



A Challenge to Saints

Joshua Gurtler

Another year has come and gone. In fact, another century has come to pass and what has man done to the glory of his Lord? Before the foundation of the world, our Creator desired that his creation would accomplish great things thus glorifying his majestic name. “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10).

In this new year what are our intentions for achievement? In Romans we read of man exchanging the glory of our Father for that of corruptible man (Rom. 1:25). Without thought, Christians behave the same with their carefree absorption into the pagan environment around them.

The United States is a country which has excelled like no other known civilization in the history of man’s existence. Americans are masters at work, productivity, and efficiency in the secular realm. Oh, if the myriads of Christians in this great land would but transfer these invaluable talents, immeasurably blessed to us, into the service of the King (Matt. 25). Dear friends, this coming year we

will be visited by two great forces. To which will we pledge our allegiance, our diligence and our talents?

THE VISITATION OF SATAN

Through Christ, Peter received this warning, though it was left unheeded: “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail; and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers” (Luke 22:31, 32). The man who doubts the presence and power of the Tempter is truly a naive and disillusioned individual (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:11, 12; 2 Tim. 4:17; Eph. 4:14). Though the power of the evil one may be great, the man of God is not defeated but is reminded of the Greater Power from above (1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jas. 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9). Be prepared for the visitation of Satan, for his eminent presence is just as sure as the inevitable consequences of his captors.

THE VISITATION OF THE LORD

Our Father with greater fervor and an assured love also desires our submission “*Challenge*” on p. 24

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The Return of Pagan Ideas: The Pantheon

Mike Willis

During November 1-12, 2002, I was privileged to lead a group of 26 saints on a trip to Italy. In addition to seeing the great historic sites of Italy, we also got to meet with the saints at Rome where brother Stefano Corazzo preaches and his father (Alessandro) continues his work of translating material into the Italian language. Later, I got to meet Valerio Marchi who preaches at Udine when he came to Venice to preach for us. On November 5, brother Alessandro Corazzo and his nephew Daniele walked eight of us through the ancient Forum and to visit other parts of Rome. One of the most impressive buildings in ancient Rome which they showed us is the Pantheon.



The Pantheon was originally begun by Agrippa II in 27 B.C. but was completely rebuilt by Hadrian. It is one of the most perfectly preserved buildings from the first century presently in existence.

Leland M. Roth describes the Roman Pantheon as follows:

Built in Rome, AD c. 118-28, in the reign of Emperor Hadrian, the Pantheon is the best preserved and most impressive of all Roman buildings. It has exerted an enormous influence on all subsequent Western architecture. The Pantheon asserts the primacy of space as contained volume over structure in the most dramatic fashion. From the time of the Pantheon onward, Roman architecture was to be one of spatial volumes.

The Pantheon was designed and built by Hadrian to replace an earlier temple established by Agrippa (the misleading inscription in the entrance frieze refers to this earlier edifice). The existing structure is an immense round temple covered by a single dome, fronted by a transitional block and a traditional temple portico of eight Corinthian columns carrying a triangular pediment. Originally, the awkward juxtaposition of these three sections was softened by a rectangular forum in front of the temple.

The temple is deceptively simple in appearance, consisting of a circular drum carrying a hemispherical dome with an inside diameter of 43.2 m (142 ft). The proportions are such that, if extended to the floor, the curve of the inner surface of the dome would just "kiss" the floor; thus, a perfect sphere is contained,

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Re-writing History

Connie W. Adams

Many have justly complained about efforts of the politically correct crowd to re-write the history of western civilization and especially of this country. Founding fathers have been minimized, if not demonized, and significant events have been ignored. That is bad enough. But it is not as serious a problem as the re-writing of spiritual history.

In the July/August 2002 issue of *Focus*, my friend, David Posey, wrote an article entitled “Leaders Confront Enemies.” It is the fifth installment in a series on “Lessons on Leadership from Nehemiah.” Thus far, it has been a good series with many insightful and helpful things being said. In the issue before us, he made some observations which I believe constitute a re-writing of history. In a section headed “Nehemiah used his best weapon first: prayer (4:4-9),” he said the following:

I don’t want to second guess my older brethren regarding the way things were handled during the heated battles over institutionalism in the 50s and 60s. There were lots of debates, a lot of “standing for the truth” and defending the truth, all good things in themselves. But I cannot remember one time that the leaders in those churches ever said, “Wait a minute; let’s stop all the quarreling and pray about this.” I cannot remember one service devoted to prayer, to seek God’s help in the matter. If that is the way it was in most churches, then that’s an indictment of both “sides” of the issues in those battles. We can only surmise about how things might have been different if men had stopped for a moment and prayed about it. I’m afraid it is a true statement to say that there were men bent on getting their way, regardless of what God wanted. They didn’t admit it, but they really didn’t *want* God’s help in the matter.

Unless David is much older than he appears to be, he was not old enough to have been involved in the institutional battles of the 50s and 60s. He may have witnessed some belated struggles, but he is in no position to judge the motives, much less the amount of praying that went on in those difficult days. To be sure, some tempers flared at times. But there were vital issues at stake which involved the very nature, work, and organization of the church.

Did brethren pray about it? Of course they did. I was a young preacher in the early 50s trying my best to sort it all out. I read the papers. I attended debates. I searched the Scriptures, and I prayed much about it. At every debate I attended, fervent prayers were offered every night for peace, unity, and understanding based on Scripture. My own father served as an elder in the church during those years and I can tell you he prayed much about it and grieved over the widening gap between brethren. I was a younger preacher in those days, but my work put me in close contact with many of

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the older men who bore much of the battle in the heat of the day. They were men of principle and upright character. They loved God, the souls of lost men and they loved the brethren. Brother Posey is way out of line when he said “We can only surmise about how things might have been different if brethren had stopped for a moment and prayed about it.”

He is not the first to “surmise” about this. Other younger men have done a heap of surmising. I see this same sentiment expressed in articles and hear it sometimes from a pulpit. It is a “surmise” rooted in ignorance of the truth and is a re-write of history. It casts an unwarranted shadow over the names and memories of valiant men who are no longer around to defend themselves. Did all these men use the best judgment in every case? They would be the first to admit they did not. But I can tell you now that it was the more liberal minded folks who sought the court injunctions to forbid the use of church buildings to their own brethren. I sat through one of those trials with astonishment at what took place. It was a time for prayer and weeping.

Some of those who are re-writing history with their surmising are preaching today in locations where some of the very men they are misjudging fought fervently for the truth and helped make it possible for them to have a pulpit in which to stand.

In the next place, our brother has trivialized the conflict by calling it simply “quarreling.” That’s what some have always called debates. To them they are just “quarrels.” These were epochal struggles for the very heart and soul of the church. They were not just petty disagreements. Time has more than vindicated the warnings of devout

brethren about the “opening of the floodgates” to what even the liberal debaters could not have envisioned in the 50s and 60s. Look at what goes on now in the institutional churches and tell me if it was simply a matter of brethren “quarreling” over things which could have been averted if some leaders had said, “Let’s stop the quarreling and pray about this.”

Brethren did pray and set a watch. And they worked to build again the walls, even as Nehemiah did. From storefronts, small houses, and divided congregations they preached the gospel and they grew. Now many of them meet in large, well furnished buildings, and support gospel preachers around the world. Sadly, some of them have pulpits occupied by men who have no appreciation for the struggles and sacrifices which made it possible for them to stand where they do.

Men ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke 18:1).

The most offensive slander of all was the statement that “they didn’t want God’s help in the matter.” How does our brother know that? That is totally out of character of the men I knew in the 50s and 60s. If brother Posey has any proof of this, we would like to see it. Otherwise, we will have to chalk it up to more of his surmising. Yes, leaders do have to confront enemies and Nehemiah offers much help in learning how to do it while continuing the task at hand. But he did not abuse and misrepresent his own brethren in the conflict.

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Harold V. Trimble

1915-2002

Bill Cavender

Harold Vinson Trimble was born September 3, 1915, in the community of Weches, Houston County, Texas, in “the piney woods” between Nacogdoches and Crockett. His parents were J.D. and Maude Lee (England) Trimble. He was the sixth of nine children. He made his exodus from this present world on July 13, 2002, in Bremerton, Washington, being 86 years, ten months, and ten days in age. He exceeded those “fourscore years” of which Moses spake by almost seven years. His last two to three years were “labor and sorrow,” of ill health and infirmities of the body. He was “soon cut-off,” and his spirit flew away to Abraham’s bosom (Ps. 90:9-10; Luke 16:22; Eccl. 12:7).

He is survived by his beloved wife of sixty years and two months, Frances (“Fran”) Lynette (Allen) Trimble, now eighty-one years of age on June 18. She was born in Kenton, Tennessee. They met at Freed-Hardeman College in Henderson, Tennessee, and were married on May 16, 1942. God gave them (Gen. 33:5; 48:9; Ps. 127:3-5) one daughter and three sons: Rebecca Lynn Peterson of Houston, Texas; John David Trimble of Stone Mountain, Georgia; Terry Joe Trimble of Arrington, Tennessee; and Richard Douglas Trimble of Okanogan, Washington. He is also survived by ten grandchildren and by two sisters, Pauline Hermann of Abilene, Texas, and Maye Mason of San Antonio, Texas. A grandson, Richard Trimble, Jr., passed away on April 9, 2001. (A nephew of Harold’s, an internationally-known attorney and judge, Kenneth Starr, son of Willie [“Bill”] Douglas Starr, and Vannie Maude [Trimble] Starr, Harold’s older sister, gained much notoriety and prominence several years ago as the “Independent Counsel” in Washington, D.C., the attorney who investigated, the political, financial, Monica Lewinsky affairs of President Bill Clinton.)

