



Magazine

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A Matter Of Submission

Kenneth D. Sils

Not long ago, the Southern Baptist Convention had been meeting in Salt Lake City, Utah for their annual convention. It has been reported that they have amended their system of beliefs to reinstate the following statement, "A wife is to graciously submit to her husband." Consider three observations concerning this ruling.

First of all, it was interesting to hear from the many liberal women pundits all over the television news shows speak about this archaic, narrow-minded, ridiculous, oppressive and Neanderthal type of mentality which would even dare think a wife should be in submission to her husband. You would think from their hysteria that these women have been projecting on television that Hitler had just invaded America to begin throwing all women into gas chambers. Oh, the panic of having to live the Bible way!

Secondly, missing in this discussion I have observed from anyone in the media is, "What does the Bible say about the issue of wives submitting to their husbands?" This is the reason why there is so much confusion on all subjects of morality.

Without a standard of morality and ethics, what else can there be but confusion. The New Testament makes the answer of Jesus Christ quite clear. Ephesians 5:23-24 says, "For the husband is the head of the wife, as also Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." The husband is the head of the wife in the same light as Jesus is the head of the church. The wife is to submit to the husband in the same manner as the church is to submit to Christ, in everything! To reject these truths from the pen of the inspired apostle Paul is to reject the authority of Jesus Christ himself. This issue has no room for debate. This issue should not be controversial. The apostle John wrote in 1 John 3:4, "Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness and sin is lawlessness." Women who refuse to submit to their husbands in everything are sinning against their husbands and against Jesus Christ.

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What Catholics Believe About The Bible

Mike Willis

A recent issue of the *Indianapolis Star* contained an article entitled “Catholics’ faith and the Bible” by John F. Fink (July 26, 1998, D3). Fink wrote,

Catholics believe that the Bible is the inspired word of God, but the Catholic faith is not based on the Bible. That’s because the Catholic Church existed before the Bible. In fact, it was the Catholic Church that determined what books would be in the New Testament — even what books would be in the Catholic version of the Old Testament.

This short paragraph pinpoints several differences between Roman Catholicism and the New Testament revelation. Consider these:

1. “*Catholic faith is not based on the Bible.*” We are agreed that is so. As a matter of fact, Fink’s article was the follow-up of another article in the May 24 issue of the *Star* which defended Catholics’ prayer through and worship of Mary. Fink candidly admitted, “Some Catholic beliefs are not based on the Bible.” That being so, what the Bible says about beliefs not based on God’s revealed word is pertinent. John, the Apostle of love, wrote, “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds” (2 John 9-11). In Revelation, he said, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (22:18-19). Despite these grave warnings, Mr. Fink candidly admits that the Catholic faith is not based on the Bible.

Fink’s admission that the Catholic faith is not based on the Bible is an admission that the Catholic faith is an apostate faith.

See “Catholics” p. 569

Valuing Men Above Animals

Connie W. Adams

We live in a convoluted world. Recently a young woman received a three-year sentence for killing her own newborn baby in a motel room. Near that time a man was given a fifteen-year sentence for killing some cats. In our nation we have had nearly forty million legal abortions in the last twenty-five years, but you had better not kill a kangaroo, rat, or any creature on the endangered species list. Partial birth abortions are now permitted. Twice Congress has voted to outlaw them and twice our President has vetoed the legislation. Animal rights groups are loud and often effective, sometimes to the point of placing the interest of animals over those of people.

How did we get to such a place? Acceptance of the general theory of evolution has led inevitably to the conclusion that man is simply a graduated animal, no more, no less. As such, it is reasoned, he is not entitled to more consideration than any other animal. In some cases, not as much. Say all you will about high-blown scientific theories. The fact remains that when you teach long enough that man is an animal, it is inevitable that he will begin to behave as animals governed by instinct and without conscience. If the survival of the fittest is the guiding force of evolution, then on what grounds can ethnic purges or the Nazi Holocaust be condemned? Such a notion contributes directly to dehumanization and to anarchy in the moral realm.

Jesus was questioned one time about whether or not it was lawful to heal on the Sabbath. A man with a withered hand was present. Their concern was for their point of argument, not the welfare of the man with the withered hand. Jesus said to them, "What man is there among you who has one sheep, and if it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will not lay hold of it and lift it out? Of how much more value then is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:11-12). He proceeded to heal the man. What Jesus stated here was based on a generally accepted premise: A man is worth more than a sheep.

God's Natural Order

In the creation, God made man of a higher order than the animal kingdom. "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness:

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and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth” (Gen. 1:26). Man was created to have dominion over the rest of God’s creation. That is where the issue is joined with the humanist. He does not believe that there is a God to create anything and explains it all with the general theory of evolution. If there is no God, then animal rights people have a point. But that is a mighty big IF.

Given that premise, then abortion, suicide, euthanasia and the extreme views of some environmentalists make sense. But if man is here as the result of divine creation and is made in the image of his creator, then that makes him unique in the universe. There must be something special about man. Dogs do not write books nor do monkeys build hospitals. What animal possesses a conscience? Man alone in the universe is endowed with the rational ability to receive divine revelation and act upon it. All the pontificating of men of science every time they find some old bones as to how old they *might* be and where they fit into the scheme of evolution cannot change the fact that man is of a higher order than the brute.

The Psalmist’ Question

David pondered the vastness of the universe and wondered why man had been so wondrously blessed. He said “When I consider Your Heavens, the work of Your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You visit him? For you made him a little lower than the angels, and crowned him with glory and honor. You made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen — even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, How excellent is Your name in all the earth?” (Ps. 8:3-8).

Here we are, tiny specks on one small planet. We are 240,000 miles from our moon and 93 million miles from our sun. As scientists develop more sophisticated equipment to look deeper into space, we are amazed at the number of solar systems far beyond our own. Yet, here is man on this earth stamped with the image of his Creator, blessed with the ability to receive revelation, ponder it and act upon it to his own betterment. No other creatures in the known universe are so advantaged.

The conviction that man was created by Almighty God can only tend to make us better. How do you account for man’s desire to worship? If he does not worship the true and living God, he will worship something of his own making. But he will worship something! Birds build nests, but do they build altars? Otters build dams, but do they build houses of praise? The belief that the God who made

me and addressed special revelation to me so that I may thereby please him makes me sensitive to my responsibility to him and to others made in his image as was I. Take that away from us and life becomes a journey from nowhere to nowhere with no rules, no compass, no map. All that is left is a selfish struggle for survival. If I have to injure or maim a fellow human on the way, then there is no standard to determine the rightness or wrongness of the action. If there is no God then there can be no basis for ethical or moral behavior.

In a question period after a debate between Phil Roberts and the president of the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism, I asked the atheist what ethical standard would make it wrong for me to hang him. He thought a moment and said, “Well, it would be unpleasant for me.” I asked “Yes, but what if it would be pleasant for *me*?” Whose pleasure prevails? Would it not be the stronger of the two? Isn’t that what the survival of the fittest is all about?

Our Modern Dilemma

As long as origins are taught without reference to God; or human behavior (sex education, abortion, suicide, euthanasia, homosexuality, communal living), or death education, or a hundred other issues with no reference to a divine standard by which all such matters are to be finally determined, then just that long we will have lying, cheating, divorce, murder, and mayhem in our streets, homes and schools. Judges and juries will pervert justice. Presidential and Congressional scandals will continue. Homes will disintegrate. Anarchy will reign.

There is much talk of getting back to basics in education. The most basic question of all is “In the beginning _____?” “I am going to put GOD in that blank. What about you? When I do, that will solve a multitude of issues including the subject of this article.

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“They Were Cut To the Heart”

Rodney Pitts

The phrase cited above is only found on two occasions within the whole of the New Testament (Acts 2:37 and 7:54). In both instances the hearers were said to have been “cut to the heart” after the truth of God was preached with confident force and direct application. This piercing of their heart, however, was not the result of a mean spirit or a lack of love on the part of the preachers, but was the natural result of preaching the gospel. For, the word of God is “living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

Same “Cut,” Different Response

Just as people respond differently to a physical wound (i.e., some calmly seek aid while others go into uncontrolled panic and even shock), man’s response to the “cutting” message of the gospel is also varied. In Acts 2, where Peter and the rest of the apostles were preaching on the day of Pentecost, the “cut” produced very favorable results. Luke records that upon hearing the message, “. . . They were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, ‘Men and brethren, what shall we do?’ . . . Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (Acts 2:37, 41).

On the other hand, the “cut” produced by the preaching of Stephen, a man “full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (Acts 6:5) resulted in quite a different response. Luke states that “when they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth” (Acts 7:54). And, they eventually went on to stone Stephen (Acts 7:55ff.).

So, Why The Difference?

The different responses of those who heard these sermons cannot be blamed on the messages nor their presentation. On both occasions the listeners were Jews who shared the guilt of rejecting the Messiah and putting him to death. On both occasions the preachers spoke very pointedly concerning the hearers’ sin and guilt before God. In Peter’s sermon he

convicted his audience of sin by telling them to “. . . hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know — Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death” (Acts 2:22-23). Yes, they were guilty of crucifying the Son of God and he let them know it in no uncertain terms.

Stephen was no less pointed. In a godly fashion worthy of emulation (which would obviously be rejected as unloving and overly harsh by the self-serving and worldly wise of today), Stephen specifically addressed the guilt of his hearers by stating: “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 5:22). Yes, they were rightfully accused of betrayal and murder.

So, why the different responses? The answer lies not in what was said, but in the hearts of the individuals who heard it. Jesus said that the preaching of the gospel is like a sower who sows seed on various kinds of soil. Three of the four types Christ mentions will not allow the word to grow unto maturity (Luke 8:11-14). The devil either has such control of the hearer’s life that the seed cannot enter the heart, or the word is given no “root” in their hearts so they fall away when faced with temptation, or the word is choked out by the “cares, riches, and pleasures of life.” There is only one type of soil that produces fruit. Jesus explains that “. . . the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). The whole issue is our condition of heart.

So, How Is Your Heart?

Yes, how is your heart? The import of that question cannot be trivialized. Just as the physical heart must be
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Preaching With Erasers or Markers?

Stan Adams

Paul told Timothy to “preach the word, be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (1 Tim. 4: 1-3). As a gospel preacher and the son of a gospel preacher, I am well aware that gospel preachers will all have a style that is unique to them. All of us are individuals, and as such, have individual approaches. The prophets of old were chosen by God and they had varying personalities and dispositions. All of them were useful in the carrying out of God’s plan. In the Old Testament it is notable that there was an Elijah, who stood firmly and through inspiration withstood the false prophets of Baal. He used sarcasm and ridicule to show the contempt that God has for those who pretend there is another God. He is a favorite of mine. But I also realize that there were other prophets of old who were effective but not with the same brash demeanor. We understand that Jeremiah was more tender-hearted and spoke with a tenderness that even when read now, brings out our emotions.

