

TRUTH

The Religion of Christ Versus The Religion of Mohammed

Bobby Witherington

Since the September 11 terrorism attacks on America, the Islamic religion has been very much in the news. Many concerned people are now bracing for Jihad, an Islamic “holy war,” and in a world with a Muslim population of around 800,000,000 souls, this is a frightening thought! Of course, it should be understood that the majority of Muslims are of the Sunnite sect — people who are moderates and who interpret the Jihad (holy war) as a spiritual struggle as opposed to physical warfare.

To thoroughly contrast the religion of Christ with the religion of Mohammed would require much more space than one article. However, we can touch on a few of the high points. But before beginning this contrast, for clarification purposes, we refer to “the Religion of Christ” as being the religion Jesus Christ founded, and we refer to “the Religion of Mohammed” as the religion Mohammed founded. The numbered paragraphs in each category will correspond.

THE RELIGION OF CHRIST

1. Was founded by Christ, who said to Peter, “on this rock I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18). True to his word, and in fulfillment of Old

Testament prophecy, Christ’s church was founded on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Christ’s church constitutes “a spiritual house” (1 Pet. 2:5), is entered by a spiritual birth (John 3:5), and his cause is spread by the correct preaching of his gospel (Mark 16:15, 16).

2. Was founded by one whose birth was foretold in the Old Testament (Gen. 3:15; 12:3; Isa. 7:14). Jesus was born at the time (Gal. 4:4), in the place (Matt. 2:4-6), and of the tribe (Heb. 7:14) announced centuries beforehand by

faithful prophets of God.

3. Follows the New Testament, of which Jesus is “the Mediator” (Heb. 9:15-17), and which serves as the medium by which God now speaks to us through his Son (Heb. 1:1, 2).

4. Affects the hearts of men and women who are called “disciples” (Acts 6:1), “brethren” (Rom. 10:1), “saints” (1 Cor. 1:2), and “Christians” (Acts 11:26). As “disciples,” they are students and imitators of Christ (John 8:31; Luke 6:40). Being “saints,” they are set apart, living in the world, but not

see “Religion of Christ” on p. 408

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

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Christianity Without Commitment

Mike Willis

The modern church in America differs significantly from the New Testament church in many respects. One difference is in the level of commitment expected of its membership. In this article, I intend to contrast the level of commitment expected of members in modern denominationalism with that expected in the Bible.



MODERN DENOMINATIONALISM

The modern church does not expect much for a member to be in good standing with the church. Most of those who are on the roles of membership in a denomination do not attend services three times a week. As a matter of fact, many of the denominations no longer have mid-week Bible/prayer service because so few attend. The number who return for an evening service is significantly lower than those present for a morning service. In most denominations, a sizable number who are on the roles of membership in a local church do not even attend every week. Not a few members attend Christmas and Easter services, with perhaps an occasional visit whenever it is convenient (that is, it does not interfere with the Sunday golf game, visit to the relatives, week-end excursion, sleeping late, etc.). Because so many travel on week-ends, some denominations have Saturday night services in an appeal to get more to attend a weekly service; otherwise these people would not attend at all. Here are the results from Barna Research as posted on their Web site:

The traditional pattern of Catholics being more likely than Protestants to attend church during the weekend has disappeared. In reality, 49% of Catholics attend church in a typical week, compared to 47% of Protestants. (2000)

Attendance levels are still higher in the "Bible belt" areas — the South and Midwest — than in the Northeast and West. 46% of those in the South and 44% of those in the Midwest attend church in a typical week, compared to 37% of those in the West and 32% of those in the Northeast. (2000)

Political and social conservatives are twice as likely than are liberals to attend church in a typical week (58% to 28% respectively). (2000)

see "Christianity" on p. 409

Salvation Issues

Connie W. Adams

Unscriptural practices are being minimized by the question, “Is this a salvation issue?” The question implies that the teaching or practice at issue is really a matter of opinion and it does not matter what is taught or done. If it “matters,” then it becomes a salvation issue.

The issues discussed in Romans 14 (eating meats and keeping days) were left in a realm where every person was to be “fully persuaded in his own mind” and was to act in “faith” (with full consent of his conscience). But even then, it was possible for the practice to become a “salvation issue” if the strong brother over persuaded the weak brother to violate his conscience and caused him to “stumble” (v. 21) or to “fall” (v. 13). Or if the weak brother sought to force his scruple on the strong brother, then he would sin in the process and it would become a “salvation issue.”

But this argument has been made regarding instrumental music in worship. For many years those in the Christian Church have said it was all right for us to sing without an instrument but that it was also acceptable with God to sing with one. They asked, “Is this a salvation issue?”

Several years ago when Ken Green conducted a daily call-in radio program here in Louisville, a preacher from the Christian Church called now and then to argue over instrumental music. One day he asked Ken, “Will I go to Hell for using the instrument in worship?” Ken simply answered “Yes” and explained that it was unauthorized and constituted lawlessness. As a result of that, Ken was invited to speak to a group of preachers (some from local Christian Churches, some from premillennial churches of Christ and some from institutional churches of Christ) on the subject “Why Those Who Use Instrumental Music in Worship Will Go To Hell.” Ken took them up and I went with him for this occasion (I was in a meeting with Ken at South End and was on the call-in program that week). The cards were pretty well stacked against Ken to create bias in those present. One of the preachers present had recently lost his daughter who had been an organist and emotions were on the surface. Ken gave a good account of himself and ably taught and defended the truth both in his speech and in the question and answer session that followed. It did not appear to be a “salvation issue” with the premillennial folks present nor with some of the institutional folks there. We were reminded that when “brother Ketcherside” (Carl) came to town he fellowshipped them and even joined in singing with the instrument.

In the aftermath of several unity forums attempting to find common ground between preachers of Christian churches and churches of Christ, several of

continued on next page

The Religion of Christ Versus The Religion of Mohammed
Bobby Witherington front page

Christianity Without Commitment
Mike Willis 2

Salvation Issues
Connie W. Adams 3

Where We Have Been — Where Are We Now — Where Are We Going (7)
Bill Cavender 6

Sex Abuse Scandal Among Priests
Johnny Edwards 9

Wording Prayers Properly
Marc W. Gibson 10

Restoring A Soul
Harry Osborne 12

Open Their Eyes
Joe R. Price 15

Pornography and Fornication: Two Deadly Sins
Ron Halbrook 16

Searching for the Impossible (2)
Andy Alexander 19

Some Thoughts on Parental Responsibility
Lewis Willis 21

Modern Sins
H. Osby Weaver 23

the institutional preachers who participated decided that instrumental music really was not a “salvation issue” and that phrase began to surface more and more. Some of them even started using the instrument while others lowered their voices and said very little against it in their preaching and writing. What they forgot is that it is sinful to “go onward and abide not in the doctrine of Christ” and that the extension of fellowship to those who do is to become a “partaker in his evil deed” (2 John 9-11). Jesus said he would say, “Depart from me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:21-23). Until someone can find in the New Testament authority for instrumental music, then the practice is without law (authority).

In recent months we have heard the same expression used by some young men who have been influenced by Hill Roberts and Shane Scott regarding the question of the days of creation in Genesis 1. Some have said, “Well, I personally believe these were literal 24-hour days, but is it really a salvation issue?” One older preacher, held in great respect asked, “Must we divide over it?” The view that these days were either long periods of time or that there were gaps of long ages between the days of creation serves only one purpose. It attempts to find a compromise between the Genesis record and the geologic tables used by the evolutionists, or to accommodate the arguments made by evolutionists based on astronomy. “For in six days the Lord made the heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it” (Exod. 20:11). “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth” (Exod. 31:17).

Faith in the divine creation in six days is fundamental. If we cannot trust what the Bible says about that, why should we believe any of it? Jesus asked, “Have you not

read that he which made them at the *beginning* (my emphasis, CWA) made them male and female” (Matt. 19:4). May I ask, “Have you not read” that in six days God made heaven, earth and the sea and all things in them? Is this a salvation issue? Will we not be judged by the word (John 12:48)? Does not faith come “by hearing” the word of the Lord (Rom. 10:17)?

When any teaching or practice is being studied, our first concern has to be “what saith the scripture?” The word of God was revealed for our learning and by it each of us will be judged. That revelation is understandable. If not, we could never contend for it, as we are charged to do (Jude 3). Jesus said, “You shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Instead of measuring issues by our own inaccurate scale, we would be far better off to seek diligently to know what the Lord said in his word and then believe that with all our hearts. Then we should speak and act accordingly.

The more conservative men among the institutional folks have said much about their battle with “change agents” such as Rubel Shelley, Max Lucado, LaGard Smith, and some of the professors at Abilene, Nashville, and a few other places. Well, we have some “change agents” to consider as well. There are always buzz words and catch phrases which attend the thinking of those who are weary with the old paths. Cock both eyes at those who seek to minimize basic, fundamental teaching of the word of God with the question, “Is that a salvation issue?”

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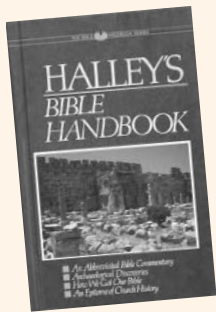
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Where We Have Been — Where Are We Now — Where Are We Going (7)

In John Greenleaf Whittier's poem, "Maud Muller," there are the famous, familiar two lines, "For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these: 'It might have been'"!

