



A New Year Begins

David Dann

King David wrote of God's blessings saying, "You crown the year with your goodness, and your paths drip with abundance. They drop on the pastures of the wilderness, and the little hills rejoice on every side" (Ps. 65:11-12). The inspired psalmist reminds us that it is God who has crowned the year with goodness. As James writes, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (Jas. 1:17).

According to our calendars, a new year has just begun. As we reach the end of one year and prepare to start another there are many things to consider. It is usually profitable to take some time to reflect on the blessings we received, the successes we enjoyed, and the failures we endured in the past year. It is also perfectly natural to look forward in anticipation of what the new year may bring. Reflection on the past and anticipation of the future are common to everyone when the new year begins. However, as Christians, we ought to realize that the new year should cause us to be mindful of more than just

the events of our recent past and those to which we look forward in the near future. Some important thoughts are brought to mind by the beginning of the new year.

1. The New Year reminds us of our

Creator. For many, the start of the new year is an excuse to have wild parties that are often nothing more than drunken revelries. But the start of the new year should underscore a nobler theme. The change of the calendar is one of the many ways in which we are reminded that, "the Lord, he is God; it is he who has made us, and not we ourselves" (Ps. 100:3). After all, the idea of measuring time in periods known as "years" did not originate with man. It was

the God who created us that said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years; and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heavens to give light on the earth"; and it was so" (Gen. 1:14-15). With the arrival of each new year, we are reminded that
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God Reveals Himself Through His Names

Mike Willis

One reads the Bible sometimes without giving much thought to the names by which God is called and or described. Yet the names by which God is called help us to understand the nature of the God whom we worship. In this article, I would like to consider a few of the names by which God is called.



ELOHIM, EL, ELOAH: THE MIGHTY ONE

One of the most common names by which God is called is some form of the word *El*. The word *hl* is the root from which *El* and *Elohim* are derived. All of these words emphasize that God is the mighty one, the powerful one. His power and might are emphasized in creation. The Genesis narrative uses *Elohim* throughout chapter one to describe the work of the mighty and powerful God who created the heavens and the earth.

JEHOVAH

The word Jehovah is used to translated the tetragrammaton *hwwhy*. The word is thought to be derived from the word *hawah*, “become” (BDB 217). The word is the Qal imperfect of *hayah* with the resultant meaning “the one who is: i.e. the absolute and unchangeable one . . . the existing, ever-living, as self-consistent and unchangeable” (BDB 218).

This name of God was first revealed to Moses in Exodus 3:12-15. When Moses prepares to return to Egypt to deliver Israel from Egyptian bondage, he asks God to tell him by what name he is to be called. The texts reads as follows:

And he said, Certainly I will be with thee; and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast brought forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain. And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? What shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you. And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God

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So, You Need a Preacher?

Connie W. Adams

Every few years preachers either decide to move, or else brethren decide it would be best if they did. This is not all bad. Neither is it all good. It depends on the circumstances. If a man is not preaching the “whole counsel of God,” is not studying to stay fresh and informed, or is not setting a worthy “example of the believers,” then he should change or move. If he is too lazy to study and work, or his life is marred with sin, then he needs to repent. Brethren might try to help him come to repentance before he goes elsewhere and compounds his sin.

Sometimes brethren in all sincerity think it would be best for the work and for the preacher to make a change. Such judgments should never be left to the biases of the weak, worldly, and untaught members. Godly living and straightforward preaching without fear or favor will be an affront to such people and they will feel accused by such example and preacher, and will either repent or create discord to have their way.

A CRITICAL TIME

The changing of local preachers is always a critical time for congregations and for preachers. He is naturally nostalgic about the work to which he has devoted a good part of his life. He is concerned for the future of the work. Pulling up roots is hard for him and his family. The decision to move to another place is not always easy. There are unknowns in every work until you are on the ground and the “honeymoon” is over. It is a critical time for the congregation. Some were close to the last preacher and have determined not to ever “get close to another preacher and his family.” Nobody else will ever suit them as well. Any man who comes to preach will be compared to the beloved brother now moved away. Every man is different and constriction of the heart is a terrible disease. Christians ought to have hearts which expand to others who labor for the Lord, even as our hearts expand to receive and love additional children in our families.

A LOCAL PREACHER’S ROLE

Anytime a congregation changes preachers, misconceptions surface regarding his role in a local church. He is to be provided wages to meet his needs while he labors in the gospel, publicly and from house to house (2 Cor. 11:8-9; Phil. 1:5; 4:15; Acts 5:42). If he spends his life providing spiritual things for others, then he is entitled to receive material things necessary for living (1 Cor. 9:10-16). His role is not to displace any other Christian in the discharge of his duty. He is not to supplant the elders, nor assume the work of a deacon. He is not to be the vortex around which whirls the social calendar. He is not a church “coach” to coordinate the recreational activities of the

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young. He is not to be a sponge to soak up all the rumors and gossip of the congregation. He is not a psychiatrist to analyze and solve marital disputes. He is not the official visitor of the church to the sick. As a Christian, he may share with others in any activity which is proper for all Christians, yet none of these involve his role as a preacher of the gospel.

Then, what is he to do? He is to “preach the word in season and out of season with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2-4). He is to “give attendance to reading” that he may have *something to say*, instead of arising *having to say something* (1 Tim. 4:13). He cannot teach what he does not know, and he cannot know without adequate study. He must seek opportunity to preach the good news publicly and privately. He needs to get out of the ivory tower of professionalism and look people in the eye. He needs common sense. He needs to know something of the everyday problems with which people live. He must preach, not to please the people, but to elevate them to the standard of divine revelation.

He is the Lord’s servant and will give an account unto him. He must speak so as to be understood, not only in volume, but in language. Forget about impressing sophisticates, in or out of the church, with your great learning and wisdom, fill your mind with the word of the Lord, find out what part the people need, and then get up and turn it loose. Feed the babes and stimulate the mature. Don’t be a “specialist”; be a “general practitioner.” Preach with fervor and let the sinner know somebody cares about his soul. Gently lead the timid. Reprove and rebuke sin and error and don’t bother to ask anybody if it is all right for you to do that! Expect some lumps but don’t go looking for a fight. If you are mistreated by some, then “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2 Tim. 2:3) and count yourself fortunate to be worthy to suffer in the name of him who suffered for you. Don’t turn sour and bitter. Just keep preaching the truth and trusting the Lord for the harvest. The Lord himself did not melt all impenitent hearts and you won’t either.

“WE NEED A PREACHER”

Brethren sometimes reveal some very immature, if not unsound, thinking in locating a preacher to work with them. Arbitrary standards have been set which render the apostles unacceptable, were they alive today. Enemies of Paul said, “his bodily presence is weak and his speech contemptible.” Some thought he was a better writer than he was a preacher. He wasn’t even married and everybody knows you need a stable, family man! Besides all that, he had been arrested and imprisoned. And all the brethren know “and Gashmu saith it” that “where there’s smoke there’s bound to be fire.” He was only the ideal age for a short time. And what about Peter? It is common knowledge that he was impetuous, spoke too quickly, and acted hypocritically that time

at Antioch. Even the Sanhedrin said that the apostles were “ignorant and unlearned men.” Further, they contended for what they believed and some just could not have a “fighter.” Paul even wrote Timothy to “fight the good fight of faith.” Better mark Timothy off the list! He was probably influenced too much by Paul!

Then there is the “tryout.” What folly this has caused. It is not wrong for brethren to have a man come and preach a few times and meet the congregation. But often that alone becomes the deciding factor. Certainly a man who preaches the gospel ought to think enough of the importance of his work to look his best. And what preacher is not going to lay out his best “samples” of sermons at such a time? How did the young people like him? Were his eyes set too close together? Did he have the right amount of hair of the right color? Were his clothes the latest fashion? Was his car so old the brethren would be ashamed to have it parked in their driveway? Or was it too sporty looking as to make brethren envious? What about his handshake? Would you believe that one young preacher was told, after one of these “tryouts” that someone did not like his handshake?

Did he have the right number of children? Were they the right ages? Really, folks, this stuff is too silly for words. And yet it is either the spoken or unspoken standard in too many cases.

THE PREACHER PARADE

Some think the best way to go about finding the right man is to have a parade of six or eight to come and speak over a period of several weeks. By the time the last one comes, the church will have forgotten what the first two or three looked like, or what they said. There are several things wrong with this practice. One is that it makes competitors out of what the Bible calls “fellowservants.” Deliver me from such parades! I was only in one, to my knowledge, and had I known it in advance I would not have wasted my time or theirs. It tends to cheapen the work of a gospel preacher. It reduces such excursions to public relations methods. There are some men who can come for a week-end and bowl over the audience and impress the elders in private meetings. And if the past record is any sign of the future, they can destroy a church in six months, or create wounds it will take fifty years to heal.

Would it not be better for elders (or mature brethren) to do their homework on a few men whom they either know or who might be recommended to them by brethren in whom they have confidence, find out about their work and manner of life, and whatever else they think would be useful to know, and then approach one man at a time? He might not be interested. If not, consider another man about whom you have learned as much. Many things can be clarified by letter, email, or telephone. If you find a brother who is seriously interested, invite him to come and meet with you

The Tangled Web

One of the great modern day marvels is the computer. It has certainly changed much of our way of life in the latter third of the twentieth century. The beginning of this twenty-first century brings more and more advancement and change in communication, in commerce, and in many other areas of our lives. Much, if not most, of this change is beneficial; some of it is harmful and deadly. The rapid exchange of information has made the world a smaller place indeed. One is able to IM (instant message) with someone around the world, or can send an e-mail with the speed of a telephone connection. Many of us (perhaps reluctantly

at first) have finally climbed aboard the computer bandwagon and joined the masses who surf the Internet on a regular basis.

