

TRUTH

Some Lofty Concepts and Blessings

Lewis Willis

When reading the Scriptures, one often notes an unusual and unexpected collection of great spiritual thoughts in a relatively brief portion of text. I observed this recently when reading the following text:

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colosse: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints, For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel; Which is come unto you, as it is in all the world; and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth: As ye also learned of Epaphras our dear fellowservant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ; Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit (Col. 1:1-8).

The passage acknowledges *God the Father* (v. 2), our *Lord Jesus Christ* (vv. 2-4), and the *Holy Spirit* (v. 8). So, the godhead is clearly mentioned and af-

firmed. These are the most lofty ideas and ideals that can occupy the human consciousness, and Paul mentions them in this text. However, those are not the things I refer to in this article. Consider with me the following thoughts in this Colossians text.

1. Grace (v. 2). At the outset of his letter, the great apostle wishes *grace* as a blessing upon his readers. By *grace* we are saved (Eph. 2:5, 8). Without God extending his *grace* unto us, we are hopelessly lost. In v. 6 Paul says his readers “knew the *grace* of God in truth.” Indeed, the *grace* of God is extended through the truth. Elsewhere Paul will say to Titus that “. . . the *grace* of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us” (Tit. 2:11-12). In the preaching of the truth, man finds the necessary knowledge of God’s *grace*, and how to benefit from it. Many more things could be said about *grace*, but suffice it to say that Paul mentioned it in this text.

2. Peace (v. 2). Paul said this *peace*

see “Blessings” on p. 88

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32).

Vol. XLVI
No. 3
February 7, 2002



Editor: Mike Willis

Associate Editor: Connie W. Adams

Staff Writers

J. Wiley Adams	Olen Holderby
Donald P. Ames	Jarrod Jacobs
O.C. Birdwell, Jr.	Daniel H. King
Dick Blackford	Mark Mayberry
Edward Bragwell	Aude McKee
Bill Cavender	Harry Osborne
Stan Cox	Joe R. Price
Bob Dickey	Donnie V. Rader
Johnie Edwards	Chris Reeves
Harold Fite	Tom M. Roberts
Marc W. Gibson	Weldon E. Warnock
Larry Hafley	Lewis Willis
Ron Halbrook	Bobby Witherington
Irvin Himmel	Steve Wolfgang

Guardian of Truth Foundation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Connie W. Adams	Ron Halbrook
Alan Birdwell	Fred Pollock
O.C. Birdwell, Jr.	Weldon E. Warnock
Dickey Cooper	Mike Willis

Steve Wolfgang

— Subscription Rates —

\$22.00 Per Year

Single Copies — \$2.00 each

Foreign Subscriptions — \$24.00

— Bulk Rates —

\$1.50 per subscription per month

Manuscripts should be sent to Mike Willis, 6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, (317) 272-6520. E-mail: mikewillis001@cs.com.

All business matters should be addressed to O.C. Birdwell, Jr. who serves as Executive Vice-President for the Guardian of Truth Foundation. He is available by phone at 1-800-633-3216 or by mail at P.O. Box 858, Athens, AL 35611.

Subscriptions, renewals and other correspondence should be sent to Truth Magazine, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Book orders should be sent to Truth Bookstore, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Phone: 1-800-428-0121.

Web Address: www.truthmagazine.com

Postmaster: Send change of address to P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102.

Truth Magazine (ISSN 1538-0793) is published twice a month by Guardian of Truth Foundation, P.O. Box 9670, Bowling Green, KY 42102. Postage paid at Bowling Green, KY and additional mailing offices.

Should We Apologize to the Christian Church?

Mike Willis

The following quotation is taken from an article published in *Once More With Love* (October 2001) which is edited by Leroy Garrett:

We Must Talk About Instrumental Music

Leroy Garrett



It is probably true, as some of our leaders are saying, that among our more “progressive” preachers there is not a one who believes that the use of instrumental music in worship is a sin. They certainly do not hold the position of the Churches of Christ of the 1940s that made the use of instrumental music a test of fellowship. There are no more sermons about the evils of instrumental music in worship.

This is the case with most members as well. Instrumental music has become a non-issue.

This does not mean, however, that they want to bring in the instrument. For the most part they don’t. The reasons vary. It is often a matter of conviction that acappella music better reflects the worship of the primitive church. Or it might cause division, or at least be offensive. It would not be politically correct. Whatever the reason for remaining acappella, it is different from the traditional position of the instrument being biblically forbidden and sinful.

But hardly anyone is saying what we must start saying, *We have been wrong about instrumental music*. I am confident that that will be our conclusion once we broach the subject honestly.

We have not been wrong in being acappella. All churches sometimes sing acappella. Some of the great choirs are acappella. Some of the oldest denominations have historically been acappella, such as in the Orthodox tradition.

We have been wrong in that we have made the use of the instrument a test of fellowship. We have made our preference or opinion an essential to the faith. This is what we must confess and repudiate, even when we go right on being acappella — as our own preference, while in brotherly love we recognize that others see it differently.

The evolution of the unity-in-diversity brethren on the subject of instru-

see “Christian Church” on p. 89

TABLE OF
CONTENTS

Editorial Left-overs

Connie W. Adams

Appropriate for the Occasion

Prayers should always be suitable for the occasion. Some of the brethren have not learned this. I have heard brethren pray for everything at the Lord's table except to remember to give thanks for the bread and the cup. Dismissing the congregation is almost a lost ability. That does not require a long prayer. Some preachers are the worst offenders. Some pray so long in giving thanks at the dinner table that the bread gets cold and the gravy needs reheating. Of course there are times when we all need to spend *much* time in prayer. Our Lord prayed all night on occasion. In the garden he prayed three times the same way pouring out his soul to the Almighty.

But I don't think I ever heard a more appropriate prayer than the one offered up by my good friend, a deacon in the church at Barnesville, Ohio a few weeks ago when he was called on to give thanks for the food at a potluck on Sunday afternoon. After thanking the Lord for the food, he said, "And Lord, help us not to be piggish or hoggish." Now, brother, that is an appropriate prayer for the occasion if ever I heard one.

Contemporary Worship

For years now a battle has raged in some of the denominations over what is called contemporary worship as opposed to the more traditional forms, especially in the music offered. Many of the younger have clamored for newer forms of music including "gospel rock." Older members have complained that the newer music lacks reverence and thus the battle has been joined. Some have tried to solve the problem by having separate services so both sides can be appeased. Well, the problem has hit churches of Christ. A large institutional church in the Nashville, Tennessee area has recently divided and this was one of the key issues.

A few years ago I had some correspondence with the editor at that time of the *Gospel Advocate*. He lamented to me the developing tendency of many of the younger generation gravitating toward camp meeting songs and the fact that many were growing up without even knowing the songs of faith which have strengthened and inspired the faithful for generations. Neither that editor, nor I would oppose learning and using new songs. I am especially pleased to learn songs written by faithful servants of the Lord, songs that are musically possible in the ordinary congregation and which are reverential in tone and scriptural in content.

But I have noticed in the last couple of years an inclination to abandon songs like that, whether old ones or newer ones in favor of a different brand

continued on next page

Some Lofty Concepts and Blessings
Lewis Willis front page

Should We Apologize to the Christian Church?
Mike Willis 2

Editorial Left-overs
Connie W. Adams 3

The Christian and Strong Drink
Louis J. Sharp 6

All Denominations Are Created Equal
J.S. Smith 7

Those Preaching Politicians
Brian A. Yeager 9

The Train Just Rolls Away
Martin Bragwell 10

Homosexuality, Divorce, and Fellowship
Harry Osborne 12

A Letter of Comfort
Larry Ray Hafley 15

The Plain Gospel
Ron Halbrook 16

Five Exceptions
Olen Holderby 17

The Great and First Commandment
Jim Ward 18

The Doctrine of Christ and the Apostles
Mark Mayberry 20

"I Don't Want My Daughter To Dance"
Jarrod Jacobs 22

Authentic Faith
Sherrel A. Mercer 23

of songs, more of the Amy Grant, Gaither convention kind of music. Some of the songs I am hearing do not really say much and some of them are downright unscriptural. I hear a distinct Pentecostal message in some of them. We were recently present in a service where twelve songs were sung, none of which we knew and several of which would fit the category just described. Certainly, I don't pretend to know all the songs available. But less and less I hear "Rock of Ages," "Power in the Blood," "Standing on the Promises," "Amazing Grace." More and more I hear songs which some of our young people have learned at a summer camp and want to use in worship assemblies. Some of these may be suitable and some are not.

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Col. 3:16).

Remembering Leon Odom

At the age of 75, Leon Odom passed away on October 30, 2001 in Tyler, Texas where he had preached for several years and also served as one of the elders. He was a preacher of dedication and great ability. I first met him during a lecture program at Odessa, Texas where he delivered an interesting series exposing the errors of Scientology. For several years he wrote regularly in the *Expositor's Review*. All of his local work was done in Texas but he held meetings throughout the country. He was a delight to have around. His sense of humor was unique. If Leon Odom

could not make you laugh until you cried, then you were a sad case indeed. I liked his directness. Once I was in a meeting in Longview, Texas and Leon brought several brethren over from Tyler. He sat on the second row. I preached that night on the Beatitudes. In discussing "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness" I made a few pointed comments about brethren who seem to think they have learned everything and who don't need to come to Bible classes. As I was about to move on, Leon spoke up and said, "No, no, don't leave that yet. Work on that some more." And so I did.

