



What Would Life On Mars Change?

by Harry Osborne

Since the landing of the rover on Mars a few weeks ago, we have seen endless speculation in the media regarding its possible findings. They tell us that it may find signs of water and “possibly” even indicators of past “life” on Mars. One can clearly see the glee in the eyes and voices of commentators who tell us that “everything will change” if the rover can find evidence that even a single-celled organism once existed on Mars. Excuse me for raining on this speculative parade, but I fail to see the logic that causes one to conclude “everything will change” if water or a simple life form is found on Mars.



One of the things that perplexes me about this matter concerns the nature of the organism that would cause “everything” to “change,” according to our speculators. It reminds one of a few years ago when a report came from NASA claiming discovery of what was thought to be a fossilized life form in a meteorite from Mars. At that time, one Houston paper’s headline caught my

eye, saying, “Was There Life On Mars? Answer Could Change Everything.” Later on, the report was debunked, but let us not allow the facts to stand in the way of some fertile speculation. The

“life” said to have been fossilized in the supposed Martian meteor was supposed to have been a one-celled organism of tubular structure, classified as one of the lowest forms of life. Yet, the banner headlines from our press proclaimed it was “life” and touted as being of “monumental” significance.

The same press commentators, however, could not determine whether the far more complex life form of a child within the womb is truly “life” and minimize the unborn child’s significance. Amazing!

Let us suppose moment that everything suspected in the debunked report and “possible” finds of the Martian rover are absolutely true and that microscopic organisms once lived on Mars beside massive reservoirs of water. In fact, let see “Life on Mars” on p. 152

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What Kind of Leader?

Mike Willis

This being an election year for America, we are sure to be inundated with political advertising and news coverage. Sometimes it is hard to distinguish the two in America. Americans will be electing officers for President, Senate, the House of Representatives, as well as state and county officers. We are glad to see the participation of Christians in this process, for surely our system works better when righteous men are involved than it works when it is totally given over to the ungodly and sinners.

Can we find any divine guidance to assist us in the time of elections?

As I was reading my Bible the other day, I read the story of the rise to power of Joseph. You will recall the narrative in Genesis. At seventeen years old, Joseph was sold into slavery by his jealous brothers. He served in the house of Potiphar until Potiphar's wife made sexual advances toward him. When Joseph refused her advances, she lied about him, charging that he had tried to seduce her and sexually assault her. On the basis of her charges, Potiphar placed Joseph in prison. There he stayed for an indeterminate period. In the providence of God, he was placed in the same prison as the Pharaoh's butler and baker were imprisoned.

These two important Egyptian officials had dreams while in prison which Joseph interpreted. Both of them were not ordinary dreams, but dreams through which God revealed the future. After telling the butler the meaning of his dream, Joseph petitioned him to make known to the Pharaoh his false imprisonment. However, the butler forgot about Joseph.

Two years later, the Pharaoh had two dreams one night which none of his wise men or magicians were able to interpret. When the butler heard of Pharaoh's dreams, he remembered Joseph and related to the Pharaoh that Joseph had successfully interpreted his dreams. Joseph was called from prison to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

Joseph explained to Pharaoh that his two dreams spoke about Egypt's future and were doubled for emphasis. He then announced the coming of seven years of prosperity followed by seven years of famine. He advised Pharaoh,



see "Leader" on p. 153

CONTENTS

Our Light Affliction

Connie W. Adams

The task was distasteful to Paul. He found it necessary to defend his apostolic work at Corinth, not to enhance his own importance, but to certify the genuineness of their conversion and standing before God. It was difficult to do this without creating the impression that Paul was elevating himself. Such was not the case. That is what 2 Corinthians is about. Paul had become the object of severe criticism from a few who had come to Corinth and cast reflections upon Paul and his work. They not only complained about his style, they indicted his character as well. Whatever he said or did was misconstrued by these false brethren.

In that circumstance, Paul said, “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed” (2 Cor. 4:8-9). Paul said all of this was “for your sakes” (v. 15) and provided the channel for the flow of God’s grace to them. Such problems would have intimidated lesser men. But not Paul. He wrote, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Cor. 4: 17-18).