A memorial service was conducted on July 16, 2002, at the Lewis Chapel in Bremerton, the chapel being filled to “overflowing” with family, friends, and brethren. Brother Charles Limburg, preacher of the Bremerton Church of

Christ, read Scriptures, led in prayer, and spoke briefly. Brother Howard Reagan, long-time elder of the Bremerton church and fellow-elder with brother Trimble, spoke at the funeral. Brother Trimble’s body was cremated. His “dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27; Eccl. 12:7) are, at present (Nov. 12, 2002), cared for by one of the sons. A graveside service and burial of the ashes will occur at Evergreen Memorial Cemetery, Crockett, Texas, at an appropriate time in the future when all of the family can conveniently gather in Crockett. A web site, www.lewischapel.com, gives information about brother Trimble. You may leave a message for the Trimble family on that website. Sister Trimble’s address is: 5202 - 5th St., Bremerton, Washington 98312; the phone number is: (360) 377-3893.

Harold was baptized into the Christian Church early in his life. There was no church of Christ in the “piney woods” area where he lived in his youth. Some years later he was convinced he needed to be scripturally baptized “into the one body, into the kingdom of God” (1 Cor. 12:13; John 3:1-8; Col. 1:13-14, Eph. 4:4-6), and did so, being baptized by brother Ed McCaskill in San Antonio, Texas. Harold’s parents and family were instrumental in beginning the church of Christ in Crockett. He went to Dallas, worked for several years, worshiping with the Trinity Heights church, where Hulen L. Jackson, brother-in-law of Foy E. Wallace, Jr., was the preacher for many years. During these younger years he came under the influences of brother Wallace’s teachings and views and the papers, *The Bible Banner*, which brother Wallace edited, later being *The Gospel Guardian*. The influences of these preachers and the writings of faithful men in those journals were evident in his thinking, convictions, and preaching the remainder of his life.

He decided to preach the gospel, went to Freed-Hardeman College, met and married Frances Allen, preached first at Scotts Hill, Tennessee, and lived in a small house on the property of W. Claude Hall, in those days a highly-

respected brother and teacher at Freed-Hardeman. An opportunity came to preach in Caldwell, Texas. Brother Tillit S. Teddlie, well-known Texas preacher and prolific hymn-writer, with others, had begun a church in Caldwell. They needed a preacher. Harold was suggested to them, he was contacted, brother Hardeman gave a good recommendation to brother Teddlie, and the Trimbles moved to Caldwell in March 1944. He preached there two years but wanted to return to Freed-Hardeman and complete his education. They did so. He began preaching for the Bemis church upon returning to Tennessee. This was in 1946. They had two children: Rebecca, born in 1943, and John, born in 1946. Harold attended Freed-Hardeman, completed his work, and briefly attended Union University in Jackson, perhaps one semester. He built a house with his own hands while there, of concrete blocks (the blocks being made one by one with a hand-operated machine) on my father-in-law's farm, brother Noble L. Raines. Harold hauled blocks and building materials in his old 1936 Chevrolet automobile, taking the back seat out and making a "pick-up" out of it!

I came home from the U.S. Navy to Bemis, Tennessee, in early August 1946. Harold was the preacher there. He encouraged me to preach. In the winter of 1946-47, he had Bible classes with me, my sweetheart (Marinel Raines), her twin sister Rose (Mrs. Jimmy Alford), and others. He taught her the truth of the New Testament and I baptized her in March 1947. She was the first person I had baptized. We married June 17, 1948. Harold said our wedding ceremony. I had been preaching for one year then, due to his influence and encouragement. We "borrowed" his car on our wedding day (I had no car), drove from Bemis to Milan, Tennessee and boarded a Greyhound bus to Nashville to "go on our honeymoon" and to return to summer school. Someone later took him to Milan to retrieve his car. The back seat was still out since he had been hauling building materials in it prior to the wedding!

The Trimbles moved to Columbus, Mississippi in the fall of 1948. They were there two years, then moved to Haynesville, Louisiana. Terry was born in 1951. After two years in Haynesville, they moved to San Antonio, Texas. He preached for three congregations in San Antonio: South San Antonio for four years; Woodlawn Hills for four years; ValleyHi for seven years. Richard was born in 1962. They then moved to work with the Eastside church in Blytheville, Arkansas for four years, the summer of 1967 to the spring of 1971. In 1971 they moved to Renton, Washington, then over Puget Sound to Bremerton in 1974. He preached in Bremerton for about ten years, 1974-1984, and was appointed one of three elders in 1975. He served as a bishop until his health deteriorated to the point that he could not function. He relinquished his overseer's duties in early 2001, having served as a shepherd of the flock of God a bit over twenty-five years. In 1976 he made the first of two preaching journeys to the Philippine Islands, in company

with brother Jady Copeland. In 1980, he went again, accompanied by brethren Rick Lanning and Vernon Love.

Harold was a able, effective preacher, an excellent Bible student, having committed much Scripture to memory. He had his own distinctive style, mannerisms, facial expressions, and bodily movements in the pulpit. He had an outstanding debate with a Baptist preacher, L.H. Brown, in Bemis, Tennessee, in 1947. Several Baptists were converted as a result of his good debating and clear expositions of the gospel and the identity of the Lord's church. Twice he served as a temporary "Protestant Chaplain" at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, although he was never in the military. He had a kind, gentle, and firm way and manner of exposing error and telling folks that they were wrong and in error, all the while with a smile on his face and a twinkle in his eyes. He was a fine appearing, handsome man, strong in body, three inches over six feet in stature in the prime years of manhood, with very striking, tender eyes, and his mouth and lips had movements when he spoke, different from any other man I have ever known. His hair was thinning, even in 1946-1948. His hands were big and calloused. He was friendly, smiling, out-going, never-met-a-stranger, and was completely unselfish. He would help anyone in any way he could, if it was right to do so. I always thought Harold looked every inch of what "a Texan" ought to look like!

He was an excellent song leader, loved to sing, and had the soul of a poet. He loved psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Much of his poetry became the words of hymns. He was ever thinking of new songs and new melodies. He composed a number of hymns. Marinel and I last saw him on September 28, 2000 when he was hospitalized for some days in Franklin, Tennessee, September 28, 2000. We visited for an hour or so. He was weak and frail, with much weight and muscle loss since we last saw him some seven years earlier. We talked of the past, of our families, of the history of church of our Lord in our lifetimes, he sang a hymn for us that he had on his mind, we prayed together, and left with tears in our eyes, knowing that we would see his face and earthly form no more. Some years ago a booklet of his hymns was printed. One of them (I think it was "I Share The Perfect Love") was sung during the funeral of brother Loyce L. Pearce in Jackson, Tennessee several years ago. Loyce succeeded Harold in preaching for the Bemis church. Later he was the leader in beginning a faithful church in Jackson, which at the first was known as the Hollywood Drive church and is now known as the old Hickory church. Some time ago brother R.J. Stevens and three other singers made a tape recording of some of brother Trimble's hymns. That recording was never published nor offered for sale, as far as I know. Sister Trimble has a copy of it.

I preached in a Sunday through Sunday meeting with

Hinduism

Paul Williams

Hinduism is the religion of the vast majority of people who live in India. About 70% of the millions of Indians who live in South Africa are Hindus and there is an increasing number of Hindus in America. The influence of this religion is seen in the lives of popular movie actors and pop singers. Who has not heard the chant, “AHare Krishna”?

The following are notes taken from the book on Hinduism which is one of six volumes on “The Great Religions of the World.” This volume is edited by Louis Renou, copyrighted 1961.

Dr. Louis Renou has been Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Literature at the Sorbonne, Paris, since 1937 and a member of the Institute since 1946 (from the dust cover).

The following quotes are from him. Paul K. Williams Notes from *Hinduism*, edited by Louis Renou, 1961

Definition: “Hinduism, then, may be characterized as a system of the means appropriate for the attainment of Liberation” (42). “Liberation . . . is conceived sometimes as absence of rebirth and at others as fusion with the Absolute” (40-41).

Hell: “The non-liberated man is subject to common destiny: enslaved by his actions which follow him indefinitely, ‘as the calf follows its mother,’ he is condemned to be reborn; and as most human actions are tainted by malice, the risk of being reborn in a lower condition, ultimately as an animal, is greater than the possibility of achieving an exalted state. . . . Man suffers passively the necessity of death in order that he be born and die, again and again. This is the basis of Indian pessimism, this frightful retributive accountability” (43). “True hell is rather a return to earth” (39).

the Bremerton church in August 1980. We were with the Trimbles daily. They took us on a tour of Seattle. We went to the U.S. Navy base at Bremerton to see the submarines and to go aboard the U.S.S. Missouri, to stand where General Douglas MacArthur had stood when the Japanese representatives signed the formal surrender documents, officially ending World War II. In December 1993, Marinel and I were in Seattle for a week, visited with the Trimbles on Wednesday and Sunday, and I preached at the morning service on Lord’s Day. We ever loved Harold and Fran. Hardly any two other people influenced the course of our lives as much as they have.

His work is done. He rests until the trump of the Lord shall call him to resurrection, judgment, and eternity. He heard and answered the summons of death and has joined “the innumerable caravan that moves to that mysterious realm where each shall take his chamber in the silent halls of death.” He is now amongst that “so great a cloud of

witnesses” who would encourage all of us on time’s side of eternity to persevere and to endure, even unto the end. He fought a good fight, he finished the course, he kept the faith. He was a faithful and true child of God, a believer in Jesus our Savior, a beloved brother in God’s family. He was an earnest contender for the faith once delivered to the saints. And so we bid him farewell. We hope to see him again in that land that is fairer than day and which, by faith, we see afar, which becomes nearer and dearer with each passing day to those of us of my generation. It well nigh breaks my heart to say these final words of “good-bye.” Fare thee well, Harold — thou friend of God, thou friend of Jesus, thou friend of the Holy Spirit, thou friend of the Bible, thou friend of the kingdom of God. Fare thee well brother Trimble — thou faithful husband, thou faithful father, thou faithful grandfather, thou faithful friend of mankind. Fare thee well!