Maud Muller, a poor, beautiful, barefoot, country maiden, working in the fields of new mown hay in her brier-torn garments, gave the Judge a cup of cold water from the gushing spring under the apple tree that day, as he came riding down the lane on his elegant chestnut horse. The Judge was "struck" by the graciousness, modesty and loveliness of Maud Muller, particularly by her natural beauty and her "hazel eyes." They briefly spoke of the hay, weather, flowers, trees, birds, and if the clouds in the west would bring rain upon the hay. As the Judge rode on he mused of her beauty and charm, thinking "A form more fair, a face more sweet, Ne'er hath it been my lot to meet; And her modest answer and graceful air, show her wise and good as she is fair. Would she were mine, and I today, like her a harvester of hay. No doubtful balance of rights and wrongs, Nor weary lawyers with endless tongues, But low of cattle and song of birds, And health, and quiet, and loving words." From that brief, chance meeting the Judge never forgot Maud Muller. Often in his courtroom, or when the glowing fire in the hearth of his elegant mansion burned warmly, or when he drank his glass of wine, or when his rich, fashionable, society-page wife and his haughty, proud mother and sister were near, his thoughts often turned back to that day, that encounter, that drink of water from the spring, and the lovely face and humble demeanor of Maud Muller. And he thought, of "what might have been" had Maud Muller been his wife and he a harvester of hay on the farm in the country. "And the proud man sighed with a secret pain, 'Ah, that I were

free again! Free as when I rode that day, where the barefoot maiden raked the hay.'"

And Maud Muller never forgot that day and the Judge! She married an ignorant, churlish, drinking, smoking, grumbling man, had a number of children, lived within her "narrow walls," working at the spinning wheel by candle light, living her life in drudgery and dissatisfaction, of dreams unfulfilled. "A manly form at her side she saw, And joy was duty and love was law. Then she took up her burden of life again, Saying only, 'It might have been.'"

"Alas for maiden, alas for Judge! For rich repiner and household drudge! God pity them both! and pity us all, Who vainly the dreams of youth recall; For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these, 'It might have been!' Ah, well! for us all some sweet hope lies, Deeply buried from human eyes; And, in the hereafter, angels may, roll the stone from its grave away!"

Few, indeed, are the individuals who live their lifetime(s) without sometimes saying and sighing, "It might have been"! We look back on our lives and say we would have spoken and done differently, if we had "to do it all over again." Blunders, mistakes, false steps, errors, faults, that we have and make in word and deed are those "trespasses" (Greek *paraptoma*) of which our Lord Jesus spake (Matt. 6:14-15), as well as the Holy Spirit guided writers of the Testament. In education, jobs, marriages, child-rearing, health habits, mis-use of time and money and efforts, in

teaching the lost, and in our activities in the church among our brethren, we all have to admit mistakes and blunders, and say, "It might have been!" There is no "land of beginning again" in this present world. The only new beginnings we can experience here are when we confess our sins, turn from our wrongs and wicked ways in true repentance, and seek mercy and pardon through faith and obedience to our Father's will, through the blood of Jesus (Isa. 55:6-7; Rom. 6:16-18; 5:9).

Those of us who have lived in "the kingdom of Christ and of God" (Eph. 5:5) over the past five or so decades, and who have been actively engaged in the preaching of the gospel, have often yearned and longed for "the good old days," that decade during and immediately following World War II. We have said often, when thinking of the tragic events in our country, and among brethren and congregations over these years, "it might have been!" The prayers, forebodings, and sorrows for sons, daughters, and husbands being away in the military services to fight for right and freedom; the anxious hours and days of waiting for news from the battle fronts on land and on the seas; the tragic tidings of death notices to families and return of the bodies of those who perished in the conflicts, and their subsequent funerals; the sadness and heartaches of those who never received bodies of loved ones, bodies buried in foreign soils, or disappearing from sight in the seas and oceans; the vanishings of so many forevermore un-named soldiers, sailors, and marines, never accounted for, joining the ranks of the "unknown to men" and "known only to God"; and the joyous return home of beloved sons, daughters, and husbands when the war was over, the last battle had been fought and won, and "taps" had sounded over the graves of the fallen for the last time. These times and events had a sobering, somber, solemn, serious effect upon our nation and upon our brethren. There was no place or time, right then, during and shortly after the war, for arguments, fusses, divisions, and strife. It had been a time of war; now it was a time for peace (Eccl. 3:8). There was a high degree of unity among brethren and congregations. There was much interest by congregations and individuals in preaching the gospel to the lost. Many, many men wanted to preach, not for money and notoriety, but because of a love of lost souls and from a far greater awareness of the need to "go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15-16). Most of us were keenly aware of the vast numbers of lost, undone sinners in the world. We wanted to teach them the truth of the gospel, bringing them to the knowledge of the Son of God, and to the salvation of their souls in and through him.

Those very times, circumstances, and noble sentiments lended themselves to a cultivation, culture, and collectivity of promoters, promotions, programs, ideas, and concepts of "doing great things for the Lord." For example: all the colleges of the brethren were needing money, quickly. A

tremendous influx of returning military men and women ("GIs") could attend college on the "GI Bill Of Rights." (I went through college under the terms of this government program. All college costs of tuition, books, fees, room and board were paid, and \$75.00 per month paid additionally to the "GI." When I married, I began to receive \$105.00 per month. According to the government, Marinel was worth \$1.00 a day. I had two months of GI benefits remaining, which were never used, when I graduated from David Lipscomb College in the spring of 1950.) The colleges needed buildings, dormitories, libraries, qualified faculty members, equipment, endowments — everything it takes to build, improve, and operate an educational facility. Local church treasuries were available and ready sources of cash — if brethren could be convinced that local church support and subsidization of schools was a scriptural, God-authorized function and work of a local church of Christ. Thus the great debate began quickly regarding the scripturalness of "the college in the budget." In the early days of this discussion, most of the colleges (Pepperdine, Abilene Christian, David Lipscomb, Harding) would take contributions from churches. Freed-Hardeman College and the newly begun Florida Christian College in Tampa, Florida, would not do so. Freed-Hardeman "University" will do so now.

Brother N.B. Hardeman, president of Freed-Hardeman College, at first rejecting contributions from churches, believed it was scriptural for churches to send funds to the college, arguing that a church could support the teaching of the Bible. He argued that if the local churches could support the "orphans homes," they could support the colleges, since both the orphans homes and the schools are chartered, legalized, and authorized under the same provisions of state laws. He was correct and consistent in this argument. He was incorrect in his basic premise that the kingdom of heaven, the divinely planned, arranged, and revealed church of Christ (Eph. 3:8-12), embraces human agencies and organizations, and can scripturally maintain and subsidize these human agencies. In time, brethren Batsell Barrett Baxter, Athens Clay Pullias, W.L. Totty, and many other prominent brethren, argued and wrote from this same viewpoint. Brother G.C. Brewer had all along argued for the church support of the schools. Brother Guy N. Woods and some others argued that the churches could send contributions to the orphans homes but not to the colleges. Brother L.R. Wilson, the first president of Florida Christian College, went on record as rejecting the idea of local churches sending contributions to the school. Brother James R. Cope, upon becoming president of FCC in 1949, also publicly proclaimed that FCC would not take contributions from churches, and would return any that might be sent to FCC.

Many programs and promoters came to prominence and notoriety during this period. Instead of local churches of Christ, with their own elders and deacons, planning and accomplishing their own work according to own abilities,

as in the New Testament, they found it easier and simpler to transfer funds from the church treasuries, to send a check, to the treasuries of the various programs and projects of the promoters. The “orphans homes” were continually pleading and vying for funds from the congregations. (The term “orphan homes” has been, in our lifetime, a misnomer, a wrong and deceptive designation. There have been few, if any “orphans” in these “homes.”) The “Millions For Manhattan” program in New York City was launched by brother Burton Coffman. The “Millions For Billions in the Far East” was begun by brother Ira Y Rice, Jr. “The Herald of Truth” international radio program was promoted by brethren James Walter Nichols and James D. Willeford, who convinced the elders of the Highland Avenue church in Abilene, Texas, where brother Ernest R. Harper was the preacher, to be the “sponsoring church” for this program. Some two or three years later, the television facet of this program was added, as television was the up-and-coming means and method of communication and “home entertainment,” as opposed to public entertainment (especially the movies). There was the work in Germany promoted by brother Otis Gatewood and the Broadway church in Lubbock, with the building of the gigantic, expensive meeting-house in Frankfurt, Germany, which was later abandoned. There was the work in Italy promoted by the Brownfield, Texas, church and by other congregations, establishing the Frascati Childrens Home and other projects.

All of the programs, promoters, and projects cost multiplied millions of dollars. None really prospered. Comparatively few people were converted to Jesus. They were divisive and destructive to the unity and love of brethren. They were catastrophic to Bible teaching concerning individual responsibility and congregational independence, just as false teaching justifying the American Christian Missionary Society had been to the churches of the Lord a century before. As the denominational world had it “beggars” and “promoters” (as Oral Roberts, Jim Baker, Jimmy Swaggart, etc.), so churches of Christ, in principle, practiced the same. Money, and the love of money, and the fame and fortune it would bring to a personable promoter, became the criteria of “good works.” “Send us the money and we can do these great works for the Lord,” was believed and practiced by the majority of the congregations. Paying someone else to do the work and be responsible for the effort was so comforting and convenient, very satisfying to most of the brethren.

Looking back on all of these activities over the years and the divisions which were caused by them, we often say, “it might have been” so different if brethren had only loved the truth, loved the Lord and each other, with individuals doing their duties and local churches planning and accomplishing their own work. What could and would churches of our Lord be today had we all taught the same truths from the Scriptures (1 Pet. 4:11), had we all understood what the

kingdom of Christ and of God *really* is (Dan. 2:44; Isa. 9:6-7; John 3:1-8; Acts 8:12; 28:31), if we had all been of the same mind and the same judgments (1 Cor. 1:10), and if we all had maintained the same goals of preaching the gospel to the lost and edifying of the saints (Eph. 4:1-16).