Did you see what he called all these things? *Light afflictions*. It was bad enough to be misrepresented. It was humiliating to have to defend the genuineness of his apostleship before a people whose very spiritual life was due to his tireless efforts among them for a year and a half. For the sake of the gospel, his own life was often in jeopardy. “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake” (2 Cor. 4:11). “And why stand we in jeopardy every hour . . . I die daily . . . I have fought with beasts at Ephesus” (1 Cor. 15:30-32). Here was a man who was beaten, often a prisoner, scourged five times, beaten three times with rods, once stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked three times, spending a night and a day clinging to scraps of wreckage to save his life, in dangers among Jews, Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, among heathen, in the sea and among false brethren. He was often weary, sometimes in pain, in anxious vigils, hungry, thirsty, in fastings, cold and without enough cover to warm him upon the ground in some strange place. You mean all that happened to Paul? Yes, it did. Now read 2 Corinthians 11:22-33. Tell us again, Paul: What were all these things? He called them “light afflictions.”

The reason he could view them that way was because he understood a cardinal truth many of us forget. He walked between what was temporal and what was eternal. He knew the value of each. He walked “by faith, not by

continued on next page

What Would Life On Mars Change?

Harry Osborne front page

What Kind of Leader

Mike Willis 2

Our Light Affliction

Connie W. Adams 3

The Orphan Homes Issue — 1947 Until Now

Bill Cavender 6

The Ten Commandments

John Isaac Edwards 8

The Elders’ Sphere

Peter McPherson 12

Do Not Exceed That Which Is Written

Joe Quinn 13

“Why Beholdest Thou the Mote . . .”

Jim McDonald 16

Mind Your Own Business

Stephen Russell 18

The Church That Jesus Built

Bobby L. Graham 19

sight.” We place such heavy emphasis on what is seen: our bodies, houses, yards, cars. Yet, all of these are perishing. What was a light affliction in temporal things if it led to the salvation of lost men and women, and if it served to prepare Paul to “depart and be with the Lord”?

APPLICATIONS

The practical applications of this are many. *Preachers* are sometimes prone to feel sorry for themselves and lament their misfortunes at the hands of their own brethren. They are misunderstood, unappreciated, overworked, and underpaid. Why, with all their talent they could have stood the business world on its ear had they not made the supreme sacrifice of giving the brethren the advantage of their great ability! Well, gentlemen, have you ever been stoned and left for dead? Ever really been hungry? Have you been in prison lately for preaching the gospel? Do you think your afflictions are heavy? Paul thought his were light when viewed from the vantage point of eternal verities. That is what impelled Paul’s preaching. My brethren, we must look beyond the seen and embrace the unseen.

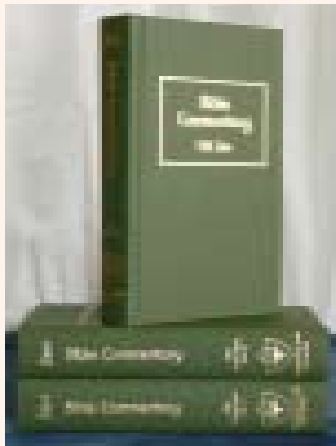
Parents often are frazzled with the everyday annoyances of life. We work hard to provide better things for our children than we had. They require attention, much of our time, a generous amount of our love and concern, and are unwittingly the cause of much anxiety. I see young mothers wrestling with small children in services. They have worked hard just to get them there. Often, they hear very little of what is said. They are fearful that their little ones may distract others, and even wonder if it is really worth all the hassle. Oh yes, young mothers. Look beyond the seen to the unseen. Remember Paul? He would have called that a “light affliction.” And it is “but for a moment.” Ask those of us whose children are now grown and have children of their own. Parents, while you are providing things that are temporal, please do not neglect the eternal. Preparing children for heaven is far more important than

dental work, sports, good grades, degrees, musical skills, the latest fashions and the social graces. These all may have a place, but they are temporal. They are light in comparison with an “eternal weight of glory.”

All Christians face circumstances which we consider “afflictions.” The car breaks down and we face expensive repairs. The furnace needs replacing when it is cold and you need it most. Or you discover a leak in the roof. An appliance quits. In frustration, we ask, “Why me?” Health problems arise and we are distressed. We see loved ones sick, sometimes gravely so. We even have to bury our dead. In agony we plead, “What am I going to do now?” “How can I go on?” “Why did this happen to me?” But remember, these are “light afflictions” when viewed from the realm of the eternal.

How shall we handle these “light afflictions”? “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. 4:16). While temporal things are decaying, dimming, and weakening, the inward man is becoming brighter and stronger. This “inward man” is “renewed in knowledge” after the image of Christ (Col. 3:10) “For I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22). Here is the blessed man of whom the Psalmist said “but his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night” (Ps. 1:2). As we grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord, we are making the inward man stronger day by day, even while the outward man, concerned with the temporal things which are seen, grows older and weaker. I don’t know about you, but I am getting to the place in life where I needed to be reminded of these things.