Harold Fite wrote a touching tribute to his lifelong friend which appeared in the December 2001 *Preceptor*. Swiftly we're turning life's daily pages and the hours are indeed changing to years. Faithful soldiers of Christ are changing worlds and many of those who remain have but a few short days to tell the old, old story. We cherish the memories of valiant men who have touched our lives and rejoice in all the good they accomplished.

Meeting Schedule for 2002

January:

East Hill, Pensacola, Florida (6-11)
Preaching in Mindanao and Luzon, Philippines (January 17-February 18)

March:

Fairfield Highlands, Midfield, Alabama (3-8)
West Lafayette, Ohio (17-22)

April:

Parkview, Deer Park, Texas (7-12)
New Carlisle, Ohio (21-26)

May:

Helton Dr., Florence, Alabama (5-10)
Beaverton, Oregon (22-26)

June:

Jamestown, Indiana (9-14)
New Matamoras, Ohio (24-30)

July and August:

We will be working with the church at Blackfoot, Idaho in teaching classes, preaching, personal work.

September:

S. Livingston, Tampa, Florida (8-13)
Hodgenville, Kentucky (23-29)

October:

Providence, Brodhead, Kentucky (6-11)
Jordan, Ontario, Canada (20-25)

November:

Glendale, Arizona (3-8)
Marshall's Branch, Virgie, Kentucky (17-22)

We would be pleased to greet any of our readers at any of these places.

P.O.Box 91346, Fern Creek, Kentucky 40291

Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Manners and Customs

by Howard F. Vos

Rath-



er than blurring all the lands and cultures of the Bible into a single inaccurate "Bible time," this volume distinguishes the differing ways of life from period to period and place to place. #16479.

\$19.99

Warnings against the evils and dangers of strong drink are proliferated on the pages of Holy Writ.

The Christian and Strong Drink!

Louis J. Sharp

A perennial problem surfaces with these recurring questions: “Can a Christian engage in social drinking?” “Shall I consume alcoholic beverages?” “Must I totally abstain?” “Did Jesus condone the use of wine at the wedding feast in Galilee?”, etc., etc.

Let me state at the outset of this article that alcohol poses no problem to me. At the age of 78 years, I can still say that I have never tasted beer or hard liquor. Furthermore, I have no desire to do so. On one occasion, I tasted wine that was used in the Lord’s supper when I was in the navy during WWII. Never have I used alcohol as a beverage. But my practice is not the divine standard! I want you to know that I am a “teetotaler,” and am in no way making a case for social drinking.

The first miracle that Jesus performed had to do with wine (John 2:1-11). Jesus changed the water into wine. Did he, who was without sin, do wrong? Was he a party to evil-doing? Did he condone ungodliness of any sort? Of course not! Yet, what Jesus did on this occasion has raised many questions, doubts, and concerns in the minds of those who may desire to imbibe, or, could it be that someone is looking for “an out”?

Possibly every drunkard knows one Scripture, 1 Timothy 5:23. They have learned this verse if they know nothing more about the Bible. This is the verse where Paul instructs Timothy to “drink no longer water, but use a little wine for their stomach’s sake, and thine often infirmities.” Undoubtedly, it contained healing properties. Present-day medicines contain alcohol in varied percentages. Medical use is not condemned.

Burton Coffman offers a rational comment on John 2:8. He states: “Regarding the question of what kind of wine

this was, all kinds of irresponsible speculations abound. Even Barnes gave elaborate arguments to prove that the wine created by the Lord was nothing more than the pure juice of the grapes with no alcohol content whatever; but, as Barnes admitted, ‘The wine, referred to here, was doubtless such as was commonly drunk in Palestine.’ And it is precisely this evident truth that rebukes any notion that this wine was merely the unfermented juice of the grapes” (Coffman, *Commentary on John* 63-64).

Coffman adds, “This is not to say, however, that the wine Jesus made was supercharged with alcohol like some of the burning liquors that are marketed today under the wine label. That, we emphatically deny, but to go further than this, and read *wine* as *grape juice* seems to this writer to be a perversion of the word of God” (*Ibid.* 64).

Guy N. Woods adds to our investigation in his comments on verse 10. “The words, *drunk freely*, undoubtedly describes a state of intoxication, wherein the senses have been dulled. *It is significant that this was not the characteristic of this group, and of this wedding feast, since all present were able to make such distinctions* (emphasis mine, LJS). Neither Jesus, his mother, nor his disciples were parties to a drunken brawl, as often occurred on such occasions. We may be sure that our Lord did not endorse by his actions here, that which deity forbids through the Bible (Prov. 20:1; 23:31; Isa. 22:13). One so good as he did not send a drunken bridegroom to his bride, . . .” (Woods, *Commentary of John* 51-52).

Woods goes on to suggest: “In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word *yayin*, equivalent of the Greek word *oinos*, signified no more than the liquid of the grape. When fresh from the vats, it was non-intoxicating, but with age grew stronger, and acquired some alcoholic content. In its first

Is our affinity for the body of Christ limited to a declaration that it is just a little more equal than the sects of men?

All Denominations Are Created Equal

J.S. Smith

It has become common for the ultra-liberals among our institutional brethren to refer to the church of Christ as a denomination. Seeking ecumenical parity with their Baptist and Methodist neighbors, they are dropping what they perceive to be a 200-year-old policy of prejudice and arrogance, the idea that there is “one true church.”

Denominationalism in the nineteenth century was a fierce rivalry. Doctrinal distinctions were magnified in de-

bates and men were known as much by their religious sect as their occupation. Today, that rivalry is muted because the masses are perceived to have attention spans too short to endure much doctrine. The new gospel of self-esteem with its mantra, “I’m okay, You’re okay,” is uniting the masses in principle if not in sanctuary.

Religious debates are nearly extinct, for it is perceived that denominational differences are insufficient to warrant

stages it was (1) pleasant and nutritious, (2) then tangy, (3) finally intoxicating. The Scriptures commended the first stage, the second is mentioned with neither approval nor condemnation, in every case the third is condemned” (*Ibid.* 52). Woods concluded his comments, “The biblical basis for the determination for the proper conduct in all such matters, is to shun that which has been harmful to the spiritual well-being of others, thus *avoiding every appearance of evil*” (*Ibid.* 52).

Total abstinence from strong drink was (1) Enjoined upon the priests serving in the tabernacle (Lev. 10:9); (2) A law for the Nazarites (Num. 6:3); (3) A rule for kings (Prov. 31:4); (4) Given as a law for the Rechabites (Jer. 35:6); (5) Adopted by Daniel and his companions as their law (Dan. 1:8); (6) True of John the Baptist (Luke 1:15); (7) Given as a qualification of elders of the Lord’s people (1 Tim. 3:3).

It is apparent to me that brotherly love demands it of Christians today. “It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is

offended, or is made weak” (Rom. 14:21).

Let us never forget: “Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise” (Prov. 20:1). Also: “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath babbling? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look thou not upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his color in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:29-32).

Warnings against the evils and dangers of strong drink are proliferated on the pages of Holy Writ. God’s people are constantly warned about intemperance and drunkenness. When one truly has an understanding of the evils of strong drink, then the shallow arguments for its consumption will cease! Then, we will concur with the Spirit-guided apostle Paul: “And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit” (1 Thess. 5:7).

Reprinted from the Gospel Spotlight; IV: 26; June 25, 1989

discussion or risk contention. The sects have retreated and declared that everyone is going to heaven anyway, even those narrow-minded church of Christ people. After all, we are told, all denominations are equal. It's just that our is a little more equal than others.

Where the sects once misinterpreted Christ's parable of the vine and branches to justify their existence, they now borrow from George Orwell's *Animal Farm* instead.

Shall we relocate to the barnyard and join the "go along to get along" crowd? Is the church of Christ just another denomination, founded in the nineteenth century like so many others? Is our affinity for the body of Christ limited to a declaration that it is just a little more equal than the sects of men?

First, it is true that all denominations are created equal, but untrue that any is more equal than another.

In Matthew 16:16, our Lord promised to build his church. It would be the church belonging to Christ, thus likely to be known more simply as "the church of Christ" (Rom. 16:16). He did not promise to build Luther's church, although Luther has one now (against his will). He did not promise to build a church for John the Baptist, but he has one now (against his will also).

Foreseeing that unity within this great, universal body would be difficult to maintain, Christ took steps to ensure that apostasy would not infect the organism. Authority was not to be vested in any one individual on earth, unlike the current condition in the Vatican (Matt. 28:18-20). The church he built has no earthly headquarters and no universal human oversight. Instead, the disciples in various places

are congregated into local churches that are overseen by appointed elders who have absolutely no authority beyond the bounds of the local church in which they are members (1 Pet. 5:1-5).

When the apostle John put down his pen, ending both the first century and the New Testament canon, not a single denomination was in existence anywhere on the face of the Earth. There were churches of Christ, however (Rom. 16:16), focused upon a mission of evangelism, edification, and benevolence toward needy saints.

Not a single drop of ink had been used to authorize clergy titles like "Father" or "Reverend" or fellowship halls for recreation, entertainment, and banquets (1 Cor. 11:34).

The method was the New Testament (1 Pet. 4:11) and every church was to have a presbytery (1 Tim. 4:14) and espouse immersion in water as the proper mode (Gal. 3:27). But there was no Methodist, Presbyterian, or Baptist church. The Bible does not mention any Mormons and the apostles never saw the need to send a delegation to Berea to build a Watchtower Society. The disciples were called Christians (Acts 11:26) and any other designation would merely show that their loyalties were divided among God and some theological theory that needed explaining beyond what the name of Christ would accomplish on its own.