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The idols: “To fashion the idol of a god, to install it in the sanctuary, to treat it as ‘animated,’ to anoint it: all of these became major rites. . . The rite consists of welcoming the god as a distinguished guest. Bathing the god, dressing him, adorning him and applying scent, feeding him, putting flowers round him and worshipping him with moving flames accompanied by music and song: such are some of the essential features of the rite. . . . For some, perhaps the majority, the idol is the god himself, and we can classify this as idolatry; for others, symbolical values are true values and the idol is nothing more than what it is in any form of cult in which the sacred is incarnate in some concrete form” (30-31). “Hinduism is fundamentally polytheistic” (35). “From this diversity the believer selects his chosen god. . . The number of gods is considerable. India could, in fact, be considered saturated with the divine, a land with an undeniable tendency toward pantheism” (36).

“The temple is dedicated to a particular god . . . spiritual teachers (guru) . . . the ‘renouncing individual’ holds himself aloof from social life and does not participate in religious practices” (32). (The “renouncing individual” is the “holy man”.)

Prayer: “Prayer consists of the silent recitation of sacred formulae (mantra) which are repeated indefinitely. . . . This type of prayer is an aid to mental concentration and is thought to bring about the desired effects of protection, fulfillment of promise or expiatory virtue. . . . Strengthened by Yoga exercises, meditation can lead to such a paroxysm of tension that the exercitant can accomplish the ultimate aim proposed in all Indian religious thought: a state of union with the Absolute” (32-33).

Ancestors: “Those religious practices performed at home are the only ones which are relatively obligatory. Prayer three times a day . . . is accompanied by offerings to the gods, to sages and to ancestors. . . . According to the periods, more elaborate ceremonies are held in memory of ancestors (of three direct generations on the male and female side) with offerings of water and sesame; the object of this is to transform an indifferent or even pernicious dead soul into one who is useful and helpful” (33).

Sacred places: “From time immemorial crowds of pilgrims from one end of India to the other have assembled at certain privileged places. . . The Ganges is considered the most sacred place” (34).

Worship of things: “It is scarcely necessary to recall that Hinduism includes certain elements typical of a popular cult: worship of trees, of serpents and of special ‘genii’ (which are often of demoniacal nature as in the case of the goddess of smallpox). Magic, too, is widely practiced as are astrology and other forms of mantics (divination)” (34).

Sects: “A sect adheres to a specific part of tradition: it recognizes a special basic text as its own; it adopts a particular speculative system; but it neither isolates itself from the totality of the system nor rejects the common postulates” (45). “In some ways the sect is the reality of Hinduism and shapes its history” (45).

Inclusiveness: “All religions are true, we are told, but Hinduism condenses them all by preserving such of their characteristics as may be acceptable to all” (51).

Castes: “*Dharma* (which roughly means ‘life’) is fragmented according to castes and ‘stages’ of life: there is a *dharma* for each individual” (52). “More important still is the gradation of society into four classes.” “The Brahmins, who exercise spiritual power, the Ksatriyas, who wield secular power; and the Vaisyas, or artisans, cultivators, etc. . . . Apart from these three groups are the Sudras, somewhat like serfs who nevertheless maintain certain rights. Below these, and one might say, apart from society is the mass of the ‘impure’ or untouchables.” “On the religious level, the existence of classes signifies that the formal relation of each individual with the Divine is established by birth.” “. . . the multiplicity of castes — approximately three thousand in modern times” (53). “If the caste theory is observed, there are few details of existence which are not affected by membership in a caste and few traits of caste which are not definitely of a religious significance” (54). “The caste system has been held responsible for social stagnation.” “. . . deplorable customs such as the burning of widows in past time and child marriage, which is still sometimes practiced” (55).

Charity: “Hinduism lacks something of that spirit of charity which abounds in Buddhism, for example. In his concern for purity the Hindu tends rather to keep aloof than to give himself” (56).

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The James Ossuary

David Dann

While the James Ossuary is an important and exciting discovery, we must be reminded that our faith does not depend upon ancient relics. While archaeological discoveries, like the James Ossuary, can be helpful to us, we need to understand that our faith does not depend on the discovery of ancient objects such as this.

The apostle Paul writes with regard to the origin and purpose of the Bible saying, “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

Unfortunately, many do not take the biblical claim of verbal inspiration seriously. When it comes to the plain statements of Scripture, many skeptics and unbelievers will only admit that the Bible speaks the truth when they are forced to do so by the clear weight of evidence derived from ancient secular history or archaeology. Archaeology (the study of ancient civilizations) is beneficial in that its discoveries always confirm and support the facts recorded in the Bible. The numerous Bible-related ancient documents and artifacts that have been uncovered provide strong evidence in support of the claims of Scripture. Each time a new discovery related to events, people, or places recorded in the Bible is made it helps to quiet the skeptics.

One recent noteworthy archaeological discovery of interest to students of Scripture is an object known as, “the James Ossuary.” The James Ossuary was first reported as a new discovery by *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazine on October 21, 2002. This ancient artifact was brought from Israel to the Royal Ontario Museum

in Toronto, Ontario, Canada to be displayed for the first time in November 2002. The Museum assembled a panel of experts to discuss the context, authenticity, and significance of the James Ossuary on November 23, 2002. The panel of experts included Hershel Shanks (Editor, *Biblical Archaeology Review* magazine), Oded Golan (antiquities collector and owner of the James Ossuary), Peter Richardson (archaeologist and Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto), P. Kyle McCarter, Jr. (Professor, John Hopkins University, authority on ancient Semitic writing), Ben Witherington (New Testament Professor, Asbury Theological Seminary, Lexington, Kentucky), and Dr. Ed Keall (Senior Curator of the Royal Ontario Museum) who served as moderator of the discussion. Notable scholars from Canada, the United States, and Europe were present for the discussion.

Since the panel discussion was open to the public I was able to attend the discussion and view the James Ossuary. I must admit that I expected at least some of the men on the panel to attack the authenticity of the James Ossuary and attempt to discredit the Bible. To my delight, the opposite occurred. In fact, at the close of the discussion, Dr. Keall only stated the obvious when he told the audience that the members of the panel were persuaded to lean toward believing that the James Ossuary is indeed authentic (Keall, 11/23/02). Much of the material presented in this article

is based on the information presented in the panel discussion that took place at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

WHAT IS AN OSSUARY?

1. An ossuary is a burial box. An ossuary is a stone box used to hold the bones of the deceased. The custom in ancient Palestine was to bury the body of the deceased in a cave tomb. The body would be allowed to remain in the cave for a year until the flesh had completely decomposed, leaving only



the bones. The bones would then be collected and placed in an ossuary, and the ossuary would in turn be kept in the family crypt. The cave tomb could then be used to bury the more recently deceased.

2. The Jews practiced ossuary burial for a limited period of time in history. For a period of ninety years spanning 20 B.C. to A.D. 70, it was common for Jews in and around Jerusalem to transfer the bones of the deceased to ossuaries. This was practiced, at least in part, due to the fact that cemetery space was scarce and valuable at the time. The practice was brought to an end when the Roman army destroyed Jerusalem in A.D. 70.

3. Ossuaries were labeled. When an individual's bones were placed in an ossuary, the family of the deceased would have the name of the deceased inscribed on the side of the stone box. Most ossuaries are inscribed with the name of the deceased and the name of

his father for identification purposes. The James Ossuary is so called because it bears the inscription, "James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus."

"JAMES, SON OF JOSEPH, BROTHER OF JESUS"

1. The brothers and sisters of Jesus are mentioned several times in the New Testament. For example, Matthew records that the people of Nazareth referred to Jesus saying, "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (Matt. 13:55-56; see also Matt. 12:46; Mark 6:3; John 2:12). The clear indication of Scripture is that several children were born to the union of Joseph and Mary following the birth of Jesus. While it is true that Jesus' brothers did not at first believe he was the Son of God, it appears that they did come to believe in him after his resurrection from the dead (John 7:3-5; Acts 1:12-14).

2. The Catholic doctrine of the "Perpetual Virginity of Mary" is in conflict with the New Testament. The Bible says Mary remained a virgin until Jesus was born (Matt. 1:25). But the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches teach that Joseph and Mary never conceived any children together even after Jesus was born. As a consequence of this doctrine, the Roman Catholic Church interprets the passages that speak of Jesus' brothers as actually referring to his cousins. The Eastern Orthodox tradition is that the brothers of Jesus are actually children of Joseph from a previous marriage. Neither idea has any foundation in Scripture. As a result of this false doctrine, many people have no idea that the Bible even speaks of Jesus having brothers. This is one of the reasons the discovery of the James Ossuary has only recently come to light. Its owner,

Oded Golan, purchased the ossuary from an antiquities dealer in Israel in the 1970s. According to Golan, the James Ossuary was in his possession for 25 years, but he didn't realize its significance because he didn't think the Son of God could have had a brother (Golan, 11/23/02).

3. James, the brother of Jesus, became a prominent figure among early Christians. Paul writes that Jesus specifically appeared to James after his resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7). James later became an elder of the church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:6, 13). Paul refers to him as, "the Lord's brother" and as a "pillar" in the church (Gal. 1:19; 2:9). Most scholars believe this is the James who wrote the New Testament epistle that bears his name. He is often referred to as "James the Just" by early church historians.

4. Some have presented a distorted view of James. Catholic historians view James as the first bishop of Jerusalem. The fourth century Catholic theologian, Jerome, was among the first to refer to James in this manner (*Commentary on Galatians* 396:1.19). The idea that James was the "first bishop of Jerusalem" stems from a misunderstanding of how the Bible uses the term "bishop." The New Testament clearly uses the terms "bishop" and "elder" interchangeably. Both refer to the same office in the local church (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9). Additionally, the Scriptures know nothing of a "head bishop" or "head elder." In every case where elders, or bishops are mentioned, we find a plurality in each church (Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23). Rather than being the bishop of the Jerusalem church, James was one of the plurality of bishops, or elders, whose job it was to oversee the affairs of that church (Acts 15:4, 6).

5. James was killed in the middle of the first century A.D. Josephus writes that James the brother of Jesus was condemned by the Jewish council and stoned to death (*Antiquities of the Jews*, 20:9.1). It is generally under-

stood that James died in Jerusalem in A.D. 62.