Many organizations have web pages where they advertise whatever it is that they have to offer. Many are large as well as small commercial enterprises. There are also numerous and various educational groups on the net. While much of these commercial and educational efforts are worthy, some of these sites are simply promoting junk, filth, or other objectionable rubbish unfit for children or adults.

and speak a few times. Make plans to spend a good amount of time discussing the Lord's work. Ask questions. Answer his questions. After such a meeting, either the preacher, or the elders might not be interested. If both parties are interested, make a decision one way or another. It is fine to have feedback from a congregation but elders need to "take the oversight" and should be privy to greater information than the rest upon which a wise decision can be made.

The practice of preacher parades has discouraged many good men. Some of the ablest men who do the most enduring work are left out in these weekend blitzes. Many young men are discouraged. Some of them are well trained, capable, and committed to the Lord and his work. What are they to do? Shall we put them on the sidelines until they are thirty, or maybe forty? You can learn much about young men by the people who have known them all their lives. It is degrading and down right insulting to any man, young or old, to have to traipse all over the country, to be put on display before elders and congregations and to be examined like a horse, cow, or car at an auction. After a couple of rounds of this, some young men may decide to forget preaching on a full-time basis and program computers and teach a few Bible classes if brethren will let them.

Meanwhile, older preachers have become "too old" for some. Never mind that they are in good health, have spent

decades studying and preaching the word, being worthy examples of the believer and have gained wisdom, which time and experience supply. Churches are short-sighted to ignore such men. Don't allow the mandatory "retirement age" in the business world to cloud your judgment about what is best for the work of the Lord.

So you need a preacher? Are you going to pick him out of a litter like the cutest puppy? Are you going to idolize him for awhile and then methodically pick him to pieces? Are you going to expect him to do your work? Are you going to encourage and help him, or shun him, berate him and hinder him? Are you going to set a man-made standard which would disqualify every apostle of our Lord? Or are you looking for a faithful brother who knows the truth, loves it, preaches it in season and out, lives it and is studying to learn more of the word of life? The answer to these questions has much to do with the success of any preacher and the congregation with which he works. At the house of Cornelius, Peter said, "I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me." That is a valid question for preachers and congregations to ponder now. Think about it.

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The religious and anti-religious organizations have also long ago discovered the advantages of using the net to advance their agendas. Much false doctrine is promoted on the various web pages, and they are readily available on the net. Everything under the sun “religiously” (from atheism to Zen) is only a short moment away with the click of the mouse once the address is known and typed in. Many precious souls have become tangled in their thinking through ill advised and indiscriminate use of the web. It can be truly a tangled web of misdirection for many.

Brethren have also gotten in on the action concerning the Internet. There are many fine and helpful web pages that teach and defend the truth of God in a wonderful and effective way. We applaud their noble efforts to uphold God’s word in a skeptical and unbelieving world. Furthermore, we rejoice in the fact that many sincere seekers have been taught and brought to Christ through the use of the web pages of our capable brethren. We would not want to see this diminished or curtailed in any way.

However, there are warnings that need to be given and concerns that must be expressed — at least to those who are willing to listen and consider. First of all, we are not trying to be censors and certainly are not attempting to tell anyone what web page they can access or what site they cannot visit. We are a free people and that is fully understood and appreciated. But at the same time, we need to be reminded that all ideas, notions, thoughts, teachings, must (I repeat must) be examined in the light of the word of God.

Some brethren using the Internet are advancing notions that are contrary to the clear, sound teaching of God’s Word. They appear to have sold out to “science falsely so called” and have (perhaps unknowingly) bought into the theology of liberal (modernistic) theology that accepts the unproved and un-provable theories of “scientists” and unbelievers that either explain away or contradict the clear statements

of the word of God. The early chapters of Genesis have come in for a thorough revision with these brethren. How long man and the animals have been on the earth, the days of creation, the account of the fall, the flood (universal or local), are only a few of the areas of discussion that have us concerned as to where it will end. We fear that some are heading straight to modernism and apostasy from the truth. There will be no stopping place once these early chapters of Genesis are explained away as merely figurative, symbolic, allegorical, or even in some instances as myth.

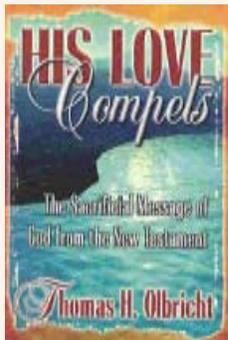
We are not opposed to discussion and debate concerning any Bible passage. However, the argumentation of some reveals a mind-set that is truly alarming. It suggests to this writer a movement (sometimes subtle — sometimes not so subtle) away from a strict adherence to the clear text of God’s holy and divine word. It seems to indicate that we are looking at the Scriptures through the unbelieving world-view of things, rather than allowing the Bible to interpret itself. Surely we realize that all thought simply must be examined in the light of the Bible rather than the Bible examined in the darkness of human speculation. We must never, never tamper with the sacred text of God’s word. Once we begin to do this, there is no stopping place short of the wrath of God against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of all who would suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

Brethren, this looseness with the text of the Bible is truly dangerous territory! I for one do not wish to have to face my Lord on judgment day having caused someone to lose his soul because of my specious speculations and unsound tampering with the plain, clear text of God’s word. Let God be true and every man a liar. The word of the Lord is right. Period!

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His Love Compels

Thomas Olbricht



God is more than a deity who loves to reach out and touch someone. He makes it clear, despite certain characterizations of the biblical God to the contrary, that he is not the sort to hold his universe and man in it at arm’s length. But more importantly, in sending the Son, he provides a remedy for the age-old scourge of human rebelliousness. The message of the New Testament is not about an idea. It is about a person — Jesus — and how his love compels us to love him. #0899008631

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The Kind Of Preaching God Expects

Preaching in the first century included three things
**(1) Preaching the truth,
(2) Condemning sin — works of the flesh and religious sins,
(3) Exposing error.**

INTRODUCTION

Everybody has his preference and opinion about preaching. I've got mine and you have yours. What should or should not be preached? When should it be preached? How long should it last? What attitude should preachers have in preaching?

And, the Lord also has an "opinion" on the subject. Sometimes my opinion may not be the same as his, but as anything else, we have got to forego our opinions and give way to his. Since the Lord has an "opinion" on the subject of preaching, it wouldn't hurt us to take a look at it from time to time. First, let us note that there are three kinds of preaching today.

PLAINNESS OF SPEECH, WITH ALL BOLDNESS (2 COR. 3:12; ACTS 4:29)

Boldness means "to give free utterance; not to be fearful." The apostles prayed for boldness after being threatened by the Sanhedrin for preaching. Did the Lord answer their prayer? He certainly did (Acts 4:31). We should pray for preachers of the gospel, teachers of Bible classes and everybody who is involved in imparting the word to others, that they will have boldness in so doing.

"Plainness of speech" is also needed (Acts 13:46; 1 Thess. 2:2). I remember an old preacher telling me several years ago that "plain preaching is the only kind that will do any good." I've thought about that a lot

and have concluded he was right. If you reflect on it, you will have to agree. *If plain preaching won't get the job done, why would we think any other kind could?* Preaching that is characterized by plainness of speech and boldness is God's "opinion" on the subject.

Preaching in the first century included three things (1) Preaching the truth, (2) Condemning sin — works of the flesh and religious sins, (3) Exposing error. The epistles of John are mostly taken up in dealing with a prevalent error at that time and the false teachers who were teaching it (Eph. 5:11).

What should be the attitude in which this is done? It should be done in love (Eph. 4:15). (1) This involves a *love for God*. The first and great commandment (Matt. 22:37). (2) It requires a *love for truth*. If we don't love truth we cannot be saved (2 Thess. 2:10). (3) It requires a *love for the souls of men and women, boys and girls*. So love must be behind what is preached. We must love God, truth, and souls.

A correct attitude must be involved. It is required (2 Tim. 2:24) — longsuffering. There seems to be distinction in the New Testament in how Christ and the apostles dealt with false teachers (the religious leaders of their day) in contrast with individuals overtaken in sin. Notice that he dealt gently with the woman at the well and the woman overtaken in adultery (John 4; 8:3, 4).

However, Jesus dealt sternly with the Pharisees, calling them hypocrites (Matt. 6:23). He spoke very plainly to religious leaders of that day, pronouncing seven “woes” on them. Plainness of speech was needed. Jesus knew that. Peter also dealt sternly with Simon. “Thy silver perish with thee, because thou hast thought to obtain the gift of God with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:20-23). That’s pretty plain. Simon was a religious leader who had been bewitching people to such a degree that they said, “This man is that power of God which is called Great” (8:9-11). It is a wonder God didn’t deal with him as he did Herod (Acts 12:21-23). But Simon was able to be taught and converted.