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The Orphan Homes Issue — 1947 Until Now

The controversy, and subsequent tragic division, was unnecessary. Brethren did not love the truth of God and love one another enough to maintain “the unity of the Spirit in the

There always was, and is, a scriptural way, therefore a right and true manner and method “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction” (Jas. 1:26-27). There is *always* a scriptural and right way to do anything which our Father in heaven has taught us is our duty to do, whether it is an individual’s (a person, making his own decisions and spending his own money, working out his own salvation in fear and in trembling [Phil. 2:12] responsibility or whether it is a congregational (a local church, under the oversight of its elders and from its collective treasury) obligation. This point of Scripture teaching, i.e., “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world,” should *never* have been the issue for dissension and division among brethren of good will. Brethren, this was *always* an area of agreement — a way that peace and unity could prevail and be maintained among beloved brethren; a way which would have satisfied the faith and consciences of every understanding and right-thinking child of God. There *did not have to be* a division among brethren regarding the matter of “caring for the orphans and the widows.”

I sometimes wonder now, in these

cold, winter months of 2003-2004, in reflecting over the past half-century, if there are any brethren in the “pro-institutional” churches any more who lived through this tragic division, who participated in the controversies, who endorsed “the quarantine of the Antis,” who are now having any sorrows and regrets for this tragedy amongst us and his participation in it. I sometimes wonder if there are still older brethren in these “pro-institutional” churches who can remember and recognize the differences in churches of Christ fifty years ago and churches of Christ now; who can recognize and remember the differences in the type and content of preaching they heard then and the type and content of preaching they are hearing now; who can recognize and realize the rapid drift of those churches into the “social gospel,” into the denominational practices and the deviations from divine truth which are occurring in those congregations? Are there many any more who are “crying out” against the introduction of the mechanical instruments of music into so-called “contemporary” worship services of many of those churches; are there any who are opposing the participation of churches of the Lord with various denominational churches in “inter-denominational, fellowship” services; are there any

who are speaking out against the false doctrines of very liberal preachers and elders among them, who are denying that baptism is necessary to the remission of sins; are there any who are informing people of the “Radical Restoration” theories, with their Lord’s supper perversions and “house churches” movement; are there any who are condemning the movement toward female participation in public services of worship and in assuming leadership roles in those churches?

I sometimes wonder if there are any brethren in those “institutional churches” who can remember the debates, the writings, the congregational upheavals and “splits,” the lawsuits against “the antis,” driving them out of meeting houses which they helped build and finance? I wonder if any still remember the attendant warnings that “the antis” wrote and spoke continually, that this “orphans home issue” and the embracing of the concept of “church-supported human institutions” and “centralized, sponsoring-church cooperative programs” would eventually lead to a wholesale, complete, irreversible departure from the truth of the New Testament and destruction of the identity of the Lord’s congregations? Such concepts, practices, and departures from the New Testament led to apostasy in the first through the fifth centuries, resulting in the Roman Catholic Church and its Papacy. In the nineteenth century the same centralizing of churches in a “Missionary Society” resulted in the Christian Churches-Disciples of Christ. Why would not the same concepts, errors, and departures from the New Testament revealed truth result in similar apostasies in the twentieth century? They have!

What is that scriptural, safe, forsure, right-way-and-method which brethren could have followed and which would have been pleasing to our heavenly Father? That is simple! Every informed and taught Christian can understand it. Here are the areas, facets, points, and principles upon

which we could and should have agreed, should have operated and worked within, and maintained unity and peace among brethren:

1. That the kingdom of God, the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, planned in the councils, wisdom, and purposes of the eternal God and revealed in the Holy Scriptures, admits of no additions, subtractions, alterations and/or changes throughout the centuries of time, once this kingdom was brought into existence and completion by the inspired apostles of Jesus Christ, through the revelation of the New Testament and the preaching of the gospel of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-4; Rom. 1:16-17; 11:32-36; Eph. 3:1-11, etc.).

2. That the inspired word of God, the Bible, both Old and New Testaments, is the revealed mind of God, by the Holy Spirit, to the minds of men and is an unchangeable, timeless, true, complete, and infallible guide in all matters pertaining to man’s duties to God, and furnishes a believer to every good work and to all matters which pertain to life and godliness (1 Cor. 2:8-13; 2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-4; Jude 3, 4).