We can also read in the New Testament and see that Jesus (the master teacher), dealt with folks in a tender manner when he delivered the Sermon on the Mount, but also showed courage in driving the money changers out of the Temple and pronouncing the woes on the Pharisees. For every Peter there was a corresponding Andrew, and

for every Paul there was a corresponding Barnabas. Each of these men was useful in the plan of God for his kingdom and the salvation of mankind. One thing they all had in common was their devotion to the right ways of God. None of them was a compromiser. Though having different styles, they stood firmly for what was right, and also stood confidently against what was wrong. We need the same attitudes today.

I was talking with one of our elders, Sherrel Mercer, about our mutual concerns about the tone of some preachers and lessons today, and he commented: “It seems some are preaching with erasers and some are preaching with markers (chalk).” I told him then how much I appreciated his comment and how it expressed the concerns of so many today.

It is sad that many older preachers today are like the old prophet of 1 Kings. He had grown tired of the struggle and grown comfortable. He lied and cost a young prophet his life. It took this to bring him back to the reality of what his job really was. Why did the young prophet have to go? Why wasn’t the old prophet doing his job? It is evident that the young prophet had courage in delivering his message and that the old prophet admired him for doing so. God

kept healthy in order to continue a normal physical life, so must the spiritual heart of man be kept pure and focused on God to maintain a healthy spiritual life. Solomon tells us to “Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Thus, YOU determine your condition of heart.

So, again I ask, “How is your heart?” If you go to the doctor, he can hook up various electrodes, etc., to test your heart for irregularities, etc. No such machine exists for the spiritual heart. The tests for it are much simpler and can

be performed by you in your own home. All you need to do is examine your response to the truth. Do you fit more with those on Pentecost who “gladly received his word and were baptized” (Acts 2:41), or with those who “when they heard these things . . . they gnashed at him with their teeth” (Acts 5:54)? A very simple test, but its results are a matter of eternal life or death.

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It is eraser preaching when one preaches that we must tolerate those in error and openly fellowship those who are doctrinally wrong (2 John 9, 10).

sent this young prophet and told him exactly how to act. He originally had a determination to obey, but grew weak and followed the unwise order of the older prophet. This young prophet should have been able to look up to the old prophet, but this was not the case. I am sad to say that many who I used to look up to have grown to be a disappointment and discouragement to me as a preacher. This is true both of younger and older preachers and brethren.

Let me illustrate, plainly, what I am saying. Many are preaching with erasers when they preach that it is all right to take one drink. This ignores the marked line God drew in 1 Peter 4:3. We must preach with God's marker and not erase the line that God has drawn. It is eraser preaching when one teaches that the Old Testament examples cannot be used as principles to help us understand the New Testament and bring us unto Christ (Gal. 3:15). It is eraser preaching when one preaches that we must tolerate those in error and openly fellowship those who are doctrinally wrong (2 John 9, 10). Many engage in eraser preaching when they teach that there is no way for us to know what is modest and what is not. This violates the lines drawn by God when he told us to avoid the appearance of evil and to dress in modest apparel. Modesty has been a principle for godly people since the beginning. God made adequate clothing for Adam and Eve. Their excuse for clothes, did not pass God's standards, so he made modest apparel for them. It is eraser preaching when one teaches that Matthew 19:9 and 5:32 do not mean what they say. It is also eraser preaching when men wish to throw every doctrinal issue into the realm of Romans 14 (which deals with individual choices authorized by God).

Several years ago, a gospel preacher stated: "There are too many sermonettes being preached by preacherettes that are contributing to a rise in Christianettes." Brethren, as one other preacher said, "We are drifting." It is not uncommon to hear "speeches" today that are supposed to pass for sermons, which have one or two short passages, but are mostly punctuated by amusing or heart wrenching illustrations. It makes for "easy listening," but we are not to be "FM Christians." We are to insist on preaching that "storms the will." Gospel preaching is designed to save people *from* sin, not *in* sin. Any preaching that seeks to "stroke the people" and scratch ears, is not gospel preaching and should not be tolerated. Many preachers have become

little more than glorified PR directors, and have ignored personal study. Perhaps, some have stooped to allowing the extent of their sermon preparation to be a brief trip to the Internet on Saturday night, to copy someone's chart and sermon.

If a preacher is not going to preach the "old paths," he should find something else to do. If we as preachers are more interested in our "employment portfolio" than we are in saving souls and defending the Truth, we should repent or quit. If we take exception to having what we say in public reviewed in public, we need to examine our concept of what preaching is all about. When one stands in public and preaches or when one writes what he believes to be the truth, he should realize that 1 Peter 3:15 is as true for him as it is for any Christian. We are accountable for what we preach. Let's not let our egos get in the way of our acceptance of honorable examination and debate.

Brethren need to rise up across this land and let the message go out clearly to every gospel preacher, that God has drawn lines. We want to know what those lines are. Elders should back up those who preach with the markers of God and should not tolerate unabashed disobedience.

One older Christian asked me recently, what had changed in the church. I know that many things have brought about apathy among brethren, but my feeling is that much of the apathy and worldliness among brethren is the result of too many preachers failing to stand up and draw the line exactly where God drew it. God knows how to draw lines, and he is clear when he tells us we can understand what his will is. God expects his servants to know how to fight. In Ephesians 6 he tells us what armor to put on. Speaking the truth in love does not mean compromising and coddling error. Jesus loved the Pharisees. One place he shows us that love is in Matthew 23, when he pronounces woes on them. Paul loved the brethren at Corinth — Read 1 Corinthians 5.

Preacher, ask yourself whether your type of preaching helps one to be stronger or encourages weakness. If you are an "eraser preacher" repent, and go back to the old paths. If you are a preacher who punctuates each lesson with the "marker of the Lord" (Scripture), keep up the good work and do not bend to the will of weak and worldly leaders and brethren. Read 1 and 2 Timothy at least every week, and preach the gospel. Leave the entertaining to those who do that for a living. As a gospel preacher remember you are not a "circus monkey" who is around to collect the money and keep everyone laughing. **PREACH THE WORD, BROTHER!**

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Jewish Feasts And Festivals (1)

Kyle Campbell

In order to fully understand the Jewish religion and people, and to gain a greater perspective of a number of events in the New Testament, one needs to study the Jewish feasts and festivals. The Jewish feasts and festivals were scheduled at specific times in the annual calendar and they were both civil and religious in nature. Some marked the beginning or the end of the agricultural year, while others commemorated historic events in the Jewish nation. All of the feasts were marked by thanksgiving and joyous feasting.

The feasts and festivals of Israel were community observances. The poor, the widow, the orphan, the Levite and the sojourner or foreigner were invited to most of the feasts. The accounts of these feasts suggest a potluck type of meal, with some parts of the meal reserved for the priests and the rest given to those who gathered at the temple or the altar for worship. One of the feasts, Passover, originated in the home and later was transferred to the temple. The rest were apparently observed at specific times during the year and in designated places.

The Jews also had three great "pilgrimage" festivals: Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles. They were very important in the Jewish faith, and every male was expected to observe them (Deut. 16:16). The religious pilgrimage from the various towns and cities to the temple became annual events. In all the feasts and festivals, the nation of Israel remembered its past and renewed its faith in the Lord who created and sustained his people. We will

be examining these feasts and festivals in this article and the next. But before considering the feasts, it will be helpful to take a brief look at the Jewish calendar and how the Jews reckoned these events in their year. Following the discussion of the calendar, we will investigate a complete list of all the feasts and festivals observed by the Jewish people.

The Jewish Calendar

The Jewish calendar was based upon the lunar month; that is, the beginning of the month was marked by the new moon. The moon was carefully observed by the people of Bible times. When it appeared as a thin crescent at sunset, it marked the beginning of a new month. The lunar month was about 29 days long. Therefore, the first crescent of the new moon would appear 29 or 30 days after the previous new moon. The marking of time in Old Testament days revolved primarily around the months, seasonal religious festivals, and the year.

The first month of the Hebrew calendar was in the spring, around March/April or the beginning of the spring equinox. In their early history the Israelites adopted Canaanite names for the months which were connected with agriculture and climate. Only four of these names are mentioned in the Old Testament. The month

Abib (Exod. 13:4; 23:15) was the first month (March/April), which was at the time of barley harvest. The word Abib means "ripening of grain" (Lev. 2:14). The month Ziv (1 Kings 6:1, 37) was the second month (April/May).

Synchronized Jewish Calendar

Nos.	Names of Months
1 (7)	Nisan (Mar-Apr)
2 (8)	Iyyar (Apr-May)
3 (9)	Sivan (May-Jun)
4 (10)	Tammuz (Jun-Jul)
5 (11)	Ab (Jul-Aug)
6 (12)	Elul (Aug-Sept)
7 (1)	Tishri (Sept-Oct)
8 (2)	Heshvan (Oct-Nov)
9 (3)	Kislev (Nov-Dec)
10 (4)	Tebeth (Dec-Jan)
11 (5)	Shebat (Jan-Feb)
12 (6)	Adar (Feb-Mar)
13	Adar Sheni

The first column indicates the numerical order of months in the sacred calendar, while the column in parentheses shows the civic year beginning with Tishri.

This word means “splendor,” and it refers to the beauty of flowers blooming at that time. Ethanim (1 Kings 8:2) was the seventh month (September/October), which occurred during the rainy season. Bul (2 Kings 6:38) was the eighth month (October/November). Its name may have reference to “rain,” since this month was between the early and latter rains. These four names for the months were associated with the most important agricultural times of the year.

In its later history the nation of Israel adopted all twelve months of the Babylonian calendar as their civil calendar, but not all of the twelve months are listed in the Bible. The seven that occur are Nisan, the first month (Neh. 2:1); Sivan, the third month (Esth. 8:9); Elul, the sixth month (Neh. 6:15); Chislew, the ninth month (Zech. 7:1); Tebeth, the tenth month (Esth. 2:16); Shebat, the eleventh month (Zech. 1:7); and Adar, the twelfth month (Ezra 6:15). The beginning of this calendar also coincided with the spring equinox.