A similar occasion was that of Elymas, the sorcerer. Sorcerers usually had a following. When Paul was teaching the governor of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, Elymas tried to withstand them and turn the governor away from the truth. Paul said, “O full of all guile and all villany, thou son of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:8, 9). That was a stern rebuke. It was plain and bold, wasn’t it? It could have hurt Elymas’ feelings. Did this mean Christ and the apostles had no love for lost souls? Why would anyone accuse Christ of not having love when we consider the ultimate sacrifice he made? He *did* love and that is why he and the apostles said the things they did. The occasions called for it. Sometimes rebuke is needed. The first kind of preaching we mention is the one taught in the Bible — plainness of speech, with all boldness, speaking the truth in love.

SOFT PREACHING

There are all kinds of terms and phrases used to describe soft preaching: pabulum, pious platitudes, generic

gospel, all positive and totally eliminate the negative, non-controversial subjects, minimizes importance of doctrine, never condemns error or identifies who teaches it, more fluff than substance, heavy on quotes from uninspired sources and light on Scripture, also known as “Chicken Soup” religion, “smooth words and fair speeches,” social gospel more intent on making a better life on earth than in preparing for judgment day, more emphasis on eloquence and dynamic speaking (messenger becomes more important than the message), etc. You might notice there are Scriptures which authorize plainness of speech, with all boldness, there are none to authorize soft preaching.

MEAN, NASTY, UGLY, BELLIGERENT, ARROGANT, “IN YOUR FACE,” SMART ALECKY ATTITUDE, HATEFUL

This kind of preaching has no place in the pulpit because we do not have Scripture for it either. Not only does it have no place in the pulpit, it has no place in the life of a Christian. No Christian should behave this way toward those with whom we disagree, whether or not the other person is a Christian. We should not be hateful. Jesus and the apostles were not hateful, but they said what needed be said for the occasion.

Hearer’s responsibility. Suppose a preacher preaches the truth but manifests the wrong attitude described above. He taught the truth, but he had a bad attitude. He was arrogant, with a “holier than thou” disposition. He was hateful, mean, and ugly. Unfortunately, that happens on occasion. Preachers are not perfect. They sin. They blunder and will have to give account to God. But the hearer’s *obligation to the truth* is not diminished one iota because the preacher had the wrong attitude. He will still be held accountable for not obeying truth. We must decipher truth from the one delivering it (Phil. 1:15-18).

POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

The kind of preaching God wants was not “politically correct” in the first century and it’s not “politically correct” in the twenty-first century. It never has been the popular kind of preaching. The popular kind is the “soft” kind. We can become guilty of trying to have better manners than Christ and the apostles.

A few months ago I had the opportunity to visit my mother. We discussed this and she said, “If it hadn’t been for plain preaching, I probably wouldn’t be a Christian today.” If it had been the “soft preaching” (see above), she wouldn’t have learned the truth. She would not have seen the urgency or need to obey the gospel. Everybody who has obeyed the truth did it because they heard a *plain* message.

Several passages in the epistles are taken up with refuting false doctrine. For example, the epistles of John greatly refute *Gnosticism*, which was prevalent at that time. Some of its tenets are still held by people today. One thing heavily dealt with in John’s epistles is the refuting of those who did not believe in the deity of Jesus. Today, neither Muslims nor Jews (among others) believe Jesus is Son of God. They have to believe he was an imposter. At best, he is regarded as a prophet, but not deity. Jews and Muslims may not agree on anything else, but they agree that Jesus was not deity.

DEFENDING THE FAITH

Since the Restoration period and into the twentieth century, there were a number of debates between atheists and gospel preachers. *Somebody* had to do it. There were few, if any debates, that took place between atheists and denominational preachers. For the most part, the denominations shied away from it. It pretty much became the lot of gospel preachers to meet that challenge. A number of those debates are still in print.

Today we are facing a great threat

from world religions, particularly Islam. I am presently aware of three debates that have taken place between gospel preachers and Muslims. I am further convinced that we cannot depend on the denominations to meet the challenge. It will be left up to gospel preachers in the church of Christ. It's an awesome and staggering responsibility. Defending the truth is often an unpleasant and difficult task. It takes great courage and boldness to say what needs to be said even if, at times, we are embarrassed by it or if it is unpopular and not politically correct. Defending the truth is rarely appreciated. Most people have no idea what a man goes through in preparing to defend the truth in public debate. It can be very agonizing. I have never wanted the truth to suffer at my hands because I had failed to prepare. While there are controversies that should not be, some, both in and out of the church, have no stomach for any kind of controversy. They prefer the "soft preaching" described above.

Should preachers call names? There were times in the New Testament when preacher called names of false teachers and/or religious groups. At other times they just identified the false doctrine. We know it is right to call names and we should be careful about criticizing the practice for it is hard to do so without criticizing Christ and the apostles. Obviously, there is some judgment involved as to when to do it, because it wasn't always done. Whenever it is helpful so the audience will know who teaches a particular doctrine, I have identified the source. I do so to inform those who don't know (don't they need to know?). I have often been shocked at how little some know about what their denomination teaches or some other group with whom they are enamored. It is also done to warn of danger. Souls are too

valuable not to warn so they will not get tangled in the web of error. Why handicap ourselves with a man-made rule that "you can't call names" when it may be very helpful to do so? People need to be warned of error and its consequences just like they need to be warned when there's a bridge out or that a house has termites. Even more so!

However, if we are calling names just to be ugly and mean, to put somebody down, or to try to hurt somebody, that should *never* be our motive. We cannot keep people from being offended by truth, but we should not let a bad attitude become a stumbling block to them. One cannot read the New Testament for long till he sees Christ and the apostles calling names of religious groups (Jews, Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, Epicureans, Stoics, heathen). Sometimes specific individuals were named (Simon the sorcerer, Elymas the sorcerer, Demetrius the silversmith, Alexander the coppersmith, Diotrephes, Demas, Jezebel, Hymenaeus, Philetus). Also notice Revelation 2:6, 14, 15; 2:9; 3:9.

Should false teachers be present before we call their names? I have heard some object that we should not call their names because they are not there to defend themselves. Many of those mentioned in Scripture were not present when their names were called. They were called to the faithful as a warning. When Jesus warned his disciples, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees," he was speaking only to his disciples (Luke 12:1). There are times when disciples need specific warning about who is teaching and practicing error. It is not very often that false teachers visit the services, so that adds another unnecessary handicap.

Suppose I was an eyewitness who saw a person (known to me) who was breaking into your home. When you asked who it was, what would you think of me if I said, "I don't believe in calling names. It really doesn't matter who. The important thing is that you know somebody was trying to break in?"

In 1960, churches of Christ were the fastest growing religious group in America. What kind of preaching was being done then? It was *plain preaching, with all boldness; preaching the truth, condemning sin and exposing error, and often calling the names of false religions and teachers!*

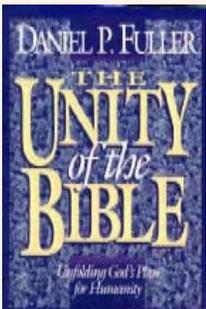
CONCLUSION

If you have a love for truth, articles like this won't upset you. If you don't love truth, articles like this ought to upset you. I sincerely hope and pray it is the former. There is a real need for all Christians (not just preachers) to carry on the work God gave. Let us lay aside every weight that is hindering us.

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Daniel P. Fuller



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Jim McDonald

“The Lamp of the Body is the Eye . . .”

The lamp of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is the darkness! (Matt. 6:22-23).

These verses follow an exhortation and warning from Jesus. Exhortation: “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven”; warning: “lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth” (Matt. 6:19f). Dangers in laying up treasures on earth are apparent: such are temporary and subject to rust and decay. Further, there is the constant danger that thieves may break through and steal them for “riches are not forever” (Prov. 27:24).

Still, there is an even greater danger in riches than just the threat of moth, rust, and thieves: there is the danger of focus. “Where thy treasure is, there will be thy heart also” (Matt. 6:21). The young ruler of Matthew 19 was good in so many ways! Jesus looked upon him and loved him. But Jesus also knew there was a critical flaw in his character and so instructed, “If thou wouldest be perfect, go sell that which thou hast, give to the poor and thou shall have treasures in heaven, and follow me” (Matt. 19:21). That was too much! When the young ruler heard this “he went away sorrowfully; for he was one that had great possessions” (Matt. 19:22). Then Jesus said “It is hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven and again I say unto you, it is easier for a camel to go through the needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:23f). Mark’s account makes the statement clearer: “How hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:24).

Paul also wrote a warning against riches. “But they that are minded to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil: which some reaching after have been led astray from the faith, and have pierced themselves through

with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:9f).

And so Jesus said, “The lamp of the body is the eye.” He shows that if the eye is single (healthy) the body will be full of light. But if the eye is evil, the whole body will be full of darkness. The “eye” stands for the heart and what it desires or intends. If our heart is pure, we will be pure. But if the heart is impure, the whole man is affected. In Psalm 10:8 the eye may be set privately against the helpless: i.e., have no compassion for people in distress. In Psalm 15:4 he who would sojourn in the Lord’s tabernacle is one in “whose eyes a reprobate is despised.” Such an one looks upon the evil that men do and hates that evil heart which leads a man to wickedness. Such an one will have a “bountiful eye,” sharing his blessings with others (Prov. 22:9).