3. That all obedient believers in Jesus Christ are God’s children by faith, are in the kingdom of God, which is the church, and are arranged and organized into separate, independent congregations in the various communities where these believers live, and that in their individual and congregational capacities alone do they operate to do God’s will, there being no smaller or larger unit of organization among God people than a local congregation, with its elders, deacons, and members, with its own treasury, planning and accomplishing its own worship, work, and teaching, following the New Testament pattern in all things pertaining to God and to Jesus (John 3:1-8; Matt. 16:13-19; Acts 2:37-41, 48; 14:23; Tit. 1:5).

4. That human agencies have a le-

gal, scriptural right to exist if citizens of the country or of a state, believers or unbelievers, want to build and maintain them, to accomplish the intended, civil-law authorized purpose(s) of bringing such institutions and agencies into existence. For example, the Red Cross, Cancer Society, Leukemia Association, March of Dimes, American Heart Association, Boles Home, Tennessee Childrens Home, St. Thomas Hospital, Middle Tennessee Medical Center, David Lipscomb University, Florida College, St. Jude’s Hospital, etc., all exist by the authority of civil governments (whether national or state) and by civil statutes (whether federal or state).

5. That no local congregation of Christ sustains any scriptural relationship to any human agency (whether evangelistic, educational, medical, eleemosynary, political, financial, industrial, etc.), in any state or nation, and that no local church of the Lord has any scriptural obligation nor duty to maintain, subsidize, financially underwrite, and contribute to, any human institution, no matter what is the purpose for that institution’s existence.

6. That any person, citizen, individual, whether believer in Jesus or unbeliever, has the legal and moral right to contribute his own money and property to any legal institution and/or agency which such a one may determine and desire to contribute to and maintain. Such is an individual’s judgment, decision, right, and action, the consequences of which are a personal responsibility for which one is personally accountable to God.

In other words, those brethren who desired to build, maintain, operate, and financially support their human institutions, and those brethren who desired to contribute to, subsidize, and fund them, *let them do so*. That is their business, their individual decision(s). Let them do what they will. *But* leave the congregations alone, leave the local church treasury alone, keep the

The Ten Commandments

John Isaac Edwards

Legislation is pending in ten states that would either require or permit the Ten Commandments to be posted in schools. Supporters claim such a move would help stem school violence. But opponents say it violates the separation of church and state. The Indiana House recently passed a bill that would permit schools to include the Ten Commandments in historical displays.

In light of the attention the Ten Commandments have received lately, it is a good time to remind ourselves of what the Bible teaches concerning the Ten Commandments.

1. Recorded in Exodus 20:1-17 and repeated in Deuteronomy 5:6-21. How long has it been since you read the Ten Commandments? Do you know what the Ten Commandments say? I urge you to sit down for a minute and read the Ten Commandments.

2. Given to the Children of Israel. God said, "I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exod. 20:2). Deuteronomy 5:13 records, "And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them. The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. The Lord made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day."

3. Nailed to the Cross. Paul taught, "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross" (Col. 2:14). The Ephesians were told, "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Eph. 2:15). The fact that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding does not mean that we are at liberty to kill, commit adultery, steal, bear false witness, and covet. These things are prohibited in the "law of Christ" (Gal. 6:2), to which we are subject today.

Though the Ten Commandments represented a great code of ethics, perhaps we would do better to curb vio-

local church separate and apart from these man-made, civil-state-authorized agencies, and let the congregation do its God-authorized work under the oversight of its elders, and let these human agencies do their work under their civil-law authorized "Board of Directors."

Every brother and sister in Christ that I ever heard of or knew could agree that individuals could send his personal contribution(s) to a human agency, if he desired and decided to do so. One can support the American Red Cross, the Heart Fund, a political party, a school or college, a hospital, an unwed mothers' home, a childrens' home, etc., if one chooses to do so. *This was, and is, the area of agreement. Everybody could do what he decided to do.* Leave the congregations alone! Leave the church treasury alone! Leave the brethren alone! But the institutional brethren would not do this in the interest of peace among brethren, unity of the Spirit, love of the Lord, and of the truth of God, and good will among men. It was the *fad*, the *craze*, the *identifying mark of a sect*, that churches, the local congregations, *must subsidize* these human agencies. A contribution *must* be sent from the church treasury to "the orphans home" to demonstrate that a congregation was on the right side, in the right group, in good standing in the sect, and was *not* identified with "those terrible antis."