The seeds of our modern state of denominationalism, however, were sown in at least one church within two decades of its birth. The members of the Corinth church of Christ began splitting into cliques to favor certain preachers who caught their fancy. Without the preachers' approval, the saints were destroying Christian unity by creating a Petrine convention, a Pauline synod, and an Apollonian Society. The apostle Paul excoriated their disharmony and told them to drop the preferences and get back to being just Christians, united in the oracles of God and not the creeds of their own devising (1 Cor. 1:10-13).

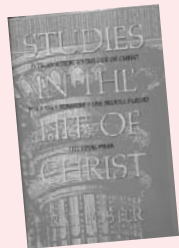
Sadly, though, as we listen to some of our own today apologizing for a historic narrow-mindedness in the church of Christ about sectarianism, we realize that Corinth is being revisited upon us. It is not we, however, who imagined that there was only one true church. It was the Holy Spirit who uttered the truth and expected those whom he sealed to uphold it (Eph. 4:4; 1:22-23).

Yet every time a congregation veers from its Bible mission into the realms of recreation or unlimited benevolence, a church of Christ begins to resemble just another denomination. What an awful pity.

jssmith@electronicgospel.org.

Studies in the Life of Christ

by R.C. Foster



One-volume edition.
Originally four volumes.
Excellent material.

Hardback. #100670

\$39.99

Reader, we need to ask ourselves; are we seeking the praise of God or the praise of men?

Those Preaching Politicians

Brian A. Yeager

It never ceases to amaze me when I see brethren bowing to the politics that are running so rapid throughout the Lord's church today. It seems that there are those that lose sight of the goal of being faithful stewards. Some change their goal from preaching the truth and getting to heaven to things like trying to please brethren that edit publications or direct lectureships. Some may play upon the politics of Schools of Preaching or "Christian" Universities. They feel as though if they play the politics just right then they will have a larger name among men. Dear reader, that is *all wrong!* This theory that is made up of pride and arrogance does nothing less than make God really upset. "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate" (Prov. 8:13). God does not want us seeking after our own glory but giving glory to him (1 Cor. 10:31). "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." Paul wrote of this exact thing: "To preach the gospel in the regions beyond you, and not to boast in another man's line of things made ready to our hand. But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth" (2 Cor. 10:16-18). It is very easy for men of the gospel to be puffed up because we help Christians through our studies and teaching know better the way of the Lord. This is a preacher's job, and the reward is not on this earth but in heaven (Matt. 25:34).

It amazes me when I hear supposed preachers of the truth lie down and act denominational all for the sake of getting a name. It is obvious when you attend some brotherhood lectures and gospel meetings it seems that the speaker is elevated above the message. This is not what God wants. "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things:

to whom be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. 11:36). We even have brethren that name buildings after past preachers (A Pro-Institutional School called "Memphis School of Preaching" is building the "N.B. Hardeman Library"), and others preach on the "Restoration Leaders" as though Alexander Campbell was Christ born again in the flesh. Yet, it seems that God tells us to preach the word, not "Restoration Movement Leaders" (2 Tim. 4:2). I know that comments like that make some brethren furious. Yet, how is this different than lifting up the name of the Pope as the Roman Catholics do?



I remember several times in calling to find congregations to try out at for preaching jobs, that many were more concerned with what school I attended (and would align myself with) and what "big named brethren" I knew, than if I could preach the word effectively. This game is Satan's game. He wants to influence brethren to respect man above God. If he succeeds in his attempts then he knows we are not serving the Lord, we are serving man. How does he know that? The same way we do. "For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ" (Gal. 1:10).

Let's look at names for a moment. If we lived in the first century do you suppose brethren would want the apostle Paul on their lectureships? I bet they would think he was a trouble maker. This Paul was one who turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Paul would have been quick to pull himself from all these "glory seekers." Paul would have been too busy preaching the cross of Christ (1 Cor. 1:18) and the truth about the church (Acts 28:31) to be involved with politics. He would have had something like this to

**We often suffer pain and sorrow in our lives from things
that were never in our control.**

The Train Just Rolls Away

Some Lessons on Opportunity
Martin Bragwell

*I pass a town with no name
Seen through the window of a train.
A boy and girl stand side by side.
The train arrives, she kisses him goodbye,
She turns away then steps on board.
He thought he'd die but now he's sure.
But as he thinks of one last thing to say
The train just rolls away.*

from "Long Train Ride" by Lee Ben.

We often suffer pain and sorrow in our lives from things that were never in our control. While that lack of control frustrates us, we somehow find the strength to persevere. However, no pain compares with that we suffer because of our own missed opportunities. Our gracious Lord gives us multiple opportunities to positively affect our own souls and those of others. How often do we recognize and appreciate these opportunities after they've gone by, sometimes just barely too late to make a difference?

The quiet man who sits on the eighth pew has been vis-

iting services for several weeks. He hears the gospel and learns that God loves him (John 3:16), that Jesus died for him and shed his blood for him (Heb. 9:14). He finds it astounding, but somehow almost believable, that the one who created him would leave the perfect perfection of heaven so that he, this quiet and uncertain man, could see heaven's perfection as well. Yet, all that Creator asks of him is a few simple steps of obedience (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16). Sure, he realizes that this obedience will be followed by a constant commitment to change his life to the wishes of his Lord. That, too, seems a small price to pay for what he wants more than anything. So as he leaves to go home, he knows he wants to change his life. He knows he wants to escape his uncertainty. He knows he wants purpose in his life. He



say to the "glory seekers" in the church today: "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:21). Christ was not a "popular" one either (John 15:18). Christ, Peter, and Paul tell us that persecution is a better sign than glory among men (Matt. 5:10-12; 1 Pet. 4:16; 2 Tim. 3:12).

Reader, we need to ask ourselves; are we seeking the praise of God or the praise of men? For if we are seeking God's approval we will be doing more things in secret without seeking praise and glory (Matt. 6:1-7).

Let us remember that we are to be doing those things that benefit the Kingdom, not ourselves. We need to put ourselves on the back burner for a while and allow our devotion be to God. Preacher's need to speak less of "I" and more of "Him." "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14).

107 S. Duffy Rd., Butler, Pennsylvania 16001 preacherof-
ruth@yahoo.com



knows he wants to live without the fear he's always felt. He doesn't know that before the sun rises again, he'll be dead. And the train just rolls away.

The Christian sees his neighbor across the fence. He notices his neighbor's hair is thinner than it was five years ago when they first moved in. He realizes that neither of them is getting any younger. He is glad that he remembered to "love his neighbor" (Rom 13:9). He remembers with satisfaction how he mowed his neighbor's yard following the latter's surgery and how sincerely grateful his neighbor was. He remembers the quiet summer evenings they sat on the patio and talked while the smoke drifted from the grill. He remembered how they joked about their wives selling everything they owned in the joint garage sale. He then realizes he has never talked to his neighbor about Christ. It shames him to know of those who "went into all the world" with the gospel (Mark 16:15-16), yet he never took it next door. He knows that has to change. He knows now that he can and must do it. He knows that he will do it even if it upsets his comfortable neighborhood. He just knows that the one person who will listen to him is his neighbor to whom he has gotten so close. He doesn't know that just a year ago his neighbor, after searching desperately for years for some higher purpose and finding only disappointment and disillusionment with religion, had decided to never try again. He doesn't know his neighbor has now shut the door of his heart with a vow to never open it again, a vow that will be kept the rest of his life. The Christian begins his efforts to teach, not knowing his opportunity has already passed. And the train just rolls away.

Christian parents, knowing they want to be godly parents, notice how hard it is to keep their children clothed and fed. They seem to be growing faster than their needs can be purchased. And lovely children they are! Their teeth are straight, their bodies healthy, and their grades are good. These children are so comfortable in every social setting and excel at each of the dozens of activities afforded them.

What parents wouldn't thank God every day for them? But a troubling doubt lingers. They haven't always had time to be sure their kids learned the things of God that their own parents had taught them (Eph. 6:4). Sometimes they really thought they should have been a little more restrictive with their children and disciplined them more often, but just look how popular and happy they are. But still the doubt lingers until they can ignore it no more. Things must change! The Lord must come first in their lives and in the lives of their kids. They know they can still point their kids toward heaven and instill the priorities that will get them there. They know that their kids can make the Lord happy every day. They know they'll spend a wonderful eternity with these precious souls. They don't know that their children's foundation has already been so

firmly laid that it would take 100 lifetimes to point them toward God again. 100 lifetimes that no one has! And the train just rolls away.

A young woman's godly parents taught her the kind of man she should marry (Eph. 5:23-25). They never seemed all that exciting to her. Her parent's idea of the perfect mate would have left her on the outside looking in. She would never have the house she wanted with things she wanted if she listened to them. She would never have the "right" circle of friends. She had decided to go her own path and have it all and still love her Lord. Then her best friend, from the little church in which she was raised, got married. Her friend's husband gave them all the things she herself longed for. But her friend wasn't as happy as before and it hurt her to see the sadness in her friend's eyes. She meets a young man who thinks going to heaven is the most important thing on earth. She marries him although she knows she'll never have some of the things she once wanted so badly. She knows her parents were right, especially her daddy. She knows she should tell him so. She decides to thank her daddy just like she has thanked God for him a thousand times. Instead she thanks his grave. And the train just rolls away.