Since the months were based on the lunar system and since each month averaged 29½ days, the year would be 354 days, or 11 days short of the solar year. In just three years the calendar would be off more than a month. To reconcile the lunar month with the solar year, Babylon had a sophisticated system where seven months would be added to the calendar over a 19-year cycle, resulting in an error of only two hours and four minutes by the end of the cycle. Israel adjusted her calendar in a similar fashion by adding a thirteenth month, known as Adar Sheni, whenever necessary. The year in which such an intercalation should be made was for a while determined by an authoritative decision of the Sanhedrin, and ultimately fixed in a permanent manner by astronomical calculation. In a cycle of nineteen years the third, sixth, eighth, eleventh, fourteenth, seventeenth and nineteenth are made leap-years with an average length of 384 days. It is plain, therefore, that the Jewish year has long been, and still is, a luni-solar year. The Jewish year thus far described is one constituted in harmony with ritual requirements, and hence it is called the sacred Jewish year.

Sabbath/Shabbat

The Sabbath is discussed in Exodus 16:22-30; 20:8-11; 23:12; 31:12-16; 34:21; 35:21-3; Leviticus 23:3; 26:2; Numbers 15:32-36; 28:9-10; and Deuteronomy 5:12-15. The Hebrew word for Sabbath means “to cease or abstain.” Exodus 20:8-11 reminded the nation of Israel to remember that God rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2). This grounds the observance of the Sabbath in the creation of the world. Deuteronomy 5:12-15 reminded Israel to remember its bondage years when there was no rest. This passage fixed the origin of the Sabbath in the bondage of the Hebrews in Egypt.

The Israelites were instructed to include the family, the hired servants, the stranger and even their domestic animals in observance of this holy day. All were commanded to cease

from normal labor. This included the command not to gather firewood (Num. 15:32-36) or to kindle a fire (Exod. 35:2-3). Later in Jewish history, the Jews were forbidden to travel more than 2,000 cubits or 7/8 of a mile on the Sabbath, based on Exodus 16:29. Those who violated the Sabbath would be cut off from among the people or could be put to death by stoning (Exod. 31:12-26).

Although the Sabbath was not intended as a day of worship, it did become a day of convocation to the Lord. A specific burnt sacrifice on the Sabbath was required in Numbers 28:9-10. In later periods of Jewish history, prayer and other rituals became the procedure for observing the Sabbath and just prior to the New Testament times, the Sabbath became a day of assembly when the principle synagogue service was conducted.

The Sabbath observance, which occurred every week, had two purposes. First, it symbolized that the nation of Israel had been set apart by the Lord as his special people. Second, it was also a celebration of the fact that the land belonged to God. This is seen in God’s provision of a Sabbatical year, which was one year out of every seven when the land would rest from cultivation in order to renew and replenish itself (Lev. 25:1-7). The law included the fields of grain and the vineyards. Even that which grew from the planting and pruning of the sixth year was not to be consumed by the owner. Eventually, the cancellation of debts was added to the land rest as a part of the Sabbatical year. Debts to fellow Jews were to be forgiven during this year, although debts of non-Jews might be collected. But the spirit of generosity was encouraged even toward non-Jews. Indentured servants were to be granted their freedom. Not only were they to be freed; they were also to be provided with grain, meat and drink in generous portions.

After every seven Sabbatical years, or 49 years, the 50th year was set aside as the year of Jubilee. Once the Israelites entered and possessed the land of Canaan, it became their obligation to observe this year (Lev. 23:15-16; 25:8-55; 27:14-24; Jer. 34:8, 14-17; Isa. 61:1-2). The Jubilee year began with the blowing of the ram’s horn. The year of Jubilee was a special year in family renewal. A man who was bound to another as a slave or indentured servant was set free and returned to his own family. If any members of his family were also bound, the entire family was set free. Houses and lands could also be redeemed in the year of Jubilee. If they were not redeemed within a year, however, they became the permanent possession of the previous owner. The land owned by Levites was exempted from this law; they could redeem their land at any time.

The Sabbath observances were rounded out by the observance of special Sabbaths where no servile work

continued bottom of next page

The Pitfalls of Public Education

Randy S. Yerby

Did you follow the controversy that befell a Cleveland area high school? It seems as though two Lakewood high school physics teachers have dared to offer an alternative explanation for the existence of the world. Instead of towing the traditional academic line, these two teachers have suggested that this world we live in may have been created, as opposed to simply evolving. It's worth noting that these educators didn't just start teaching creationism (the belief that God created the heavens and the earth) this school year, but have been teaching it for the past five years, without incident, according to reports. As a result, this recent firestorm can be traced to just one source, a May 4 article appearing on the front page of *The Plain Dealer*, a Cleveland based newspaper. This single article has spawned numerous editorials and follow-up articles, all of which have polarized the Lakewood community and devastated the educational process at Lakewood High School.

At the center of this controversy is Cleveland area

columnist Joe Dirck. Mr. Dirck has made several pointed attacks upon those of us who believe in God and his creation. He ridicules creationists for their lack of "hard evidence" that would support a belief in the biblical account of creation. Yet, Mr. Dirck fails to offer any "hard evidence" that would support his contention that this earth, and yes, you and I, somehow evolved over millions of years. As I told him when I talked to him directly, in the absence of "hard evidence" the only thing left is faith. In short, the only real issue where the creationist vs. evolutionist is concerned is where will you put your faith, in God or Darwin.

However, at the heart of this debate rests something much more significant to those of us who want nothing more than for our children to follow in our foot steps and faithfully serve God. Our desire is being hindered by the ever increasing influence we allow the public school systems to have on our young people. The public school system provides some troubling challenges to parents who

could be done. The Jews had 52 regular Sabbaths and seven special Sabbaths. These included the first and last days of Passover (Lev. 23:7-8), Pentecost (Lev. 23:21), New Year's Day (Lev. 23:24-25), the day of Atonement (Lev. 23:28) and the first and last days of the feast of Tabernacles (Lev. 23:35-36).

New Moon

The new moon was reckoned by actual personal observation, not by astronomical calculation. The Sanhedrin required two or three independent witnesses as to the appearance of the New Moon. This was so important that the Sanhedrin permitted the witnesses to travel on the Sabbath and make use of a horse or a mule.

The references in the Bible to the New Moon celebration include Numbers 10:10; 28:11-15 and Psalm 81:3. The law

specified that two bullocks, one ram, seven lambs and one kid were to be offered in connection with this celebration. Meal mixed with oil accompanied the offerings; a trumpet blast introduced this feast. The sins committed and not expiated during the previous month were covered by the offerings of the New Moon. Thus, sinners received atonement and were reconciled with the Lord.

Conclusion

Having laid a significant foundation concerning the Jewish calendar, and the regular Sabbath and New Moon celebrations, the next article will examine all of the yearly Jewish feasts and festivals and their significance in Jewish life.

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want their children to receive the necessary tools to live in this society and at the same time develop strong ties to God and his institution the church. In addition to the theory of evolution, parents must worry about the effects of humanism which manifests itself in the form of “self actualization” and subjective morality, the most modern term for situation ethics. Humanism, according to Webster, is any system or mode of thought or action in which human interests, values and dignity predominate; an ethical theory that often rejects the importance of a belief in God.

One can readily see, therefore, that the battle lines have clearly been drawn. Even before our children start bringing this humanist garbage home we must instill within them values that rest upon the foundation of God and his Word. Evolution should never be an issue for our children, they must be taught that it was God who created the “heavens and the earth.” We need to teach our children that, “The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork” (Ps.19:1). The evidence is too compelling to ignore. Paul tells us; “His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, . . .” (Rom. 1:20). Don’t ever let the evolutionist put you in the position where he asks you to offer any more proof than what we can perceive with our senses or what the Bible provides. If the evolutionist asks that of you they’re asking you for more than they themselves are willing to provide. You see, the two science teachers from Lakewood recognized what many of us have seen for years, that the theory of evolution has become too problematic in the areas of systematic testing and proof. So, in the absence of evidence one is left with the dilemma of where will he place his faith.

I suspect it wouldn’t be hard for us to guess where the evolutionist would put his faith. Remember, humanism is a system of thought that rejects the importance of God. Sadly, however, evolution is not the only humanistic doctrine pervasive within our public school systems. We, as parents, must also grow to understand terms like “self actualization,” which propagates the notion that we can realize our fullest potential by independence and self reliance. The idea is that man does not need God. Everything that a man can be and would be is under his control. This ignorance of God’s role in our lives astounds many of us, yet it has become a powerful tool of Satan. We have to instruct our children that it was God who created man on the sixth day and we, as his creation, owe everything to him. As a result, the only way we can realize our true potential, and “be all that we can be,” and become “self-actualized” is through the Lord. The prophet, Jeremiah, proclaims, “O Lord, I know the way of man is not in himself; It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps” (Jer. 10:23). Complete independence can only be perceived, but never wholly realized.

Along with this viewpoint of “self actualization,” our children are being told that morality is dependent upon the circumstances. They are being taught that morality is dynamic and always in a state of flux and a person’s values may change as the situation would dictate. Well, I’m sure this will please many a seventeen-year-old boy who needs to convince his date that what their doing really doesn’t violate any objective code of morality, just one that changes according to the circumstances. Again we must tutor our children and let them know that God is consistent throughout time and nothing is ever subjective to him when it comes to morality. The author of Hebrews tells us that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Heb.13:8). His character never changes. His expectations for our moral purity have never changed. We must not allow ourselves to “be carried about with various and strange doctrines”(Heb. 13:9). This world’s standards may change, and what is acceptable conduct may change, yet we as Christians must be on guard to never let our chaste behavior change with the world’s standards.

Yes, friends, we need to understand how the public school system is impacting our children. What our local school systems are teaching undermines the principles of God and his divine word. We need to remember that everyday our children are being taught some form of humanism, from the theory of evolution, and how to become “self actualized,” and what subjective morality is, to topics like, “safe sex,” “a tolerance for alternative lifestyles,” and “values clarification.” Parents, if we expect our children to carry on the cause of Jesus Christ into the twenty-first century, we had better start teaching our children the ways of God. Because if we don’t teach these young impressionable minds the way of the Lord, you can rest assured that some public school teacher is just waiting to teach them the ways of the world.

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The First Church

Johnie Edwards

Many have never been taught about *The First Church*. All that we can know about *The First Church* has been revealed in the Word of God. So, to the Bible we make our appeal to some needed teaching about *The First Church*.

The First Church Was Not

By knowing some things *The First Church* was not, we will be in better position to understand what *The First Church* Was. So, *The First Church* Was Not:

1. *The Roman Catholic Church*. The Catholic Church is never mentioned in the Word of God. In fact, it was not until A.D. 606 that the first Roman Pope was named. Yet, many think that all churches have their origin in the Roman Catholic Church. Most do, but not *The First Church*!