The plea of the Herald of Truth radio program planners, in the beginning, was that “the Catholics have their international Catholic Hour,” “the Lutherans have their Lutheran Hour,” “the Baptists have their Baptist Hour,” “the Seventh-Day Adventists have their Adventist Hour,” and “the churches of Christ” need an international radio program also. It was affirmed, in speaking and in writing, that “the Church of Christ is the fastest growing religious body in America” and “the Church of Christ is the sixth largest religious body in the United States today.” These statements were neither factual nor provable.

Today, to a great degree, we can see the fruits, results, and devastations wrought of and by these programs, promoters, and promotions. The old promoters of the forties and fifties are all dead and gone to meet the Lord in judgment. Many of their programs and works are dismantled, dismembered, little remembered, and have gone into oblivion. Another generation (or two) has arisen who never heard of them, but who have been infected by the bigness, human institutions, centralization of congregational work, and human wisdom viruses. One has only to read the monthly paper, *The Christian Chronicle*, to realize that these pernicious germs are multiplied and most brethren, for the most part, have little understanding of the concept and nature of the eternal kingdom of God. Millions and millions of dollars were, and are, ill-spent. Great numbers of lost people, who could possibly have been saved if local churches and individuals would have done their scriptural work and duties, were not saved. “For of all sad words of tongue or pen, The saddest are these, ‘It might have been’”!

The “Herald of Truth” is one, among some of the organizations and programs, which still lingers on. A few years ago someone challenged the “Herald Of Truth” brethren to supply the name and address of one congregation of Christ begun by, through, and as a result of the preaching done by the “Herald Of Truth” organization. I never did see any statement in any paper in response to that inquiry and challenge. I doubt there is any such congregation in existence. If so, where is it? It staggers the imagination to visualize the thousands of preachers who could have been supported and sent into all areas of the world, with all the wasted, ill-spent millions of dollars which have been spent on the unscriptural, humanly-devised projects of talented “PR” brethren! (To be continued)

Sex Abuse Among Priests

The Roman Catholic Church has been rocked with sex abuse among a number of Catholic priests, as has recently come to the forefront. Pope John Paul II labels such as a “Crime,” according to a front page article in the *Evansville Courier & Press* (Wednesday, April 24, 2002). Please observe:

CELIBACY

Catholic rules forbid marriage among priests. This rule is of human origin and is not biblical in the first place. Paul identified those who would “depart from the faith” as those “forbidding to marry” (1 Tim. 4:1-5). Nobody, and I mean nobody, has the right to tell a person, who has the right to marry, that he cannot be married. There is no doubt that celibacy among Catholic priests has contributed to their pedophilia and homosexual problems.

THE RIGHT TO MARRY

The Bible teaches, “Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (1 Cor. 7:2). Paul wrote the Corinthian church, “Have we not the power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?” (1 Cor. 9:5). Some of the apostles were married and those who were not, had the right to marry.

PETER WAS MARRIED

We are told by the Catholic Church that the apostle Peter was the first pope. There is no passage in the Bible that ever says that or even hints at such. The pope and priests in the Catholic Church are not allowed to marry. The apostle Peter was married. Paul said Peter had a “wife” (1 Cor. 9:5). I know he was married because the Bible says he had a mother-in-law! “And when Jesus was come into Peter’s house, he saw his wife’s mother laid, and sick of a fever” (Matt. 8:14). We are sometimes told that when Peter became a pope, he put his wife away! Anyone got a passage of Scripture for this?

HUMAN INSTITUTION

The Catholic Church is a human institution as Clarine Young, a nun from Carmel, Indiana, said on *The Today*

Show (April 4, 2001). She plainly said, “You know that the Catholic Church is a human institution,” as she commented on this sexual assault among young children. Mr. Bernie Mass, a devout Catholic said on the same television program, concerning these Catholic priests, “they are men.” And I might add that the pope is also just a man, as the apostle Peter said he was, when Cornelius “fell down at his feet and worshiped him.” But Peter took him up, saying, “Stand up; I myself also am a man” (Acts 10:25-26).

MEETING TO DRAW UP POLICY

A Vatican City meeting of the pope and American Roman Catholic leaders, “stopped short of a zero-tolerance policy to dismiss all abusive clerics,” according to the April 25, 2002, *Evansville Courier & Press*. The newspaper further stated that, “The church leaders will take their recommendations to a meeting of U.S. bishops in June to draw up a policy on dealing with abusive priests as the bishops gather in Dallas, Texas.” The Bible already has a policy for dealing with such sins. A reading of 1 Corinthians 5 will point out God’s policy for dealing with such sexual sins. God’s policy was and is: “Deliver such an one unto Satan, purge out, not to company with fornicators, with such an one no not to eat and put away from among yourselves that wicked person.” Paul wrote the Thessalonians “that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6). Since the Catholic Church is a human institution, they can continue to make up their own policies!

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Renew Prompt-

Wording Prayers Properly

Giving Thanks for the Bread and Cup Before Partaking of the Lord's Supper

Everything we do in worship unto God should be done with the utmost care and accuracy. The divine pattern of worship is provided in the New Testament. Our attitudes and actions should reflect our careful attention to the commands, examples, necessary implications learned from the inspired text. This is true for any act of worship to God, including our prayers for the bread and the fruit of the vine during the Lord's supper.

Those who lead these prayers and help serve the Lord's supper have an important task to accomplish. We are to partake in a worthy manner, remembering the words of Jesus and

discerning [distinguishing and understanding] the Lord's body (1 Corinthians 11:23-30). Those who make comments before partaking should direct these comments to the meaning and purpose of the Lord's supper. Those who pray should word those prayers so as to express the thanksgiving that should be offered to God.

At times, the prayers that are offered either do not express the proper thanks for the bread or fruit of the vine, or use language that is confusing to those in the congregation who are praying along. Everyone needs to be aware of these matters to see if prayers should be worded more accurately to reflect the pattern of observance revealed in the Scriptures. Please read on with this attitude of mind.

THE DIVINE PATTERN

The night he was betrayed, Jesus gave the pattern of observing the Lord's supper. We know this is what we should follow because the apostle Paul told the Corinthian brethren that this is what he had received from the Lord and delivered to them (1 Cor. 11:23ff). The example of Jesus is that he first took bread, gave thanks, and divided it for them, commenting that it was his body. They were to partake of the bread in remembrance of him. "In the same manner" he took the cup.

Paul's review of Jesus' actions and words are what we find recorded in the accounts of Jesus' life (Matt. 26:26-28; Mark 14:22-24; Luke 22:19-20). Jesus *took, gave thanks, and served*. This is our example today. We should take the emblems, give thanks, and serve. Jesus also offered comments on the meaning of the bread and the cup, and we should do the same so that all will understand the meaning and purpose of observing the Lord's supper.

With this being said, the wording of our prayers has become a concern. This is a problem observed in many congregations around this country, but this should not make it any less a concern. Any diligent and humble Christian will want to be made aware of any area that he can improve his service to God. Pride and personal feelings should not stand in the way when we seek to please God and serve others. Making changes to improve our service to the Lord should encourage and motivate us. Letting problems slide helps no one. Let me also add that most people recognize that nervousness and habit can play a part in what we say and do, and we must strive to overcome this. We can get very nervous offering a public prayer, but we must try hard to con-

thoughts *on the subject* to God in his prayer, that would be fine, but we must not omit the very purpose for the prayers – to *give thanks* for the bread and cup.

THE MEANING OF “BLESS”

A popular wording of these prayers that tends to confuse people is this:

Our Father in heaven, *bless* this bread . . .

Our Father in heaven, bless this cup . . .

It is my conclusion that this wording comes from a misunderstanding of the translation of Matthew 26:26 and Mark 14:22 in the King James Version, New King James Version, and American Standard Version which reads, “Jesus took bread, *blessed* it. . . .” One meaning of “*bless*” is to bestow blessings upon, but this is *not* what the word means here. Jesus is not “*blessing*” the bread by bestowing blessings upon it; Jesus is giving thanks for it. The word used here in the Greek is *eulogeo*, which means “to praise, to celebrate with praises, of that which is addressed to God, acknowledging His goodness. . . .” (Vine, I:132). The parallel passages of Luke 22:19 and 1 Corinthians 11:24 use the Greek word *eucharisteo*, which means “to give thanks” (Vine, IV:122). Both words are used to describe what Jesus did when he took the bread, and both words refer to the *giving of thanks*. This is also the meaning of 1 Corinthians 10:16, “the cup of blessing which we *bless*” – this is giving thanks for the cup. In all the passages on the institution of the Lord’s Supper, it consistently says that Jesus gave thanks – *eucharisteo* – for the cup. The example of Jesus does not teach us to ask God to “*bless*” the bread or the cup. When Jesus “*blessed*” the bread, he *gave thanks* for it. Let us do the same in our prayers.

OTHER THOUGHTS ABOUT THESE PRAYERS

Let’s think about a couple of other matters concerning these prayers. We must be sure to address the Father as Jesus did. This is why it is good to start the prayer addressing the Father. Unfortunately, I have heard prayers where the Father is thanked for “the blood which *you* shed on the cross.” I think everyone realizes that the Father did not shed his blood on the cross. The Son, Jesus Christ, did. Mistakes like this happen from nervousness and lack of preparation. Some catch their mistake and correct it in their prayer. To prevent these mistakes, we need to prepare for these important prayers and listen to ourselves as we talk.