Two Christian friends are inseparable. They finish each other's sentences and are always on the same wavelength. They anticipate each other's every move, until one decides to leave the Lord. The one who remains faithful cannot believe the other has left and prays for his return. He asks everyone he knows to also pray. He doesn't know what he can say to bring his friend back. He keeps praying for months and months. After a couple of years, he realizes he must take more drastic personal action. (Gal. 6:1) He finally knows just the right words to say. He doesn't know that his friend kept expecting the doorbell to ring for months and was surprised when it didn't until he no longer cared. He doesn't know his delay has made even the right words useless. He doesn't know that the time when he, and only he, could make a difference has come and gone. He learns with tears. And the train just rolls away.

The man who bows
humbly before God
is sure to walk up-

One characteristic of doctrinal error and sinful conduct is its progressive and corrupting nature.

Homosexuality, Divorce, and Fellowship

Harry Osborne

In the previous two articles, we have examined points raised by recent efforts to accept those practicing homosexuality into the fellowship of some institutional “Churches of Christ” and some Christian Churches. As we have seen, those justifying such efforts have claimed that biblical condemnation of homosexual practice is not really clear. In some cases, they urge a non-literal interpretation of passages condemning homosexuality when understood in their literal sense. In other cases, they have used supposed “scientific evidence” that homosexual “orientation” is an inherent trait, not a matter of choice, in order to counteract the Bible’s condemnation of those choosing to engage in such behavior.

In this article, we will notice another appeal being made for accepting homosexuality into our fellowship — an appeal to the “divorce” issue parallel. As we examine this appeal, please keep in mind the efforts among our own brethren over the past fifteen or so years to justify brethren who teach doctrinal error over divorce and remarriage. In many places, their plea for tolerance of this error has been heeded. “Unity-in-diversity” has been the banner for those who would accept known teachers of error regarding divorce and remarriage. In some churches, the plea for tolerance towards teachers of error has extended to a tolerance of those in adulterous remarriages. When faithful brethren have warned that consistent application of this principle would result in tolerating homosexuality, the “unity-in-diversity” advocates have scoffed, “Scare tactic!” Twenty years ago, our institutional brethren and those in Christian Churches would have retorted with similar skepticism. Now, notice their own words.

Following the Pattern From Divorce to Homosexuality

In the recent discussions on an Internet discussion list facilitated by

some institutional brethren, several predicted that views on homosexuality would “track views regarding divorce.” When they use the term “divorce,” they are speaking of what we often call “divorce and remarriage.” In other words, they are granting that it is common to find those in their fellowships who not only teach false views on divorce and remarriage, but that one may enter a second marriage following a divorce wherein he or she was not the innocent party in a marriage sundered for the cause of fornication. Having accepted such into their fellowship, they are prepared to go farther.

One of this persuasion expressed his view of the future in these words:

From a historical perspective, I think it’s safe to predict that two forces will change attitudes among conservatives regarding homosexuality in the next decade or two, following pretty much the same direction carved out by churches that are more affirming of homosexuals, and also following the pattern regarding divorce.

The first force would be the increasing amount of personal experience

with gay and lesbian family members and friends, who will persuade their loved ones that neither their homosexual nor others' heterosexual orientation is a matter of choice. As this issue becomes more personal and as more is learned about how sexuality develops, the old unexamined assumptions will fade away, as will the appeal to Bible verses that support them.

The second force could well be a gradual acceptance of a theology and spirituality of sin that helps each of us recognize our own intractable capacity for evil and hurt, and to deal with our continuing need for forgiveness throughout life, so that if anybody ever started a spiritual housecleaning to get rid of all who are openly and unrepentantly sinful we'd stop before there would be nobody left.

The same writer went on to apply his principles as follows:

I'm reminded of a comment made by a minister of a CofC (Church of Christ — HRO) in the Dallas/Fort Worth area 30 years ago when the congregation lifted their ban on divorced persons serving in positions of spiritual leadership. During the first wave of new members, many came from across the doctrinal spectrum, including some from anti-institutional and mutual ministry backgrounds. The minister said that the church now was far more conservative on issues other than divorce than it was as a typical mainstream CofC. The only point on which the church was more open was divorce; now for the first time they had leaders who opposed orphan homes and Sunday Schools. I'm familiar with what are called "Metropolitan Community Churches" organized by and for gays and lesbians. A few years ago I was asked to preach at a congregation in New York City, and was surprised to see that most members were from fundamentalist and Pentecostal backgrounds, and they sang the same songs and expected the same animated preaching style, with the only difference being that

they could sit next to their partners without fear of molestation.

By comparison, we might well expect to see similar anomalies in conservative churches that begin to view homosexuality with more understanding and less fear, much as they are doing with divorce.

Another writer expressed the same parallel in these words:

... People's interpretations of the biblical strictures regarding divorce changed as more and more real divorced persons came into the picture. Some of that change was due to caving in to social realities, but some of it surely was due to a more spiritually mature, compassionate, and humble understanding of human relationships.

He concluded that acceptance of homosexuality would follow the same path. The conclusion that acceptance of error on divorce and remarriage was later used as the basis to urge acceptance of homosexuality is not the product of a reactionary "watchdog." It is a fact! A fact stated by the very people who have traveled that path to its logical end.

Problems In This Path of Tolerance

1. It accepts the past actions of brethren as our pattern rather than Scripture. No matter what the issue, truth is determined by God's word, not human practice (2 Tim. 3:16-17). When one argues for one practice based upon the common acceptance of another, he has yielded to denominational and creedal thinking whether or not he realizes it. Denominations often justify their practice based upon their "heritage" or historical practice. The Bible teaches us to seek authority from God's word (Col. 3:16-17; 1 Pet. 4:11; etc.). If we cannot find book, chapter, and verse for a practice, we better not engage in it (1 Thess. 5:21). That principle applies to determining the bounds of our fellowship. What is the difference between urging the acceptance of an erring teacher regard-

ing divorce and remarriage today on the basis of past brethren accepting another teacher of error, and urging the acceptance of homosexuality based on past acceptance of sinful divorce and remarriage? Regardless of the error, when one opposes the doctrine of Christ, we cannot receive him into our fellowship and yet be approved of God (2 John 9-11; Rom. 16:17).

2. It is based on a political alliance with man rather than a servitude in total submission to God.

The underlying mentality behind such efforts is to achieve a coalition of justification with numerous people united in a common willingness to accept an assortment of sins. Or, as one of the above advocates of toleration noted, it is an understanding that any "spiritual housecleaning" would get rid of everybody, thus necessitating mutual tolerance. Such is diametrically opposed to the Bible admonition, "And have *no fellowship* with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather even reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). What part of that is so difficult to understand? It will not be popular, but it is clear. It will not please and attract the multitudes, but it will please God. Let our concentration always be on finding favor with God (Rom. 8:31; John 12:43).

3. It inevitably leads to a tolerance of more and more ungodliness.

One characteristic of doctrinal error and sinful conduct is its progressive and corrupting nature (2 Tim. 2:16-18; 3:13). To combat such, we must diligently study, rightly divide and correctly apply the truth (2 Tim. 2:15). If we condone one form of fornication (adultery) today, we will eventually justify another form of fornication (homosexuality) later. The only way to maintain purity in the body of Christ is to purge the leaven of evil from our fellowship (1 Cor. 5).

~~2351~~ Windsor Oaks Ave., Lutz, Florida

A Letter Of Comfort

Larry Ray Hafley

(A friend I met in a meeting several years ago wrote to tell me of the death of his father. Below is the letter I wrote to comfort and console.)



My dear brother,

I am so sorry for your loss, but your loss is not his! We can know that, and we can thank God for that fact, but the pain we feel is very real. Even the devout disciples “made great lamentation” over Stephen, so we know it is not wrong to sorrow (Acts 8:2). We sorrow, but not as those who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:18).

It is no consolation, but I think I know how you feel. My dear Dad was taken from us October 11, 1998. I still miss him and need to talk with him, to share things with him, to tell him things and ask his advice. (Some songs bring unbidden tears, and that is especially tough if it is the last song before I have to get up and preach!) Selfishly, I just miss him, whether or not I need anything from him!

But there is this to think about (Marilyn reminded me of it the very moment we heard the news about my Dad’s passing): Imagine the sense of glory our fathers must have known when they awoke in the arms of angels! Leaving a body that was perishing day by day, they were carried by an angelic army of heavenly hosts into the pleasant paradise of God. Luke says they are “comforted.” That is an active word. Our fathers are actively being comforted and tended to with the bliss and blessedness that awaits all who abide in Abraham’s bosom until the morning of the resurrection.

In a bitter sweet way, your mother’s memory loss is a blessing to her. I hope that statement doesn’t sound cold and cruel. I don’t mean it to be so. She is spared the gnawing, unending loss that such a dissolved union must bring.

My own mother’s memory is fading. She still remembers Dad and feels his loss. She is 80 years old, in great health, except for her memory lapse. She is not depressed or morose, but she says she longs “to go and be with Cecil.” She is aware of her failing mind, and jokes about it, saying, “Here I am healthy as a horse and will probably live to be a hundred and won’t know who I am.” It is so sad to see this marvelous woman being reduced in this way, and for us, as for her, it is sadder still without Dad.

So, brother, where does this leave us? It leaves us with thanksgiving for what we have had. It leaves us with gratefulness that God gave us the parents he did. It makes us long for heaven and appreciate that this life is not all there is. It should make us love God and hate the devil. It should make us even more determined to do right and to hate sin, for it is sin and Satan that have put us in the body of this death and have taken our loved ones from us.