2. *A Human Denomination*. The word denomination means a division of. *The First Church* is not a division of anything. When we think of a denomination, we think of a Mother Church, and from the Mother Church, others spring out of that Mother Church. This may be true of most religious bodies today, but *The First Church* is not a denomination.

3. *A Political Organization*. God has ordained government. Paul told the Romans, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God" (Rom. 13:1-7). We might not always like the men in power, but we need to respect the office and "pray for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:1-2). Yet at the same time, the church is not a political body and must stay separate from such.

4. *A Social Club*. To many, the church is a glorified country club, with fun and frolic as their main agenda. You never read of the Lord's church providing for, or engaging in, social activities. In fact, Paul, in trying to get the Roman Christians to see where things belonged, said, "For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. 14:17).

The First Church Was

Having seen some things *The First Church* was not, we should be in better position to see some things *The First Church* was.

1. *The Church of Christ*. Some seem to be timid about calling the Lord's church the Church of Christ. The Apostle Paul said, ". . . The churches of Christ salute you" (Rom. 16:16). The church belongs to the Lord because he built it (Matt. 16:18), is its head (Col. 1:18), is the savior of it (Eph. 5:23), and is its foundation (1 Cor. 3:11). Paul said

it is the Lord's church. And that is good enough for me. How about you?

2. *One In Number*. Paul taught the Ephesians, "there is one body" (Eph. 4:4); and he wrote the Colossians, "for his body's sake, which is the church" (Col. 1:24). The God of heaven never intended for there to be all of the religious bodies we now have, teaching all kinds of conflicting doctrines. In fact, the Lord expects us to be "one as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (John 17:21). We need to learn that whatever the Bible says to you, it says to me, and whatever it says to me, it says to you!

3. *In The Mind Of God From Eternity*. To many, the

**The God of heaven
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church is a substitute for the Kingdom of Christ due to Jewish rejection of Christ. There is just one thing wrong with such thinking. It is just not so! The Holy Spirit said, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). The New Testament Church first existed in the mind of God, from eternity. The church has been made know by the wisdom of God.

The First Church Did Not Have

By studying some things *The First Church* did not have, we can better see what it does have. Some things *The First Church* did not have:

1. *Any Reverends.* Most preachers are not content to just be called by their name. They want to be called reverend, right reverend, father, rabbi, and the like. The word "reverend" is found only one time in the Bible and then it refers to God. "Holy and reverend is his name" (Ps. 111:9). Jesus said, "But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven" (Matt. 23:8-9). None of the apostles was ever called reverend — just Peter, James, and John. Job got it right when he said, "Let me not, I pray you, accept any man's person, neither let me give flattering titles unto man. For I know not to give flattering titles; in so doing my maker would soon take me away" (Job 32:21-22).

2. *Mechanical Instruments Of Music.* Mechanical instruments of music were used in the Old Testament, as commanded by God (2 Chron. 29:25; Ps. 81:1-4; 150). Since there has been a change in the law (Heb. 7:12) and we live under the New Testament (Gal. 6:2), we are commanded, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; Heb. 2:12). The instrument, the music is to be made in, is the heart. To use instrumental music in the worship today, is to add a kind of music the Lord never authorized. The only reason *The First Church* did not use instrumental music in their worship was because the Lord never told them to and they respected the silence of the Scriptures on the subject!

3. *Human Institutions Through Which To Work.* Many churches today think they cannot do the Lord's work of evangelism, benevolence, and edification without building and maintaining institutions of men or sponsoring church arrangements. Ever wonder how *The First Church* got along without such? In benevolence, the local church just did its own work (Acts 6:1-7). And if there were saints in other places which were in need, "... the disciples determined to send relief . . . and sent it to the elders" (Acts 11:27-30). Their relief was sent to the elders of the needy

churches. The local church was capable of "... edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16). They did not build and maintain a school to edify the church. *The First Church* did evangelism as they sent "wages" (2 Cor. 11:8). Or, like the church at Philippi, "... sent once and again unto my necessity" (Phil. 4:15-16).

The First Church Had

Now we can learn some things *The First Church* had:

1. *Elders in Every Church.* I am amazed at the number of churches today who are without elders. In New Testament days, "they ordained them elders in every church" (Acts 14:23). For a church to be fully organized as God desires, they must be as the church at Philippi, "... the saints in Christ Jesus with the bishops and deacons" (Phil. 1:1). You will notice that there was a plurality of men serving as elders and deacons. Many of the problems facing the church are due to unqualified men trying to run the church in business meetings. We need some good training programs for elders.

2. *Christ As the Head.* Many churches have so little respect for the head that about anything goes. The church is the body of Christ and Christ is to be its head (Eph. 1:22-23). When we get back to having respect for the head, the church will only do and be as the head directs. The church being in subjection to Christ is absolutely necessary (Eph. 5:24).

3. *One Means Of Raising Funds.* Today, we find churches raising money by every means except the Lord's way. New Testament churches were taught, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay be in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (1 Cor. 16:2). Each child of God is to give "bountifully as he purposeth in his heart" (2 Cor. 9:6-7), realizing that, "it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35), "for the Lord loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). Tithing belongs to the Old Testament system of giving, sales and car washes belong to the denominations, selling alcohol belongs to the Catholics, and we need to get back to giving the Lord's way.

4. *Gospel Preaching As Its Primary Mission.* "Preach the word . . . in season and out, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:2), is the divine charge to every gospel preacher. "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord . . ." (1 Thess. 1:8). This must be the primary mission of every New Testament church. Most churches put gospel preaching on the back burner with funny stories, making folks feel good, whitewashing sin; little gospel preaching is being done today!

5. *The Lord's Supper Every First Day of the Week.* The First Church met "upon the first day of the week, when

The Value of the Bible

Lewis Willis



The Bible is the inspired Word of God. Paul affirms as much in 2 Timothy 3:16 when he says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for

instruction in righteousness.” Because

this is so, we in churches of Christ emphasize that the Bible serves many purposes.

1. It is a store house of knowledge for people who would be free from sin. Jesus said that truth would make us free (John 8:32). I like a statement from Leslie Diestelkamp which I wrote down several years ago: “The Word of God misunderstood is no more helpful than the Word of God unknown!” Because of the sins of past generations, the Bible is unknown to many. Here in our country, we are rapidly moving in that direction. Because of the corruptions of religious doctrine, many are not free because they misunderstand its profound message.

2. The Bible is also a guide which shows Christians how to live. David wrote, “Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory” (Ps. 73:24). The Bible is God’s counsel, and it is man’s guide. He learns how to live as God wants him to live by reading the Bible. Most of the New Testament is used to outline the responsibilities of those who would serve God.

3. The Bible is a statement of doctrine which is to be believed. Paul said it is profitable for doctrine (2 Tim. 3:16). I read an interesting statement not long ago from the pen of Johnie Edwards. He wrote of those who would try to make a distinction between “faith” and “doctrine.” Johnie cited Acts 13:7-12 to show that several words were used interchangeably to refer to the same thing — the Truth. Those expressions were the Word of God, the faith, the right ways of the Lord, and the doctrine of the Lord. Men try to make a distinction where God made none. For our purposes, note verse 12: “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord.” Clearly, this man believed the doctrine.

the disciples came together to break bread” (Acts 20:7). Churches observe the Communion, once a year, every six months, quarterly, monthly, or every other week under the guise that it doesn’t say every first day of the week. I saw a sign that says, “Lions meet here Tuesday, 6:00 P.M.” The sign does not say that the Lions meet here every Tuesday. It doesn’t have to. Lions know that every week has a Tuesday! Need I say more?

6. The Lord’s Plan Of Salvation. “Salvation belongeth unto the Lord” (Ps. 3:8). Since salvation is of the Lord, maybe we ought to let him tell us what he wants us to do

to be saved. New Testament conversion was brought about by men hearing, believing, and being baptized (Acts 8:12; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:28). After primary obedience, men were taught to, “live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Tit. 2:12).

Conclusion

May the Lord hasten the day when we get back to simple gospel preaching and just let the church be the church as God intended.

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4. Another of the functions of the Bible is that it nourishes us spiritually. Note the following passages which refer to it as food and water:

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby (1 Pet. 2:2).

For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil (Heb. 5:12-14).

Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water (John. 4:10).

I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

The Bible is the only source for this spiritual nourishment.

5. Man is a religious being so the Bible teaches him how to worship.

- He is to pray (Acts 2:42).
- He is to sing (Eph. 5:19).
- He is to observe the Lord's supper on the first day of every week (Acts 20:7).
- He is to give of his money on the first day of the week as he has been prospered (1 Cor. 16:2).
- He is to study God's Word, and this comes from teaching (Acts 20:7).

There is no other source provided by God to guide us in worship except the Bible.

6. Man is a sinful being so the Bible teaches him how to be forgiven.

- He is told he must hear the gospel and believe (Rom. 10: 17; John 8:24).
- He must repent of his sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- He must confess his faith in Christ with his mouth (Matt. 10:32-33; Rom. 10:10; Acts 8:37).
- He then must be baptized as the Word of God directs (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:26-27; 1 Pet. 3:21).
- Thereafter a man must be faithful until the time of his death (Rev. 2: 10).

These are the things specified by the Bible which one must do to be saved. They are certainly not unknown to us anymore. Furthermore, one would have to have help to misunderstand them.

7. Man is a suffering being so the Bible tells him about the Great Physician (Matt. 9:12-13). The Word of God teaches us that God cares for us (1 Pet. 5:7), and that he will never leave us or forsake us, but will be a help to us (Heb. 13 :5-6). When the troubles of life beset us, the words of the Bible are to be used to comfort and console us (1 Thess. 4:18).

8. Because man is an intelligent being, the Bible is presented to him to instruct him in the ways of righteousness. God's Word identifies the good works which man must do (2 Tim. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:10; Tit. 2:14). No instruction we receive is as great as the instruction found in the Bible.

Conclusion

Therefore, the value of the Bible is in the things it will do for us, as outlined above. We could have spoken of other things. When we are weak, it supplies courage and strength. It gives us occasions for joy, and comforts us when we are in sorrow. When we are in despair, it gives hope. And, when it is time to die, it tells us about eternal life which is available to those who have served God.

Do you know of any other document or book about which all of these things could be said? Is the Bible of value to you?

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Controversy, Debate, and the Progress of Truth

Ron Halbrook

Controversy and Debate Truth and Error Battle for the Souls of Men

Since the time when Satan first introduced deception, error, and sin into the world, every step gained by the teaching of truth has been accompanied by controversy. Religious historians point out the gospel originally spread because of *its emphasis on one true religion or one right way in religion*, a proposition which has been the occasion of unending controversy (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Eph. 4:4-6). The Apostles of Christ and the early evangelists preached that Christ demanded unconditional surrender to him and to his word. Notice the emphasis of the Great Commission on converting “all the world” and “every creature” to the same “gospel”:

And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned (Mark 16:15-16).