From Solomon come many warnings against an “evil eye.” He warned that every man’s way is right in his own eyes (Prov. 21:2). Nearly all seek to justify themselves for some evil they do. In Proverbs 21:10 the wise man wrote: “The soul of the wicked desireth evil: His neighbor findeth no favor in his eyes.” We would say that such is “looking for something to criticize.” In Proverbs 23:33 we are warned that strong drink affects our desires, “Thy eye shall see strange things.” In Ecclesiastes 4:8 the writer tells of one who had sufficient for his needs but still “his eye would not be satisfied with riches,” the riches he already had.

Solomon described the spirit of many. “Whatsoever mine eye desired, I kept not from them” (Eccl. 2:10). These “lay up for themselves treasures upon the earth.” These have an evil eye and their whole body is full of darkness. Jesus warns, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one and love the other or else he will hold to one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). The words of an unknown man say it well: ~~“Money is a good servant, but a hard master!”~~
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Iconoclast or Traditionalist: Which Is It?

To label one as an iconoclast is to give him a badge of honor or dishonor, depending upon the observer's attitude toward tradition. To many it is unthinkable that others would not respect established ways of doing things, but be intent on tearing down traditions, which to many become icons (little different from idols). An iconoclast, then, is one who breaks not only religious images, but also established ideas, customs, and doctrines. Which approach is appropriate? Should one be a traditionalist or an iconoclast? Adherence to sound teaching sometimes spills over into opposition to all tradition, because of an unsound attitude.

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Opposition to established means of operating, frequently called traditions, is often the justification used to oppose the old and to advance the new. Traditions have become acceptable, not because they are the sole means of executing the Lord's will, but because they provide effective and practical ways of obedience to God. Many have cited "our traditions" as their objection and cause for their destructive work. Let it be stressed that the Bible never sanctions or condemns anything on the basis of its being old or new, especially expediencies (helpful means or methods of doing the Lord's work). Matters of faith must be often upheld as being in harmony with the Lord's will, and other matters must be often condemned because they lack the Lord's backing (Col. 3:17). Matters of expediency (keeping of vows and circumcision) were practiced by Paul, even after the Law of Moses, which had bound them upon Jews as necessary, had lapsed in the divine administration. In fact, one would be hard-pressed to find an instance where the Lord or his apostles ever opposed a harmless human tradition. In replacing the Old Covenant of Moses with his New Covenant, it is significant that Jesus did not alter every aspect of the former covenant. In a number of areas he left some teachings and practices intact. Jesus was no iconoclast (Matt. 5:17-19). Anyone wishing to imbibe his attitude and follow his example must learn to distinguish the things that differ (Phil. 1:11, marginal reading of ASV).

There are some traditions of men that can stand with God's approval, while others must be discarded. The wholesale iconoclastic approach of destroying all established ways and means of service to God is not the approach of Jesus Christ.

In spite of the divine attitude here affirmed toward such, it seems that some are bent upon such opposition; they seem to enjoy the label of "iconoclast," even to the point of seeking to develop their reputation for such. So much disparaging talk about "our traditions" in recent years has usually been founded on the shaky foundation of misunderstanding/disbelief of the Scriptures; the talkers don't usually know enough to even talk about the matter or they don't care enough about the harm they leave in their wake. Divine traditions are never subject to human change (1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6), whereas human traditions can and often do change as new situations and circumstances make them obsolete. Those traditions originating with man need to change, when they cause us to set aside the way of the Lord (Mark 7:9, 13). What such novices little understand is that after a week or two they will have established their own traditions, which they must then oppose if they maintain their present attitude.

The weak and juvenile status of one's faith is displayed when he contends to break down a tradition such as a formal dress code for worship, use of a church building, or the "pinch-and sip" observance of the Lord's supper, because his spiritual imbalance shows in his focus. In the matter of a dress code, no situation known to this writer has such a code, not even an understood one. Some might generally practice more "dressing up" than others, but none enforces such a practice. The use of such justification amounts to subterfuge; it is a cover for something else that the person has in mind. Some other agenda (some new thing in teaching or practice) is the real driving force behind such efforts. In the second place, such opponents ought to consider what will most likely happen in the wake of their encouragement of "dressing down." The tight jeans, cutoff tops, ball game

attire, and generally casual dress that are so much a part of society will soon distract the minds of many from the spiritual activities of worship that should occupy them. We are not urging some kind of formal dress code, but rather teaching people to observe the principles of decency, modesty, and appropriateness for the occasion. In the other traditions (use of a church building and “pinch-and-sip” of the supper), matters of expediency become matters of faith in the hands of iconoclasts. That they thus view them is seen in their fervent *opposition to the traditional* and their equally fervent *insistence on the novel*. The result is the establishing of new, wrong traditions and their destroying of obligatory teachings of Christ in their imbalance. Though their speech says otherwise, their practice proves the truthfulness of this statement.

AN APPEAL TO MY BRETHREN

I urge all to realize that the Lord nowhere sanctions the iconoclasm that too many are practicing. Spiritual growth is required to understand the difference between harmless and harmful traditions. Humility is necessary to put the spiritual good of others ahead of selfish ambition (Phil. 2:1-4). It is never right to seek to draw away disciples after yourself (Acts 20:30). Do not oppose the old merely because of its age; there were good reasons for its acceptance and are for its continuance. It is too easy and simplistic to oppose *all*

traditions on the wrong basis (that the Bible teaches against *some* traditions)!

I likewise urge all to understand that *traditionalism* (steadfast adherence to all traditions) is wrong. Some traditions, such as infant baptism, instrumental music in worship, and unscriptural use of church funds, need to cease because they are in conflict with God’s will. Other traditions are harmless and can stand, if they pose no problem in given situations. A few traditions, harmless in themselves but no longer effective, probably should cease, when Christians are educated concerning their ineffectiveness. Adherence to all traditions is just as wrong as opposition to them. Neither the iconoclast nor the traditionalist has God’s approval in his approach to traditions.

If you truly desire to follow Christ, then grow in understanding of the Scriptures, so that you can know the difference in matters. Grow also in lowliness of mind and your esteem for your brethren. Pursue those things that contribute to peace among God’s people, not a divisive spirit or sowing of discord among brethren. This, too, is soundness!

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How To Have A Happy New Year

Larry Ray Hafley

“How Can I Have A Happy New Year?”

1. Hope for good fortune. “I returned, and saw under the sun, that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all” (Eccl. 9:11).

2. Quit doing the same dumb things you have been doing. Ungodliness, worldly lusts and sinful living lead to unhappiness — “many foolish and hurtful lusts” drown men in despair and destruction (1 Tim. 6:9). “Who hath woe? Who hath sorrow? Who hath contentions? Who hath complaining? Who hath wounds without cause? Who hath redness of eyes?” Sinners, that’s who (Prov. 23:29).

3. Sincerely strive to bring joy and happiness to others (1 Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3, 4). Please others rather than yourself. Go out of your way to warm the heart of the sick and lonely. If you do, a happy new year is assured for you.

4. Learn to be content with such things as you have. “For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therein to be content” (Phil. 4:11). Riches from without will not produce peace from within.

5. Resolve to go to heaven and take others with you. Have you ever seen a *true* Christian, diligently seeking to go to heaven, who is miserable? Me, neither.

6. “For, 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. 3:10, 11).

Conclusion

Remember that sorrow and sadness come to all alike. There is “a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:4). However, if we will apply the principles above, our lives should be holier and happier.

Joe R. Price

Falling From Grace

Can a Christian fall from grace? That is a question that has been discussed and debated many times over the years. Some believe that Christians can lose their salvation, others believe they cannot. This article is intended to examine that important question.

SOME SAY “NO”

Sam Morris, a Baptist preacher, said, “We take the position that a Christian’s sins do not damn his soul! The way a Christian lives, what he says, his character, his conduct, or his attitude toward other people have nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul. . . . All the prayers a man may pray, all the Bibles he may read, all the churches he may belong to, all the services he may attend, all the sermons he may practice, all the debts he may pay, all the ordinances he may observe, all the laws he may keep, all the benevolent acts he may perform, will not make his soul one whit safer; and all the sins he may commit from idolatry to murder will not make his soul in any more danger. . . . The way a man lives has nothing whatever to do with the salvation of his soul” (Morris, *A Discussion Which Involves A Subject Pertinent to All Men*)

Bill Foster said, “If I killed my wife and mother and debauched a thousand women, I couldn’t go to hell — in fact, I couldn’t go to hell if I wanted to. If on the judgment day, I should find that my loved ones are lost and should lose all desire to be saved, and should beg to send me to hell with them, He couldn’t do it” (*The Weekly Worker*, March 12, 1959).

Indeed many denominational preachers teach emphatically that a child of God can never lose his salvation. They insist that nothing can cause a saved person to become unsaved.

GOD SAYS “YES”

The New Testament clearly teaches that Christians can lose their salvation if they turn away from the truth. Although we can have confidence that God will save us if we remain faithful (Heb. 10:35; 1 John 5:13; Rev. 2:10), we must also recognize that we can voluntarily choose to “fall away” (Heb. 6:6).

- “Cut off” (Rom. 11:22)
- “Castaway” (1 Cor. 9:27)
- “Fallen from grace” (Gal. 5:4)
- “Moved away from the hope” (Col. 1:23)
- “Departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12)
- “If they shall fall away” (Heb. 6:6)
- “Fail of the grace of God” (Heb. 12:15)
- “Err from the truth” (Jas. 5:19)
- “Led away with error” (2 Pet. 3:17)

Peter graphically describes those who have obeyed the truth but fall away. He wrote, “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” (2 Pet. 2:21-22).