THE AUTHENTICITY OF THE JAMES OSSUARY

1. The ossuary itself has proven to be genuine. The ossuary is a limestone box with a lid and tapered sides. Though there are no bones in it now, it is the proper size to be able to accommodate the bones of an adult first century Jew (Golan, 11/23/02). It resembles the other ossuaries found in Jerusalem dating to the first century A.D. According to tests conducted by the Geological Survey of Israel, the limestone of which the ossuary is made is from the Jerusalem area and is the type of limestone that was quarried near Jerusalem in the first century (ROM Website). The chemical film known as “surface patina” that has built up on the ossuary is the same on the box as it is on the inscription, therefore proving that the box and its inscription are the same age (*Ibid.*). Also, the letter shapes used in the inscription indicate that the inscription was made between A.D. 50 and 70 (*Ibid.*).

2. The inscription is authentic. The inscription on the James Ossuary reads, “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus.” It is written in Aramaic, which was the everyday language of the Jews in first century Palestine (Witherington, 11/23/02). The inscription, like all Aramaic writing, reads from right to left. There is a great deal of evidence showing that the inscription is genuine rather than being a later forgery. For example, by the early Byzantine era (fifth century A.D.) the standard way of referring to James the brother of Jesus was, “brother of the Lord” (Richardson, 11/23/02). The fact that this inscription says, “brother of Jesus” rather than “brother of the Lord” indicates that it was made long before the fifth century (*Ibid.*). Another thought is — had the inscription been added by the Catholic Church in the middle ages it would have most likely included a reference to Mary, but it instead bears the father’s name, which is typical of authentic ossuary inscriptions (*Ibid.*). Additionally, the inscription is very neat and beautifully done compared to other ossuary inscriptions of the period, which suggests that it was meant to be clearly seen (Shanks, 11/23/02).

4. Did a “second hand” work on the inscription? The panel gave a good bit of consideration to a discussion of whether or not more than one person worked on the inscription. The style of writing at the beginning (right) of the inscription appears to be a more formal style than the writing in the last part of the inscription (McCarter, 11/23/02). This may mean that a “second hand” worked on the part of the inscription that reads, “brother of Jesus” (*Ibid.*). However, this does not mean that the second individual worked on it or added to it hundreds of years after the first part of the inscription was completed (*Ibid.*). If a “second hand” did in fact work on the last part of the inscription, then he must have worked on it near the same time as the work was done on the first part of the inscrip-

tion (*Ibid.*). However, according to Peter Richardson, the change in writing styles appears to take place gradually across the inscription so that it is possible that only one person worked on it (Richardson, 11/23/02). In any case, the panel unanimously agreed that the entire inscription was made in ancient, rather than modern, times.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE JAMES OSSUARY

1. Its inscription is unique. Nearly 900 ossuaries have been discovered in and around Jerusalem dating to the first century A.D. Out of 900 ossuaries the James Ossuary is one of only two ossuaries known to include a reference to the brother of the deceased in its inscription (Golan, 11/23/02). The mention of the brother is extremely rare and unique and seems to indicate that the brother must have been a well-known figure (*Ibid.*). The mention of the brother in this particular case is incredibly significant since his name is “Jesus.”

2. The inscription very likely refers to James, the brother of the Lord. The names James, Joseph, and Jesus were very common among first century Jews. Among the ossuaries that have been discovered it is not entirely unusual to find one of these three names mentioned in the inscription. But when all three of these names appear in the inscription in the proper order and proper family relationship, then the probability that it refers to James, the brother of Jesus Christ increases dramatically (Shanks, 11/23/02). According to an unpublished study by Tel Aviv University professor of statistics, Camil Fuchs, there were probably only three people in Jerusalem during the 90-year period of ossuary use who would fit the description, “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” (Golan, 11/23/02). When the time frame is narrowed down to a period of 20 years between A.D. 50-70, there is almost only one person who could fit the description, “James, son of Joseph, brother of Jesus” (*Ibid.*). Therefore, it is most reasonable to conclude that the inscription refers to James, the brother of Jesus Christ.

3. The James Ossuary most likely represents the earliest ancient artifact bearing a reference to Jesus Christ. Jesus is mentioned by secular historians of the first century, such as Josephus and Tacitus. But the inscription on the James Ossuary would be the oldest known artifact to contain a reference to Christ. It takes us right back to a time when people who knew Jesus were still alive. This makes it a monumental discovery. In fact, Hershel Shanks calls it “the most important find in the history of New Testament archaeology.”

4. The inscription agrees with the biblical view of the family of Jesus. The Aramaic word *akhui* is the word for “brother” used in the inscription. This word can only mean brother in the literal sense and cannot refer to a cousin or a half-brother, or to any other relationship (Witherington, 11/23/02). If the ossuary is authentic, as it appears to be,

Happy New You

Larry Ray Hafley

If the Lord wills and the world is allowed to stand, we will welcome another new year later this week (Jas. 4:13-15). In the coming days, many times the familiar refrain will be repeated, “Happy New Year!” Though often thoughtlessly spoken, it is a fine, old tradition. May the Lord bless it as our prayer that we all will have a blessed and prosperous new year.

A “happy new year,” though, may depend on whether or not there is a happy, new *you*. If your concept of happiness is based on material gain, you may not have a good, new year. If your self worth is based upon this vain world’s glitter and glamor, you are a shallow person, destined to skim the surface of a shrinking, stagnant pond. Is not your life more than the food you eat? Is your value determined by that with which you adorn your body (Matt. 6:25)? If so, what a pitiful thing you are!

The measure of a man may very well be the objects of his joy. What defines happiness for you? If it is solely based on this life, you will be a sorrowful soul at death, for that is the end of all earth’s pleasures. What happiness of this life can you take to the grave? Nothing, absolutely nothing (Eccl. 9:5, 6; 1 John 2:15-17).

It is not wrong to enjoy the beauty of a shimmering soap bubble, but it is idle and ignorant idolatry to make it your hope for lasting beauty. So, of the pursuits and pleasures of life. Many of them are lovely. We may rightfully admire them, but like the sudden, silent pop of a wafting bubble, they, like we, are instantly taken from view. Again, there are joys and pleasures in this realm (Eccl. 3:13; 9:9). However, we should savor and treasure them in view of death and the judgment (Eccl. 11:9). Such a concept may be the missing link, the key ingredient to your happy new year. It will, if adapted, make a happy new *you* (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Phil. 4:4-8, 10-13).

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then it reinforces the teaching of the Bible concerning the family of Joseph and Mary (*Ibid.*). The inscription supports the biblical view that Joseph and Mary had other children after Jesus was born (*Ibid.*). The James Ossuary only reinforces the point that the Catholic doctrine of the “Perpetual Virginity of Mary” is not only without foundation in Scripture, but is also without foundation from a historical and archaeological perspective. Archaeology has once again brought forth evidence in support of the text of the Bible.

CONCLUSION

While the James Ossuary is an important and exciting discovery, we must be reminded that our faith does not depend upon ancient relics. While archaeological discoveries, like the James Ossuary, can be helpful to us, we need to understand that our faith does not depend on the discovery

of ancient objects such as this. True faith comes by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17; Heb. 11:1). A two thousand-year-old bone box has no power to save anyone. On the other hand, a two thousand-year-old message about the Son of God who died for us has the power to save everyone (Rom. 1:16).

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English Translations of the Scriptures

Joe R. Price

Ron Daly

There is a rather vocal group of people who believe and teach that the King James Version is the *only* acceptable translation of the English Bible. They also believe the KJV was preserved by the providence of God. A couple of questions are in order for those people: (1) Where does the KJV teach that it is the *only* acceptable English translation (2) If the KJV of the Bible was preserved by the providence of God, are the errors that are in the KJV also preserved by the providence of God?

Do you deny that there are “doctrinal” errors in the KJV (cf. Acts 2:47; 3:19; Heb. 6:6)? The truth is that many of the people who espouse the “KJV only” philosophy actually are not equipped to give legitimate bases for their belief. Many of the objections they make against modern translations are not sound. Some of the complaints against modern versions are valid, but many are not! The same people often object to readings in the ASV, NASB, RSV, NIV, NRSV, and the ESV in the following manner, “Well, it doesn’t read like my King James.” So what? That doesn’t mean the modern readings are wrong. A comparison of other versions to the KJV is not the basis by which we determine accuracy in Bible translations. The KJV is not the final authority; we should appeal to the original manuscripts (Hebrew/Aramaic and Greek). A version is not wrong just because it differs from the KJV, nor is a version right just because it agrees with the KJV. A translation is wrong if it does not reflect what is in the original manuscripts.

A translation, any translation, is accurate if it accurately reflects what is in the original texts. I believe that a person may use any translation in any place where it is accurate. If not, why not? The person who objects to a reading in a particular translation should be qualified to give legitimate reasons for his objection. If he can’t, his ground of objection is immediately suspect.

Translators of the Scriptures are not guided by the Holy Spirit in their work. Do you think otherwise? Most transla-

tors of the English versions are denominationalists. Do you believe they are guided by the Holy Spirit in their work? Of course not. Much of their work reflects some aspect of their theology. It is unavoidable. This is what accounts for the imbalance that we see in most versions. One portion of the text done by a segment of the translating committee may be done quite well, while other portions may be quite shabbily done. The translators of the KJV were to some extent influenced by Calvinism.

Can a person learn the truth of the gospel from the KJV? Yes. Is the KJV perfect? No.

A person would do well to use more than one translation of the Scriptures. Study from and compare as many as you can. When you lock yourself in to using only one version, you also lock yourself in to the weaknesses of that one version. Learn to note the differences between the various versions and attempt to discover the reason for the variations.

There are preachers who appear to be careful students, and they object to the NIV because as they say, “It has Calvinistic renderings and it is therefore unreliable.” What they are arguing is: Translations that have Calvinistic renderings are translations that are unreliable. The NIV has Calvinistic renderings, therefore the NIV is unreliable. I will not defend any incorrect rendering in any translation, be it the ASV, NASB, NIV, RSV, or KJV. Nonetheless, let’s apply their same logic to the great KJV. “Translations that have Calvinistic renderings are translations that are unreliable. The KJV has Calvinistic renderings, therefore the KJV is unreliable.” The KJV only extremists naturally object to such logic, but the logic is *their very own*.