Also, if the term “Lord” is used, it is good to specify in your prayer who you are addressing since both the Father and Son are referred to as “Lord” in Scripture. If you say “Our Lord and Father” or “Lord Jesus,” this can help eliminate any confusion as to which one you are talking to or about. We must strive to word our prayers clearly so that all can say, “Amen.”

Lest it be said that this is being too picky, it is good to remember that we emphasize following the pattern of righteousness revealed in Scripture in our lives and worship. This is why we sing without adding unauthorized mechanical instruments of music. This is why we partake of the Lord’s supper with unleavened bread and grape juice (not donuts and coffee), and only on the first day of the week. If we are careful and exact about these details, should we not be just as careful to offer the correct prayers of thanks for the bread and fruit of the vine? If not, why not?

I beg each one of us to think seriously about these things, and to pour forth from our lips the thanksgiving appropriate and needed for the Lord’s supper.
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concentrate on speaking the proper words to God and not worry about being in front of people. Old habits are hard to change when we have said something the same way for years, but we must be more concerned about being right in what we say to God. I have known some brethren to make notes on a note card to help remind them what to say in their prayers. I see no objection to doing this while learning to express the proper words in prayer.

FORGETTING TO GIVE THANKS

Most prayers around the Lord’s Supper say good things to God. The problem is what is *not* said. The most important reason we offer the prayer is most often left out — to *give thanks for the bread and the cup (fruit of the vine)*! We give thanks for Jesus, his death, burial, resurrection, for those “about to partake,” and other things, but we forget to give thanks for the bread and cup. This has caused some to offer their own prayers to themselves, which should not be necessary if the public prayer had offered the proper thanks. Consider the following sample prayers:

Our Father in heaven, *thank you for this bread*, which represents the body of our Savior, Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

Our Father in heaven, *thank you for this cup (fruit of the vine)*, which represents the blood of Your Son, Jesus Christ. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

These prayers may seem quite short, but say what is necessary to give thanks for the bread and the cup. If someone wishes to express more

Restoring A Soul

In competitive events, it is not unusual to see opposing parties wishing disaster upon each other. I have yet to see a

middle linebacker cry because he decked the opposing quarterback hard enough to knock him out of the game. Nor have I noted much sorrow from the remaining contestants when one player hits the bankrupt space on “Wheel of Fortune.” In the business world, the cut-throat mentality seems to be accepted as a part of the corporate ladder climbing game. When the one on top falls, the next one is more than happy to take his place without much mourning over the associate’s lot. Competition is healthy in various aspects of life, but we need to beware of the general belief that good will come to us as a result of another’s disaster — especially in spiritual matters.

When disaster comes upon one in the spiritual realm, it means that a soul is in danger of eternal condemnation. *A lost soul benefits no one.* When one falls through Satan’s devices into sin, no one is better off. Yet, those who would claim to be Christians sometimes seem to rejoice at the fall of a brother or sister in Christ. It is a sad fact that news of another’s sin has *occasionally* been spread with glee among *some* Christians. Please notice the emphasized words. I do not believe such is the *normal* practice among brethren, but it has happened. Nor do I believe that *most* Christians react to a brother or sister’s sin with glee, but it has happened.

I recall a case of two people who had a continuing feud in one congregation. When one of the two was caught in a sin, the other hit the phone to help spread the “juicy news” and further embarrass the first. The practice of such gossip seems to be increased when the sin is one of a sexual nature. If the sinner is in a place of leadership, the urge to gossip seems to grow larger. Instead of sorrowing over the fact that a soul is in danger, lives have been ruined, and great damage has been done to the cause of our Lord; a few seem to delight in spreading the details of such tragedies. *No sin should serve as the kindling for a fire of gossip, nor should any sinner be the wood consumed for the glee of another’s self-promoting tongue!*

A few examples in Jesus’ teaching should serve to declare his disgust with such behavior. For example, examine the case of the elder brother upon the return of the

prodigal (Luke 15:11-32). After the prodigal had repented and had been forgiven of his sins, the elder brother sought to rehash the sordid past of the prodigal’s sins with harlots. Even though the prodigal had left such sinful relationships and had humbled himself in repentance, the elder brother desired to benefit from his father by bringing it up again.

Jesus even directed one of his parables “unto certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and *set all others at nought*” (Luke 18:9). The Pharisee of the story was quick to notice and confess the sins of others, particularly those of the publican. As he compared himself with the publican, the Pharisee was lifted up in pride. He did not seek, as did the publican, the forgiveness of God and transformation of his life to the instructions of the divine standard (Rom. 12:1-2). Obviously, Jesus despises the practice of rejoicing over the sins of another.

RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESTORING SOULS

We have seen how we should not react towards the sins of another, but what should we do? The apostle Paul addresses that question:

Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself (Gal. 6:1-3).

If we are indeed “spiritual” ones, our place is to *restore* the brother or sister who has been defeated in a battle with sinful passions. Instead of looking down our noses at our brother or sister, we should consider what it would be like if ~~we were in his place and see that such a scenario is possible.~~ If we are certain of our own invulnerability to such sin, we have *deceived* ourselves and our fall may be imminent (1 Cor. 10:12). We must strive to help our brethren with the load of temptation under which they fell. Such is our duty commanded by God!

Since God gave us the obligation of restoring others, we should seek to follow his example in fulfilling that task.

After Israel had sinned against God in every imaginable way, God still offered restoration through the message of his prophet in Isaiah 57. He promised,

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a *contrite and humble spirit*, to revive the spirit of the *humble*, and to revive the heart of the *contrite* (Isa. 57:15 — emphases mine, HRO).

God's action towards Israel were aimed at bringing such humility and contrition so that he might "restore comforts" unto them (Isa. 57:18). God's actions towards man have always been governed by that goal — *restoration* of the humble and contrite.

Is that not also the goal he desires us to pursue with the brother or sister overtaken in a sin? A good example of the principle is seen in the way God declared the fornicating brother of 1 Corinthians 5 was to be handled. The faithful brethren were told to "deliver such a one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Cor. 5:5). Paul goes on to state that the same method was to be used for other cases where one refused to leave a sinful practice (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

One might say that such cannot be done in the "spirit of gentleness" previously instructed (Gal. 6:1). However, when Paul commands the same thing of the Thessalonians, he adds, "And yet count him not as an *enemy*, but admonish him as a *brother*" (2 Thess. 3:15). Thus, God declares that congregational discipline *can* and *must* be done in a spirit which shows our *brotherly affection* towards one overtaken in sin. The aim of such action ought to mirror God's goal — restoration of the humble and contrite.

When the brother of 1 Corinthians 5 responded in humil-

ity and contrition to the action taken, the next step in the process of restoration needed to be taken. Paul gave these instructions to the church:

Sufficient to such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the many; so that contrariwise ye should rather *forgive him* and *comfort him*, lest by any means such a one should be swallowed up with his overmuch sorrow. Wherefore I beseech you to *confirm your love toward him* (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

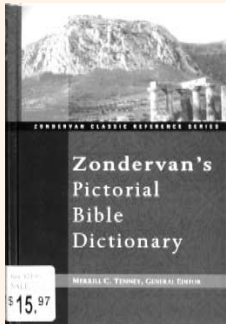
It was time for them to help the brother grow in service to Christ, reassured by their love. A soul had been *saved from death* and a multitude of *sins covered* (Jas. 5:19-20). They were to act accordingly.

CONCLUSION

The same principles should govern our actions today. When one with a truly humble and contrite heart turns from sin and ceases the sinful actions, God covers the sin and remembers it no more. Who are we to dig up the sin again, chew on the past, and regurgitate the details? Let us help "lift up the hands that hang down" and heal the lame (Heb. 12:12-13). If our focus is on restoration, such action will be the natural course to take. If our natural tendency is in any other direction, we need to take a long look at ourselves and then act to restore proper motivation and action to our own life.

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Open Their Eyes

In Acts 26:12-18 we read Paul's account of the Lord Jesus appearing to him and commissioning him as his apostle. He



would work as a “minister” and a “witness” “both of the things which you have seen and of the things which I (Jesus, jrp) *will yet reveal to you*” (v. 16). The Lord would protect his servant from both Jewish and Gentile opponents of the gospel that he might “finish his course” (v. 17, 2 Tim. 4:7).

Jesus sent Paul into the world with the gospel “to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:18). Paul obeyed the heavenly vision by declaring “first to those in Damascus and in Jerusalem, and throughout all the region of Judea, and then to the Gentiles, that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20).

Acts 26:18 provides commentary on Acts 2:38, and is a workable model for us to follow as we teach the gospel to the lost (Phil. 3:17; 4:9; 1 Cor. 11:1).

According to the text, the purpose of teaching the gospel to the lost is to open their eyes (to expose their hearts to truth and its converting power) so they will turn from the darkness of sin and error to the light and righteousness of divine truth (Heb. 4:12; Rom. 1:16; Matt. 13:15). Thus transformed in their obedience to the gospel, they receive forgiveness of sins and the inheritance of the sanctified.

Gospel preaching serves to enlighten the sinner. If we do not tell the sinner of his sins he cannot repent of them and be saved (Luke 13:5, Acts 2:38; 17:30). Failing to discuss sin which is being committed prior to baptism does not open the sinners' eyes to his sin and renders “repentance” void. One cannot repent of sin until it is made known to him.