How much different would it have been, and would be even now, if our brethren could have understood and been convinced that many more orphans and widows would have been helped, supported, taught, and cared for, if all preachers, teachers, elders, and influential brethren would have spoken with one voice and one conviction, teaching individuals to care for "the fatherless and the widows," and to leave the local church treasuries alone. Sincere, believing brethren, honest of purpose and wanting to please our Father in heaven, would have done just *that* and there would be no limit to the amount of good that could have been done. Instead, promoters of institutions and those who had, and have, a vested, financial interest of gain and livelihood, of prominence and notoriety, prevailed over the truth of God and we had, and have, the tragic division we have experienced over a matter which had a scriptural, easily-understood solution. Let people do what they want to do and give account to God for their actions. Leave the churches alone. Leave their treasuries alone.

Churches supporting the institutions, or build-

ing an institution for themselves, was an addiction in those days. Marinel and I lived in Port Arthur, Texas, for seventeen years in the sixties and seventies. The Proctor Street Church of Christ in that city was a very liberal, institutional-oriented church. Wyatt Sawyer was the preacher. Their best-known, most influential elder was Ike Summerlin, an official of the Texaco Refinery there. They were a large church of some 350-400 members, with a dozen or so elders, many deacons, and many well-known, well-to-do people in the congregation. They endorsed whatever liberal brethren could concoct and promote for churches to do. They decided to build "a Childrens' Home," although they had no needy or homeless children, no "widows and fatherless" for whom they were responsible. They obtained a charter from the state of Texas, bought property, hired a superintendent (one of their elders) and personnel, and were ready to begin their operation. The problem was that they didn't have any needy, dependent children to incarcerate in their "home." They placed ads in the newspapers in that area and in "the brotherhood papers," advertising for children to become inmates in their "home." Finally, a man in Bridge City, Texas, east of the Neches River and east of Port Arthur, whose wife had died and left him with their five children, and who needed some help in caring for his children, agreed to commit the children to this "home" which the brethren wanted to operate. He did, the children wouldn't stay, the whole experiment was a disaster, the man soon removed his children from the "home," and the "home" soon closed its doors. It wasn't too long afterwards that the elders decided to take a Baptist man, who had married a woman in the church, into membership of the Proctor Street church. One elder would not agree to this decision, a major division resulted, and this one elder, all the deacons, and many members left and began another congregation in the Port Neches - Nederland area of Jefferson County, called the

Twin Cities Highway Church. Thus ended the unscriptural venture of "The Port Arthur Christian Childrens' Home."

On and on I could reminisce and write about attitudes, words and writings, and events of those days, especially if I were to "dig into and out of" my old files, church bulletins, "brotherhood papers," tape recordings, etc., in my attic. I have written these articles, to this point, from memory, without consulting voluminous collected materials of the past half-century which I have long ago stored away. As I conclude this particular area and facet of my own personal thoughts and reminiscences, I desire to summarize these salient points about the "orphans home" controversy which erupted among us over fifty years ago and was so devastating to the churches of our Lord.

1. The controversy, and subsequent tragic division, was unnecessary. Brethren did not love the truth of God and love one another enough to maintain "the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-6). There was the scriptural area of agreement all along, the same area of agreement

which existed in the first century in the lifetimes of the inspired apostles. In the first century there were no human, man-devised, "missionary and/or benevolent societies" attached to local congregations of Christ. There were no human agencies subsidized and maintained by congregations of Christ. Only local churches existed, set in order by the apostles (Acts 14:23; Phil. 1:1; Tit. 1:5). If we follow the divine pattern (Heb. 8:5), if the New Testament is a complete and infallible guide and law, if the kingdom of God is planned, purposed, and revealed by the eternal God our Father through Jesus and his inspired apostles, then there can be no human agencies attached to divine local churches of Christ now. The New Testament, God's will, has not changed through the centuries. True churches of the Lord admit of no changes either.

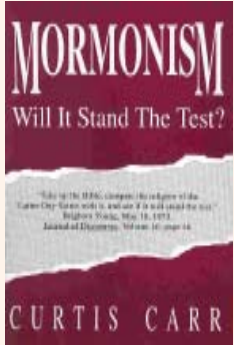
2. There was, and is, much hypocrisy attached to this issue. I have yet to meet the elder, the deacon, the preacher, or any brother among us, who is willing to incarcerate his own children and grandchildren in one of these institutions, to subject his own flesh and blood to the mass-rearing

MORMONISM

Will It Stand The Test?

by Curtis Carr

"The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, commonly referred to as 'Mormons,' is one of the fastest growing denominational groups today. They believe that all men must submit to their beliefs to be pleasing to God. This includes the belief in Joseph Smith as a true prophet of God. . . . Since the Book of Mormon claims to be from God, we should expect to find similarities between it and the Bible. . . . This challenge needs to be addressed. I ask each reader to take a serious look at the religion of the Latter-day Saints and make a comparison to the Bible based on the evidence presented in this book."