Actually, the very first sectarian preachers I ever heard promulgating the tenets of Calvinism used the KJV and only the KJV! There definitely are verses in the King James

that were influenced by the Calvinistic beliefs of the translators. “Such as should be saved” (Acts 2:47). That isn’t what the Greek text says. It says “the ones being saved.” In Acts 3:19 the KJV says “be converted.” The original text says, “turn” or some equivalent that conveys the *active* quality of the verb *epistrepsate*. The KJV treats it as if it were passive. In Hebrews 6:6 the King James says, “If they shall fall away.” The Greek says, “having fallen away” (*parapesontas*). The writer doesn’t employ a hypothetical or conditional clause, but he uses an aorist active participle which in my judgment depicts actual cases of apostasy. There are other cases of sectarian bias in the great old King James. The King James only extremists can’t see the forest for the trees. It makes you wonder why not?

Others object to the NIV because it says, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me” (Ps. 51:5). One brother said, “See, there you have it, Calvinistic to the core.” Has the brother ever stopped to consider the fact that the KJV’s rendering of the passage “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” is not *literally* true! Neither the NIV nor the KJV rendering is stating a literal truth. David’s statement is a poetic Hebrew hyperbole. He is exaggerating his condition because of the emotion he feels due to his adultery with Bathsheba. It is as if David is saying, “I have never been any good. I have always been a sinner!”

If one or more mistranslated texts disqualifies an entire translation from being worthy of use, there isn’t a single translation that could stand the test. The same measuring stick that KJV only folks apply to “modern” versions should be applied to the biblical text *they* use. But, they are not going to apply their own set of rules to the KJV. If they did so, they would abandon it post haste. Every translation I know of has some verses that need to be corrected, but the corrections need to be done in comparison to the original texts, not as the result of being compared to the KJV. The KJV is itself a translation — a translation that was done by denominational scholars in the 17th century. It is not the last word in Bible translation, the extremists not withstanding.

It is so sad that some are so extreme that they are willing to point out the inaccuracies (as they see it) in every Bible except the one they use. They turn a blind eye to their text, but they diligently point out the “corrupt” verses in other peoples’ texts. Serious students of the Bible want all incorrectly translated texts expunged from every translation. We all must strive for accuracy in teaching and practice, so we necessarily want the text we are using to be as accurate as possible. If texts in our version need revision or other forms of improvement, we should welcome constructive criticism rather than rail against men who point out the needed corrections that will make good translations better.

For example, the NRSV is generally an excellent translation. It has many of the same idiosyncrasies of the RSV-1971, but in many places it is among the best English translations available. One of the main problems of the NRSV is its tendency to “strike” male oriented language from the text. The translators were often correct in doing so, for there are places where the words “man,” “he,” and “him” are used generically or inclusively in the older translations of the original manuscripts, and are subject to misunderstanding by the modern reader. Acts 17:30 in the NRSV is an accurate rendering of the Greek text “. . . now he commands all people everywhere to repent . . .” (Acts 17:30, NRSV). The Greek word *anthropos* can mean “man, male.” It can also mean “person, human being” as it does in the aforementioned passage. But, when we turn to John 3:1, the NRSV reads, “Now there was a Pharisee named Nicodemus. . . .” The Greek text says, “Now there was a man (*anthropos*) of the Pharisees. . . .” The NRSV leaves *anthropos* untranslated. In this passage the word means “male or man.” Could it be that in their attempts to remove unnecessarily male oriented language from the Scriptures that the translators went too far? Yes, I believe so.

In John 1:14, the NASB refers to Jesus as “the only begotten from the Father.” The translators used the words “only begotten” to render the word *monogenes* into English. The problem is *monogenes* doesn’t mean “only begotten.” It means “only, unique, only one of its kind.” The NASB gives this as an optional translation in its margin. The optional rendering ought to be in the text.

The NIV translates the Greek word *sarx* by the words “sinful nature” in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. It may be that the men who did the work on those texts were influenced by Calvinism. I say “may be” because they did not render *sarx* by the words “inherited” sinful nature. Nevertheless, there are other, and more accurate, options that are available than the “sinful nature” reading. One thing is certain, the Holy Spirit through Paul’s pen is not speaking of the flesh in the sense of the literal, material covering of the body. *Sarx* is used figuratively by the Spirit to indicate the condition of people who are not governed by the Holy Spirit’s influence through the gospel. Hence, it describes the carnal state. It is the condition or state of human existence that is in opposition to God and God’s law.

In 1 Timothy 3:1 the KJV speaks of “the office of a bishop.” Two things are immediately apparent in the Greek text: (1) There is no corresponding word for “office.” (2) The word *episkopos* doesn’t mean “bishop,” it means “overseer.” Why does the KJV have the word “bishop”? It reflects the religious of those seventeenth century Church of England translators. This is one of the places where the NIV accurately reflects the sense of the original very nicely, “If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer. . . .”

What is Baptism?

Scott S. Finley

Various answers are given to the above question, depending on the religious background of those asked. Scholars say that the Greek word *baptizo* means, “to dip, plunge, immerse, overwhelm, or dunk.” But many do not like what the scholars say, so I’ll try to answer this question in another way.

The New Testament clearly defines what baptism is and the divine purpose it serves. In John 3:23, John the Baptist “was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim, because there was much water there.” Note that baptism requires “much water.” How much? So much that John could not conveniently carry it with him. John was limited in where he could baptize by the quantity of water required. If sprinkling or pouring water on an individual were baptism, John could have baptized virtually anywhere.

Acts 8:26-40 records the baptism of the Ethiopian. Luke writes, “And they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.” After the baptism took place, “they came up out of the water.” Note carefully the action involved in the baptism of this man.

Conclusive information about the act of baptism is found in Romans 6:4-5. “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised

up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection.” According to Paul, baptism is a “burial,” and is typical of the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. This explains why John the Baptist needed “much water” (i.e., enough for a “burial”). It also shows why Philip and the Ethiopian both went down into the water; it was essential to executing a “burial.”

That baptism is commanded by God of those who hear and believe the gospel is clear (Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; 1 Pet. 3:21). It is required by God because man is a sinner (Rom. 3:23) and baptism is “for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:38). Saul of Tarsus was told, “And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). Jesus declared, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved” (Mark 16:16). The Apostle Peter affirmed, “Baptism doth also now save us” (1 Pet. 3:21).

May God help us to have faith in his word along with the courage to obey it. God’s lovingly extends his grace and mercy to those who obey him, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Heb. 5:8-9).

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Are we to discard the above mentioned translations just because they have some inaccuracies? Absolutely not. These same versions have many places that are clear, idiomatic, modified-literal, and accurate. We must avoid extremism in regard to Bible translations.

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Study the Bible to
be wise;
believe it to be safe;

“Blessed Are the Peacemakers”

Jim McDonald

“Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God” (Matt. 5:9). Christians are peaceable people. They cannot follow their Master and be otherwise! Isaiah wrote of “Immanuel” who, among other things would be called “Prince of Peace” (Isa. 7:14; 9:6). Peter quotes from Psalms 34:12 when he wrote, “He that would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil and his lips that they speak no guile; and let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it” (1 Pet. 3:10f). Paul commands, “So then, let us follow after things which make for peace and things whereby we may edify one another” (Rom. 14:19).

Jesus is called “Prince of peace.” Paradoxically enough he said, “Think not that I came to send peace on the earth, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law: and a man’s foes shall be those of his own household” (Matt. 10:34-36). He did not mean that he intended that men be in opposition to each other; he knew that given the free-moral agency of man, that some (most) would rebel against him which would put them in opposition to those who follow Christ. Because Jesus said he came not to “send peace on the earth but a sword,” we understand that God’s wish that we seek peace must not be “peace at any price.” In Jeremiah’s day there were those who cried “peace, peace when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). We cannot seek a compromising peace and we must remember it is not always possible for us to be at peace. The Holy Spirit knew this and so he caused Paul to write: “If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men” (Rom. 12:18). Paul wrote about some that “the way of peace they have not known” (Rom. 3:17). With such, the only path to peace is through compromise and sin. In such a case, the faithful Christian really has no choice. He stands for truth and righteousness and lets the “chips fall where they may.”

When Paul wrote “Let us follow after things which make for peace” (Rom. 14:19), he had given direction in that context that, in matters of indifference, men were to live peaceably with other men. Some could eat meats,

others could not. The ones who could not eat were not to judge those who could; those who could eat were not to set at naught those who could not (Rom. 14:3). We are also told that to be “spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). But Jesus did not simply say, “Blessed are they that follow after peace.” He said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.” Consider at least two ways in which we are to be peacemakers.

First, man must make peace with God. “He who makes himself a friend of the world, makes himself an enemy of God. The friendship of the world is enmity with God” (Jas. 4:4). We make peace with God by appropriating to ourselves the “peace offering” we find in Christ. Christ is “our peace.” Through his sacrifice he made possible our peace with God. Still, we must act. We must believe and obey his terms for peace. “Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God our Father the Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:1). This is an obedient faith, not faith only (Jas. 2:24).

Secondly, man must seek to bring about peace with others who are estranged from each other. He seeks to be a peacemaker when he preaches the gospel of peace; preaching “peace through Jesus Christ” (Acts 10:36). There can be no greater “peacemaking” than to teach a lost soul how he may be at peace with God!

Those who are “peacemakers” are called “sons of God.” Such are “sons of God” because they are acting like their Heavenly Father who actively sought to reconcile man to himself through the death of his Son. May we ardently desire that we shall be sons of God because as he made the sacrifice which allows for peace, we tell others about this available peace and praise his goodness in providing it.

*No king is saved by the multitude of an army;
A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.
A horse is a vain hope for safety;
Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.*

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Children And Worship

Bobby Witherington

Behold, children are a heritage from the Lord, The fruit of the womb is a reward. Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth (Ps. 127:3,4).