Should we inquire into the manner of life being lived by one who wants to be baptized? If Paul had reason to believe one desiring baptism was practicing idolatry, should he discuss with that person the sin of idolatry as well as repentance from it before baptizing him? Certainly, he should if the eyes of the sinner were to be opened to see his sin, repent of it, and be baptized in order to be forgiven (Acts 26:18; cf. 1 Thess. 1:9; Acts 2:37-38).

Some object to this same approach when the sin under consideration is adultery. If there is reason to believe a remarried couple is in an unscriptural relationship we do not violate God's will to discuss it with them. Instead, such is an attempt to *open their eyes* to see their lives in light of God's truth. Perhaps their remarriage is scriptural, or perhaps it is sinful. Will forgiveness of sins be applied at baptism to the soul who does not repent of adultery before being baptized? No (Acts 2:38). If a person is saved before and without repenting of one sin, why not all sins?

We must do more that *say* repentance is necessary. Through gospel teaching we must *open the eyes* of sinners so they can “repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance” (Acts 26:20). This means there will be times we must sit down with the sinner, discuss sin in his life, and show him God's way to salvation.

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Pornography and Fornication: Two Deadly Sins

Pornography is spreading across the American landscape like wildfire. It is a multi-billion dollar industry. It is found in print, in pictures, in movies, in TV programs, and on the computer. It is promoting gross immorality and the most calloused perversion. Every day more marriages are being destroyed and more souls lost through the influence of pornography. We must make no mistake about it. Pornography is sinful and will cause us to be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thess. 1:9).

The teaching of Jesus forbids pornography in the following words:

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27-28).

The battle against pornography requires a balanced, biblical approach. We must understand clearly that pornography is sinful and will lead to the eternal fires of hell. We must not overreact to the problem in a way which may create other problems. For instance, there has been some confusion over whether the word fornication is inclusive of pornography and related perversions. Let us begin by making a careful study of the word fornication (*porneia* in Greek). Once the term fornication is clarified, then let us consider the seriousness of the sin of pornography.

THE TERMS “PORNOGRAPHY” AND “FORNICATION”

ARE DISTINCT

I offer the following information for further thought and study on the word *porneia*, translated fornication.

1. The Greek lexicons are uniform in giving the meaning of *porneia* as fornication or unlawful sexual intercourse. Arndt and Gingrich (*A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) define *porneia* as “prostitution, unchastity, fornication, of every kind of unlawful sexual intercourse.” They explain *porneia* is sometimes “differentiated” from *moicheia* (common word for adultery) and sometimes they are synonymous. Here are the very next words on *porneia*: “Of the sexual unfaithfulness of a married woman Matt. 5:32; 19:9.” Sexual intercourse between two parties who are not joined in lawful or scriptural marriage is inherent to the meaning of *porneia*.

Moulton and Milligan (*Vocabulary of the Greek Testament*) point out that *porneia* “originally meant” prostitution in classical Greek, “but came to be applied to unlawful sexual intercourse generally.” While it may be used as “a wider term” than *moicheia*, already during the Old Testament era “there was a tendency to assimilate in some respects the two terms.”

Thayer (*Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) says *porneia* means “illicit sexual intercourse in general” is distinguished from *moicheia* in such passages as Galatians 5:19, and is “used of adultery” in Matthew 5:32 and 19:9.

W.E. Vine (*An Expository Dictionary of New Testament*

Words) gives the meaning of *porneia* as “illicit sexual intercourse” and explains that “in Matt. 5:32 and 19:9 it stands for, or includes, adultery; it is distinguished from it in 15:19 and Mark 7:21.”

2. Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, edited by Kittel and Friedrich, gives lengthy and detailed discussions of the history and meaning of Greek words. The material on *porneia* and cognate terms covers seventeen pages of small print (VI:579-95). The discussion begins by pointing out that the root word, *porne*, means literally “harlot for hire,” “prostitute.” The terms intercourse, sexual intercourse, and extra-marital intercourse are used throughout. Kittel points to Genesis 38:24 to show that *porneia* and *moicheia* can be “equivalent.” A married woman, Tamar, is said to have played the harlot and to be with child of whoredom (*porneia* in Septuagint). The same usage is found in Ezekiel 16 and 23 (“22 times all told”), confirming that “fornication may in some circumstances involve adultery” (VI:584). The Jews continued to use *porneia* of “harlotry,” but also often “adultery,” and “incest,” and “sodomy,” and even “unlawful marriages,” until it came to be used of all such “‘sexual intercourse’ in gen. without more precise definition” (VI:587). Kittel notes that in both Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 *porneia* “refers to extra-marital intercourse on the part of the wife, which in practice is adultery.” He then gives an example of a Jewish writer who spoke of fornication (*porneia*) as involving adultery (*moicheia*) (VI:592). Kittel further notes the error of those who claim that *porneia* must be limited “to pre-marital intercourse” and *moicheia* used exclusively of illicit intercourse “within marriage” (VI:592, note 74).

3. A survey of commentators who wrote Greek word studies confirms the information given above. A.T. Robertson is reputed to be one of the greatest Greek scholars to have lived (his *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* is almost 1,500 pages long). He succinctly comments on Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 that “Matthew represents Jesus in both places as allowing divorce for fornication as a general term (*porneia*) which is technically adultery (*moicheia* from *moichao* or *moicheuo*)” (*Word Pictures in the New Testament*, I:155). H.A.W. Meyer likewise comments, “not on account of fornication, i.e., adultery” (*Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Gospel of Matthew*, 339). A.B. Bruce wrote the volume on Matthew in W. Robertson Nicoll’s *Expositor’s Greek Testament*. *Porneia* in 5:32 and 19:9 “means adultery committed by a married woman.” He adds that a few writers “think it means fornication committed before marriage,” but the “predominant” conclusion of “both ancient and modern” scholars is the one just stated (*Expositor’s Greek Testament*, I:110).

Henry Alford’s *Greek Testament* reflects his understanding that fornication (*porneia*) and adultery (*moicheia*) can be used synonymously. He notes on Matthew 5:28 that Old Testament usage shows that “adultery includes for-

nication.” The prohibition against adultery includes “the impure beholding of an unmarried woman with a view to fornication.” Here, any person gazing with a view to feeding unlawful desire “has already in his heart passed the barrier of criminal intention; made up his mind, stifled his conscience; in thought, committed the deed.” Alford also speaks separately of the figurative use of fornication or adultery when we violate our relationship to God in any number of ways (*The Greek Testament*, I:48).

Alford’s *Greek Testament* comments on Matthew 5:32 that *porneia* must be understood in its “wider sense” as including *moicheia*. The aforementioned figurative use of *porneia* “cannot be admissible here” because “the law is one having reference to a definite point in actual life.” Alford cautions, “Otherwise this one strictly guarded exception would give indefinite and universal latitude” (I:49). His comments on 19:9 emphasize again that only the act of fornication “can be a ground for dissolving” a marriage. Referring back to 5:28, he reminds us “that our Lord does not confine the guilt of such sins to the outward act only,” but he again cautions against regarding “demonstrated *approaches to porneia*, short of the act itself,” as providing the ground for scriptural divorce (I:194).

4. The Greek terms translated fornication and adultery refer to illicit sexual intercourse between two individuals. Fornication is the broader term and may at times refer to sexual intercourse between unmarried persons. The term is broad enough to include any and all acts of sexual intercourse between any two individuals, other than intercourse between mates who are scripturally married. Adultery is generally more limited and refers to illicit sexual intercourse in violation of the vows and bonds of marriage. The distinction between the two terms applies when they appear in lists together or when the context requires it. Otherwise, the two terms may be used as synonyms for all forms of illicit sexual intercourse.

PORNOGRAPHY: PERVERSION JUST SHORT OF PORNEIA

Pornography is one of the horrible manifestations of the spirit of immorality. It breeds and promotes every form of fornication and adultery. Pornography and any number of unclean thoughts, words, and deeds associated with it are “demonstrated *approaches to porneia*, short of the act itself,” to borrow an expression used by Henry Alford (*The Greek Testament*, I:194). Matthew 5:28 prohibits pornography because it prohibits “the impure beholding” of a woman “with a view to fornication.” Jesus teaches that any person gazing with a view to feeding the sinful desire for fornication “has already in his heart passed the barrier of criminal intention; made up his mind, stifled his conscience; in thought, committed the deed” (*The Greek Testament*, I:48).

On the one hand, we must emphasize that pornography

involves the searing of the conscience and the destruction of the soul. No passage or teaching of Christ could be more emphatic or definitive in condemning this sin than Matthew 5:28. Under the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments forbade adultery and other statutes revealed by God required the death penalty for those who broke this law (Exod. 20:14; Deut. 22:22). Moses and the other administrators of Israel who followed him could enforce capital punishment in a civil government. The kingdom of Christ is wholly spiritual and he ordained no civil powers in the church, but his wrath will be executed upon those who practice pornography. They will suffer a penalty far worse than capital punishment on earth. They will be cast into the fires of hell with Satan and his angels to suffer the agonies of eternal torment.

On the other hand, we must guard against overreacting to the sin of pornography by expanding the definition of fornication to include conduct short of illicit sexual intercourse. In an effort to tighten the restraint against pornography, we must not loosen the restraint against divorce and remarriage. We must strive with all of our might against pornography, and strive equally against broadening the ground for divorce and remarriage beyond the act of fornication. Alford cautions, "Otherwise this one strictly guarded exception would give indefinite and universal latitude" (*The Greek Testament*, I:49). If we expand the definition of fornication to include pornography, we step onto a slippery slope.

PORNOGRAPHY: SEXUAL DELUSION AND SOUL DESTRUCTION

The fact of the matter is that pornography is an advertisement, invitation, and inducement for fornication. Those who continue to sear their conscience by taking this poison into their soul will eventually be led to the act of illicit sexual intercourse with another individual. We must plead with them to repent before they commit fornication.