Where issues of truth and error, right and wrong, were involved, the teaching of Christ allowed no compromise or accommodation. Those who changed and perverted the message of Christ were considered “the enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18). Thus, the original spread of the gospel was associated with much

controversy and debate, both with alien religious bodies and with false teachers in the church. This is why the religion of Jesus Christ survived and outlived every other religion of the first century. The more other religions tried to attract people by accommodating and embracing different concepts and practices, the more those religions lost their distinctiveness and became impotent.

Rather than accommodating false religions, the early Apostles and preachers “confounded” their representative teachers by proving the truth of the gospel, which had the effect of converting the sincere lost and enraging their former leaders (Acts 9:20-25). Paul said to a man who withstood the truth and sought to turn people away from it, “O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” Paul struck this false prophet blind rather than apologizing to him for refuting and condemning his error (Acts 13:6-12). Because of the dangers to the souls of men posed by the doctrines of false teachers, Paul warned, “Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision,” and he called these teachers “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:2, 18). Palestinian dogs were not generally domesticated

False teachers are “enemies of the cross of Christ” because their error has the effect of undoing what Christ sought to accomplish by dying on the cross: save the souls of sinners.

like ours but were dangerous and destructive, like false doctrine. The work of spreading false teaching is an evil work and those who do it are evil workers. “The concision” is a play on words using forceful satire, sarcasm, and ridicule based on the fact that the words for circumcision and mutilation are much alike in Greek, only the prefix to these compound words differing. False teachers are “enemies of the cross of Christ” because their error has the effect of undoing what Christ sought to accomplish by dying on the cross: save the souls of sinners. To compromise the truth would have been to desecrate the gospel sealed with Christ’s blood and to jeopardize the souls of men which could be saved only by the truth.

The impetus of the gospel and of the church began to wane when a spirit of compromise and accommodation spread in later centuries. This gave rise to the development of Catholicism, which often “converted” people by embracing elements of their false religions as a means of attraction.

Controversy and Debate During the Protestant Reformation

After the corruption and darkness of Roman Catholicism held sway for several centuries, the Protestant Reformation occurred in the 1400s-1500s. This was an era of widespread debate and controversy. The discussions which occurred were wide ranging in subject matter, and generally very heated, very pointed, and very vigorous in every way. The result was a new era of Bible study which led untold thousands of people out of the Catholic Church and set them searching for the truth of the gospel.

Luther’s Ninety-five Theses for debate nailed to the Castle Church door at Wittenberg October 31, 1517 were not limited in language to mere academic statements of differences. Several of them cut with the force of a two-edged sword by using language similar to the satire and irony used by great Bible characters in debate at

times. For instance,

11. Those tares about changing the canonical penalties into the penalties of purgatory surely seem to have been sown while the bishops were asleep.

27. They preach human doctrine who say that the soul flies out of purgatory as soon as the money thrown into the chest rattles.

28. It is certain that when the money rattles in the chest, avarice and gain may be increased, but the suffrage of the Church depends on the will of God alone.

32. Those who believe that through letters of pardon they are made sure of their own salvation will be eternally damned along with their teachers.

87. Again: Why does not the Pope, whose riches are at this day more ample than those of the wealthiest of the wealthy, build the one Basilica of St. Peter with his own money rather than with that of poor believers?

E.G. Schwiebert of the Department of History at Northwestern University noted that the Ninety-five Theses caused fear, resentment, and alarm among Romanists:

This criticism of the power of indulgences and the demotion of the Pope struck a powerful blow at the very foundations of papal power. A contemporary woodcut pictured Luther standing before the door of the Castle Church writing the Theses with a pen so long that its other end knocked off the Pope’s triple crown. This drawing well illustrated why Rome and its cohorts became extremely alarmed over the reception of the Ninety-five Theses (*Luther’s Ninety-five Theses*, intro. by E.G. Schwiebert [St. Louis, Mo.: Concordia Publ. House], 15).

Such forceful expressions and illustrations might be pronounced “insensitive,” “ungracious,” and

“unkind” by some, but they are no stronger than the language of many Bible passages. Twelve years after the Ninety-five Theses were posted, an important debate occurred within the Reformation camp. Martin Luther with Philip Melancthon met Ulrich Zwingli with John Oecolampadius for a face to face debate as the result of an ongoing controversy through their pamphlets. The main issue was Luther’s view that Jesus is mystically present in the elements of the Lord’s Supper. This 1529 meeting is called the Marburg Colloquy and the speeches were recorded in the notes of people who were present. The debate was primarily over whether the words, “This is my body,” are literal or figurative in meaning. Zwingli charged Luther with exaggerating the figure to make it literal. Luther answered, “You stray from the point, admonishing me for my rhetoric and refusing to tolerate my ‘exaggerations.’ . . . I call upon you as before: your basic contentions are shaky. Give way, and give glory to God!”

Zwingli responded, “And we call upon you to give glory to God and to quit begging the question! The issue at stake is this: Where is the proof of your position? . . . You’ll have to sing another tune!” Luther fired back in the following ways: “You’re being obnoxious!” “You’re trying to dominate things! You insist on passing judgment!” “You express yourself poorly and make about as much progress as a cane standing in a corner. You’re going nowhere.” Zwingli responded, “No, no, no! This is the passage [John 6] that will break your neck!” (Donald J. Ziegler, ed., *Great Debates of the Reformation* [New York: Random House, 1969], 84-86)

Such debates were the lifeblood of the Protestant Reformation, which had the effect of returning the Bible to the common man and making it possible for the boy who follows the plow to know more of God’s Word than does the Pope, just as William Tyndale hoped. North America was settled

and populated primarily by the heirs of this great religious revival and reformation, bringing with them the militant spirit of open debate and controversy.

Controversy and Debate In Restoring New Testament Christianity

This spirit of constantly submitting all things in religion to the test of revealed truth in Scripture caused many people in this country during the 1800s-1900s to forsake all denominational names, doctrines, and practices and to plead for a return to the New Testament pattern of faith and practice in all things. This return to the original teaching of Jesus and his Apostles is sometimes called the restoration movement. Every step was taken and tested in the crucible of controversy in keeping with such passages as 1 Peter 4:11 (“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God”) and 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22 (“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil”).

Regaining and retaining the New Testament ground has involved a state of constant warfare. It is possible to return to the original teaching of Christ and his Apostles because God preserved his Word as the basis of true Christianity. When Jesus taught the parable of the sower, he explained, “The seed is the word of God” (Luke 8:11). If we believe, teach, and practice what Jesus commanded in the first century through his Apostles, we will be nothing more or less than “Christians” — sharing “the like precious faith” and “the common salvation” of the first Christians (2 Pet. 1:1; Jude 3). The gospel seed originally made Christians only — not Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Methodists, Baptists, Pentecostals, Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses, or Grace Evangelicals. The same gospel seed will make the same thing today, Christians only. The denominations resist this simple truth, and so there is warfare for the souls of men.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, he sent the Holy Spirit to guide the Apostles in the revelation and proclamation of “all truth” (John 16:13). The book of Acts shows that by this divine guidance, they preached the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as providing the basis of our salvation and of all that we are to do in submission to God. Matthew through John was written to prove, secure, and confirm that teaching as the foundation of all New Testament truth. 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 summarizes that same message. The book of Acts also shows that sinners were taught to accept and obey the gospel on the terms and conditions of the gospel: Men must put their faith in Christ, a true faith leading them to repent of their sins, to confess Christ openly, and to be immersed in water (Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; Rom. 10:10).

Often only one of these conditions is mentioned to stand for all of them by a common function of language where a

**The restoration of New Testament
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part stands for the whole. Faith is often mentioned in this way since it is the basis for the other conditions, but each of them is mentioned in this way without all the others at times (John 3:16; Acts 11:18; Rom. 10:10; 1 Pet. 3:21).

When penitent believers are immersed by the authority of Christ, it may then be said of them, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph. 2:8-9). The conditions of pardon are not works of merit in any sense, but are merely terms appointed by God for men who wish to throw themselves on the mercy of God. All the merit necessary for salvation belongs to the Lord who provided it by his own love, grace, and mercy, but no merit belongs to man when he meets these conditions. These conditions merely serve the purpose of God offering salvation to men without forcing it upon them. Men must choose to accept or reject God’s offer of salvation by grace. “But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report?” (Rom. 10:16). Whether we choose to believe and obey or not, there is no merit in ourselves as a basis for salvation. If our working could merit salvation, the reward would be “not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom. 4:1-8).

As Roman Catholicism corrupted everything in the gospel of Christ, it corrupted the doctrine of salvation by faith through grace by developing the doctrine of man’s meritorious works. In reacting to this hurtful extreme, the Protestant Reformation went to an equally hurtful extreme by developing the doctrine of salvation by faith alone. In spite of some differences in the application of this faulty premise, virtually all of the Protestant denominations are united on it as a basic premise. On this premise, people are said to be saved and somehow united in Christ in spite of all sorts of differences in name, doctrine, and practice. Not only do these denominations tolerate the widest possible range of differences between themselves, they tolerate all sorts of differences and departures from the New Testament pattern of teaching. In spite of paying lip service to the New Testament as a standard of truth, the very spirit and essence of denominationalism with its emphasis on salvation by faith alone breeds disrespect and indifference toward the New Testament. Though not intentional, that is

an inevitable consequence of the doctrine. *The restoration of New Testament Christianity requires uprooting both the Roman Catholic doctrine of man's meritorious works and the Protestant Reformation doctrine of faith only, which means plenty of controversy!*

The Apostles taught not only the basis of salvation in Christ along with the conditions for receiving salvation, but also "all things" commanded by Christ (Matt. 28:19-20). After being baptized into Christ, the early Christians were taught to work and worship together in local churches. Immediately after obeying the gospel, the first Christians "continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). Under the direction of apostolic teaching, they met every "first day of the week" to eat the Lord's supper as a memorial to his death and to give of their financial prosperity for the work of the local church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2). They were taught not to forsake these gatherings where they also sang, prayed, and taught God's Word (Heb. 10:25; Col. 3:16-17). *New Testament worship has been restored only after much controversy and debate.*

Each local church was organized under the oversight of mature men called pastors (shepherds), bishops (overseers), or presbyters (elders), but without any concept of a clergy-laity distinction or an elevated priesthood (Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28; Tit. 1:5). Evangelists or preachers were simply public proclaimers of the gospel, without titles or institutional portfolio of any kind (2 Tim. 4:1-5). There was no hierarchy or higher level of organization beyond the local church, but each church was autonomous or independent, sharing no inter-congregational ties except the common faith and practice resulting from a common devotion to Christ as head (Eph. 1:22-23). When Paul said, "The churches of Christ salute you," he referred to these independent New Testament churches, not to some group of churches under the umbrella of a pyramid institution resembling Roman Catholicism or the denominational synods, presbyteries, and conventions. The New Testament pattern for the local church has been restored by the arduous process of debate and controversy.