It is evident that the writer of Psalm 127:3,4 did not regard children as inconvenient, unwanted accidents of nature. To the contrary, he viewed children as “a heritage of the Lord.” This seems to have been the attitude which Eve, the first mother, possessed, for when she conceived and bore Cain she said, “I have acquired a man from the Lord” (Gen. 4:1). Hence, in both instances the children are spoken of as being “from the Lord.” However, as we re-focus on Psalm 127:3, 4, it becomes apparent that children who are “from the Lord” are to be reared for the Lord. They are likened to “arrows in the hand of a warrior” — arrows which are to be aimed in the right direction.

The intention to aim his children in the right direction was evidently possessed by Abraham for, concerning Abraham, God said, “I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they may keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He had spoken to him” (Gen. 18:19). This was certainly the intention of righteous, barren Hannah who, “in bitterness of soul,” tearfully petitioned God for a man child and then vowed — if God answered her prayer — to “give him to the Lord all the days of his life” (1 Sam. 1:11). In his rich providence, God gave Hannah a man-child, and she honored her vow. God gave Samuel to Hannah, and he became as it were an arrow in her hands, having consistently been pointed in the right direction.

The fact that children are from God and are to be reared for God is abundantly taught in both the Old and New Testaments. Concerning his “statutes and righteous judgments” to the children of Israel, God said “teach them to your children and your grandchildren” (Deut. 4:9). God later

was even more specific, saying: “And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deut. 6:6,7). In Psalm 78:5-7 the sacred writer said that God has “appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; that the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, That they may set their hope in God.” In the New Testament, to the saints at Ephesus, Paul said, “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). Timothy was a man who possessed “genuine faith,” but that faith “dwelt first” in his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5). They were the ones who made it possible for Timothy, “from childhood,” to know “the holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15).

Other passages, from both Testaments, could be cited which time and again prove that parents are responsible for the spiritual direction and development of their children. To bring a child into the world and then neglect to give that child any spiritual direction is a sin against God, a sin against the child, and a sin against the society which (for good or bad) will ultimately be affected by the child!

Without minimizing the importance of in-home spiritual training and direction, we affirm that one very important aspect of the process of aiming one's children as “arrows” toward heaven involves public worship. A healthy baby, at least as early as two weeks old, should regularly be brought to Bible study and worship. Such should become a part of the atmosphere in which the child grows from infancy to

adulthood. Little by little, as the child begins to learn about God, he becomes impressed with his (or her) parents' reverence for God, and he gradually concludes that all good people believe in God; they love God, they seek to serve God, and they live for God on earth because they plan to live eternally with God in heaven.

However, small children (at first) do not comprehend what worship is all about. As one brother (now deceased) said: "Sometimes children feel bad and they twist, wiggle, and squirm. And sometimes children feel good and they twist, wiggle, and squirm." This is true, and this is one reason why God gave children to parents, and instructed parents concerning how to rear their children. Parents of young children have the very challenging task of bringing their children to worship, and making them behave in such a fashion as to not overly disturb the worship of others in the assembly. And this is no small task!

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Bring your children to worship! To all the services! Even though you are tired, stressed out, and apprehensive as to what embarrassing "stunt" your child will "pull this time." If you do your job right, it won't be long before the child learns how to act and how not to act.

2. Use the Nursery. If you need to take the child out to nurse, change diapers, or to apply some psychology on that part of the anatomy which the diaper covers, do so.

3. Don't abuse the nursery. The nursery is not intended to become a play room for spoiled children who have learned to misbehave so they can then be taken to a more fun atmosphere. If it becomes necessary to take the children to the nursery, then please take them. But do what has to be done, and then return to the assembly — the children must learn that they come together to worship God, not to play.

4. Go easy on the food. Yes, babies should be fed on schedule. But as children get older, they can learn (if they are required to) that we have "houses to eat and drink in" (1 Cor. 11:22). Give a child everything he wants, every time he wants it, and he will become a "spoiled brat." Youth is a good time to learn both patience and the meaning of "no."

5. Avoid hard, noisy toys. On the one hand, these items can be very disturbing to others. On the other hand, the church house is not intended to be a play house. For that matter, attention focused on toys could be better focused on all worship activities, including listening to the sermon — especially as the children begin to get a little older.

6. Avoid needless distractions — such as unnecessary trips to the rest room or the water fountain. Children must learn that the worship hour is sacred, that God is to

be honored, his word learned, and his will obeyed.

7. Keep your children under control after worship is concluded. Children unsupervised can actually be dangerous, especially to older people, who are feeble, who use walkers, who have had knee surgery, hip replacement, etc. A small child can fall a thousand times and not feel a thing; an elderly person can fall one time, break a hip, and never recover. In a sense, the pulpit area and the location of the Communion table should be regarded as "holy ground" — the place where God's saving message is proclaimed and where the great sacrifice of Jesus is commemorated. Using Old Testament terminology, our children ought to learn to "distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Lev. 10:10).

CONCLUSION

Some subjects are very "touchy." This topic fits that category, so I have touched it. However, I have written out of concern, and in what I perceive to be in the best interest of all concerned. Our children are our future. They are often precocious; they are always precious and priceless. You and I cannot change our ancestors, but we can do something about our descendants and the place to begin is with our children. Thank God for parents who recognize and honor their parental obligations! We are thrilled to see babies and children in worship — the more the merrier. Parents, we do not want to discourage you, nor add to your burdens. To the contrary, we have your best interest at heart and we sincerely believe "an ounce of prevention" now is worth "a pound of cure" later on. In other words, if you bring your children to Bible Study and worship, monitor their conduct, and set the proper example before them, then they will more likely grow up to be obedient, happy, and respectful. They will make you proud and fill your heart with gladness. Most importantly, you received them from God, and you will be rearing them for God.

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Conversion

by B.F. Manire

A study of the meaning of "conversion," cases of conversion recorded in Scripture, and scriptural baptism. #80258

\$8.99

Erhardt/DeBerry Debate

John Humphries

On Saturday, October 19, 2002 at the West Broadway church of Christ in Louisville, Kentucky, Aaron Erhardt (Louis-

ville, Kentucky) and John DeBerry (Memphis, Tennessee) debated the proposition: *The Scriptures authorize the local church to plan and provide social and recreational activities and the facilities such as a fellowship hall or gym.* John DeBerry was in the affirmative and Aaron Erhardt was in the negative. Good order prevailed throughout the debate. There was the pressing of points made in argumentation, but no untoward incidents occurred. The host brethren at West Broadway were very courteous and kept the debate on a high plain.

The debate was a little different from the usual debate format in that the disputants did not have moderators. This was at the insistence of John DeBerry. There was a timekeeper, and the brethren at West Broadway handled the matter of introductions, songs, and prayers, as it was conducted in their meeting house. All went very smoothly and at no time did either side raise a “point of order.” Another unusual twist was that John DeBerry did not actually sign the proposition. He verbally agreed to it and said that his word was as good as any ink on paper.

In this brief review, we will not go into much detail concerning the various arguments made to justify the proposition. Furthermore, we will not discuss all of the negative’s responses. We will note just a few of the arguments raised in the debate.

One that came up often was that Jesus fed a multitude and, therefore, it is scriptural for the local church to build a fellowship hall. The argument was constantly made that there is just as much authority for a local church to build a fellowship hall to eat food in as there is for the local church to build a meeting house. Also, in nearly every speech by the affirmative, there was also an appeal for the negative to show from the Bible where it is wrong for the church to plan and provide social meals, etc. The negative was often portrayed as being too legalistic and lacking in proper love. In other words, it was argued that Jesus did away with the legalism of the Law of Moses and that, therefore, the church is to operate upon the principle of love and not the

old, cold legalism of the Pharisees. John DeBerry also tried to anticipate the negative by maintaining that Paul (1 Cor. 11) was only condemning division and selfishness when the brethren at Corinth came together to eat. He argued that Paul was not condemning the fellowship meal of the church but only its abuses.

In response to these arguments, the negative first of all pointed out that Jesus’ feeding the multitude was out of necessity and not for entertainment or recreational purposes (Mark 6:36, “They have nothing to eat”). The negative argued that Jesus rebuked those who missed the intent of his miracle and were only concerned with physical food (John 6:26, 27). The point was emphasized that this was a miracle that Jesus did to prove his deity and was not performed in order to give authority for the church to provide social and recreational meals for the non-needy. The negative emphasized that the church is not to engage in the “social gospel” (food and drink) approach to evangelism but to realize that the drawing power to the Lord is through the gospel of Christ (Rom. 1:16; cf. Rom. 14:17).

The negative pointed out that the Bible clearly authorized the church to provide a place for the brethren to meet for worship (edification, evangelism, and benevolence for needy saints, Heb. 10:25). However, there is no verse that authorizes the local church to plan and provide (build) a fellowship hall or a gym. These are two completely separate issues and authority is clearly revealed in the word of God for one but not for the other. There must be Bible authority for all that the local church is to do (Matt. 7:21-23; 2 John 9).

Repeatedly, John DeBerry demanded a passage that said that he and the local church were sinning and that all of them would be lost if they planned and provided social and recreational activities for the church. It was pointed out by Aaron Erhardt that this was in essence the classic argument of the Christian church of where does the Bible say *not* to have a musical instrument in the worship. Furthermore, many denominational folks, when challenged concerning

their unscriptural practices, will ask, “Where does the Bible say not to?” Aaron Erhardt discussed the importance of respecting the silence of the Scriptures (Acts 15:24; Heb. 7:14; cf. Lev. 10:1-2) and not to go beyond the doctrine of Christ (2 John 9). The negative pointed out that it was the affirmative’s responsibility to give the Bible passage that upholds the proposition as being scriptural. The negative’s role is to examine the affirmative’s efforts and to test them by the word of God. It was John DeBerry’s responsibility to provide Bible evidence for his practice.

