zealous and eager to spread the Gospel! References available upon request. Please contact me via email at david_oz@cheerful.com or call me at (254) 968-5089 or (254) 865-6965.

J.D. Hammonds, 206 York, Lot #34, Middlebury, IN (219-825-7756): I have been training under the direction of the Caroline St. Church of Christ in South Bend, IN, for the past year and half and am now ready to begin working with a congregation of the Lord's people as an evangelist. My desire is to find a congregation to work with this summer. If your willing to give me a chance, I'll do my best to edify the church and build it up regardless of the size. Also, if it be the Lord's will that I come to work with you, my financial support can be worked out. I am in my upper 30's with two teenage daughters. Give me a call.

Field Reports



William C. ("Bill") Sexton, 802 Adeline Lane, Van Buren, AR 72956-3530: I have resigned the work at Van Buren, effective June 1, 1998 if they find a man by that time. Otherwise I'll stay till they find another man to move or until September 1, 1998 — whichever occurs first.

However, we will probably stay in the area and I'll do "fill in" preaching — wherever I might be needed in driving distance of Van Buren (the Fort Smith area). I'll be available to fill in with these limits — East to Little Rock, West to Oklahoma City, North to Joplin, and south to Texarkana. If I can be

of help in this way, please contact me (501) 474-2617, or send letter to above address or to the E-mail you'll find at the end. Also, I'll be available to hold some meeting if needed. Should you need a meeting, I'll be able to come if you can pay my gas bill to and from and provide Lois and me a place to stay while there.

If I can be of help in this way, you can contact me by writing to the above address, or calling (501) 474-2617 or by E-mail: wmessenger@Juno.com or wsexton@IPA.net. I do not intend to stop preaching and serving in whatever capacity I'm able, for as long as the Lord allows me to serve and there is an opportunity!

Preachers Needed

Van Buren, Arkansas: After four years, brother Bill Sexton has resigned from his full time duty as evangelist for the local work in Van Buren. He has been effective in the work here in keeping the peace, and in preaching and teaching the gospel. His insistence in upholding Scripture at all costs is well known, while his demeanor and sense of fairness are tributes to his kind nature and genuine love for his fellow man. He will continue until June, and has no immediate plans to leave the area, but will preach in the area as opportunities arise.

The Van Buren church is Crawford County's only conservative church. The church currently has about 50 in attendance for most Sunday services with most of the congregation younger to middle aged. Located on the Arkansas-Oklahoma line off of I-40, and just across the river from neighboring Fort Smith (population — 80,000), the Van Buren community has a population of about 16,000. The area is enjoying a growth spurt at this time and is fortunate to have a low unemployment rate. There are two sound congregations in Fort Smith and one in nearby Greenwood.

The church had its beginning in October 1988 and moved into a new building in 1994. We are currently providing all of brother Sexton's support and are fortunate to own the building. Not long after moving into the new building, elders were appointed and Bill Sexton and Louis Brown served until the passing of sister Brown. We are now in a business meeting arrangement, however, we are hopeful of appointing elders in the near future.

If interested please contact Louis Brown, P.O. Box 717, Alma, AR 72921, 501-632-4413 or Ross Fink, 6902 N. Lakewood Dr., Van Buren, AR 72956, 501-471-5563, Email: RFink611aol.com.

Hardinsburg, Kentucky: A gospel preacher is desperately needed in Hardinsburg. This congregation is about 30 years old. Due to deaths, brethren moving to new locations, unfaithfulness on the part of some people, and a friendly separation on the part of some members who lived some distance away, the membership has diminished to six people.

The congregation has a very nice brick meeting house which seats about 130. Hardinsburg is a city of 5000 people. The prospects for growth are very good. This is the only church of Christ in Hardinsburg, with the closest congregation being 15 miles away.

This would be an ideal situation for a preacher and his wife who are on social security, or a young married couple. If interested, contact John S. Tyler, 2600 El Patio Pl., Apt. 302, Louisville, KY 40220, 502-459-5906 (after 8:30 p.m.), or 502-458-0636 (daytime).

Greenville, Mississippi: The church meeting in Greenville is looking for a preacher to work with them beginning July 1998. They can offer partial support of \$1100 per month being a small group of 21. Greenville is a city of 45,000 located on the Mississippi River about half-way between Memphis, Tennessee and Vicksburg, Mississippi. If interested, please contact John Baxter at 601-335-7791 (day) or 601-335-8066 (night), or Harold Hurst at 601-686-4589.



New Church Building in Houston, Texas

With thanksgiving to God and sacrifices of loyal members, a new church house has been erected in a growing part of the city. Their new location is East Belt church of Christ, 5610 East Belt Way 8, Houston, TX 77015.

After thirty-one years, the Greens Bayou church, 1020 Maxey Road, sold their facility, because commercial enterprises changed the area, and the neighborhood moved away. A few years back, the foresight of the elders, Gene Fain, Ira Britton, and Gary Wodtly, recognized the problem and decided the congregation must relocate to insure a place in the future. Last year the last payment on the two acres was made, and prayerfully the members decided it was time to sacrifice monetarily to help the coming generations hear the pure gospel, and completed the house for worship on the new loop. It is an area where houses and schools are being constructed, where the church will grow and produce fruit.

When in East Houston, worship with us. If you know someone that we could visit and help in their spiritual quest, write or call. The building is located two miles north of I-10 on east Beltway 8 (Sam Houston Parkway). Take the Woodforest exit and proceed one mile north to the building. The office number is (281) 862-0022. The evangelist, Jerral Kay (281) 454-6266. Sunday Bible Study — 9:30 a.m., Worship — 10:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m., Wednesday Bible classes — 7:30 p.m. **Jerral Kay.**

New Building for Church in Missouri City, Texas

In 1989, a number of Christians living in Sugar Land and Missouri City, southwestern suburbs of Houston, Texas, saw the need for a conservative church in this rapidly growing area, and considered the possibility of beginning such a work. They began planning and preparing toward that end, and some brethren in southwestern parts of Houston joined them in their efforts. On July 15, 1990, with the blessings and good wishes of the churches they were leaving (Bellaire and Rosenberg), they began meeting for worship in rented spaces in a shopping center in Stafford, Texas. The church was known as the Sugar Creek Church of Christ. I have been working with the church here as an evangelist since August 1991 and have enjoyed my association with these good brethren.

The Lord blessed us with modest growth, and in 1996 we began planning a building project, in order for the church to have its own facility for worship and Bible study. We purchased a piece of property located on a major thoroughfare in Missouri City not far from our previous location. We purchased a building which was at one time a bank, then a private school, and had the building moved to our property, where it is being renovated and remodeled for use as a place of worship. The building is more than adequate to meet our needs for some time to come. The project has been much more costly than first anticipated, and we are almost a year behind schedule, but, if the Lord wills, we should be in our building by early summer, though the work will not be completed at that point because we plan to do much of the finish work ourselves after we move in. In our new location we will be known as the Murphy Road Church of Christ.

If you are moving to this area, or are just passing through, we would love to have you visit with us. Our address is 2025 Murphy Road (F.M. 1092), Missouri City, Texas. Worship is at 9:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Our Bible classes start at 10:45 a.m. on Sundays, 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. If you need directions call Gene Mabry at 281-265-8071 or 261-5216. If you get my answering machine, be sure to leave a message, and I will call you back right away. **Gene Mabry.**