Pornography does not lead to sexual fulfillment. True fulfillment can be found only in marriage as God ordained it. Pornography is evil and leads to more and more forms of evil. It poisons, pollutes, and perverts our minds, our senses, our thoughts, and our souls. It hardens the heart against God, against our mate, against our children, against our brethren, against the object of our illicit desires, and against all truth and right. It creates emotional addictions and obsessions and delusions, all of which are sinful. It enslaves. It destroys.

In fact, a man's use of pornography and associated sins have the same emotional impact on his wife as the physical act of adultery. She will be devastated in numerous ways. She will feel rejected, neglected, despised, deceived, devalued, and dejected. She will feel unloved. Her sense of respect and trust toward her husband will be severely dam-

aged or destroyed. It will take months and years to restore her sense of security with him, if ever.

His callous disregard for her and her welfare will make her think about divorce, whether or not she has the Bible ground. She may convince herself she has the ground when she does not, which means the man has created this stumblingblock for her. She may begin to doubt him and investigate "little" anomalies which were overlooked when she trusted him. She will wonder, "If he deceived me and carried on this practice behind my back, is it possible he is lying now when he says that it went no further and that he has not committed adultery?" In some cases, she indeed will suffer more humiliation and devastation, because she will discover he indeed has committed adultery.

PORNOGRAPHY: POISON TO EVERYTHING PURE AND PRECIOUS

What can a wife do if she discovers that her husband is a purveyor of pornography? She needs to confront him with his sin and the evidence of it. She should expect a full, genuine, heartfelt confession and apology. She should not allow him to sweet talk her by saying, "This is no big deal," "You are making a mountain out of a mole hill," "All men do this," "It is okay for a Christian to do it in his own home," or any other excuse. She must insist that this conduct is a big deal, it is sinful, it can poison our children, it can lead to adultery and thus destroy our home. If she finds filthy magazines and pictures in her home, she should destroy them. If she finds them on the computer, she should delete them and learn how they can be blocked.

The wife must realize that pornography is not only a cruel insult to her, but also is a danger to everyone in the household. It can lead her husband to adultery and he can bring home venereal diseases, yes, even AIDS. It can lead him to commit incest or to molesting other children or to any number of criminal activities. It can lead him to destroy the financial well-being of the home as the addiction drives him to spend more and more money, and to run up thousands of dollars of debts he cannot pay (over \$60,000 in one case I personally know), and to steal in an effort to cover the debts.

How can we help someone who is taken captive by the Devil through this sin? We must appeal to his soul and conscience with everything we can find in the Word of God. Focus the light of the gospel of Christ on this sin, "speaking the truth in love" and using "great plainness of speech" (Eph. 4:15; 2 Cor. 3:12). We must call him to repentance and make no concession to his excuses or rationalizations. If he repents, we need to reinforce his battle against this sin by follow-up studies of Bible passages which fortify his faith. If we know other Christians who have conquered this sin, let us call on them to help.

Searching For the Impossible (2)

In a previous article we noticed several impossible things to search for. Just as Ponce de Leon searched in vain for

the fountain of youth, there are people today searching for things in religion that are equally foolish. However, these people often believe they have found what they are searching for even though they have no credible proof that this is so. Some are searching for salvation without Christ and without the sacrifice that he made at Calvary. Some are searching for salvation without repentance and baptism and others are searching for salvation without the church that Jesus built and purchased with his own blood. As we saw in the article, these searches are all futile, they are impossible searches for the things they are searching for do not exist.

In this article we want to continue our theme of searching for the impossible.

SALVATION WITHOUT FAITHFUL SERVICE

There are several different ways Christians can be unfaithful and all are wrong. Some Christians quit and return to the world. Some are lukewarm like the Laodiceans (Rev. 3:14-22). They think they are saved, but they are blinded and need to repent. Others are hypocrites. They attend some of the services; speak about the need for strong preaching; praise sermons on modesty, dancing, and other worldly

vices, but are not faithful in their service to the Lord.

It is impossible to be saved without faithfully serving the Lord. Christianity involves a lifelong commitment. Jesus says, "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). Paul writes, "And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart" (Gal. 6:9). To the Corinthians Paul said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). These statements emphasize the need for faithful service.

It appears that James was writing to some Christians who had the idea that once they had obeyed the gospel they could retire from the service of the Lord. He teaches that we are to look into the mirror of God's word and correct the flaws in our life (Jas. 1:21-27). This is a job that never ceases. In the second chapter James teaches that a saving faith is a working faith and a faith that does not work is dead (Jas. 2:14-26). These were Christians who needed to get up and go to work for the Lord.

The Hebrew writer rebuked some Christians who had developed the custom of forsaking the assembly (Heb.

With proper caution, we can utilize other avenues of help. Books are available dealing with pornography and how to defeat its delusions (Stephen Arterburn and Fred Stoeker, *Every Man's Battle*; Ted Roberts, *Pure Desire*). Many good books on strengthening one's marriage are available (Ed Wheat, M.D., *Love Life: For Every Married Couple*). Some professional counselors can help us better understand the illusions, delusions, and emotional addictions associated with pornography, and how to escape them, but ask them directly about their attitudes toward God and Scripture before going to them on a regular basis.

We must resist, expose, and fight against pornography

if we are to "fight the good fight of faith," and "lay hold on eternal life" (1 Tim. 6:12). Let us meditate more and more on things which are pure, holy, and good (Phil. 4:8). Let us sound the trumpet call of truth and righteousness, and cry aloud, "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of their plagues" (Rev. 18:4).

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10:25). Today, there are some in the church who forsake the assembly at least once a week and still consider themselves faithful. These people are self-deceived and cannot be saved without genuine repentance. If we are searching for salvation with this kind of half-hearted effort, we are searching for the impossible. Only the faithful servant will receive the heavenly reward. The parable of the talents plainly illustrates that only the good and faithful servant enters into the joy of the Lord (Matt. 25:21-23). Would it not be wonderful if we could say with Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:7)?

SALVATION WITHOUT PERSONAL SACRIFICE

Another impossible search that some Christians seem to be searching for is salvation without personal sacrifice. Jesus teaches that we cannot reach heaven unless we are willing to deny self, take up our cross, and follow him (Matt. 16:24).

There is a personal cost to discipleship and Jesus urges us to count that cost (Luke 14:26-33). If we decide to follow Jesus, we should know that trials lay ahead. The devil will make sure of this. Paul taught in 1 Corinthians 3:11-17 that Christians will be tested and some will prove to be gold, silver, or precious stones; while others will be wood, hay, and straw. The wood, hay, and straw will not stand the test of fire. The gold, silver, and precious stones may be altered in some way because of the fire, but they will pass the test. It requires a personal sacrifice to endure trials and tribulations. Others may help and encourage us, but ultimately we must each bear our own burden, and make whatever sacrifices are necessary in order to maintain our allegiance to Christ (Gal. 6:2-5).

Paul teaches, "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age" (Tit. 2:11-12). This means we must deny temptations; say "no" to them and to those who would lead us into sin. There are movies we might like to see, but we deny ourselves this pleasure because of the filth that is contained in them. There are places we might wish to go, but again we say "no," knowing that a Christian has to watch out for his influence and abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul (1 Pet. 2:11-12).

We may have to sacrifice friends and family because of our decision to follow Jesus (Matt. 10:34-38). Jesus will not take second place to our family. We may also have to sacrifice the clothes we would like to wear because of our desire to reach heaven. Immodest clothes may be more comfortable in the summertime and everybody else may be wearing them, but if our aim is heaven, then we will have to sacrifice these pleasures in order to reach our goal. God expects our best and he will not accept less (Rom. 12:1-2;

Mal. 1:6-14).

FALSE TEACHING WITHOUT A FALSE TEACHER

Some brethren are searching for a false teaching without a false teacher. This too is an impossible search. False doctrines do not appear out of thin air. False doctrines do not promote themselves, someone has to invent them and teach them. The word of God commands that true teachers expose false teachers and their false doctrines (Eph. 5:11; Rom. 16:17).

The apostle Paul taught the truth and established churches in the Galatian region. Somebody followed him and taught error concerning circumcision and the Old Law. This error did not just appear by itself. Someone taught and promoted it. Those who did this were false teachers. These false teachers perverted the gospel and hindered the work of God (Gal. 1:6-7; 5:7).

DISCIPLINE WITHOUT PAIN

Another vain effort some brethren make is a search for a way to administer discipline without pain. Self-discipline requires sacrifice and is often painful. In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul draws an analogy between an athlete preparing for a race and the Christian seeking to go to heaven (9:24-27). The training process requires self-control and exercise. Anyone who has trained physically knows that pain is involved in this process. The athlete is disciplining himself in hopes of obtaining a perishable prize. The same is true when striving for the imperishable prize of heaven. Christians must exercise self-control and maintain a regular regimen of spiritual exercise in order to reach the goal.

Discipline of unruly children will be fruitless unless pain is involved in the process. God's word teaches, "Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (emphasis mine, AA, Heb. 12:11). The book of Proverbs is filled with admonitions to use the rod on unruly children for the purpose of training them by driving out childhood foolishness and rebellion (Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 23:13).

There is no difference when we come to church discipline. It is meant to be painful. We do not use the rod as described in the book of Proverbs. We use the means described by God in the New Testament. "But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person" (1 Cor. 5:11). Paul also wrote the Thessalonians about discipline of unruly members. "But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us . . . And if anyone does not obey our word

Some Thoughts on Parental Responsibility

Somehow I suspect that, given the range of duties which press upon us daily, parents are not particularly begging to hear about their parental responsibilities. Nonetheless, this is another Bible-imposed obligation and we need to know about it so we can discharge our duties. The future of our children, as well as of the church, depends upon our faithfulness in this task.