The negative pointed out that rather than being legalistic and loveless, the loving obedience to the Lord’s commandments was what the Lord himself demanded (John 14:15; 1 John 5:3). It was stressed that good intentions and love do not negate the need to obey the law of God. A powerful example of this is Uzzah’s efforts to keep the ark of the covenant from falling to the earth (1 Chron. 13:9-10). Uzzah may have had the best of intentions and surely would have professed love for God, but he violated the law of God and was struck dead on the spot when he touched the ark (cf. Num. 4:15).

Concerning the matter at Corinth (1 Cor. 11), it was agreed that there was division and selfishness in the church when they came together (vv. 18, 20, 21). But what was Paul’s answer to the problem? Did Paul tell the church at Corinth to build a kitchen and fellowship hall and eat there? No, Paul told them to “eat at home” (v. 34) where they had “houses to eat and drink in” (v. 22). In other words, keep the social and recreational activities in the home environment where they belong and do not bring these into the assemblies of the local church. To seek to bring these home/social/recreational activities into the local church is only to assemble “together unto condemnation” (v. 34). The brethren attending the debate (who were under this

condemnation that Paul mentions here) were exhorted to repent and come back to the Bible. Aaron Erhardt continually argued the need for Bible authority (book, chapter, and verse) by presenting several passages of Scripture (Matt. 7:21-23; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 John 9).

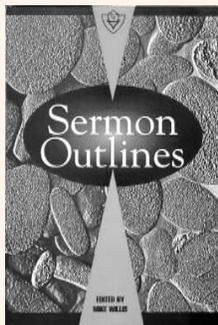
It was a timely debate and much good was accomplished. Several brethren are seriously questioning the practice of the local church planning and providing social and recreational activities and the facilities such as a fellowship hall or gym. Aaron Erhardt maintained a good attitude all through the debate and conducted himself as a Christian and a gentleman. He was well prepared and was never caught off-guard in spite of the absence of a moderator. Aaron is a young man, but the older John DeBerry did not rattle or fluster him in any way. In this viewer’s judgment, the negative carried the debate and clearly demonstrated the error of the proposition.

One other point that should be mentioned is that on Thursday night following the debate on Saturday, there was an open forum at the South End church building concerning the work of the local church. Many of those who attended the debate also came to the open forum with their questions. Aaron Erhardt was the capable moderator for the forum with three gospel preachers, Ron Daly, Ron Halbrook, and John Humphries, on the panel to receive the questions from the audience. This forum at South End was a very good and effective follow up to the debate and gave faithful gospel preachers the opportunity to emphasize the truth concerning the dangers of the social gospel creeping into the local church.

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Sermon Outlines

Edited by Mike Willis



Contains outlines by: Connie W. Adams, Andy Alexander, Dick Blackford, Richard Boone, James Cooper, Bob Dickey, Johnie Edwards, Harold Fite, Marc W. Gibson, Ron Halbrook, Gary Henry, Harry Osborne, Donnie V. Rader, Tom M. Roberts, Johnny Stringer, Weldon Warnock, Lewis Willis, Mike Willis, and Bobby Witherington. #82001

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Is There An “Age of Accountability”?

Kyle Pope

Christians sometimes use phrases which describe concepts we believe are inferred in Scripture, in spite of the fact that the phrases themselves are not biblical. In doing so great caution must be used lest we give an authority to the phrase itself which exceeds the scriptural evidence that supports it. It is generally wisest to simply use “Bible names for Bible things.” Yet when a doctrine is evident, though not specifically defined, such labeling may be unavoidable.

An example of this is our use of the phrase “the age of accountability.” We use it to describe the period we believe exists when a person moves beyond the innocence of youth into a position of accountability before God for personal misdeeds. Before this period we teach that baptism is unnecessary. After this period we teach that it is essential. Is this a biblical concept?

THE INNOCENCE OF YOUTH

The first evidence which Scripture offers that infers an age of accountability is the very clear principle that children are innocent. In Jeremiah 19:4 when the Lord rebukes the kings of Judah for their involvement in child sacrifice they are said to have “filled this place with the blood of the innocents” (NKJV). When Jesus on two occasions encounters children he declares (1) “of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:14), and (2) “unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:3). In the context of the last statement Jesus goes on to warn those who would cause “one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin” (Matt. 18:6) that even a horrible death would be a better fate for them than to do so. All this makes it clear that there is a time in youth when sin is not reckoned.

“I WAS ALIVE ONCE”

A second evidence comes from descriptions given in Scripture of coming to accountability. In Romans 7:7-9 Paul details the effect that divine law has upon man’s relationship with God. Paul points out that, though Law is not sin itself, once it is declared it defines sin (7:7). Thus when an individual violates Law sin comes to life and he dies spiritually (7:8, 9). In the midst of this discussion Paul

declares, “I was alive once without the law” (Rom. 7:9). It is clear that Paul is not claiming innocence in ignorance (see Rom. 3:19), for he was born under Law (Phil. 3:3-7). So when would Paul have been “alive without the law”? Clearly, before he reached the moral maturity to understand Law and choose to violate it!

Along these same lines, the prophet Isaiah, in speaking of the childhood of the Messiah describes a time “before the child shall know to refuse the evil and choose the good” (Isa. 7:16). It is clear that there is such a time, as seen in God’s dealing with the children and adults who came out of Egypt. When they refused to enter Canaan, God forced them to wander in the wilderness forty more years. The adults died in the wilderness. Yet those under 21 years of age were not held accountable for this sin and were allowed to enter Canaan. This clearly illustrates that we come to accountability with maturity.

NEW TESTAMENT BAPTISM

The final evidence relates to what the Bible teaches about baptism. First, we find that Scripture teaches that faith, repentance and confession are all prerequisites to baptism. Mark 16:16 teaches, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.” Romans 10:10 declares, “For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation.” And finally Acts 2:38 commands, “Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.” There is a time in a person’s life when all three of these things are impossible. An infant cannot believe, confess, or repent.

Second we find that Scripture is totally silent regarding the baptism of even a single child. Even when a large group turns to Christ we are told “both men and women were baptized” (Acts 8:12) yet no mention is made of the baptism of children. All these factors together makes it evident that there is an age of accountability.

WHEN IS THE “AGE OF ACCOUNTABILITY”?

Having shown that Scripture infers an age of account-

ability it is much more difficult to identify when that age is for each person. Is the age of 21 used in Numbers 14:29 an appropriate pattern? Is it rather when one come to “know to refuse the evil and choose the good” (Isa. 7:16)? Each soul must make this decision for himself. It seems that the important thing is for a person to have a mature understanding of what it means to obey God and repent of sin. The mental and emotional maturity required to keep one’s commitment to Christ is essential if we are to follow him in truth.

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“Challenge” continued from front page

sion. This is manifest by innumerable opportunities for repentance and continual longsuffering on his behalf. Paul said, “Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4). While one might argue that the way of the cross is a difficult road to find, there are undeniable proofs and truths God has laid before us. When presented with the love of God, we can but accept or reject the Lord’s directives. Stephen, in Acts 7, told the Jews they were turning a blind eye to such. “You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did.” Moreover, Saul of Tarsus resisted the Lord unknowingly until confronted with the truth. “And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads’” (Acts 26:14).

The course is set before us. Will we kick against the righteous chastening hand of the Lord? In this new year God desires to make you what you can and will be for him if you will but comply. Jeremiah 18:1-6 describes the potter making and remaking the clay. We then read, “Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does? Declares the Lord. Behold, like the clay in the potters hand, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel.”

This is our challenge. Not just for the new year, but until the Saviour’s return.

From this beautiful text, Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Williams penned the corresponding hymn:

*O Lord, you know my strength indeed is small,
Lest thou should lead I’m prone to slip and fall;
Guide and direct, o’er evil help me stand,
Make me as clay in the potter’s hand.*

*Thou art the Potter, I am the clay,
Make of my life as pleases Thee each day;
Weave into beauty as You have it planned,
Make me as clay in the potter’s hand.*

*Father, we pray for power to be strong,
Let not our lives be marred by sin, and wrong;
Lead to Thy throne, by love take full command,
Make us as clay in the potter’s hand.*

*Mold me, make me, as You’d have me be,
Take me, use me, that the lost may see;
Guard me, guide me, thru this pilgrim land,
Make me as clay, in the potter’s hand.*

“Pantheon” continued from page 2

a symbolic reference to the temple’s dedication to all the gods — pan (“all”) plus theos (“god”) — in the sphere of the heavens (*Grolier’s Multimedia Encyclopedia* 1998).

Even by the standards of modern architecture, the Pantheon is a beautiful building with its domed ceiling and marbled columns and floors.

McClintock and Strong’s *Cyclopedia* says, “It was anciently dedicated by Agrippa, son-in-law to the emperor Augustus; but in A.D. 608 it was rededicated by pope Boniface IV to the Virgin Mary and all the saints. In this once pagan but now Roman Catholic church may be seen different services going on at different altars at the same time, with distinct congregations around them, just as the inclinations of the people lead them to the worship of this or that particular saint” (VII:624-625).

My main interest in the Pantheon is its religious significance. The Pantheon is “a building for the worship of all of the gods revered in a certain locality” (*Encyclopedia Britannica* XVII:191). The Roman Catholic concept changed the significance very little when they made it a temple for the worship of all of the particular saints in the Catholic Church. Remember Jesus’ words, “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). By worshipping the saints, Catholics deify them as objects of worship.

THE PANTHEON CONCEPT

The concept of the pantheon is simple. There were many different temples in the city to various deities. So the Romans decided to create one temple in which all of the deities could be worshiped. The word “Pantheon” is derived from two Greek words, *pan* which means “all” and *theos* which means “God.” Hence, the pantheon is a temple in which all of the gods can be worshiped. There



is no need for a separate temple of Zeus, Mars, Diana, or any other god. One can worship all of these gods in the one temple, the Pantheon.

This pantheon concept sounds remarkably similar to modern ecumenism and pluralism. The concepts of ecumenism and pluralism may be expressed as follows: Every one has his own separate and individual religion. One is no better another. One should not condemn another's religion, even though he might not choose to be a member of that religion. Rather, he should recognize it to be equally valid as his own. There is no one right way to worship God or the gods. The Pantheon validates the worship of each and every man's deity.