Thank God that this is not the end of the story. When the last wave has spent itself upon the last seashore, when the last glimmer of the last star fades into oblivion, then all the ransomed, the redeemed of all the ages shall bask in the bliss and blessedness of the Son and his Father for ever and ever. Going down the hallway of eternity, we shall pass through the pearly portals of paradise, eat of the tree of life, and praise him who loved us as the songs of the angels grace our hearts and the crown of life is placed lightly upon our brow. Oh, what a glad reunion that will be — no more sighing or dying, no more fears or tears, but beauty and joy while the endless ages of a never ending eternity roll on and on.

With brotherly love, Larry

The Bible teaches that sinners outside God's family must believe and be baptized to receive remission of sins.

The Plain Gospel

Ron Halbrook

The Missionary Baptist Church tract on *The Plain Gospel* asks, "Are you among many today who are confused as to which religion, . . . denomination, . . . church, or . . . preacher is right? They cannot all be right, can they?" The tract correctly teaches the only thing that matters is "what the Bible actually says." It is our sole authority in all matters relating to salvation and service to God (2 Pet. 1:3).



The author creates confusion when he claims, "You were born into the world with a sinful, corrupt nature. . . . You are a sinner, and therefore you sin." He cites 1 John 3:4 and Psalm 51:5. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). This shows we become sinners by transgressing the law and committing sin, not by birth or inheritance.

Psalm 51:5 says, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me," just as the people on Pentecost referred to the languages "wherein we were born" (Acts 2:8). We are not born sinners nor speaking languages. We enter a world filled with languages and sin; thus, in time we learn to speak and to sin from those around us.

Sin entered the world through Adam and we followed his flawed and fatal example — "all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). We are not born out of the way but are "gone out of the way. . . . For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:12, 23). We cannot inherit sin in our nature: "The soul that sinneth it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father" (Ezek. 18:20). The theory of an inherited sinful nature came from John Calvin (1509-64), not from Scripture.

Once we commit sin, we are destined to suffer eternal torment with Satan and his angels in the fires of hell. The

tract points out passages which show that Christ died on the cross to provide the perfect sacrifice for our salvation from sin (Isa. 53; John 3:16; Rom. 5:6-8; 1 Tim. 1:15). As the writer says, "You cannot earn or merit salvation, for you only deserve hell and God's wrath." When the tract tells how we receive the saving benefits of Christ's blood, it mentions only two conditions: faith and repentance. By omitting other Bible conditions, the tract misleads and confuses people.

In order to receive pardon from sin, sinners outside the family of God must hear the gospel, believe it, repent of sins, confess Christ, and be baptized in water. Jesus said "all the world" must hear the gospel including this: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16). Peter told sinners to believe or "know assuredly" that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ," and to "repent, and be baptized" (Acts 2:36-38).

When the Ethiopian believed on Christ and confessed, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God," Philip "baptized him" (Acts 8:35-39). Confessing Christ "with the mouth" is just as necessary as believing "with the heart" (Rom. 10:9-10). If we are to be saved by the blood of Christ, we must be "baptized into Jesus Christ" — "baptized into his death" (Rom. 6:3-4). Confession of Christ and baptism are as essential as faith and repentance.

There is no salvation outside Christ (John 14:6). How does the penitent believer who seeks salvation come into Christ? "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:26-27). To be "baptized into Christ" is to be "baptized into one body," to "enter into the kingdom of God," and to be "added to the church" of Christ (1 Cor. 12:13; John 3:5; Acts 2:47). In this sense,

**In the New Testament the only thing of which
we are to repent is sin.**

Five Exceptions

Olen Holderby

The word “except” is used in the Bible (KJ) over 110 times; 44 of those times in the New Testament. Some translations use the word “unless” in most cases; but we quote from the authorized version.

“. . . Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it remaineth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit” (John 12:24). Most readers will understand that a single grain of wheat put into the ground will die, thus producing a stalk upon which many grains of wheat will be found. As long as that grain of wheat is not planted, it produces nothing. It appears here that Jesus is speaking of the necessity of his death — he had to die in order to achieve his end. Verse 16 says, “These things understood not his disciples at the first: but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things were written of him, and that they had done these things unto him.” We

“baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21). That is why Saul was told, “And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16).

A public discussion of these matters could be very profitable. I am willing to affirm for two nights, “The Bible teaches that sinners outside God’s family must believe and be baptized to receive remission of sins.” I will deny for two nights, “The Bible teaches that all men inherit a sinful, corrupt nature.” Can a Baptist preacher be found to deny the first proposition and affirm the second one? Paul said, “I am set for the defense of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). Let us see if the Baptists will defend the gospel they preach.

3505 Horse Run Ct., Shepherdsville, Kentucky 40165

should have no trouble understanding the meaning of the Lord here. But, let us get this fact well — without his death, there would be no life for us!

“Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it” (Ps. 127:1). Let us, also, get this fact well!

We are told that the house of God is the church of the living God (1 Tim. 3:15). Jesus promised to build his church (Matt. 16:18). He purchased the church with his own blood (Acts 20:28); and, he is both the Head of the church and the Savior of the body (church) (Eph. 5:23). Paul said there was only one body (Eph. 4:4); the same Paul said that we are baptized into that one body (1 Cor. 12:13). Peter explained the means of entrance into that one body in Acts 2:36-41, 47. Listen to the denominations cry, “we are all part of that one body.”

Please go back to our “grain of wheat” illustration. From it how many different kinds of bodies do you get? Do we get pumpkins, potatoes, and corn, as well as wheat, from that one grain? To ask such questions is to answer them. Get these facts well!

“. . . Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). Whatever it meant by “converted,” it is a must! John 3:5 says the same thing, so it must mean the same. As long as one is in sin, he is not converted. So, what rids us of our sins? “Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death” (Rom. 6:3). “. . . Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). While it is preceded by three other acts of equal importance (faith, repentance, confession), yet we see that baptism is the converting act. Get this fact well, for without it there is no heaven!

Jesus taught that man's first duty is to God; his second, to man.

The Great and First Commandment

Jim Ward

Many people think that the main (and perhaps, only) way to serve God is to serve mankind. This extreme example, is paraphrased from the words of a denominational preacher: "I do not know whether man has a soul, or whether there is a heaven. I'm going to teach a man to treat his fellow man properly, and if he has a soul, it will go to heaven, if there is a heaven."

Such people need to learn the lesson of Matthew 22:34-40, where Jesus taught that man's first duty is to God; his second, to man. But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together. "Then one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question, testing him, and saying, Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your

mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

God's commandments can be divided into two categories. The first one involves a person-to-God relationship. We might call these ritual or religious commandments. The first four of the Ten Commandments will illustrate: have no other gods, make no graven image, take not God's name in vain, and remember the Sabbath. A violation of one of these was a sin directly and only against God, not against another man.

The second category involves both a person-to-God and a person-to-person relationship. These we might call moral or social commandments. Again, note the Ten Command-

"... Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). It is disheartening to hear some say that the statement of Jesus here has nothing to do with our repentance. Jesus gave these people a choice — repent or perish. In the New Testament the only thing of which we are to repent is sin. Now, unless there is respect of persons with God (Acts 10:34), the same applies to us. Further, Luke records that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30). Then, it is still "repent or perish." Do we have any other alternative? It seems to me that there are three words which well define repentance — sorrow, quit, restore. Get this fact well! For, it is either repent or perish.

"... Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit

adultery" (Matt. 19:29). "Except it be for fornication." Please note the "Whosoever" — That is anybody: Jew, Gentile, Christian, or non-Christian. This so very plainly teaches that one cannot put away his mate and marry another, unless that mate is guilty of fornication; and, whoever does so is committing adultery.

Why is it that we have little or no trouble understanding the first four of these exceptions, but find this one in Matthew 19 so hard to understand, so difficult to apply, and hassle over it to no end? Could it be simply that we want something different (Gal. 1:10)?

1515 Walnut, Alameda, California 94501

ments; the last six require: honor parents, and abstain from murder, adultery, theft, perjury, and covetousness. Violating one of these was a sin against both God and man.

Now to the question of why loving God is the “great and first commandment.” There are two main reasons. First, all commandments, including “love your neighbor,” come from God. Therefore, one cannot love God without loving people. However, one can love people without even believing in God. An atheist, for example, can be humane, but God’s will is merely coincidental, not causative, in his humaneness.

Second, since all commands come from God, every sin is against God. The religious sin of a non-priest burning incense was against God (2 Chron. 26:16ff), and so was the social sin of adultery (Gen. 39:9). However, every sin is not against man. In these two examples, only adultery was against man; Uzziah’s burning of incense was against God alone.

One who loves God will keep both his religious and social statutes, excluding neither, nor reversing their order. He will not place a meaning upon a command that makes it contradict another. The Jews did this when they emphasized a religious command (give to God) and nullified a social command (honor parents; Mark 7:9-13). Conversely, Acts 5:29 teaches that we may not press a social statute (obey magistrates) to the violation of a religious one (teach in Jesus’ name).

As we apply these principles to us now, we observe that we cannot obey only ceremonial commands (e.g., be baptized, sing, contribute, eat the Lord’s supper, etc.) and ignore social or moral precepts (e.g., tend the sick, give to the needy, do not steal, do not commit adultery, etc.) To do so is hypocritical. But neither will God accept us for



keeping only the social statutes and disobeying the religious ones. He authored both.