Paul mentions two individuals who had fallen away in his first letter to Timothy. He wrote, “. . . some having put away concerning the faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymeneus and Alexander; whom I have delivered unto Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme” (1 Tim. 1:19-20).

Why would the New Testament be filled with numerous warnings of apostasy if a saved person can never fall away? Why would the apostles write things like “if ye do these things, ye shall never fall” if a saved person can never fall away? Obviously, a child of God can fall from grace if he turns away from God.

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God never intended that
we do as we please, but

Joseph and Mary's Assumption

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. And when they had fulfilled the days, as they returned, the child Jesus tarried behind in Jerusalem; and Joseph and his mother knew not of it. But they, supposing him to have been in the company, went a day's journey; and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And when they found him not, they turned back again to Jerusalem, seeking him. And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? Behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? (Luke 2:41-49).

I am sure that this account is familiar to most of our dear readers. Perhaps upon reading this text it brings to mind a time when you lost sight of your children in a crowd. Has this happened to you, yet? Perhaps you “assumed” they were right with you, only to realize that they were not with you. Can you remember the panic, the fear, at not knowing where your child was? Imagine Joseph and Mary's panic and fear. They did not just lose sight of Jesus for a moment, but for a total of four days! I don't imagine they got any sleep in the three days they spent searching for him, do you? Might you imagine they were feeling guilt and remorse at the fact that they simply “assumed” he was with the family or a friend, when in fact, he wasn't? What a horrible feeling!

Do you remember the relief you felt when you found your child that you had lost sight of just a few moments earlier? Imagine the joy of Joseph and Mary as they finally found Jesus, and he was safe, unharmed, and in good health after the three days of searching.

Of course, we should also remember those who have lost a child or a family member and searched for days or years

in vain. Their loved one was lost or stolen and their return home seems hopeless. Sadly, many times these stories end in tragedy. Perhaps many folks scour the countryside looking for this person(s), and yet no positive results come from their search. This is truly a tragedy.

Yet, is there not a greater tragedy than these we have mentioned? Greater than the physical loss of a loved one, we see folks who are spiritually lost every day. How sad it is to see folks who, like Joseph and Mary, assume Jesus is with them, when he is not! How sad it is to know those who, when you tell them Jesus is not with them, get mad, and think that everything is OK. They refuse to accept the plain evidence of Scripture. This happens too often in our world!

Who is it that assumes Jesus is with them when he is not?

1. Those who are doing “religious” things without authority from Christ (Col. 3:17). When Jesus spoke of the judgment scene, he said, “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matt. 7:22-23). Notice Jesus did not deny that these folks did “many wonderful works.” What he said was that they worked iniquity (“lawlessness,” NKJ). In other words, they did things without authority from Heaven. For this, they were condemned by Christ! Why is this? It is because unless one acts and speaks according to the authority of God, then one is not doing a “good work” (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

2. Those who think they are saved without being baptized (1 Pet. 3:21). Our Lord said in no uncertain terms that one needs to believe and be baptized in order to be saved (Mark 16:16). It is just that simple. If one refuses to do this, regardless of how many “preachers” say he is saved, that person is lost! That person is living without a relationship with Christ! One who “puts on Christ” is the one who has been “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27). That

Created By God, Corrupted By Satan

Steven F. Deaton

The first chapter of the Bible records the creation of the world and all things in it (Gen. 1). The third chapter introduces the corruption of Satan (Gen. 3:1-6). This pattern of perversion has held true from that point on. However, this does not make creation itself a bad thing. When God finished making all things, including man, He considered it “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

More specifically, God established the home (Gen. 2:24). From the beginning the devil has labored to destroy the home. He does so through a host of sins. Uriah’s home was torn apart by adultery (2 Sam. 11). Other homes have fathers who turn against their own children, as Saul did with Jonathan (1 Sam. 20:30-33). There are homes in which the wife becomes the head, with the husband abdicating his duties, like Jezebel and Ahab (1 Kings 21:25). The list could go on and on. When some people see difficulties in families, they think the problem is the home itself, not sin. Thus, they work to undermine the home. Rather than attacking the home God created, people should attack the sin that contaminates it.

Further, God ordains government (Rom. 13:1-7). This, too, has been used by Satan to turn people against God. He has enticed men in positions of power to condemn the innocent (Matt. 27:24). Revelation shows how the Roman government was used by the devil to persecute Christians (Rev. 13). From this, some conclude that governments are inherently evil. Therefore, they condemn its very existence, like the “Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Instead of castigating the institution authorized by God, men should censure the corruption of the devil.

Additionally, God founded religion (Matt. 16:18). Satan, of course, did not leave this alone. In fact, perverted religion is a master weapon of the god of this world. He promotes everything from paganism to denominationalism to liberalism. Such distortions or praise leads men to condemn religion. It is ironic, though, that in condemning religion men create their own religion of worshiping man or nature in humanism/atheism. Rather than turning against religion, people should assault the error that adulterates it.

God created the home, government, and religion. Thus, they are good. It is only through the corruption of the devil that these institutions become bad. Therefore, let us respect the things God established and condemn the sin that perverts them.

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is the truth. When folks simply assume Jesus is with them, based upon a “feeling,” “faith only,” saying a prayer, etc., they no more have Jesus with them than Joseph and Mary did on those days recorded for us in Luke 2!

3. Those who say “Choose the church of your choice.”

The New Testament declares to men that Jesus built only one church (Matt. 16:18). He purchased only one church with his blood (Acts 20:28). He is the head of only one church (Col. 1:18). Therefore, it is not within the scope of man’s authority to tell people to simply “choose” the church they like! Biblically speaking, you have the “choice”

of one! I remember one woman telling me, “Jesus is in all churches.” While this sounds nice, it is just as wrong as it can be! Christ is *not* a part of every group that calls themselves a “church.” There is only one church that Christ chose, and that church needs to be my choice, too! If I am not a member of the church that is found in the Bible (Rom. 16:16), then I am living a lie by assuming Christ is with me when he is not!

4. **Those who are living with unrepented sin.** John taught, “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth” (1 John 1:6).

Will The Kingdom Be Established At Christ's Second Coming?

Many today are looking for the kingdom to come as they have been made to believe Christ will establish his kingdom when he comes the second time. The Bible teaches the kingdom has already been established.

THE KINGDOM WAS AT HAND IN JESUS' DAY

When Jesus preached in Galilee, he preached the coming kingdom. Matthew 4:17 records, "From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom is at hand."

SOME LIVED TO SEE THE KINGDOM COME

The Lord declared, "Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power" (Mark 9:1). If the kingdom is yet to be established, then either Jesus is a liar or there must be some pretty ancient people roaming the earth today! If not, why not?

PEOPLE SAID TO BE IN THE KINGDOM

Paul said that the Colossian Christians had been "translated into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col. 1:13). The

beloved apostle John stated, "I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom" (Rev. 1:9). How could these be said to be in the kingdom, if the kingdom hasn't been established yet?

WHEN JESUS RECEIVED HIS KINGDOM

The prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14 has Christ receiving his kingdom when he "*came to* the Ancient of days," which occurred as recorded in Acts 1:9-11. The false theory that Christ will come back to earth, set up his kingdom and rule and reign in Jerusalem for 1,000 years, has Christ receiving his kingdom when *he comes from* God, the Father. If you can understand the difference in "to" and "from," you'll have no difficulty with this.

When Christ comes the second time, he will not come to set up his kingdom (for he did that when he came the first time); he will come to deliver up the kingdom to the Father (1 Cor. 15:24). Do you know the difference in set up and deliver up?

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Remember, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5). Therefore, if one has sin in his life and refuses to repent, Christ is not with that person! For example, if one is a Christian, but for whatever reason begins to harbor an attitude of pride, of covetousness, of adultery, of divisiveness, of selfishness; is a "closet drunk," addicted to tobacco or drugs, or is omitting various parts of the Lord's word, etc., Christ is not going to be with that one until/unless he repents of that sin.

Sin separates between man and God (Isa. 59:1-2) Therefore, let us be conscious of our spiritual standing before God and repent of sin while we have the opportunity to do it (Heb. 3:7-8; 2 Pet. 3:9).

CONCLUSION

This account in Luke 2 has a happy ending despite Joseph and Mary's assumption; because they searched until they found Jesus (Luke 2:45-46). Friend, will your life have a happy ending? It will not have a happy ending unless you belong to Christ (Gal. 3:27). We cannot just "suppose" he is with us. We must know he is with us by diligent searching and obedience to him (Acts 17:11, 27; Rom. 6:17-18; etc.). Don't risk an eternity in Heaven on an "assumption"!

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The Hobby Riders — Continue to Ride!

As far back as I can remember, there have always been hobby riders in the church. For any who might ask, “What is a hobby rider?” The answer is this: “Hobby Rider” is a term used to describe a “One Issue Preacher.” In other words he is a preacher who becomes so totally obsessed with a particular doctrine or problem, that he cannot preach, teach, or write about anything else. He becomes so preoccupied with some “danger facing the church,” that he neglects all other matters.

Through the years countless brethren have become consumed, controlled, and dominated in a crusade to slay one dragon or another, real or imagined! Even if the brother is right in his assessment of a false doctrine, his persistent and excessive attention to one issue will cause him to become ineffective in his work as an evangelist. Not only that, after awhile his incessant carping can cause people to “tune him out,” as they tire of his never ending and unrelenting preaching and writing on the one monumental concern!