Given the concept of the Pantheon, why not create a separate niche in the Pantheon for an emblem of the cross and allow Christians to be a part of the Pantheon alongside of Zeus, Mars, Diana, and the other gods?

CHRISTIANITY VERSES THE PANTHEON CONCEPT
 because it could not accept that the worship of other gods was equally valid with the worship of Christ. Even Old Testament worship condemned the worship of a plurality of gods, as the following texts show:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord (Deut. 6:4).

For thou shalt worship no other god: for the Lord, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God (Exod. 34:14).

I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth (Exod. 20:2-4).

They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed. Who hath formed a god, or molten a graven image that is profitable for nothing? (Isa. 44:9-10).

The New Testament also teaches that the worship of one God is the only way for salvation. Jesus emphasized that there is only one God (Matt. 4:10) and idolatry is condemned (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21). Furthermore, the only way for one to be saved is through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the following texts show:

I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins (John 8:24).

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me (John 14:6).

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

Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:12).

And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead (Acts 17:30-31).

Christianity teaches that there is but one way to salvation — through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who does not believe in Jesus is dead in his sins and doomed to eternal damnation.

Christianity did not teach that Christ is one way to be saved among many. Rather, it taught that salvation is only available through Christ Jesus. Hence, the very concept of a Pantheon was repugnant to New Testament Christianity.

Indeed Christianity is an intolerant religion. It could not even tolerate the departures from the truth introduced by its own adherents, such as the Judaizers and Gnostics (see Gal., Col., 1-3 John, etc.). Christianity believes that there is "one faith" and that departures from that "one faith" are sinful.

THE INTOLERANCE OF ANCIENT PANTHEONISTS

Had early Christians been willing to state, "Jesus is another god, just like Zeus, Mars, Diana, and the hun-

dreds of others,” a statue of Jesus (or a cross) could have been erected in the Pantheon and the two religions could peacefully co-exist. Christians were unwilling to make such a statement and the ecumenical attitudes of the first century Romans were not so tolerant of other religions as they outwardly professed. Those who could tolerate every other religion would not tolerate Christianity. Soon Romans were persecuting Christians. The persecutions began under Nero and continued intermittently until Constantine made Christianity legal in the first part of the fourth century.

THE MODERN LESSONS

Modern ecumenism and pluralism are nothing but a revival of the ancient pagan concept manifested in the Pantheon. Both ecumenism and pluralism are expressions of the concept that there is no one right way in religion. Every man’s religion is equally valid to everyone else’s religion. If one can understand what was wrong with the ancient Roman Pantheon, he should understand what is wrong with the modern concept of religion as taught by modern pluralism and ecumenism. Indeed, the world religions courses taught in most state universities echoes the concept of the ancient Roman Pantheon.

Let us not be deceived into thinking that twenty-first century pluralism is any different from first century pluralism. While there might be some differences in the details of the argument, they are essentially the same and equally opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Wouldn’t it be a tragedy if modern Christians bowed before the altar of the same ancient pantheon concept that first century Christians sacrificed their lives to fight?

The saints in modern Rome are not deluded by modern expressions of ecumenism. They are fighting Catholicism and trying to lead the souls of men out of that false religion. Indeed, I am sure that these modern saints think that Catholicism is not so tolerant of other religions as some in America might tend to believe. Though they are not persecuted, some of them can tell stories of being rejected by their families because they renounced Catholicism for New Testament Christianity.

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Charlie Graham, Sr., 9021 N.E. 64th Pl., Gainesville, FL 32641. I visited with the good brethren at the Haynes Street Church of Christ in Dayton, Ohio in September and worked with them in a seven-day gospel meeting. Three responses and a lot of good fellowship was in evidence. The attendance was good and the spirit of cooperation and a renewed zeal for the Lord was overflowing. The desire to reach the lost was apparent. The future, with the Lord in their plans, looks very promising indeed. Visitors were present from local churches as well as the community.

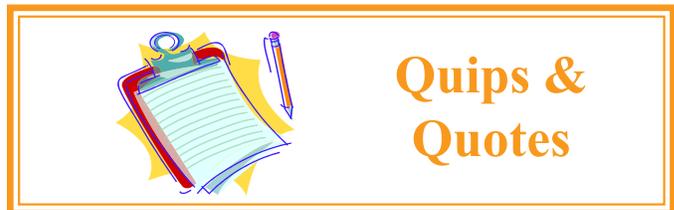
Our visit with the good brethren at the Southside Church of Christ in Athens, Alabama (a six-day meeting) was an edifying experience for Maxine and me. We stayed with Windell and Charlotte Wiser. Brother Wiser is the preacher there. The church is working hard and doing well.

We went from Dayton, Ohio to Walnut Ridge, Arkansas for a five-day meeting where brother Dodd is the preacher and his work for the Lord there is under the shadow of a big, liberal church’s influence. The truth is being preached on the radio and house to house. The Lord willing I will return to Walnut Ridge

next year in October. I am scheduled to be with the brethren in Union City, Tennessee where brother George Hickman is the preacher, following the meeting in Arkansas.

In May 2003 a meeting is planned at the Pleasant Hill church in Cumberland County near Crossville, Tennessee where brother Hallace Page labors. The church is located on Highway 70 between Sparta and Crossville, Brother Page continues to have need of support. Sister Page continues to be very ill. His phone number is 931-277-8032. Jesus said, "I was sick and you visited me."

Brethren, I enjoy working with churches in hard places. I have done that on a part-time basis most of my 45 years of preaching. At the Melrose church where we worship, we had a VBS. It was a great success. The attendance was in the high forties. I taught the adult class.



Pews For Sale

The brethren in Ellisville, Missouri have the following pews

available: 13 - 11' pews and 1 - 4' pew. They are lightly stained wood with red upholstery. They are in good condition. The brethren are asking \$150 for 11' pews obo and \$65 for 4' pew. Brethren will load them for the buyer, but buyer must provide shipping (the truck). For more information contact: Forrest Hall at (636) 230-5141, drfhall@hotmail.com or Joe Works at (636) 391-0378, worksfam@aol.com.

Preacher Available

"I am available for fill in, interim or regular preaching within commuting distance (50 mi.) of Birmingham, Alabama and for gospel meetings anywhere. Under the right circumstances, I might consider moving from this area to a 'full time' work. Only partial support would be needed. I have been preaching 'full time' for 23 years. **Bennie R. Williams**, 665 Coupland Road, Odenville, AL 35120. (205) 640-7402, e-mail: benmary3152@hotmail.com

Debate

On the nights of March 20th and 21st, 1987 Hugh Manus (a very liberal-minded institutional preacher) met Ron Daly in public debate in the building of the Alice Avenue church of Christ in Memphis, Tennessee. On the first night brother Manus affirmed: "The word fellowship as defined and applied by the inspired writers of the New Testament, may properly be used to describe the action of a local congregation coming together in a church kitchen or in a church building (where the church meets), to consume a common meal when said meal is for social, recreational, or entertainment purposes as a part of the local congregation's work." Ron Daly denied. On the second night of the debate brother Manus affirmed: "The New Testament teaches that a local congregation may take up congregational collections on days other than the first day of the week in order to finance its work of preaching the gospel, benevolence to saints, worship and edification." Ron Daly denied. Brother Manus threw everything at his disposal, including the proverbial "kitchen sink," at Daly. He was under such pressure that he made disparaging remarks against "white brethren." Ron Daly addressed the matter without apology, as racism has no place among the Lord's people; it is sinful! A set of six cassette tapes of the debate is being made available, not for any personal glory or selfish ambition, but there seems to be a resurgence of interest in these issues in some places, especially among the black brothers. In many ways liberalism among black congregations takes on a different set of characteristics than it does among the white brothers. This debate presents liberalism in its most raw form! There is also a set of two video tapes available. The video tapes have a slight echo in their sound. The lighting isn't perfect, and the last two speeches aren't on the video due to battery failure, but all else is intact. For more information about the audio and video tapes contact Ron Daly at: 1-317-899-1191 or e-mail at: RONNIEBUSTER@HOTMAIL.COM

Reformed Congregation OKs Gay Leaders

"The First Christian Reformed Church in Toronto has opened church leadership to practicing homosexual members living in committed relationships; a move the denomination expressly prohibits. The church council announced the policy change in an October 10 letter.

"The decision of the council seems to go contrary to the Christian Reformed Church's established position, and contrary to biblical teaching," David Engelhard, CRC general secretary, told Christianity Today. The CRC has 279,000 members in the United States and Canada.

"The 1973 North American Synod set forth the denomination's policy: Those who are homosexual in orientation may be eligible for church offices, including those of pastor, elder, and deacon, but those who are actively homosexual are ineligible. The church reaffirmed the policy at the synod of 2002.

"The representative body, or classis, of the Toronto area's two dozen Christian Reformed churches will consider the matter in January. Engelhard said that other churches in the region are asking the classis to take action. Responses could range from a letter of admonition to the suspension or removal of First CRC officers" (Christianity Today [December 9, 2002], 19).

Preachers Needed

El Paso, Texas: The Sunrise Church of Christ located at 8625 Roberts Dr. is seeking a full-time preacher for the local congregation and surrounding area. If interested, please contact William O. Wright, 915-592-8854 or e-mail James A. Wright at jawright2639@netzero.net.

Minooka, Illinois: The church in Minooka is looking for a full-time preacher. Minooka is located about 40 miles southwest of Chicago, near Joliet. The church is able to provide about 80 percent of salary. If interested, contact Frank Satterthwait at 815-723-1583 or e-mail: frankandjoan7@aol.com.

West Frankfort, Illinois: The West Frankfort church is seeking to hire a full-time preacher as quickly as possible. The church is able to pay \$400 per week and will help in getting other support. If interested, please contact Robert Johnson, 2740 Charley Good Rd., West Frankfort, IL 62896 or call (618) 627-2655. The church is located at 812 W. Saint Louis St., West Frankfort, Illinois.