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circumstances of these institutions. Yet the advocates, who were willing to divide and alienate brethren and churches of the Lord over the financial subsidizing of these agencies from local church treasuries, have ever pictured these institutions as “divine agencies,” “restored homes,” as little “heaven(s) on earth” for these unfortunate children who are committed to the walls and closed doors of the orphanage, to be cared for and taught by hired hands and hearts who work their shifts, then leave their wards and their work and go home to their families!

3. James 1:22-27, the supposed “proof text” for “the orphans home,” is completely perverted by institutional brethren. No denominational preacher has ever done a better job of perverting the Scriptures regarding baptism for the remission of sins as our own brethren have done in perverting James 1:22-27. These passages of Scripture tell us and teach us of a Christian’s, an individual’s, spiritual growth and development. Every noun and pronoun has reference to a child of God as he learns God’s will and obeys it. There is no mention of nor reference to: (a) a local, organized church of the Lord, (b) a church treasury, (c) any responsibility, work, or activity of a local congregation, (d) the elders of any local church and their responsibilities, (e) any type or kind of “restored home,” (f) an eldership or a “board of directors” being *en loco parentis*, “in the place of parents,” acting for and in lieu of parents. The same “himself” who is to keep “himself unspotted from the world” is the same “himself” who is to “bridle his tongue” and to “visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.” People who do not have “an ax to grind” or a pet project to promote, who can see through a ladder and a woven-wire fence, can see through the perverted use of this Scripture by institutional brethren.

4. The “visit” of James 1:26-27 is the same “visited”

of Matthew 25:36, 43, both in the Greek and English texts. If James 1:27 involves, authorizes, and requires human benevolent institutions and local church activities under an eldership and/or board of directors, then Matthew 25:36, 43 requires the same: church grocery stores and restaurants, church water works and refreshment agencies, church motels and hotels, church garment factories and clothing stores, church medical schools, hospitals, and clinics, church jails and prisons. What James 1:26-27 authorizes and requires, so does Matthew 25:36, 43 authorize and require. This argument and observation was *never* answered by institutional debaters, preachers, elders, and brethren. And they never will!

5. Institutional brethren have argued that these institutional, civil-law-authorized “homes” are “restored homes,” a restoration of what the child has lost through death of parents, divorce of parents, desertion by parents, etc., and if churches of Christ can support families, then they can subsidize and support these “restored homes.” Yet they *do not really believe* what they say! Baptist Homes, Methodist Homes, Catholic Homes, Adventist Homes, and Mormon Homes are just as much “restored homes” as are “Church of Christ Homes.” Baptist marriages, Methodist marriages, Catholic marriages, etc., are just as much approved, scriptural “marriages” in God’s sight (Heb. 13:4) as are “Church of Christ marriages!” Why cannot these “restored homes” of denominational churches be subsidized and maintained by churches of Christ? This argument and observation has never been answered by institutional brethren and never will be!

6. Our institutional brethren will not financially support denominational “restored homes” but will argue in the same breath, out of the same sides of their mouths, that the Lord’s congregations are authorized, obligated, constrained, and commanded to aid, assist, and care for *all* the poor and needy of the world, “all men,” everyone, unbelievers as well as believers. They misuse 2 Corinthians 9:13 and other passages to try to prove this false theory. They affirm that churches of the Lord have a scriptural responsibility to every needy person in the world, that the churches *must* care for everyone from their treasuries, yet in the same breath they will deny assistance and aid to these “restored homes” of the denominations. Verily, verily, the legs of the lame are not equal! Institutional brethren have not noticed nor answered this observation and argument. They never will!

7. Our institutional brethren have shifted gears on the word “home” faster than an old Chrysler automobile could shift gears with the “fluid drive” (as the modern-day

“automatic transmission” was first called). Sometimes by “home” they mean “a family,” husband, wife, and children; sometimes they mean “a building, a house, a domicile, a place where people live”; and sometimes they mean a “human, man-made, civil-law-authorized agency under a board of directors,” which they call a “restored home” and try to tell us that these “restored homes” are taught in God’s word and have divine sanction. That is comparable to the gays, lesbians, and all homosexuals (“sodomites” in the Bible) trying to tell us that homosexual “unions” and “gay marriages” are “alternate life-styles” and “alternate unions and families.” The Bible says nothing about our brethren’s “restored homes,” and nothing about the homosexual’s “alternate unions or alternate families.” The same passages of Scripture which authorizes and describes one will describe and authorize the other!