Back through the years, some brethren plunged head long into a life time campaign regarding “the clergy system,” the “one cup” issue, or the “anti-Bible class” question. Others, portrayed a bulldog, snapping turtle mentality against Bible class literature, women teachers, or the “Sunday school.” Even when their concerns were justified, some neglected all else, committing themselves to exposing the evils of Masonry, Catholicism, and countless other “isms.”

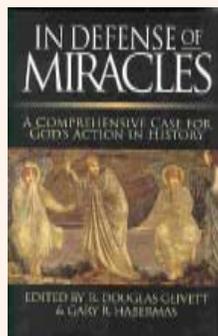
Today, we have some, *very real*, serious matters troubling Israel! However, this should promote a time of prayer for our brethren that we believe to be in error. Experience has taught me that I have a hard time being ugly or sarcastic with a brother that I am earnestly praying for. It is a time for serious Bible study. It is a time for level heads and a Christ-like spirit. It is *not* a time for overly zealous young “gun slingers” to be maliciously ripping, biting, and gouging seasoned brethren who have spent a lifetime in the trenches holding the line against premillennialism, institutionalism, denominationalism, and sin of every kind! I am

not saying we should look the other way or give anyone a *pass*, regardless of their age or faithfulness of the past. We remember all too well the agony of the apostasy of brother Hailey. When there is a clear, easily identifiable swing away from the truth, by anyone, a line must be drawn in the sand! However, history should teach us that the chronic grouching of the Hobby Rider, out to make a name for himself, will not solve the problems or bring peace to Zion. When we receive a ceaseless flood of e-mails that goes on and on for months and months with articles dealing with *one* subject, it is obvious we have another hobby rider. When we are directed to web sights featuring countless articles on *one* subject, it is obvious we have another one issue, hobby rider out to rescue the brotherhood!

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The Church That Tolerated Error

The book of Revelation was written to “the seven churches . . . in Asia” (Rev. 1:11). Also in the larger book of Revelation itself, there were seven shorter letters written to each of “the seven churches” (Rev. 2, 3). These shorter letters addressed situations peculiar to each of “the seven churches.”

In this article we shall consider the third letter in the order listed in Revelation. Specifically, we shall consider the letter to the church at Pergamos. But first let us note:

SOME FACTS ABOUT PERGAMOS

Pergamos was located about thirty miles north of Smyrna, about fifteen miles inland from the Aegean Sea. Pergamos was regarded as the royal city of Asia. It had served as the political capital of the province. The city boasted a library of some 200,000 volumes — which is considered small by library standards today, but let us not forget that books in those

days were all hand written! Also in Pergamos parchment (a writing material developed from animal skins) was developed. But of significant importance, as it related to the church in Pergamos, is the fact that this city was also a center for Caesar worship. Various heathen temples were located at Pergamos, and Christians (as loyal citizens) were expected to take part in the unscriptural and ungodly activities which were connected therewith.

THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH (2:12-17)

“And to the angel of the church in Pergamos write. These things says He who has the sharp two-edged sword: “I know your works, and where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is. And you hold fast to My name, and did not deny my faith even in those days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. But I have a few things against you, because you have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality. Thus you also have those who

hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate. Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”

THE AUTHOR’S SELF-DESCRIPTION

“To the angel” or to the messenger of the church in Pergamos, Jesus described himself as “He who has the sharp two-edged sword.” To the Romans the sword was a symbol of authority. However, it should be observed that Jesus regarded *himself* (not Rome!) as the possessor of the “sword.” He is the one who possesses “all authority” (Matt. 28:18). Moreover, this sword is described as that which is “sharp,” and “two edged” — language which is reminiscent of the word of God (cf. Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17).

WORDS OF COMMENDATION — “I KNOW YOUR WORKS” (REV. 2:13)

Of course, to the Bible believer, the fact that Jesus knows our “works” is a given. After all, if we are to be judged according to the “things done in the body” (2 Cor. 5:10), and if the Lord is to bring “every work into judgment” (Eccl. 12:14), then you can be sure

he is totally knowledgeable as to our works. Indeed, “all things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13).

“Where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is” (Rev. 2:13). “Where” these saints resided was a factor to be considered. After all, there is a difference in earthly locations — some being areas where Satan’s influence is especially evident. With the “Concilia” (the committee that enforced Emperor worship) located in Pergamos, it is evident that Satan was especially influential in that area!

“And you hold fast to My name” (Rev. 2:13). Jesus’ “name” stood for all that Jesus is, and all that he possesses — his Deity, his headship, his authority, etc. The saints in Pergamos held “fast to” the name of Christ; they refused to renounce him even though they resided in an area so evil that it was said to be the location of “Satan’s throne.”

“You . . . did not deny My faith even in the days in which Antipas was My faithful martyr, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.” The expression “My faith” refers to that which is elsewhere described as “the faith” (Jude 3; Gal. 1:23). Of course, “the faith” which Paul preached (Gal. 1:23) is the same as “the gospel” which he “preached” (Gal. 1:8). The brethren at Pergamos, even amid such evil surroundings, did not deny the faith. Moreover, the cost of discipleship in Pergamos was exceedingly high — evidenced by the martyrdom of Antipas. Interestingly, we know nothing else about Antipas than the fact that he was a martyr for Christ — but you can be sure the Lord has a complete record of his life! Even today, beneath the sod, lies the remains of countless unknown Christians — faithful servants of the Lord, unknown to the world, but who lived and died for the Lord, and whose names are in the “book of life” (Rev. 20:15). The Lord has a record of their faithfulness, and that is all that really

matters now.

WORDS OF CONDEMNATION

Notwithstanding all the complimentary things the Lord said about these saints, He then said, “But I have a few things against you” (Rev. 2:14). The same all seeing eye that sees the good also sees the bad. We cannot deceive the Lord! The things which the Lord had “against” the brethren are listed as follows:

“You have there those who hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality” (Rev. 2:14). The “Balaam” alluded to in this verse was first mentioned in the Old Testament book of Numbers. According to Numbers 22 Balak the king of Moab, having learned of the great military success of the Israelites, began to fear the Israelites. However, there existed in those days a prophet named Balaam. Balak “sent messengers” to Balaam and promised him great riches if only he would pronounce a curse upon the Israelites (Num. 22-24). Of course, God would not enable Balaam to utter a curse against his people, so it began to look as if the efforts to bribe Balaam into pronouncing a curse upon Israel had failed. However, in Number 25:1 we read of the men of Israel who “began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab.” Then from Numbers 31:16 we learn that the reason why the Israelites so conducted themselves was because they heeded “the counsel of Balaam.” Heeding Balaam’s “counsel” caused them to engage in the kind of conduct which ultimately resulted in their bringing a curse upon themselves. With regards to the saints at Pergamos, in principle, the type

“counsel” Balaam gave the Israelites was analogous to “the doctrine” being held by some of their own members. “Sexual immorality” was part and parcel of some of the pagan ceremonies engaged in at Pergamos. Moreover, though the eating of things sacrificed unto idols (within itself, 1 Cor. 8:7, 8) was not inherently sinful, the manner in which it was done in Pergamos was sinful. In the language of 1 Corinthians 10:21, “you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons.” In essence, the saints at Pergamos were guilty of compromising with error. It is not that they actually taught the error, but they harbored in their fellowship those who held (or believed) “the doctrine of Balaam.” Many today would say, “Don’t get too uptight just because you have a few members who believe false doctrine.” Well, these brethren believed false doctrine, and the Lord rebuked them — even though there is no indication that they were actually teaching “the doctrine of Balaam.” In addition, they also had some who held “the doctrine of the Nicolaitans,” a doctrine which the Lord said “I hate” (Rev. 2:15). But the principle is the same — these brethren were guilty of compromise, and the Lord held this “against” them! Do we have any reason to believe the Lord has since changed his attitude toward false doctrine?



Dancing

(Editor's Note: *Amanda Duvall is a sixteen-year old high school junior. She has been a Christian for four years. Amanda teaches Bible class for the little children at the church of Christ in St. Robert, Missouri and is active in the ladies classes. She is editor for the high school paper and sees a lot of problems with the attitudes of her peers, especially the attitudes, of many of her Christian friends, as they pertain to social activities such as school dances and parties. We are delighted to see our young people taking a courageous moral stand.*)

Teens many times feel the need to dance and go to dances in order to fit in. They totally disregard everything that the Bible says about the things involved with dancing.

Dancing often times causes your partner to lust after you. When your body is moving and you and your partner are touching one another, several sinful feelings can take over both of your bodies. The Greek word for lust is *epithumia*. By definition *epithumia* means desire, passionate longing, and coveting. In 1 John 2:16, the apostle

John tells us about the lust of the flesh which is involved in dancing. The lust of the flesh is of the world and not of God. Those who choose to participate in sins of the world, such as lusting, totally disregard God's teachings and leave God altogether.

Leaving God is not the only worry when you lust, however. Lust can also cause harm to other people. Dancing causes destruction. In chapter 14 of the book of Matthew, death is caused by the lustfulness involved in dancing. King Herod has a birthday party at which his niece performs a dance for him. The dance that she performs entices him and causes destructive lust. In return for the sinful dance, King Herod promises to give her anything that she wants. She requests for John the Baptist to be killed and for his head to be brought to her on a platter. John the Baptist's death was a result of the evil that can come from lusting.