After giving the New Testament pattern of truth for the gospel and the church as God ordained it, He forewarned his people to "hold fast the form of sound words" because many departures and apostasies would occur in the future (2 Tim. 1:13; Acts 20:28-30; 2 Thess. 2; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). All the religious error associated with so-called Christendom since the first century verifies the validity of God's warning. In a world filled with such innovations and apostasies, the task of calling people back to the truth of God's Word is a difficult battle. Every step back in the direction of truth is won in the face of fierce resistance. Only those with a determined faith and a courageous spirit can endure this great battle for the souls of men.

Just as the steps of progress in the Protestant Reformation occurred in the crucible of controversy and debate, every step in this return to the purity and simplicity of New Testament teaching occurred in the crucible of controversy and debate. Whatever could not stand the acid test of Scripture under intense investigation was rooted out and rejected. In debates which were often prolonged, pointed, and even heated, these New Testament Christians met the best representatives of virtually every religious group in America to examine the Scriptures during the 1800s and the first half of the 1900s. In this atmosphere of open religious examination, hundreds and thousands of people left religions and churches they could not read about in the Bible and became simply New Testament Christians. *Debates have always played a vital role wherever and whenever there is a sincere search for truth.*

Debate and Controversy in an Age of Secularism and Apostasy

Most people today are interested in debates over all sorts of issues involving everything from politics to economics to educational policies to sports, but, sad to say, they are little interested in discussing religious issues. Religious debates have become increasingly rare as our society has become increasingly secular in its values. Most people, including preachers, do not have sufficient conviction to make it worth the effort to examine their views in debate. Religious issues have been marginalized not only by *secularization* but also by *ecumenicism* (unity in doctrinal diversity), *subjectivism* (no absolute standard of truth and error), and *pop psychology's positive mental attitude philosophy* ("don't let anyone put a guilt trip on you," eliminate negative positions, avoid controversy, etc.). Religious historians sometimes summarize this complex of ideas as part of a new world view which they call "modernity."

Historians point out that after World War II the focus of most religion in America began to shift away from concern for religious *truth*. Emphasis upon truth gave way to concern for such things as *counseling* (mostly pop psychology on how to "feel good about yourself" without repenting of sin), *building a "positive image" for the church* (dubbed "the Protestant smile" by some historians), and a *plethora of social services* (giving the people what they want including everything from daytime baby sitting to recreational programs to job training to legal services to you-name-it).

Just as in New Testament times, churches of Christ in modern times have suffered from innovations, departures, and apostasies. A major apostasy occurred during 1875-1925, when a large number of churches gave up New Testament teaching and embraced much of the faith and practice of the Protestant denominational world. Another such tragedy occurred after World War II. These apostate movements tolerate debates for a while but inevitably lose

interest in them. Such movements are not fueled by an intense interest in truth but by the desire for peace, conformity, compromise, and popularity. Most of the preachers among these apostate churches are horrified at the prospect of public debates today and consider them a relic of ancient history. These men consider themselves much too “nice” and “pious” to draw the sword of the Spirit.

Although churches of Christ used to be known for actively pursuing opportunities for debates with other groups on a wide range of subjects, just as was done in New Testament times, many brethren today have succumbed to the popular delusion that we can convert people without confronting and uprooting sin and error. Bill Crews recently wrote about “Churches of Christ, Past and Present,” including these comments:

Let me tell you what nearly all churches of Christ used to be like.

Their preachers were ready to defend their religious faith and practice and to discuss differences, publicly or privately, with anyone. They challenged teachers of error to public debates and never refused honorable discussion of differences. They believed that teachers of the truth had nothing to fear and that the truth would always stand out in open, honorable discussion.

But the success of rapid growth and new generations of members not grounded in New Testament truth and some who have wanted things to be otherwise have largely changed this picture for most churches of Christ. An old story is being acted out all over again. History is repeating itself. Today many churches of Christ are not concerned about respecting the authority of God’s word in all things. Many unauthorized innovations have been introduced. Many members look upon the churches of Christ as constituting another denomination among denominations. Most preachers are completely uninterested in and fearful of discussions, public or private, of religious differences. They seem more interested in getting along, fitting in, attracting and holding numbers, friendly competition, and “dialogue.” Most will refuse a challenge to public debate, especially upon issues within churches of Christ. Desire for recognition, acclaim, acceptance strongly influence. Apostasy is the order of the day.

But there are still some churches of Christ that are concerned about being churches after the New Testament order (*Park Forest Proclaimer* [published by Park Forest Church of Christ, 9923 Sunny Cline Dr., Baton Rouge, LA 70814], 6-7).

Some among churches of Christ have lost the spirit of militant evangelism and debate. Some among us polish the tombs of past debaters and profess to believe in debating “if done the right way,” but they rarely if ever know of anyone who does it “the right way.” They will claim to believe the truth taught in debates, but will spend more time and ef-

fort criticizing one thing or another about the brother who debates than condemning the opponent who is an enemy of the gospel of Christ for his false teaching and false practices. Rather than challenging those who teach error to debate and showing the rest of us “the right way to do it,” they snicker and spread their disgust over “the way most debates are conducted.” They are far more embarrassed and upset over the debates which occur than over the error and false teaching these debates expose and refute.

Such thinking, no matter how well or how pleasantly expressed, is in direct contradiction to Jeremiah 1:7-10; Matthew 15:13; John 16:7-13; Acts 15:1-7; 17:17; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Philippians 1:17; Jude 3, and many, many other passages. Controversies accelerated rather than impeded the spread of the gospel in the first century, and again during the 19th and 20th centuries, until the love of prosperity in the post-World War II years bred a spirit of compromise and accommodation toward both doctrinal and moral error. During the last fifty years, the avoidance of debate and controversy has impeded greatly the spread of the gospel in America.

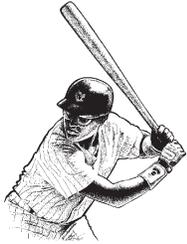
This shift is not unique to churches of Christ, but is typical of the religious scene in America generally. Churches of Christ feel the impact of surrounding culture today just as they did in the first century when, for instance, the weaknesses and problems in the church at Corinth mirrored Corinthian society. God’s people must resist and rise above the seductive attractions of secularism and apostasy. The battle for the souls of men is just as vital and necessary now as ever before. The days of controversy and debate are not gone anymore than the general need for preaching the truth both publicly and privately is gone, but it is harder to engage people in any kind of study about spiritual things. We must work all the harder to proclaim and to defend the truth of the gospel. We must preach and press the demands of truth all the harder. There are still souls to be won if we will persist in an all-out warfare for the truth and against sin and error of every kind. The Great Commission still says,

“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mark 16:15-16).

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A Silver Lining

Joy Powers



In the midst of turmoil, there is a silver lining. The story goes like this . . .

The weather is beautiful; a perfect day for baseball. Players are dressed in their uniforms. Hot dogs are cooking. The popcorn has been popped. Fans have arrived. "Play ball," cries the umpire. Players run on to the field. The first pitch is thrown. The Wednesday night game has begun.

The game progresses as usual. All is well at the Pony League ball park in Baytown. Suddenly, at 7:10 P.M., the right fielder has to leave the game — not for an injury, or for being disrespectful to the officials, but for another appointment. His brethren are meeting at Pruett & Lobit on this night, just as they always do.

Everyone asks, "Hey, where are you going?" The player simply answers, "church." It is a simple, direct answer. It is given without a hint of embarrassment or resentment in his voice. It was a natural thing for this 14-year old to do. Playing baseball during church services was not an option to him.

At practice the next day, the manager, who himself had missed the previous nights' game to attend a concert, pulled the 14-year old boy aside and questioned him about his early departure from the game. "What if the game is tied and there are no reserves left and your mother pulls you out for church? What are you going to do?" "Go to church," the young man replied. "Even if we have to forfeit a game, you would let everyone down to go to church," the manager asked. "Yes, sir," was the young man's respectful reply.

Obviously, the manager was not getting across to the player the importance of playing baseball, so he called for an appointment with the boy's mother.

She met with the manager to discuss the situation. "He's right," the boy's mother explained, "church comes first."

"But if we have to forfeit a game, his teammates are not going to be happy," said the manager. "He'll get over it," mom replied. "But he'll let his team down if that happens," the manager exclaimed. "But if he misses church for a ball game, he'll also be letting down God," mom said.

As the conversation continued, the manager saw he was not going to change the boy or his mother's mind. Finally, he said, "We'll try to work out a time for the next Wednesday game that will allow your son to be there, but I can't make any promises." "I understand and appreciate you for trying," the mother said kindly.

Afterward, she walked away with a little more pride in her son. But where did a 14-year old get this inner, spiritual strength to stand up to those in authority and do what is right?

He got this strength from *you, from all the brethren at Pruett & Lobit*. Taylor, the right fielder, has grown up here and has been very involved in learning the truth at a young age. He could easily have said, "I have to be at the game, mom, or we'll have to forfeit." He could have pressured Sam and I, but he didn't. Taylor knew what was right, *even without his parents being there!* Now you see why this is "a silver lining in the cloud of turbulence."

(Elders' Note: *We are proud of young men like Taylor Powers who are letting their light shine [Matt. 5:16]. We are blessed here at Pruett & Lobit in Baytown, Texas to have many outstanding young boys and girls who are putting Christ first in their lives.*)

Walking In The Fear Of God (4)

Donnie V. Rader

A Study Of Nehemiah

The story of Nehemiah is that of rebuilding the walls around Jerusalem following the Jews' return from Babylonian captivity. In this book we see a people who feared God. Nehemiah described the people to God as those who "desire to fear Your name" (Neh. 1:11). Later in the book he rebuked some for not walking in the fear of God (Neh. 5:9). He also cited the fear of God as the cause for his own behavior (Neh. 5:15). Nehemiah describes Hanani (who was given charge of the city after the walls were completed) as "a faithful man and feared God more than many" (Neh. 7:2).

Remember, as we have studied in an earlier article, that fear involves: (1) awe and respect, and (2) being afraid of displeasing God. We shall see both of these concepts as we look at the book of Nehemiah.