SOME HISTORY

Of course, I mean Bible history. None of us would particularly like for our personal history to become the basis of this study. We might be embarrassed, so we shall not go there.

The history of the Jews, to which I refer, is not any better than the history of modern parents. Note the charge they received from God:

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons; Specially the day that

thou stoodest before the Lord thy God in Horeb, when the Lord said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children (Deut. 4:9-10).

Not only were the Jewish parents to live the Lord's commandments, they were also to teach them to their sons and grandsons! The future happiness and success of the nation depended upon their discharge of this parental responsibility. This was not something that they could view casually. This was serious business! Note again the words of the Lord:

And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up (Deut. 6:6-7).

Isn't it clear? I mean, isn't parental responsibility clear

in this epistle, note that person and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2 Thess. 3:6, 14).

These instructions are not difficult to understand, but they can be difficult to apply, especially when we are close to those who are being disciplined. It is painful for those who have to administer the discipline because of our love for the lost soul, and it is designed to be painful for those who are being disciplined. When we fail to exercise this discipline that is commanded by the Lord, we are not helping to save the soul of the lost and committing sin as well. We must obey the will of God and work his plan if we expect discipline to have its desired effect. If you have been searching for a way to administer church discipline without pain, then you are guilty of searching for the

impossible. In order to have its desired effect, discipline must be painful.

There are more impossible searches we hope to examine in another article. Think about these things. If you are searching for the impossible, stop the vain search and search for that which can be found. God's word is truth and when God promises something, we can trust it to be true. Heaven is real and those who humbly seek the Lord will find him. "I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me" (Prov. 8:17).

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in these verses? None of those Jewish parents could miss the message! They were to teach these lessons diligently! When they talked and walked with their children, they were to teach them the will of the Lord. When they arose to begin their day, they were to teach their children. As the ended their day, they were to teach their children. They had that responsibility assigned to them by the Lord.

BUT, THEY FAILED IN THEIR DUTY

After Moses and Joshua concluded their leadership of the nation of Israel, leadership fell to a group of people known as the “judges.” The Old Testament book of Judges relates some of the experiences of the nation and the judges God sent to them. This was a sad time in their history. Primarily, theirs is a repeating history of disobedience, trouble, deliverance, and peace. The nation disobeyed God, they were troubled by neighboring nations who afflicted them, they finally turned to God who sent a “judge” to deliver them, after which they lived briefly in peace. I say “briefly” because they only remained faithful for a short time before they repeated this cycle of events. The cause of their return to evil is stated repeatedly in the book of Judges. The cause was a failure of Jewish parents to fulfill their God-assigned parental responsibility. Note the record:

And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not

the Lord, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and served Baalim (Judg. 2:8-11).

The record of the Jews’ failure to teach their children repeats itself. Judges 2 continues, “And it came to pass, when the judge was dead, that they returned, and corrupted themselves more than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them, and to bow down unto them; they ceased not from their own doings, nor from their stubborn way” (2:19). Not long afterward, the report is the same: “And it came to pass, as soon as Gideon was dead, that the children of Israel turned again, and went a whoring after Baalim, and made Baalberith their god. And the children of Israel remembered not the Lord their God, who had delivered them out of the hands of all their enemies on every side” (8:33-34).

Neither the leaders of the nation, nor the parents of the land fulfilled their responsibilities to the next generation of the Jews. As a consequence, their history is one of utmost sadness, which ends in them losing their favored place with God.

THE MESSAGE?

Well, the message is too obvious to miss, is it not? Parents, if you do not diligently teach your children the law and will of God, they will grow up not knowing what they should do. The effect will be as devastating for them as it was for the Jews. Perhaps the effect will be felt in our own nation; not just within the family and the church. No matter how far-reaching the rebellion might be of those who know not God, the result will be devastating. *Souls will be lost!* Sadly, the first who will be lost will be *our own children and grandchildren*. Parents, we have a job to do. Let’s do it!

A PRAISEWORTHY OBSERVATION

As I reflected on this article, my mind went back to our Men’s Training Class this year, and the number of our young men who have stepped forward to participate. They are not just reading Scriptures in this practice, they are making talks! I wish their mothers and grandmothers could hear their work. It is excellent! Nor do I forget our many young girls who are committed and faithful in serving God. They are in their places and happy to be there. This reflects that their parents have done their jobs; they have discharged their parental responsibility and as a result, the future of the Lord’s church at Brown Street remains bright.

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Modern Sins

Sin is as ancient as the garden of Eden. In reality, there are no new sins. Man today has the same desires, frustrations,

temptations, and ambitions which man has always had. Those same lusts that moved men to sin in ancient times move men to sin in modern times. Hence, no sin is uniquely modern. However, in modern times it seems that some sins have lost their social stigma, and are thus more openly and brazenly committed than at other times in our nation's history. For this reason, we refer to them as "modern sins."

Let us look at the sin of profanity. Many are the Scriptures which deal with sins of the tongue, including profanity. In Ephesians 4:29 the apostle Paul cautioned, saying, "Let no corrupt speech proceed out of your mouth, but such as is good for edifying as the need may be, that it may give grace to them that hear." To the Israelites, in Exodus 20:7, Jehovah said, "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain." He further warned them, saying, "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God." In 1 Timothy 6:20, we read that "profane (and) vain babblings are to be avoided." In Colossians 3:8, the Colossians were told to "put off anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, and filthy language out of their mouths."

These are not all of the Scriptures that condemn the improper use of the tongue, but these are sufficient to inform us that the God of heaven takes notice of our speech and is concerned with what it ought to be. However, modern speech gets progressively worse. One can read vile, vulgar, filthy, and profane speech in newspapers and magazines. Movies, television programs, and even some of the required reading in public schools are full of it. It seems that we are living in a "four-letter-word" society, and very few seem to be raising much protest. The more obscene and squalid a remark is the louder the applause. Those who laud that kind of performance, will then turn and post their placards saying, "God Bless America." What do they expect him to

provide for them? Obviously they want God to give them whatever they want and allow them to continue in the same life-style to which they are accustomed. Of course this freedom of speech allows them to say what they want, when they want, where they want to say it. After all, they have their rights! But what about the hearer? Does he not have some rights also? Does not a man have the right to take his family to a public place without someone forcing their ears to become a garbage dump full of all the vile, vulgar, filthy words which can be conceived in the minds of the irreverent and profane? Surely, with some 400,000 words in the English language, anyone with any degree of intelligence ought to be able to express himself without having to resort to profanity.

Contrary to the thinking of some, there is nothing smart, cute, masculine, or feminine about profanity. On the contrary, it is an indication of irreverence, immaturity, ignorance, and a lack of self-respect and self-control that one is unable to express himself without the use of such grossness. His I.Q. is so low that he must employ such in order to make up for his mental defects. No person of honor and decency is favorably impressed by a stream of vile profanity pouring out of some foul mouth. So why do people seemingly enjoy that sort of thing? I do not have the answer to that question. I do know that James 3:6 describes such a tongue as that which "defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and is set on fire by hell." We need not only to be careful of the meditations of our hearts, but also the words which come from our mouths.

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“Religion of Christ” continued from front page

being of the world (John 17:16). As “brethren,” they are members of the same spiritual family, the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). Being “Christians,” they are “of Christ” because: (a) Christ died for them, and (b) they were baptized in the name of Christ (1 Cor. 1:12, 13).

5. Respects Jesus Christ as the “Messiah” of Old Testament prophecy (Dan. 9:26; Acts 2:31, 36). Please bear in mind that “Christ” (meaning “the anointed one”) in the New Testament means the same as “Messiah” in the Old Testament.

6. Elevates women. Husbands must love their wives as Christ “loved the church” (Eph. 5:25), God’s intent being that husbands and wives be “heirs together of the grace of life” (1 Pet. 3:7).

7. Founded by one who was sinlessly perfect (Heb. 4:14; 1 Pet. 2:22).

8. Divine in origin and spread by those who are motivated by love (John 14:23; 2 Cor. 5:14).

THE RELIGION OF MOHAMMED

1. Founded by Mohammed, who was born in Mecca in West Central Arabia in A.D. 570, nearly five centuries after the New Testament was completed, or nearly five centuries after “all truth” of a spiritual nature had been revealed (John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3).

2. Founded by one whose birth was not foretold in the Old Testament. Muslims cite Surah 7:157 in the Koran (or Qur’an), which refers to an “unlettered prophet . . . mentioned in . . . the Law and the Gospel,” and they sometimes cite John 14:16, 26, etc., as prophecies concerning Mohammed. But one can search “the Law and the Gospels” in vain for any prophecy regarding a forthcoming “unlettered Prophet” — much less an unlettered prophet named Mohammed! Moreover, John 14:16, 26 (please read for yourself) speaks of the Holy Spirit; he does not speak of Mohammed!

3. Follows the Koran (Qur’an), concerning which they mistakenly say God (Allah) is the author. Koran means “recitation,” and presumably God (whom they call Allah) sent the angel Gabriel to Mohammed and gave him revelations in the Arabic language, which he repeated to others, who wrote them down. In contrast to the Bible, the Koran is self-contradictory. For example, depending on which part of the Koran you read, man was created “from clots of blood” (Surah 96:1), “from clay” (Surah 6:2), and “from water” (Surah 25:54). We also call your attention to Surah 4:157 which says that Jesus was not “crucified,” a position which denies the basic reason for Christ coming

to earth (Heb. 2:9).