8. Our institutional brethren have never agreed (and they never will) as to whether these human institutions, these “restored homes,” to be scriptural and to meet God’s approval, must be under “the eldership of a local congregation,” or must be under “a board of directors authorized by civil statutes.” This is a fundamental, basic difference between these brethren. They cannot settle this issue! They try to ignore this clear and glaring difference and problem they have, which they won’t settle. Yet both groups fight and disfellowship “the antis,” who try to urge them to “visit the fatherless and the widows” as was done by the first-century brethren who had no problem and no issue with this point of New Testament teaching.

9. If the elders, preachers, and brethren had practiced what they preached prior to World War II (before the powerful colleges and children’s homes, endorsed and backed by powerful papers among us, moved to bed-down in the budgets of the churches), then all the brethren would have been taught to personally care for the fatherless and the widows, the poor and needy, the sick and the distressed. Much, much true benevolent work would have been done and more people by far would have been cared for, if all the members of the churches had been personally, actively caring for others. *Proxy religion, paying others to do our work and to meet our obligations,* never really works nor accomplishes the design and purpose of God to cultivate our souls in spiritual matters.

10. We’ve had the sorry spectacle in churches of Christ, for over fifty years now, of proxy religion, one church transferring funds to and/or paying another church or an institution to do their work for them. In so many instances “church A” will send a fifty or one hundred dollars check over to “church B” to assist in “benevolent work,” and “church B” will send a fifty or one hundred dollars check over to “church A” to assist them in their “missionary work.” Neither church really knows what the other church is doing. Churches send money to benevolent

institutions, not really knowing who these people are, why are they there, what are their real circumstances, etc. A check is sent from the church treasury and the consciences of the members are soothed and salved, and folks in the congregation think they are really caring for the widows and orphans, or are really preaching the gospel to the lost by sending a check to another congregation to assist in some type of preaching program planned by the church receiving the check! Churches who send funds to various other churches and agencies average about twelve to fifteen cents per month, per member, for participation in preaching the gospel and caring for the needy. *Proxy, paid religion* dulls the spiritual senses of those who engage in it.

11. These church-related, church-subsidized institutions, whether aged homes, childrens home, schools, colleges, etc., are accountable to no one. No one knows, except their “Boards of Directors” and their “Administrators” how much money is received, how much is expended, what is their net worth, what are their holdings, what are the salaries and financial arrangements with “board members, administrators, faculties, and staff members.” Years ago I worked with two congregations whose elders wrote Boles Home in Quinlan, Texas, asking for a financial report regarding funds received, funds disbursed, real estate holdings, net worth, etc. Boles Home refused to supply such a financial accounting to the elders of those two churches. No more funds were sent to Boles Home. These institutions are rich in this world’s goods. None of them will divulge their income, their holdings in property, land, stocks, bonds, money, etc., yet they continually beg as if they were the poorest paupers in the world! These institutions want and have well-to-do, prosperous, well-known brethren on their “Board(s) of Directors.” Many of these board members are doctors, lawyers, bankers, successful business men, people of wealth. These institutions sometimes lend money to churches for building programs and other projects. Sometimes these institutions have been touched by scandals, both sexual and financial. Some of them have been put on probation by state authorities for their misconduct and violations of law. It has long been my conviction that, by civil statutes, these institutions, all of them of every kind, should be made to submit an annual public financial accounting of their income and net worth, if they are going to ask brethren and the public for contributions. One thing is for sure with all of these institutions: they must have a continual supply of children, young people, *and money!* Money is the oil and grease that lubricates all these human agencies. Yet they are fraudulently “palmed off” on gullible brethren as being authorized by God Almighty and brethren are disobeying God if you don’t support and finance them.

12. When I was a young preacher, in age and in experience, after a few years in the church, studying the Testament and this “issue,” reading and seeing this tragic division being forced and encouraged by power-

The Elders' Sphere

Soon after I became a Christian in 1962, I was introduced to an excellent booklet written by J. Harvey Dykes (1945, 1946) entitled *1900 Years Ago The Church of Christ Was Established And Today Has The Same Organization, Worship and Doctrine*. Over the years I would give a copy of this superbly written booklet to someone that I thought was genuinely interested. Now that I recently developed my own booklet entitled *The Gospel of Christ and the Church of Christ* I see that Dykes' booklet has been reprinted by Star Bible Productions only changing the 1900 to 2000. It is still, in my opinion, an excellent tool.