Since God’s laws are harmonious, we cannot press a meaning upon one commandment to the violation of another. For example, brethren have created benevolent and teaching institutions which violate the organization and work which God assigned to local churches. This inverts the order given by Jesus: God is before man. We can hardly argue that the end justifies the means. If we can ignore God’s means, what’s to keep us from ignoring his goals? Since God’s laws are harmonious, it is possible to preach and to do benevolence without sponsoring church arrangements that break his pattern.

Finally, Jesus said, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). Clearly, love is not a substitute for obedience; it includes it. The moment we intentionally disobey God, we no longer love him. May we love man. But may we love God first — this is the great and first commandment.

From 12th Street Bulletin

Today’s Parallel Bible

(#96055) Each two-page spread contains a complete Scripture portion from four major versions:

King James Version
New International Version
New Living Translation
New American Standard Bible, Updated Edition

Hardcover — \$45.99
Burgundy Bonded Leather — \$89.99

The Doctrine of Christ and the Apostles

Mark Mayberry

**The doctrine of Christ
and the apostles is:**

- **Crucial**
- **Credible**
- **Confrontational**
- **Comprehensive**
- **Comprehensible**
- **Circumscribed**
- **Commanded**
- **Commendable**

**Praise be to God for
having delivered unto
us such a glorious
gospel (1 Tim. 1:11-12).
Let us, therefore, allow
the message of truth to
open our eyes.**

We live in an age when the importance of doctrine is minimized. However, the biblical view is different. Jesus said those who substitute the doctrines of men for the commandments of God render their worship vain, empty, and worthless (Matt. 15:3-9). He warned against the leavening effect of the doctrine of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (Matt. 16:6-12). Paul echoed this same theme (Eph. 4:14-15; Col. 2:20-23), cautioning against those who teach strange or different doctrines (1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3-5). He even spoke of the doctrine of devils (1 Tim. 4:1-3). The book of Revelation condemns those who follow after the doctrine of Balaam, the Nicolaitans, and Jezebel (Rev. 2:14-16, 19-24). Who can say, therefore, that doctrine is unimportant? The eternal validity of the doctrine of Christ is seen by the abject emptiness of the doctrines of men. Therefore, in this lesson, let us consider some of the outstanding characteristics of the doctrine of Christ and the apostles.

From a biblical standpoint, the words “doctrine” and “teaching” are synonymous. In the course of this lesson, we will consider the Greek word #1319 *didaskalia*. Strong defines it as “instruction (the function or the information).” Bauer says it refers

to “1. active, the act of teaching, instruction; 2. passive., of that which is taught, teaching.” In the KJV, it is translated “doctrine,” “learning,” and “teaching.” In the NASU, it is rendered “doctrine” (9x), “doctrines” (3x), “instruction” (1x), “teaching” (7x), and “teachings” (1x). We also will consider the Greek word #1322 *didache*. Strong defines this word as “instruction (the act or the matter).” Bauer says it refers to “1. active, teaching as an activity, instruction; 2. passive, teaching, of what is taught.” In the KJV, it is translated “doctrine” or “hath been taught.” In the NASU, it is rendered “instruction” (2x), “teaching” (27x), and “teachings” (1x).

It is Crucial

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles was crucial to the early church, forming the very foundation of its existence (Acts 2:37-42; Eph. 2:19-20). Men become servants of Christ by rendering obedience to that form of doctrine to which they have been delivered (Rom. 6:16-18). Those who would cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the revealed doctrinal pattern must be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17-20). Attention must be given to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation and doctrine. Evangelists who are faith-

ful in proclamation and practice will ensure salvation both for themselves and those who heed their message (1 Tim. 4:13-16).

It is Credible

The doctrine of Christ is authoritative (Matt. 7:28-29; Mark 1:21-22; Luke 4:31-32), originating in the very mind of God (John 7:14-18). Since the apostles were guided by the Holy Spirit (John 16:12-13), the inspired Scriptures are the basis of all doctrine and teaching (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Miracles, signs and wonders give credibility to the gospel message (Mark 1:23-27; Acts 13:4-12; Heb. 2:3-4).

It is Confrontational

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles is confrontational. Jesus did not consider the distinction between right and wrong a mere intellectual curiosity; rather, he vigorously promoted the former and forcefully opposed the latter (Mark 11:15-18). Our Lord was scathing in his denunciation of ecclesiastical error and religious hypocrisy (Matt. 23:13-15; Mark 12:38-40). In a similar manner, evangelists and elders must be able to effectively confront and correct error (Tit. 1:5-13; 2:1-10). Despite the dangers, we must, in all things, obey God rather than men (Acts 5:27-29).

It is Comprehensive

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles is comprehensive. Baptized believers must be taught to observe *all* that Christ commanded (Matt. 28:18-20). He that teaches must fully devote himself to teaching (Rom. 12:6-8). Edification of the body is the supreme goal (1 Cor. 14:26; Eph. 4:11-16). Growth is demanded (1 Pet. 2:1-2). Elementary teaching, i.e., "first principle lessons," becomes the basis for more advanced instruction (Heb. 6:1-3). Accordingly, the old adage, "Use it or lose it!" can have no greater application than here (Heb. 5:12-14).

It is Comprehensible

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles is comprehensible. For those who are spiritually attuned, the gospel message is easily understandable; however, the carnal-minded are blind, deaf and dumb to such veracities (Mark 4:1-12). Truth shines when the sword of the Spirit is welded by a competent and courageous soldier of the cross (Eph. 6:13-17). Jesus' ability to expose sophism was marvelously evidenced in the manner in which he handled the Sadducean error concerning the resurrection (Matt. 22:22-33). In like manner, he vanquished the Pharisees and the Herodians (Matt. 22:15-22).

It is Circumscribed

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles is circumscribed. In other words, there is a clear distinction between truth and error, and Christians must distinguish between the two. Those who fall away from the faith give heed to the doctrine of devils; good servants of Jesus Christ are constantly nourished on words of faith and sound doctrine (1 Tim. 4:1-8). Recognizing the terrible curse that falls upon those who ignore divinely established boundary lines, let us abide in the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9-11).

It is Commanded

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles is commanded. Timothy was obligated to preach the truth (1 Tim. 4:6). Even though many will not endure distinctive preaching, faithful evangelists must keep their charge (2 Tim. 4:1-5), constantly proclaiming the message of faith (1 Tim. 4:6), and speaking things that are fitting for

sound doctrine (Tit. 2:1).

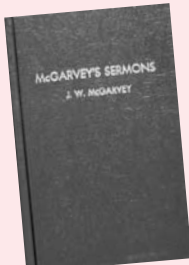
It is Commendable

The doctrine of Christ and the apostles is commendable. In other words, our commitment to the truth should be strong enough that we will eagerly recommend it unto others. The gospel is for all mankind (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). Whether in Jerusalem (Acts 6:7), Antioch (Acts 11:22-24), or in Ephesus (Acts 19:18-20), when the apostolic message was sounded forth, sinners were converted and souls were saved. Are we evangelistically minded? Our charge is the same as the one given unto Timothy: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Conclusion

As we have seen, the doctrine of Christ and the apostles is crucial, credible, confrontational, comprehensive, comprehensible, circumscribed, commanded, and commendable. Praise be to God for having delivered unto us such a glorious gospel (1 Tim. 1:11-12). Let us, therefore, allow the message of truth to open our eyes. Those who turn from darkness to light and exchange the dominion of Satan for devotion to God will receive the forgiveness of sins, and gain an inheritance among those who have been sanctified (Acts 26:18).

4805 Sulley Dr., Alvin, Texas 77511



McGarvey's Sermons

by J.W. McGarvey

A classic in sermonic literature. 24 sermons
on first principle topics. #10820.

\$11.00

“Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?” (Prov. 6:7).

“I Don’t Want My Daughter To Dance”

Jarrod Jacobs

I want my daughter to be happy. I want her to be liked by others, especially her school mates, both now and later when she gets to High School and College. I do not believe that she has to learn to dance, however, either to be happy, or liked.

I do *not* want her to learn to dance, for I know if she learns *how* she will *want* to dance. If she dances she will be exposed to other desires that I do not want her subjected to. Petting and fondling and general familiarities are bad for young people anywhere, but to encourage and allow such things, especially to the rhythm of music is to stimulate within young people desires which should belong only to married people. Girls are sometimes not as aware of this as they should be because they are often not as affected as the boys. I believe boys and girls should be together, should play together, and should talk together and understand one another. But they must be careful not to do those things which stimulate and encourage lust. Modern philosophy says, “Live! Let yourself go! Have fun!” But the Bible says, “Flee youthful lusts and follow after righteousness” (2 Tim. 2:22).

I want my daughter to be able to present herself to some young Christian man as a bride that is virtuous, happy, and beautiful. I do not want her to have the sense of guilt that goes with improper conduct; I do not want her to enter into marriage feeling ashamed for having been loved and fondled by every eager boy who wants to experiment with every girl available. I do not want my daughter to have the unhappy guilt of sin before God as she stands in his presence to promise to give herself to her husband and him alone.

“But one can dance without being guilty of these terrible things,” someone will say defensively. I reply, I doubt it.

The medical doctors and psychologists do not think so. Even the dancing instructors do not think so. There is simply no use in exposing yourself to dangerous temptations to see if you can resist. In the word of the wise man, “Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burned?” (Prov. 6:7).

No, I do not want my daughter to dance. I want her to keep herself unspotted from the world for the sake of her Christian marriage, and for the sake of righteousness (Wayne Mickey, *The Gospel Guardian*, 9/1/60, Vol. 12, 261).