With the above references as a backdrop, let's consider what the fear of God would prompt these people to do. Likewise, if we are walking in the fear of God, we will do the same.

1. Concerned about the things of God. When Nehemiah learned that the walls were torn down and burned, he "wept and mourned for many days." He said, "I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven" (Neh. 1:4). Nehemiah was so bothered that the city of God was in total ruins that he cried. His concern was so great that he couldn't eat.

Our concern about spiritual things (the church, a soul in danger, what is being taught, development of an apostasy and our worship) should cause us to be greatly disturbed when we see that things are not as they should be. Too often apathy allows the problems to go unchallenged (cf. 1 Cor. 5:2).

2. View God as great and awesome. As Nehemiah prayed, he addressed God as, "O great and awesome God" (Neh. 1:5). Later, when urging the people to resist their opposition, he reminded them that the "great and awe-

some God" would fight for them (Neh. 4:14).

3. See a need and act upon it. After Nehemiah was informed of the situation in Jerusalem, he went to see for himself (Neh. 2:1-10). He went out by night and surveyed the damage the city had suffered. It is interesting to note what Nehemiah didn't do. He didn't think, "Somebody ought to do something about this." Rather, he immediately made a plea for the people of God to rise up and build (Neh. 2:17-18). His plea included himself in the plan.

When we see a need in the Lord's work (someone to be visited, someone to be taught, a problem to be handled or encouragement to be offered), the fear of God will cause us to jump in and do what we can.

4. Diligently work. Chapter three shows who worked and where in the reconstruction of the wall. In this chapter we also see the attitude and manner with which they worked. Baruch "diligently repaired the other section" (Neh. 3:20). There was no time for workers who didn't get with it (Neh. 3:5). Those who fear God will put their whole heart into their work.

5. Have a mind to work. The reason they finished the wall in such a short time (52 days, 6:15) was that the "people had a mind to work" (Neh. 4:6). They were willing to work. They responded to Nehemiah's pleas by saying, "Let us rise up and build" (Neh. 2:18). This is a far cry from those who have to be begged and coached and still don't carry their load.

6. Press on in spite of trouble, opposition or the fear of man. Sanballat (from the north) and Tobiah (from the south) did all they could to hinder the work on the wall (Neh. 4). They ridiculed their work and tried to confuse the workers besides planning an attack. However, that didn't stop those who feared God. They returned to their work (v. 15) while some stood guard with spears (v. 21). They didn't buckle under pressure.

7. *Work long and hard for the Lord's cause.* Under Nehemiah's leadership the people worked on the wall "from daybreak until the stars appeared" (Neh. 4:21). They literally worked from sun-up to sun-down. What could explain their drive and motivation to give so much to their work? It must be their desire to fear God (1:11). Churches that have members that fear God, will have members who work long and hard for the cause of the Lord.

8. *Treat one another right.* When Nehemiah learned that some of the people were exacting usury (charging unreasonable interest) from their brethren, he rebuked them saying, "What you are doing is not good. Should you not walk in the fear of our God?" (Neh. 5:9).

The fear of God will cause us to treat others fair and right. That is the very motive cited by Nehemiah for his own conduct being different from the former governors (v. 15).

9. *Respect for the word.* In the eighth chapter Ezra reads the law before the people. Because of their respect for God (fear) they (a) listened with the intent of understanding (vv. 2, 3, 7, 8), (b) they took time for the hearing of the word (v. 3; 9:3), (c) when Ezra opened the book the people stood (v. 5), (d) they were willing to do what they found lacking in their own lives (vv. 13-18), and (e) as they listened, they viewed the speaker as a spokesman from God (9:26, 29).

10. *Make great changes.* After reading the law, the people confessed their sins (Neh. 9). The Feast of the Tabernacles was not being observed as the law commanded. So, they changed! They also separated themselves from the mixed multitude (13:1-3).

After all, that is the purpose of the preaching of God's word (Neh. 9:26, 29). Those who fear God will make any changes necessary (no matter how painful) to fit their lives to the plan of God.

11. *Recognize that God's wrath is just.* The confession that is recorded in Nehemiah 9 said to God, "You are just in all that has befallen us; for You have dealt faithfully, but we have done wickedly" (v. 33). This is a recognition that God's wrath, rebuke and punishment are fair.

12. *Promise to be faithful.* Once the people confessed their sins, they make a covenant that they would "walk in God's law . . . and do all the commandments of the Lord" (10:29). Those who fear God make a promise to the Lord by their confession and baptism that they will serve the Lord faithfully. Those who would think of doing otherwise do not fear God.

13. *Exercise righteous indignation.* There is such a thing as *righteous* indignation. There is a time to be upset

and angry. While we must control ourselves properly at all times, there is a time and place to demonstrate our displeasure over things that do not harmonize with the fear of God. Nehemiah did.

While Nehemiah had left Jerusalem to return to the king, Eliashib, the priest, had compromised with Tobiah "preparing a room for him in the courts of the house of God" (Neh. 13:7). Nehemiah said, "it grieved me bitterly; therefore I threw all the household goods of Tobiah out of the room" (v. 8).

Later, when Nehemiah learned that some of the people had married people of the land, he said, "So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, 'You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves'" (Neh. 13:25).

When we fear God we will be upset when we see God's will being transgressed.

14. *Aware of danger.* As Nehemiah dealt with the matter of their marriage to the strangers of the land, he cited Solomon as an example of what could happen. He said, "Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin" (Neh. 13:26). If that happened to Solomon, it could and would happen to those of Nehemiah's day. The point is that those who fear God have their eyes open to the danger of things that could lead them away from the Lord.

It is my prayer that this short series of articles will challenge you to do more thinking and study on the concept of the fear of God.

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Piloting The Strait

by Dave Miller

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Do The Simple Things

Richard Boone

I took the car to have the tires rotated and balanced and the alignment checked and adjusted. There was the customary wait, but when I noticed that my car was being driven onto the alignment rack, I stepped outside to watch and chat as I usually do. I talked with the alignment technician.

His work was efficient and the conversation enjoyable. As he was finishing I asked, "What causes most of the problems that you have to correct?" His answer was interesting: "Failing to do the simple things (checking air pressure, regular rotation and alignment, etc.) consistently." I saw immediate applications to faithfully serving God.

Too many times we are like Naaman or the Israelites of Ezra's day. From a desire to do some great thing (2 Kings 5:13), we despise the little things we can do (Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3; Zech. 4:10). While faithfully serving God may call upon us to do great things from time to time, more frequently it is the day-to-day, routine acts of devotion and service which keep us faithful. In short, it is doing the simple things, consistently. Simple things like:

- *Studying God's word each day.* There is special emphasis on this in the Scriptures (see Deut. 6:6-9; Ps. 1:1-2; Acts 17:11; etc.). This is preventive in its nature (Ps. 119:11).
- *Praying to God each day.* This is also emphasized in Scripture (Ps. 55:17; Dan. 6:10; Luke 18:1; Acts 3:1; 10:2-3, 30; 1 Thess. 5:17). We cannot cling to sin and pray acceptably at the same time (1 Tim. 2:8; 1 Pet. 3:10-12). Prayer will help to stop sin, or sin will stop prayer!
- *Speaking to others about God each day.* We are God's instruments for teaching his word (Eph. 4:15; 2 Cor. 4:7). We must use every opportunity we have, as Dorcas did "while she was with them" (Acts 9:39).
- *Doing what is right each day.* What we do shines our lights as much as what we refrain from doing (Matt. 5:13-16). As Jesus did, we must go about "doing good" (Acts 10:38). "Good" works are revealed to us in God's word (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

How can we faithfully serve God? By doing the simple things, consistently!

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"Submission" continued from front page

Is there any surprise in our day of women's liberation that the divorce rate is sky high? Is there any wonder why many congregations across America have been finding themselves in bitter divisions for the laws of God are cast aside by some who call themselves Christians in the name of equality, fairness, and womanhood?

There is a third observation I want you to consider about this ruling. Friends, you do not need a denominational church to determine which laws given in the New Testament apply to the church of Jesus Christ today. The Southern Baptist Convention does not have authority from God to repeal or reinstate this law or any other law of Christ

in the New Testament. Actually, in their attempt to do so, they have usurped the authority of Christ unto themselves, granting themselves unlimited power to make laws for their congregations. In the New Testament, there was no such thing as a Southern Baptist Convention or any other earthly church headquarters. We read that Christ is the head of the church (Eph. 5:23). Since this is the truth, there is no room for the Southern Baptist Convention or any other governing religious authorities making laws, amendments or rules for believers in Jesus.

The church we read about in the Bible had no earthly governing theological body who dictated which laws that

would be enforced religiously. Christians in the New Testament followed the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42), and the apostles' doctrine is the New Testament, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Christians understood the seriousness of John's instruction when he wrote in 2 John 9, "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." The doctrine of Christ is complete in the New Testament and real true Christians are satisfied with the doctrine of Christ.

Ladies, be content to accept the truths of Jesus Christ by submitting and respecting your husband in everything. Men, let's remember that God has placed upon us the responsibility to be the head of our wife. When we consider the headship of Jesus towards his church, we observe a loving, caring and compassionate leader. If you will exercise this type of headship towards your wife, your marriage will blossom into the joy God designed marriage to be. Don't try to change the truth that God has given concerning the roles of men and women in marriage. Try living like Christ would have us to live. You'll discover that Jesus knew what was best all along.

1500 S. Calvert., South Bend, Indiana

“Catholics” continued from page 2

Catholic faith is based on four things: (1) The teachings of the Fathers as conveyed through the ecumenical councils; (2) The word of the pope as he speaks *ex cathedra*; (3) The teachings of the apocrypha; (4) The teachings of the Bible as it is translated from the Vulgate version. Much could be said about each of these, such as the contradictory teachings of the Fathers; an examination of the *ex cathedra* statements of the papacy in comparison with the Bible; the errors and unique teachings of the apocryphal books; errors in the Latin Vulgate translation; etc.

2. *“The Catholic Church existed before the Bible.”* There is some truth in this statement, but it is mixed with enough error that it needs to be sorted out. The New Testament church began on the day of Pentecost following the crucifixion of Jesus. It existed after the Old Testament was completed and before any part of the New Testament was written. The church of the New Testament had no papacy, no cardinals, no archbishops, no bishops (in the Catholic sense), no separate priesthood, no clergy-laity distinction, or inter-congregational organization of any sort. It did not believe in purgatory, the worship of Mary, or any other uniquely Catholic doctrines. So, the Catholic Church is not the church in the Bible.