Many people wonder why Christian teens feel the need to dance. About 90% of the time it is because they want to be accepted. Christians already stick out in today's world (if

THE WARNING

"Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth" (Rev. 2:26).

In their case it was either "repent, or else!" "Or else" the Lord would come and "fight against them with the sword of" his mouth. "The sword of" the Lord's "mouth" is the word of God (Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17). Through his word, God let them know the gravity of their condition, and, according to that word, if they refused to repent, the Lord would deal with them accordingly.

THE CONSOLATION

"To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat" (Rev. 2:17). Such terminology doubtlessly was designed to remind them of the "manna" which God fed the Israelites in the wilderness (Exod. 16). For us who live in this the gospel age, Christ is our "manna"; he is

"the true bread" which God sent down from heaven (John 6:32, 33). No doubt he herein referred to the blessings to be enjoyed in Christ, but which are "hidden" from those who have withheld the truth from the "eyes" of their own understanding (cf. Eph. 1:18).

"And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Rev. 2:17). In ancient courts white and black stones were used for registering the verdict of juries. Black stones were used when the accused were judged guilty. White stones were used to denote innocence. The "new name" written on the "white stone" bespeaks a new status, a new relationship. How wonderful it will be in that last day for every saint "who overcomes"! But how eternally tragic it will be for every compromiser who goes along with the crowd for fear of "rocking the boat!"

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they are living a godly life) so much that Christian teens are looking for anything to make them seem less out of place. Dancing seems like such a harmless solution. However, as we have looked at, dancing cannot only be against God but dangerous as well.

In conclusion, remember that God tells us in Matthew 5:10, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven." Keep in

mind that God will deal with those who are mean to you because you don't do worldly things. I don't know about you but I'd much rather spend eternity with in heaven with God than waste all of my time impressing people that I'll probably never see after high school anyway. Stay focused on God and his law and good things will follow.

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Unity At Any Price?

Ron Daly

As important as unity is among the people of the Lord, neither Jesus his apostles ever taught unity at any price! So-called unity based on compromise of doctrinal and/or moral principles is a farce, it's a joke! When people agree to disagree on the fundamentals of the faith only disaster can result. Unity is desirable, attainable, and maintainable, but we must not sacrifice truth in order to acquire it. Scripture says "Buy the truth and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction, and understanding" (Prov. 23:23). Jesus said, "The truth will make you free" (John 8:32). James said, "Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18). Truth is important and must not be minimized.

Actually, unity at any price is not unity, on the contrary it is union! In other words, "unity at any price" brings people together, but they are not in unanimity. Two fighting tom cats might be "together" but they are definitely not minding the same things! They are "waltzing" and "holding on" to one another with their claws, but they are not in agreement! They are together, but they are not one. This is not what the new covenant envisions about unity.

Jesus prayed to the Father, "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me *through their word*, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:20-21). The phrase "through their word" in verse 20 must not be ignored. It shows the means by which unity among believers would be attained. Not through human creeds, philosophies of men, dictates of the pope, decrees of a human council, but through the word of the apostles!

When a person studies the new covenant and correctly applies it, he will be in agreement with the apostles (2 Tim. 2:15). When a group of people study the new covenant and correctly apply it, they will be in agreement with the apostles (Acts 2:42). The result will be unity (Acts 2:44).

Some people are so eager for unity, albeit the wrong kind, that they are willing to close their eyes to religious error and overlook doctrinal differences. Many people are of the "Can't we all just get along?" mentality, and in order to placate opponents they, like the ostrich, bury their heads in the sand.

Is there only one body? Yes (Eph. 4:4). But, most people in the religious world do not believe it and will not accept it! In order to we must set aside the scriptural truth. Are you willing to do this? You shouldn't be. It is their duty to believe, accept, and obey the truth on this subject. If they want to be united, they must accept and obey the words of the apostles.

Are we to eat the Lord's supper on the first day of the week? Yes (Acts 20:7). But, most people in the religious world do not believe and accept this truth. In order to be united with them, we must set aside the scriptural truth. Are you willing to do this? You shouldn't be. It is their duty to believe, accept, and obey the truth on this subject. If they want to be united, they must accept and obey the words of the apostles.

From The Word of Truth, September 28, 2003

“New Year” continued from front page

God created the world with its cycles and seasons giving man the ability to measure time in years.

2. The New Year reminds us that Jesus Christ came into the world. The apostle Paul writes, “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15). Even from a purely secular perspective the impact that Jesus has had on the history of mankind cannot be denied. We have just entered the year 2004 A.D. The initials “A.D.” represent the Latin phrase *Anno Domini*, which means, “year of our Lord.” In other words, this is supposed to be the 2,004th year since the time that our Lord Jesus Christ came into the world. While it is likely that those who first ordered the calendar in this manner erred slightly in their calculations, the point remains the same. That is, the beginning of the new year reminds us that Jesus Christ came into the world and had an impact on mankind more profound than any person who has ever lived. His impact is such that mankind now reckons time by referring back to the point when he came in the flesh.

3. The New Year reminds us of God’s mercy. The Bible tells us that God “has appointed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom he has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The Scriptures often refer to that day as “the last day” (John 12:48; 6:44). With the arrival of each new year we are reminded that another year has passed without the last day having come. In this respect the new year makes us mindful of God’s great mercy toward mankind. The Day of Judgment signals the end of God’s grace toward the unrighteous (2 Thess. 1:6-8). The start of the new year testifies of the mercy and patience of our God who “is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Pet. 3:9). In the beginning of the new year we see that God has given sinners at least a little more time to repent before it is too late.

4. The New Year reminds us that new opportunities lie ahead. It is obvious that most people tend to view the new year as a chance at a fresh start. This is seen in the “New Year’s Resolutions” made by so many. Most of these resolutions involve new attempts at sticking to a particular diet or exercise program. But for the Christian, the new year presents opportunities of a spiritual nature. The new year gives us new opportunities to “grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior” (2 Pet. 3:18), to “warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all” (1 Thess. 5:14), to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17), and to “go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

CONCLUSION

Let us take advantage of the opportunities we have to

serve God now, and let us do our best to glorify him in the new year. God has not promised us another year, or even another day, but in his great mercy he has granted us the beginning of this new year. Are you planning on putting God first this year? “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

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“God Reveals” continued from page 2

of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.

The pronunciation of the name Jehovah was unknown until 1520 when it is first introduced by Galatinus. The name was made by taking the consonants of hwhy and combining them with the vowels of the word *adonai* (Lord). The reading of *adonai* for hwhy occurred because of the Jewish reluctance to pronounce the name of God lest they take his name in vain; consequently, when hwhy appears in the text, Jewish readers pronounce *adonai*. As a result the consonants of hwhy were joined with the vowel pointing of *adonai* to produce the reading Jehovah. However, no one really knows how the name is to be pronounced.

The name hwhy is translated in the KJV by the reading LORD (in contrast to “Lord”). Where LORD appears in the KJV, one can know that hwhy is the word in the original Hebrew.

The name hwhy is a personal name for God much as the Canaanites used Baal, the Moabites used Chemosh, and the Ammonites used Moloch. The combination of hwhy *Elohim* should be understood as the specific God Jehovah (as contrasted with the pagan deities of their various names). But, by this name, the emphasis given to God’s character is that he is the eternally existing one. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last, the one whose nature is never changing.

EL RO’I: THE GOD WHO SEES

Genesis 16 relates the story of the birth of Ishmael. In the context of the story, God reveals himself to Hagar as *El Ro’i*. Because Sarai was barren, she persuaded Abraham to cohabit with her handmaid Hagar so that she could raise up children to Abram as God had promised him a seed. After Hagar conceived, she despised Sarai and Sarai responded by treating her so harshly that she fled the home. An angel of the Lord confronted Hagar near a fountain of water in

the wilderness of Shur. He asked why she had fled the home and then instructed her to return and submit to Sarai. The text continues as follows:

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction. And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren. And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, *Thou God seest me*: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me? Wherefore the well was called Beerlahairoi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered (Gen. 16:10-14).

Hagar is comforted in the knowledge that God sees her plight and responds to help her. We express the same attribute of God in the song, "There's An All Seeing Eye Watching You." However, somehow we have so emphasized the negative of this concept that we obscure the positive. The negative side is that the omniscient God is aware of every evil thought, word, and deed that we say, and he is! The positive side is that the omniscient God is aware of every burden we bear, every sorrow we endure, and every need that we have. Like a father caring for his children, so God watches over us, just like he did for Hagar. Jesus expressed the same thought in such words as the following:

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things (Matt. 6:26-32).

God sees and knows our every need and will provide what we need because he cares for us.

EL SHADDAI: GOD ALMIGHTY

In Genesis 17:1 God reveals himself to Abram as *El Shaddai*, "God Almighty." In the context of this chapter, God appears to Abram and Sarai to announce the birth of Isaac within a year. He changes their names to Abraham and Sarah to express the giving of the promise and the seed which would descend from him. At this time, Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah was 90; more significantly, Sarah was past the age of bearing children (she had experienced

menopause). When God announced the birth of Isaac, Sarah could not believe and laughed at the idea. God announced again the birth of Isaac addressing Sarah's unbelief by saying, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?" (Gen. 18:14).