Comments

As I read this 41 year-old article, it stirred a few thoughts: First, that dancing is a “two-way” street. Certainly if this man had a son, he would have had the same objections to his son dancing, and for the very same reasons. Second, if we kept our daughters from dancing, how many boys do you think would be dancing, then? Third, to answer the nay-sayers looking for a “thou shalt not dance” in the New Testament, may I remind you that the Bible condemns “lasciviousness,” saying that those involved in such will not see heaven. They will die in their sins and go to hell (Gal. 5:19). Why mention this? Because “lasciviousness” (sensuality, NAS; lewdness, NKJ), means “unbridled lust, excess, wantonness . . . wanton (acts or) manners, as filthy words, indecent body movements, unchaste handling of males and females” (Thayer’s, 79-80). Could you think of a better description of dancing than this? In dancing, what other result is there, but the stirring up of emotions and lusts that only lawfully belong to a husband and wife? Why send our children out to experience that? By the way, “indecent body movements” is included in the definition. I think our dear readers understand that one can display such movements without physically touching a person. (Mark

Violence in the name of any religion is wrong, for it is a crime against the nature of man and his intellect.

Authentic Faith

Sherrel A. Mercer

Until 1895 the United States Congress repeatedly rejected the application of Utah for statehood. When the voters changed the constitution of Utah to outlaw polygamy, a fundamental religious doctrine of a majority of its citizens, admission to the Union was granted.

Congress in its refusal had wisely rejected an idea that was contrary to the values on which this nation was built.

A question arises as a result of the adoption of a specific public policy by the voters of Utah in 1895. Who are the legitimate and authentic practitioners of a faith, those who doggedly affirm all its tenets, or those who conform to public policy and repudiate part of their system of faith?

How valuable to anyone is a system of faith if he has to reject the demands of that faith in order to have peace and acceptance?

Our peace-loving friends in the Muslim religion now face a similar quandary. Violence in defense of Islam is



authorized in the Quran (Sura [Chapter] 009 Verse 29). Mohammed drove the Jews from Medina in order to form a purely Muslim society. National governments in many

Islamic countries are authorized to punish, even with death, those who fail to publicly practice Islam as well as those who teach any other religious doctrine.

Who are the authentic Muslims today? Where are they?

Is it not interesting that the personal faith of a Muslim appears to survive best in a free country where democracy, tolerance, and Judeo-Christian laws prevail?

“My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” said Jesus

6:22) Yet, aren't those same desires stirred up?

Lastly, perhaps some reading this engaged in dancing in their youth, but have repented of such, having learned better. Please understand, you are no hypocrite for not allowing your children to engage in an activity that you did in ignorance. That is called growth! You have grown spiritually as well as mentally, and know more than you did at that time. You are responsible to take that wisdom you have and bring your children up right (Eph. 6:4). Hypocrisy results when we allow our children to do something

we know is wrong, but we pretend like it is not wrong. If your children know you engaged in such behavior, don't lie, but tell them the truth, and let them know you are human and made (and will make) mistakes. At the same time, you were forgiven for it, and know better, though you may still carry regrets. If you want something “better” for your children, don't allow your children to make the same mistakes you did. Satan is out to get our children as it is without us throwing them to him!

long ago (John 8:36). Violence in the name of Christianity is wrong. The Crusades fought against the Muslims were wrong.

Violence in the name of any religion is wrong, for it is a crime against the nature of man and his intellect. Those who coerce by their faith will share the dustbin of history with all tyrants. Yet many outspoken Muslim leaders envision a totally Islamic world, even if accomplished by force. Will these leaders ever realize that coercion of faith never creates true converts? And will these leaders now, finally, repudiate the calls to violence that are part of their history and sacred writings?

Christians face similar challenges. “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). Yet Christians, without violence or coercion toward anyone, can always satisfy Jehovah, live at peace, prosper, and be the best citizens of any country in the world. And they do this knowing that they may receive far worse treatment than they give. How

tragic it is that some religious and political philosophies that are not based on the Bible alone choose to punish Christians, who are willing to die for their faith.

Christians teach, try to convince, and then move on to others. Christians bear reproach without reprisal. Christians honor and forgive one another. Christians value life and love their enemies. For these and other reasons, the United States is still the emigration destination of choice for all the rest of the world. Unfortunately, some wish to punish the United States population for successfully creating a peaceful, prosperous society based on Christian principles.

Those principles are the product of a deep, abiding faith in God and a trust in the Bible on the part of a large part of the population of this country. Let everyone seek to have a truly authentic faith based exclusively on the Word of God.

And the authenticity of one’s personal faith is best judged by its consistency, not on its adaptability.

“Blessings” continued from front page
issues forth from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not world *peace*. It is *peace* with God, with others, and within one’s own heart. *Peace* has its foundation in knowing that our sins, which made us enemies of God, have been cleansed and forgiven. Thus, we are at *peace*!

3. Prayer (v. 3). Paul said he offered *thanks* to God, *praying always* for the brethren at Colosse. This would be a comfort to these brethren, especially because of the threat of persecution that was ever before them because they were Christians.

4. Faith (v. 4). Their *faith* was not in themselves, in others, or in things. Their *faith* was in Christ, the Savior. They are called “*faithful* brethren” (v. 2). Without *faith* we cannot please God (Heb. 11:6). Those who do not believe in Christ die in their sins (John 8:24), and are said by Jesus to be “damned” (Mark 16:16). These Christians, to their credit, had *faith*! Paul’s prayers for them resulted from their *faith* in Christ Jesus.

5. Love (vv. 4, 8). These brethren loved one another. Epaphras had told Paul of their *love* in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit revealed in the Scriptures that *love* must be evident in our lives (1 Cor. 13:1-8). Peter wrote that we are to *love* one another (1 Pet. 1:22). The writer of Hebrews said brotherly *love* was to continue (Heb. 13:1). Much can be said about the importance of *love*, and Paul mentioned it twice in his introductory remarks to this first century church.

6. Hope (v. 5). These brethren had *hope* of going to heaven when they completed their journey on earth. The word of God tells us of *hope* in a number of passages. Paul said to the church at Rome, we are saved by *hope* (Rom.

8:24). To the evangelist, Titus, Paul said he was “in *hope* of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began” (Tit. 1:2). Sadly, this same apostle spoke of the Gentiles who had no *hope* (Eph. 2:12).

7. Gospel (v. 5). Actually, the author of our text spoke of “the *word* of the *truth* of the *gospel*.” God’s word is truth (John 17:17). Thus, we do not have the *truth* without the *word*. Jesus appointed that *word*, the *gospel*, is to be preached to the world (Mark 16:15). To the church at Ephesus, Paul referred to “the *word* of *truth*, the *gospel* of your salvation” (Eph. 1:13). Without the *gospel*, there is no salvation. The New Testament affirms that the *gospel* is God’s power to save believers (Rom. 1:16). The unbelieving world regards the message as nothing more than foolishness (1 Cor. 1:18), but Christ charged the apostles with the task of preaching it to the world (Matt. 28:19). Timothy was told to preach the *word* (2 Tim. 4:2).

8. Fruit (v. 6). The preaching of the gospel is designed to produce *fruit*. When the “seed,” which is the word of God, is sown, it produces *fruit* or results (Luke 8:11). The prophet Haggai said there will be no harvest if the seed stays in the barn (Hag. 2:19). The church has the task of proclaiming the gospel to the world. The church of the Thessalonians “sounded out the word of the Lord” in their section of the ancient world (1 Thess. 1:8). Timothy was told that the church is “the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Tim. 3:15). This solemn and grave responsibility occupies the energy and means of the Lord’s church; there are always people who need to hear the gospel! Furthermore, that is why it is such a waste for the church to use its means and opportunities for dinners and games instead of spreading the word to the lost.

Again, we sometimes allow important statements of truth to pass us by when we read the Scriptures. I hope this brief article will re-focus our eyes when we read God's word, to notice just how full and rich his word is. As long as we live, we will be edified by the truth.

491 E. Woodsdale, Akron, Ohio 44301

“Christian Church” continued from page 2

mental music is progressively away from the doctrine of Christ revealed in the Scriptures. This can be illustrated by the evolution of Garrett and his brethren with reference to instruments of music in worship. At first, these brethren thought that instruments of music in worship were sinful. They believed that honest and sincere brethren who were sinning in ignorance still could be saved. Since they were going to be saved in heaven, we should fellowship them on earth, they reasoned. Later, the unity-in-diversity position evolved to the point that they were stating that the subject of instrumental music in worship is so ambiguous that no one can know for certain whether or not God approves of instrumental music in worship. Recognizing that no one could know for sure, the respective religious communities should tolerate their differences while respecting each other's conscience. So, brethren such as Garrett and Carl Ketcherside visited the services of Christian Churches but would not sing with their instruments of music because it was a violation of their conscience.

Over the years the unity-in-diversity brethren became convinced that using instrumental music in worship was no longer ambiguous. One could know that there is nothing wrong with using instrumental music in worship. Rather than asserting that we should tolerate each other's respective beliefs, now these brethren are condemning those who oppose using instruments of music in worship and calling upon them to apologize for making a test of fellowship out of using instrumental music in worship.

If we are going to apologize to the Christian Church for condemning their use of mechanical instruments of music in worship, we should also:

- Apologize to the Methodist Church, Presbyterian Church, and others for condemning their use of sprinkling for baptism.
- Apologize to the Baptist Church for condemning them for teaching that one can be saved without being baptized.
- Apologize to the Catholic Church for condemning their

prayer through the name of Mary, burning incense as an act of worship, creation of the papacy, and other such unauthorized doctrines.