However, the New Testament did foretell an apostasy in

the church (2 Thess. 2:1-12; 1 Tim. 4:1-3). This apostasy began before the New Testament was completely revealed and it culminated in about the sixth century with a universal pope and what is now recognized as the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church, in its incipient form of apostasy, did exist before the New Testament was completed, but it was not the church which Christ promised to build (Matt. 16:18). The Roman Catholic Church is the culmination of the apostasy that began to develop in the latter part of the first century, the incipient forms of which are condemned in the New Testament.

3. *“The Catholic Church determined what books would be in the New Testament.”* That simply is not so. From the time that the New Testament books were revealed, they were considered the revealed word of God. Paul wrote, “If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37). They were received as the word of God (1 Thess. 2:13) and passed from one congregation to another (Col. 4:16). The books were received as “inspired” of God because they were written by an apostle or prophet. Those books whose origin was uncertain went through a period of uncertainty before they were universally recognized as inspired. However, even this was done long before the Council of Carthage met in A.D. 397, as Mr. Fink asserts. One can see the books of the New Testament quoted as Scripture, not only in the New Testament itself (Luke 10:7 is quoted as Scripture in 1 Tim. 5:17), but also in the apostolic fathers. For example, Clement quotes Acts 20:35 (2:1), Titus 3:1 (2:9), and 2 Corinthians 3:3 (2:10) in just one chapter. Clement's letter to the Corinthians is dated A.D. 95-96 (Lightfoot, *The Apostolic Epistles*). This demonstrates that the New Testament was already recognized as the word of God two centuries before the Council of Carthage.

Mr. Fink alludes to the Catholic Church including the seven apocryphal books and minor additions to other books of the Old Testament in their Bibles. That the Jews rejected these books is clear from contemporary Jewish writings. The first century historian Flavius Josephus said, “We have not a multitude of books among us, disagreeing and contradicting one another, as the Greeks have, but are confined to twenty-two, that we are bound to believe, and these twenty-two books comprise the history of the world from the beginning to this day” (*In Answer To Apion*, Book I, 455). The 22 books of Josephus' numbering correspond to our 39 books today because they combined some books which we separate today (for example, the 12 Minor Prophets were treated as one book; 1-2 Samuel was treated as one book, as were 1-2 Kings and 1-2 Chronicles). Furthermore, the New Testament alludes to the completed Old Testament canon in Matthew 23:35, where Jesus mentioned those who had died unjustly in the Old Testament from the blood of Abel (the first man in the Bible to die) to Zacharias (the last

man to die as recorded in the Old Testament), based on the Jewish arrangement of the Scripture which places Genesis as the first book of the Old Testament and 2 Chronicles as the last. Hence, the canon of Old Testament Scripture existed in Jesus' day and was mentioned with approval by him. Jesus and the writers of the New Testament never quoted from any apocryphal book as an authoritative word of God. Even the Roman Catholic Church did not officially recognize the apocryphal books as part of the Old Testament until the Council of Trent in A.D. 1546.

Mr. Fink's statements about the Catholic Church and the Bible are revealing, helping us to understand why the Catholics and Protestants form separate religious groups.

6567 Kings Ct., Danville, Indiana 46122

Preachers Needed

Arbutus, Maryland: This congregation was established in November 1995 by faithful brethren who are determined to spread God's word to their friends and neighbors in the Arbutus area, a suburb of Baltimore. They are presently meeting in the East Drive Professional Building, 5205 East Dr., Suite D (second level), Arbutus, MD 21227. The congregation has 22 members with an average Sunday attendance between 30-35. They are in need of a full-time evangelist to work with them. The congregation can provide \$1600 per month salary, plus health insurance, and pay for moving expenses. They are interested in someone who can provide partial support. This work is ideal for someone who is enthusiastic for the Lord and wants to work with brethren who are eager to spread the word. If interested, please write the Arbutus Church of Christ at the above address or call Jim Craig (410-789-2080), Jim Ruff (717-359-0055), or leave a message at the church building (410-247-1396).

Nevada, Iowa: They are looking for a preacher to help start a new work in Ames, Iowa. Ames is a university town with a population of 50,000. Ames is a growing community with several small towns around it. Ames currently has no conservative church, but with help they feel they can have a thriving congregation. There will be 3-4 families helping to start the work there. Limited support will be available at the beginning so outside support is needed. They are eager to start this new work in the near future. If interested, please contact Dwight Bouvette, 515-382-3169 or 515-382-312

Charleston, West Virginia: The Oakwood Road congregation in Charleston is still looking for a preacher. Some preaching experience desired. If interested, please contact

Frank Linville, 304-346-2700, 1314 Thelma Dr., Charleston, WV 25302.



Charlie L. Graham, 563 N.E. 5th St., Crystal River, Florida 34429: J.T. Smith of Tulsa, Oklahoma had a fine gospel meeting for the Crystal River church of Christ the last week of January. One soul was washed clean by the blood of Christ, J.T.'s grandson, his youngest daughter, Debbie's son. The church rejoices with brother and sister Smith and with Debbie's family.

The church is spiritually healthy, working hard to save the lost and worshiping God in spirit and in truth. The church is at peace with itself and God and is fighting Satan on every front. We have had two baptisms, one restoration, two to place membership, one family to move here from another state, and we are having a host of visitors. At this writing we had 17 visitors Sunday. We invite those coming to Crystal River to visit with us.

I am finishing ten years with the church here and look forward to working with these fine Christians into the future as God gives to us the increase. I will be in a gospel meeting with the brethren at Kahoka, Missouri August 9-14 and in Walnut Ridge, Arkansas, August 16.

Bruce Reeves from Conway, Arkansas has just finished an excellent gospel meeting for the church here. The church was edified as we were taught from 1-2 Peter. The church is making plans for a meeting with Jim Lee in November. Brother Lee preaches for the church in New Carlisle, Ohio. We ask for the prayers of saints everywhere and your encouragement to continue faithful to our Heavenly Father.

Eric Reed, P.O. Box 637, Bellville, Cape 7535, South Africa: At the end of each month, and usually by the middle of the next one, I try to put pen to paper with all the good news of the previous 30 days. Well, My fellow Americans and beloved brethren in Christ, as I begin to write this report, I find myself on a preaching trip to Knysne (about a 5-hour drive up the coast, east of Cape Town), on the 4th of July! And as we celebrate (wherever we are all over the world) our Independence from Britain, truly our celebrations will *never* cease regarding our *spiritual* independence from sin! (Rom.8:6). A little old lady in this town, by the name of Molly Shew just completed her sixth lesson of our *Know*

Your Bible correspondence course, and I'm here to make personal contact and set up further studies, if desired by her. Anyway, that's another story for another report.

Son-In-Law Replaces Son-in-Law Replaces Son-in-Law

Ray Votaw has spent some 43 years of his life preaching the precious gospel of Christ throughout Southern Africa. And through the years (ever since way back in 1974), he has helped me immeasurably, to follow in his footsteps! He helped me raise the needed support amongst the brethren, educated me regarding the diverse cultures and customs of this "rainbow nation," and taught me the joys of "true conversion without coercion."

Well, as most of you know (who have closely followed my reports over the years) during the past couple of years, my youngest daughter, Holly met, taught, converted and married a fine young man from Martinsville, Virginia, brother Shane Perry. Holly met Shane on the "Mercy Ship" (an inter-denominational, floating medical facility, offering FREE medical assistance to the peoples of the world, unable to afford such). Shane, like myself, has always wanted to be a missionary, and fresh out of high school, joining this "CARE-type" of international assistance seemed "the right thing to do." But when he met and began studying with Holly, his confidence in his own spiritual condition before God became unsettled (and rightly so). He followed Holly to Cape Town (which he had also done previously), this time to study further with me for a 12-day period. We were all thrilled with his subsequent decision to be rebaptized the right way, for the right reasons (Acts 22:16; Eph. 5:23), and into the right church! (1 Cor.12:13; Acts 2:47).

Ever since his happy conversion, Holly and Shane have continued to study together. And now he is looking forward to studying and working with me (for at least 1 year) from January 1999. But a work permit must be obtained from the South African embassy in America and financial support must be raised for him just like Ray Votaw did for me 24 years ago). Brother Leslie Maydell, from Pretoria (here in South Africa), has in recent years tried this with great success; plus inviting young men (keenly interested in overseas evangelism) to come work with him for a limited time to see if they are suited for the Lord's work in this country (and vice versa). Likewise, Shane and I will be working, studying and preaching very closely together for at least a 12-month period, Lord willing.

We are hoping to raise \$2,000 per month in total monthly support (\$1250=salary, \$300=car allowance, and \$450=house & utilities allowance). If you can help this fine, young brother in Christ, in his intensive study and proclamation quest for the gospel, please write him soon! Shane and Holly are busy now winding-up their final tour duty on the ship (currently off the coast of Germany) before

returning to Virginia (where Shane's folks stay) and then apply for that all-important work permit.

Swapping George for Shane

The 3rd son-in-law, brother George Harris (Conrad Steyn's son-in-law), and his family are preparing to return to the States, to Trinity, Alabama (after completing some 16 years of overseas evangelism here). We will certainly miss brother George and his family, but are thankful to him, for recommending Shane to the S.A. embassy, as an appropriate replacement in this area. This should speed up the allocation of Shane's work permit from the embassy in New Orleans.

Again, if you are able to help this fine, young brother in Christ, to get a good start in his efforts to follow in my footsteps; who likewise, has been for the past 24 years following in brother Ray Votaw's footsteps, please write soon! You can write him, c/o my address above for now, until his ship duty ends. Or, c/o his parents — yet out of Christ, 355 Shady Grove Road, Martinsville, Virginia 24112. Ray Votaw can be contacted at: Rt.2, Box 335, Buna, Texas 77612; or by phone and fax at (409) 745-5738.

Any monthly amount capable of being sent BEFORE January 1, 1999 will be applied towards the necessary travel expenses involved. We are also trying to raise \$5,000 in one-time assistance to cover the expense of airline tickets, travel documents and permits, household goods sent, etc. All funds sent will be fully itemized and accounted for, as well as letters of gratitude sent to each supporter!



Edward Gimsley: Vulgar Language

"People who knowingly select movies and television programs featuring foul language deserve exactly what they get. But it is not always possible to know in advance that a show is likely to overflow with filth. There are ratings for movies, but they provide inadequate protection for unsuspecting viewers. Vulgarity often erupts from television without any warning at all. Many people will wonder why governments that are clever enough to devise ways to shield children from the dangers of prayer in classrooms should not be clever enough to shield them from the evils of vulgarity in entertainment" (*Reader's Digest* [April 1996], 50).