4. Affects the hearts of men and women who are called: (a) Mohammedans, meaning “followers of Mohammed,” (b) Islams, which means “to submit,” (c) “Muslims or Moslems, which means “submitting” ones.

5. Denies that Jesus is the Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. According to Muslims, God (Allah) had four great prophets — Adam, Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed, and Mohammed was the greatest of all. Even though the Koran pays respect to Jesus, it denies that Jesus was begotten of God (Surah 19:29). Moreover, Mohammed’s account of the birth of Jesus is vastly different from the biblical account. Concerning Mary, we read in Surah 19:23: “And the pains of childbirth drove her to the trunk of a palm tree; She cried (in her anguish): ‘Ah! would that I had died before thee! Would that I had been a thing forgotten and out of sight!’” The verses which follow refer to the same event, and they are equally as contradictory to the Bible record.

6. Demotes women. According to the Koran, “a male should inherit twice as much as a female” (Surah 4:10). A man can “marry other women — two, three, or four of them” (Surah 4:2). “Men have superiority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other.” “As for those (your wives, bw) from whom you fear disobedience admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them . . .” (Surah 4:35).

7. Founded by one who was sinful, who prescribed rules for others, but which he did not personally follow. Also, the religion of Mohammed was founded by one who had self-serving “revelations.” To document these points, we state that, according to Mohammed, men could have up to four wives, whereas Mohammed had many more. Some say he had twelve wives; others say he had fifteen! On different occasions, when some of his wives were jealous because he was showing favoritism to one wife, Mohammed received “revelations” from Allah which were designed to bring them into subjection.

8. Human in origin, and spread by those who are motivated by fear. This point is reflected in Surah 8:39: “Make war on those (unbelievers, bw) until idolatry is no more and Allah’s religion reigns supreme. If they desist Allah is cognizant of all their action; but if they give no heed, know that Allah will protect you.” Again: “Make war on them: Allah will chastise them through you and humble them. He will grant you victory over them and heal the spirit of the faithful” (Surah 9:14). “Let those who would exchange the life of this world for the hereafter, fight for the name of Allah; whether they die or conquer, We shall richly reward them” (Surah 4:73). “Allah has given them that fight with their goods and their persons a higher rank

than those who stay at home. He has promised all a good reward, but far richer is the recompense of those who fight for Him” Surah 4:95). “Moreover, according to Islamic law, the penalty for apostasy is death. In some countries a Muslim who is baptized, or who has shown interest in Christianity, may possibly be poisoned by his own family. In countries in which Islam is the national religion the abandonment of Islam is considered an act of disloyalty to the state” (*Origin, History, and Development of Islam*, by Miller, 95).

CONCLUSION

Like Moslems, I believe in both heaven and hell, but I affirm that “the way” (John 14:6) to heaven is through Jesus Christ, and not through Mohammed!

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“Christianity” continued from page 2

The modern church does not expect much from its members in respect to moral living. When churches are wrestling with whether or not to ordain homosexuals, they have obviously not required much from their members in reference to moral issues. The practicing homosexual can hold membership in these denominations; the issue is whether or not to ordain them as preachers. Those couples who are living together without being married are comfortable attending most mainstream denominations. The issue of divorce and remarriage is ignored; any marriage is acceptable without regard to why one divorced his former mate.

Moral issues such as immodest dress, mixed swimming, social drinking, gambling, abortion, and dancing are not preached in most denominational pulpits. These churches just accept that a person can practice any and all of these things while holding membership in the denomination.

The modern American church tries to accommodate itself to the lack of religious commitment among Americans by making itself as convenient as possible. Surveys are taken to see what needs the community has so that they can gear their preaching and their services to what the world believes are its spiritual needs. When the survey shows an interest in overcoming grief, the local denomination provides a grief recovery workshop; should the survey indicate that people are interested in meeting someone to date, the local church might start a singles ministry. In this way, the world sets the agenda for the church.

Nowhere is the accommodating attitude of the church toward the world more clear than in the elimination of preaching on the subject of hell. Churches advertise that

one will not hear any “hell fire and brimstone” preaching in their pulpit. Belief in hell is being rejected as being too negative.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE TEACH?

Jesus made total commitment to the Lord essential for discipleship and, therefore, for salvation. Consider these passages of Scripture:

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me (Matt. 10:37).

And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God (Luke 9:57-62).

If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple (Luke 14:26).

Because of their belief in Christ, early disciples suffered many things. The Scriptures teach:

Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life (Rev. 2:10)

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death (Rev. 12:11).

These Scriptures show that Jesus expects his disciples to be willing to give up anything — even their lives — in order to be his disciple. For that reason, he said that the greatest commandment is that one should love God first and foremost: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37). The choices of what one places first in his life reflect what he loves most. Paul stated as much with reference to Demas who loved the world more than he loved the Lord: “For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world” (2 Tim. 4:10).

Contrast what the Scriptures say about church attendance

with what denominationalism teaches. Hebrews 10:25 says, “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” One who makes a habit of missing the assembly, even less than twice a year, can still hold membership in a denomination. However, Jesus expects the Christian not to habitually miss the worship assemblies.

CONCLUSION

How dare we preach that one can be saved with less than total commitment? Those who want a religion that does not intrude on their lives, does not cost them anything (or very much), and does not require them to make changes in their sinful conduct will not be interested in the Lord’s church.

One of the reasons that modern denominationalism has an appeal to an audience that wants a religion of convenience is that denominationalism is willing to change the gospel message to fit their desires. Wouldn’t it be tragic if God’s people adapted themselves to the ways of twenty-first century denominationalism and started making changing in its preaching to make the gospel more appealing to such carnally minded people?

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Obituary

Cesar L. Caadan (1924-2002). Cesar L. Caadan, a veteran gospel preacher, of Makilas, Ipil, Zamboanga Sebugay died on April 5, 2002 at the age of 78 after ten months of failing health. He died of acute ulcer, the effect of some absence of meals during his early time of preaching the gospel, especially in remote places where he used to hike with an empty stomach due to lack of traveling funds!

Cesar Caadan did not fear death because he really understood it. He faced death proudly and valiantly. During his early years in the church, he was able to establish some local congregations such as in Gungawan and in Sisay. He worked three years with the brethren in Buug congregation, in Ipil proper, in Sampoli, and then in Makilas. He was a man without guile or compromise of truth, a man with great energy for the cause of Christ, a man of persistence, or courage and conviction, a man with a great determination.

One time Cesar had a gospel preaching scheduled somewhere in Leyte and his son was seriously ill. The situation did not hinder him from complying with his preaching schedule; he prayed before he left and told his wife, "That if so happen that our son will die, don't wait for me on his burial, because I could not determine how long should I stay on the other place." This is how I know this brother. He was one of a kind — one could not help but admire him and, like him I am happy that his life touched mine. I will remember him as a brother seeking to make this world a better place in which to live, a man who devoted himself to that end. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, that they may rest from their labors."

Brother Caadan is survived by his wife, Porferia M. Caadan, a faithful wife, and by his eight children, and a number of grandchildren. His departure leaves sadness and grief, as he was a good defender of the truth; he was one of many good debaters here in Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte, Zamboanga Sebugay, and in some neighboring places. Those whose lives he touched during his 78 years of pilgrimage will truly miss him.

The writer knows this brother so well, as we were converted the same year — way back in 1973. We have on many occasions joined our efforts in conducting several gospel meetings in some areas over here and enjoyed the fruits of our labors. The work now in Makilas still continues to go on, through the efforts of brother Johnny Mulat and the brethren. During the nightly services, brother Luis Calipayan, a gospel preacher in Sampoli B, preached with the help of brother Romeo Quesada, a gospel preacher in the Ipil congregation. When I arrived Monday night,

the last night before our late brother was brought to his resting place, I spoke on "Hope in Christ" wherein around 50 people attended. Then at the funeral service on April 9, brother Aurelio Armada, a gospel preacher in Guipos congregation, delivered the funeral sermon to the crowd of around 100 people.

Brethren, since our late brother Cesar Caadan has no insurance at all, he left some debt during ten months of failing health, He was in and out of the hospital and the money used was all borrowed from some meaningful friends. He left some debt of more than 35,000 Pesos (P35,000+). It is more than \$700. Should the brethren there have opportunity to help, please direct your assistance to his wife, Porferia M. Caadan, Makilas, Ipil, 7001 Zamboanga del Sur, Philippines. **Submitted by: Jun A. Apatan, evangelist, Hilltop church of Christ, 0481 Purok Bonifacio, Sto. Nino District, 7016 Pagadian City, Phillippines.**

Preachers Needed

Norton, Ohio: The church in Norton is looking for a sound gospel preacher. They can provide about \$2000 a month, so additional support will be needed. Attendance averages in the mid-40s. If interested, contact Bill Wells (330) 666-9460 or Jack E. Jones (330) 753-5924.



Quips & Quotes

Church's Fireworks Display Denied

"Munster, Ind. — A northwestern Indiana church will not be allowed to celebrate with a fireworks display over the Fourth of July weekend because of neighborhood complaints.

"But the senior pastor of the Family Christian Center says the show might go on despite the Munster Park Board's denial Tuesday of a request to use park property next to the church for the display.

"I'm going to do it anyway. I don't care what they say. I don't care if they put me in jail," Steve Munsey told The Times for a story published Thursday. . . . Munsey and the church had planned a huge celebration on June 30 . . . to honor doctors, nurses, police and firefighters" (The Indianapolis Star [May 24, 2002], B7).