Indeed, nothing is too hard for the Lord for he is the Almighty God. Although for many Americans, the use of "God Almighty" is generally disrespectful slang, the concept that God is omnipotent is important. He is able to do what he promises. He is able to raise the dead, to bring all men to judgment, to place men in heaven or hell, just as he was able to bring the Messiah into the world and raise him from the dead. Nothing is too hard for God.

JEHOVAH JIR'EH: THE LORD WILL PROVIDE

In the context of the sacrifice of Isaac, Jehovah reveals himself to Abraham and Isaac as the God who provides. In Genesis 22, the Lord commanded Abraham to offer his only son in sacrifice to God on Mt. Moriah. Abraham journeys three days to get to Moriah and there ascends the mount to offer Isaac in sacrifice. After binding Isaac on the altar and drawing back the knife to slay him, the angel of the Lord intervenes to stop Abraham from offering his son on the altar.

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me. And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns: and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt offering in the stead of his son. And Abraham called the name of that place *Jehovah-jireh*: as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen (Gen.22:12-14).

Because of what transpires, Abraham names the place *Jehovahjireh*, which is literally "the Lord (Jehovah) will provide." The explanation given is **In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen. Shall be seen** is from the Niphal imperfect of *rĒŌĒh*, "see," but which is used in this context in the sense of "provide" (see v. 8); consequently, that thought (provide) should be retained in v. 14 — "In the mount of the Lord it shall be provided."

Whereas on that occasion God provided the ram to take the place of Isaac, the greater and deeper thought is that God provided his own Son as the atoning sacrifice for sin. Isaac was but the type of Jesus, the greater sacrifice. Indeed, God did provide for mankind what he could not provide for himself.

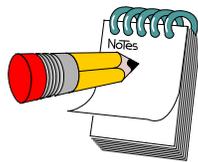
But God's provisions are not limited to his provision of the Son. He provides for every physical and spiritual need that man has. What a marvelous thought is revealed in his name *Jehovah Jir'eh*.

CONCLUSION

There are many ways to learn the nature of God, one of which is through a study of the names by which he is called. There are other terms used to refer to God which I have not discussed in this article and each of them is enlightening as well. May our consideration of these names deepen our adoration of him.

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Quips & Quotes



Parrying Masons

"Tired of reading about gay Anglican clergy? Get ready for a still-emerging controversy: Anglican Freemasons. Days before being confirmed as Archbishop of Canterbury, Rowan Williams said he had 'real misgivings about the compatibility of Masonry and Christian profession,' and said he wouldn't appoint any Freemasons to senior posts. After an outcry, he apologized for causing 'distress.'

"But the Sydney Anglican Synod isn't backing down, and in October called on its members to choose between lodge and church, and told congregations not to let Masons use their facilities. Freemasonry, the synod said, 'teaches and upholds a system of false religious and spiritual beliefs'" (Christianity Today [December 2003], 19).

"A Man and a Woman"

"Politically active Christians, among others, say marriage is the next great social issue for the church in North America. 'I think we're on the front side of another Roe v. Wade,' Bill Murray, spokesman for the Family Research Council, told Christianity Today. 'It's definitely going to be the biggest issue during the election'" (Christianity Today [December 2003], 21).

Bush Signs Landmark Abortion Ban

"On November 5 President Bush signed a bill, passed 64-34 by the Senate on October 21, that bans partial-birth abortion, a procedure in which doctors crush the skull of a partially delivered child.

"Bush called the bill 'very important legislation that will end an abhorrent practice and continue to build a culture of life in America'" (Christianity Today [December 2003], 21).

RU-486 Kills Again

"A seventh woman has died from complications related to the abortion pill RU-486 (CT, June 10, 2002, p. 15). Holly Patterson,

18, of Livermore, California, died on September 17 after a local Planned Parenthood clinic gave her the abortifacient one week earlier. Patterson went into septic shock after fragments of her unborn child were left in her uterus. Prolifers were outraged. The Christian Medical Association, Concerned Women for America, and other groups petitioned the Food and Drug Administration in August 2002 to recall the drug over concerns about the drug's safety and what they call a politically tainted approval process. The FDA has yet to act on the petition. 'The RU-486 drug regimen's unconscionable laxity has put American women and teenagers at dire risk,' said Gene Rudd, associate executive director of the CMA. In November, U.S. Rep. Mike Pence, R-Indiana, called on the FDA to suspend its approval of the 'abortion pill'" (Christianity Today [December 2003], 23).

Baylor Update

"In September, Baylor University President Robert Sloan survived calls for his resignation by the Faculty Senate and several members of the Board of Regents. Sloan's Baylor 2012 plan calls for the Waco, Texas-based institution to become a major Christian research university (CT, Nov. 18, 2002, p. 62). The board voted 31-4 on September 12 to reaffirm Sloan's leadership.

"Later that month, 29 descendants of Baylor trustee J.M. Dawson (who advocated teaching evolution) sent Sloan an open letter calling for the removal of Francis Beckwith, who heads the J.M.Dawson Institute of Church-State Studies. The signatories say Beckwith is unqualified to hold the post because he believes Intelligent Design theory — an alternative to evolution — can also be taught in public schools" (Christianity Today [December 2003], 23).

'Wheaton Footloose For 1st Time Tonight

"Wheaton, Ill. — . . . It was not until the 1960s that the school lifted the rule prohibiting students from going to movies. For generations, students were barred from dancing — on the campus or off — unless it was with members of the same sex or at a square dance. It was not until the 1990s that students and faculty were permitted to dance with spouses or relatives at family events such as weddings.

"Nine months ago, Wheaton lifted the ban altogether, freeing students to cut the rug on campus or off, at Chicago clubs or other places. (Wheaton also eased its ban on alcohol and smoking for faculty and staff. They can now drink and light up off campus, as long as it is not in front of under-graduates.)

"Under the new set of rules, called the Community Covenant, students may dance, but should avoid behavior 'which may be immodest, sinfully erotic or harmfully violent'" (The Indianapolis Star [November 14, 2003], A10).

Bishops Condemn Same-Sex Marriage

"Washington — America's Roman Catholic bishops overwhelmingly approved a statement Wednesday that urges states to withhold recognition for same-sex marriages.

"The bishops said they did not intend to offend gays, and they called discrimination against them unjust. But the church leaders said they had an obligation to 'give witness to the whole moral truth' and reinforce Catholic teaching that homosexual sex is a sin.

"Marriage is in crisis and will be further devalued and eroded unless we're strong in pointing out that same-sex unions are not the equivalent of marriage,' said Bishop J. Kevin Boland of the Diocese of Savannah, Ga., who led a committee that drafted the statement" (The Indianapolis Star [November 13, 2003], A3).

Can Gays Change Their Orientation? Public Evenly Split

"Washington — The public is evenly divided on whether gays and lesbians can alter their sexual orientation, with white evangelicals the most likely to think homosexuals can change, according to a new poll.

"In another finding, most Americans, 55 percent, said they felt homosexuality was a sin, while 33 percent did not. Nine in 10 highly committed white evangelicals and nearly three-quarters of black Protestants said homosexual behavior was sinful.

"Evangelicals are far more likely to say homosexuals can change, Catholics and mainline Protestants fall in the middle, and more secular people are most likely to say they cannot change,' said Scott Keeter, a pollster with the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press, which conducted the survey on attitudes about homosexuals.

"The poll's figures: Overall, 42 percent said homosexuals can change, 42 percent said they cannot and 16 percent said they didn't know. Among evangelicals it was 65-22 saying homosexuals can change; among Catholics and mainline Protestants it was 57-29 and 48-31, respectively, saying they cannot.

"The poll also found that opposition to gay marriage has grown since midsummer, with 32 percent favoring it and 59 percent opposing it. In July, 53 percent said they opposed gay marriage" (The Indianapolis Star [November 23, 2003], E5).

Church Might Discipline Catholic Politicians

"Washington — The nation's Roman Catholic bishops said Monday they are considering whether to recommend sanctions for Catholic politicians who favor policies contrary to church teaching on abortion and other issues.

"A task force of bishops will take up the idea of a church punishment as it develops guidelines on how prelates should respond to Catholic lawmakers who do not uphold church values in their work.

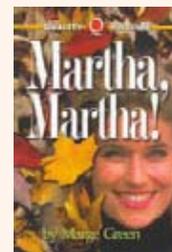
"Bishop Joseph Galante, a task force member, said some dioceses already ban from church property elected officials who support abortion rights" (The Indianapolis Star [November 11, 2003], A5).

Uganda's Anglicans Cut Their Ties to U.S. Church

"Kampata, Uganda — The Anglican Church of Uganda said Saturday that it has severed ties with the Episcopal Church of the United States for elevating an openly gay man to the rank of bishop.

"Uganda's Anglicans initially cut ties only with the New Hampshire Diocese after the Nov. 2 consecration of V. Gene Robinson as that state's Episcopal bishop, the first openly gay man to hold that position in any major Christian denomination.

"But 30 Ugandan Anglican bishops agreed at a meeting Thursday to sever ties with the entire U.S. Episcopal Church because 'any same-sex relationship is a disorder of God's creation,' said Jackson Turyagyenda, a spokesman for the church in East Africa" (The Indianapolis Star [November 23, 2003], A17).



Martha, Martha

Marge Green

Ms. Green admonishes women to keep the cares and troubles of everyday life from hindering their service to God. Just as Jesus reminded Martha, we need to be reminded to learn more of this "good part" and listen to his word. Martha's realistic problems are typical of so many women in the church today, no matter what their real names may be.

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