- Apologize to the Friends Church for condemning them for not practicing water baptism.

These traditions of men that are introduced, whether by the Christian Church or other denominations, stand or fall together. We must oppose either all of them or none of them. The logic of this soon led the unity-in-diversity brethren to accept, not only mechanical instruments of music in worship, but also to receive as brethren those who have not been baptized for the remission of their sins. The pious unimmersed also are “brethren,” so we are told. To refuse them fellowship is sectarian and sinful.

Are you ready to send your letter of apology to the Christian Church? To the Baptist Church? To the Roman Catholic Church? If not, perhaps you are agreed with me that one cannot have unity with those who depart from God's revelation, the doctrine of Christ. John 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). The Lord's church is expected to abide in the doctrine of Christ, speak the same thing, and practice the same thing (1 Pet. 4:11; 1 Cor. 1:10; 4:17).

Brother Garrett is correct in his assessment of where some preachers are, especially among institutional brethren. He wrote, “It is probably true, as some of our leaders are saying, that among our more ‘progressive’ preachers there is not a one who believes that the use of instrumental music in worship is a sin. They certainly do not hold the position of the Churches of Christ of the 1940s that made the use of instrumental music a test of fellowship. There are no more sermons about the evils of instrumental music in worship.” The report was circulated that brother Guy N. Woods said before his death that 90% of institutional brethren would not oppose instrumental music in worship today if it were being introduced into worship. I don't know how accurate his assessment is, but obviously there is a sizable number of institutional churches ready to make the transition about which brother Garrett speaks. Already Rubel Shelly has apologized for his opposition to instruments of music in worship.

The Leaven Is Working

The leaven of unity-in-diversity has been working among non-institutional brethren as well. In the early 1970s Edward Fudge led a number of brethren away from the truth as he taught that one could have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who have departed

from the truth. He based his conclusion on his Calvinist doctrine of the imputation of the perfect obedience of Christ to the believer's account. A new impulse was given the unity-in-diversity approach to fellowship in the late 1980s when Ed Harrell printed a series of 17 articles defending an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who teach and practice error in doctrine and morals. He based his conclusion on the belief that Romans 14 justifies an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who teach and practice differing doctrines relating to "the faith." He began his series with a defense of an on-going and never-ending fellowship with Homer Hailey who admittedly was teaching error on divorce and remarriage. His preaching that error had already divided the Belen, New Mexico church. In brother Harrell's biography of Homer Hailey, *The Churches of Christ in the Twentieth Century* (subtitled "Homer Hailey's Personal Journey of Faith"), there can be no doubt that brother Hailey is viewed as the hero riding off into the sunset in his white hat while those who answered his false doctrines on divorce and remarriage were the wicked villains taking potshots at the hero in the plot. Teaching error on divorce and remarriage does not damage one's reputation but answering the error that is taught makes one a wicked villain.

The leaven of unity-in-diversity continues to work to this day among brethren who have figured out a way to have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who teach false doctrine on divorce and remarriage. Soon it was applied to those who teach a non-literal interpretation of Genesis 1 and who believe the torment of hell annihilates its victim rather than endlessly tormenting him. Where will this doctrine take these brethren next? There is no logical place to stop. The very same principles that allow an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who teach and practice false doctrine on divorce and remarriage will allow them to have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with those who teach that instruments of music in worship are not sinful and who use those instruments in their worship. Ultimately, the application of these principles

leads to universalism, as a study of the ecumenical movement in twentieth century Protestant denominationalism demonstrates. The mainline Protestant denominations have long ago given up the belief that one must have faith in Christ in order to be saved, despite the plain teaching of Jesus who said, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24). "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

When the gate has been opened, there is no logical place to shut it. It was opened when brethren sought a way to have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with brother Homer Hailey in spite of his preaching an admittedly erroneous doctrine of divorce and remarriage and propagating that teaching through his book on the same subject. The power of logic, the desire for consistency, will force many to further compromises, just as it did for Leroy Garrett and Carl Ketcherside.

We are appealing for brethren to recognize their error and to reject that teaching that asserts that men can have an on-going and never-ending fellowship with teachers of false doctrine. Let us cling wholeheartedly to the revealed word of God. If you are not ready to send your letter of apology to the Christian Church, perhaps you need to ask, "What is the doctrine that these men believe which is leading them to the conclusion that this is what they should be doing?" When you identify that doctrine, you should repudiate and reject it so that it will not spread like a leaven among the Lord's people. The doctrine which leads to this conclusion is the doctrine of unity-in-doctrinal diversity. Won't you join me in opposing it?

6567 Kings Ct., Avon, Indiana 46123, mwillis1@cs.com



Home-Schooling Boosts Socialization

"Homeschooled children are friendlier, more independent, and more socially developed than their peers from public or private schools. They also have higher self-esteem.

"These findings come from a new study by the Fraser Institute, a public-policy organization in Vancouver, British Columbia. 'Popular belief holds that homeschooled children are socially

backward and deprived, but research shows the opposite: that homeschooled children are actually better socialized than their peers,' says Claudia Hepburn, director of education policy at the institute.

"The study says these benefits may come from having parents, rather than peers, as primary behavior models. Extracurricular activities and homeschool associations may also provide social settings.

"The study also finds that by eighth grade, homeschooled students perform four grade levels above the national average. Homeschooled students tend to score significantly higher on standardized college entrance tests" (Christianity Today [December 3, 2001], 17).

Condemned Prisoner Appeals For Help

"Pakistan — Ayub Masih, a Pakistani Christian with a full black beard, disheveled hair, and dingy blue prison clothes, wept as he embraced his Christian visitor at the Central Jail in Multan in August.

"A judge sentenced Masih in 1998 to death by hanging for violating Pakistan's blasphemy law, which bans defamatory comments about Islam or its founder.

"Muhammad Akram, a young Muslim in the Punjabi village of Arifwala, accused Masih, his neighbor, of blasphemy for urging Akram to read Salmam Rushdie's novel, *The Satanic Verses*. Many Muslims consider the book blasphemous.

"All legal efforts to overturn Masih's conviction have failed. Masih filed a last-chance appeal to the Pakistan Supreme Court on August 22.

"The blasphemy case against me is false, baseless, and concocted," Masih told International Christian Concern (ICC), an interdenominational American organization that helps persecuted Christians worldwide. "I am tortured and forced by Muslim inmates to convert to Islam, but I refuse to obey them. The behavior of the jail authorities and Muslim inmates is inhumane. I am not getting proper food and [am] living in a small cell" (Christianity Today [October 12, 2001], 13).

Briefs: North American and the World

"At least 500 people died in riots between Muslims and Christians in Nigeria. The latest rioting reportedly broke out as some Muslims celebrated terrorist attacks on the United States. In an earlier riot, 165 people were killed and 928 injured. Fighting broke out in the southern city of Jose in September, and more than 5,000 Muslim youth rioted in the northern city of Kano. Long-standing tensions between the two groups have escalated as Islamic law has been introduced in 12 of 19 northern states since last year. In February 2000, between 2,000 and 3,000 died in riots in Kaduna" (Christianity Today [October 12, 2001], 13).

Field Reports



P.J. Casebolt: After nearly four years, my work with the Wilkesville, Ohio congregation ended the first of June 2000. For the next few months I filled in on Sundays at Marrtown Road in Parkersburg, West Virginia and Pomeroy, Ohio. I taught Bible classes for the new congregation at Bethel, Ohio on Tuesday nights and at Pomeroy on Wednesdays. I began working full time with the church at Pomeroy (West Side) the first of No-

vember that year, continued Bible classes at Bethel the rest of the year, besides preaching in eight gospel meetings. The congregation at Pomeroy is small (30-40), but the work goes well, and I continue to preach in meetings as opportunity and time permit.

Around 1970, I began working with small congregations in the Ohio Valley, preaching in several meetings each year. I made three preaching trips to the Philippines (1977, 1984, 1993). Yet, the amusing rumor started that I had quit preaching and gone into construction work. When we moved from Moundsville, West Virginia to Florida, where I worked with the Chiefland congregation for four years, the rumor was that I had "retired" and moved to Florida. When we moved back north to work with the Elk Fork, West Virginia church where we labored for nine years, and then with Middlebourne for six years (1990-96), it was rumored that I had "retired" (again) and had moved back north to be near our family. (All four children moved out of the area, and into four different states.)

Then, we supposedly "retired" again, and moved to southern Ohio. To paraphrase Mark Twain, the rumors of our retirement have been greatly exaggerated. We still have the same address and phone number. 72211 Grey Rd., Vinton, OH 45686, (740) 669-4111.

Preacher Needed

White Rock, British Columbia, Canada: The church which meets in White Rock is looking for a preacher. This is a small congregation of seven members who desire to have a sound preacher work with them. White Rock is located one mile north of the U.S. border and is less than 30 miles south of Vancouver. A preacher would need to have his own support due to the small size of the congregation. The church in White Rock has been in existence since 1988.

This is a beautiful area and the strength of the U.S. dollar is currently 60% more valuable than the Canadian dollar. Please consider this opportunity to aid the only non-institutional group of brethren meeting in British Columbia. If interested, contact George Ashton at 604-536-3886 or Bill Milner at 604-270-3664.

Jesus Christ Today

by Neil R. Lightfoot

Outstanding commentary on Hebrews. #10201.

\$14.95