Let me call your attention to a section of Dykes' booklet where he deals with the "Same Officers." In his concluding remarks in this section he says, "Today the church of Christ has the same officers for the congregations it had under the inspired apostles. They meet the same qualifications, wear the same titles, serve in the same sphere, teach and

defend the same doctrine and offer the same advantages to the membership" (30). Note that he says they "serve in the same sphere." I am amazed that today's writers, for instance the writers of the conservative (in most areas) *Spiritual Sword* paper, when they write on the church organization, its work and elders, do so in the same way as brother Dykes. They talk and write about such things as elders serving in "the same sphere" even though there has been set up among them special international-wide, nation-wide, county-wide, and area-wide "Sponsoring Churches (sponsoring and directing both evangelistic, edification and benevolence programs), even though their concepts demand receiving elders (of funds) and brotherhood treasuries (huge amounts of monies many more times in amount than their own sizable local contributions), even though they have Brotherhood Elderships (begging money from hundreds of churches of Christ and selecting certain people and placing them in their agreed upon locations;

ful papers, institutions, churches, and preachers, upon a once loving, peaceful, growing body of brethren, with all the resultant hatred; ill-will, suspicions, misrepresentations, mistreatments, and separations, my wife and I ceased making any kind of contributions to any of the brethren's institutions (except Florida Christian College, for we believed in James R. Cope, which I will write about later). From the early fifties until the present day, we have chosen carefully who and what we support, giving our contributions first of all to the local church treasury where we are members. We know whom we give money to, their circumstances, and what is being done with the funds. Sometimes we help family members in distress; sometimes friends, neighbors and acquaintances are our objects of assistance; sometimes it is brethren, widows, children of divorced parents, etc., whom we assist; sometimes it is an organized charity, as the Red Cross, American Heart Association, Cancer Fund, American Lukemia Society, American Diabetes Association, Cal Farley's Boys Home in Tascosa, Texas, etc., whom we help. We try to avoid unknowing, blind assistance and help as much as we can, to people whom we do not know. We know that we will individually give account to God through Jesus Christ at the last great day, the Judgment

Day, of what we have done with our lives and with the substance God has given us. We no longer support any of the institutions of the brethren. And we will not be lost and separated from God eternally for not doing so!

I cannot go to heaven unless I visit the fatherless and the widows in their affliction and keep myself unspotted from the world. I cannot go to heaven unless I do good unto all men as I have opportunity, especially to those who are of the household of faith, my brethren in Christ. *But I can go to heaven and never send one thin dime or one copper cent to one of my brethren's human, divisive institutions.* (In our next article, I hope to write about some visits to Bethany College, the school Alexander Campbell founded in Virginia, now West Virginia, in 1840.)

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whether it be, for instance, in some foreign health clinic or school), and even though their concepts necessitated all the extra-biblical apparatus, like that of the Highland church of Christ in Abilene, Texas to operate The Herald of Truth in the 60s” (see the *Willis-Inman Debate* 73-76). These kind of innovations were totally unheard of before the turn of the century (*Ibid.* 67).

But when writing of the church and its organization hardly have I seen any mention made by these fellows of the absolute necessity of these new centralized-sponsoring-churches and their brotherhood elders/officers even though they support the same and even though those innovations of the 50s and 60s (now modernized and becoming nationwide) are what split the church of our Lord wide open! Its almost as if these issues that split the blood-bought body of Christ are so in-place now that they are looked upon as mere expedients and options. Some giant expedients and options! I would think that if these operations were scriptural and absolutely necessary, these writers should be mentioning them in their writings on the church and its organization. But no, on such they are silent. For instance, in the April issue of *The Spiritual Sword*, William Woodson has an article entitled “How Is The New Testament Church Governed?” Not a word about the now set-in-place sponsoring churches and their elders! Nor in Wendell Winkler’s article “Do New Testament Churches Exist Today” (*Spiritual Sword* 01/02). But why not if they are so necessary? Why not if such are found on the pages of the New Testament?

Brother Dykes says elders today are to serve “in the same sphere” as they did in the days of the apostles. Let us get a handle on this word “sphere” (Greek: *kanon*). W.E. Vine says, “Originally denoted a straight rod, used as a measuring instrument. . . .” “By a common transition in the meaning of words, that which measures, was used for what was measured.” “In general the word thus came to serve for anything regulating the actions of men, as a standard or principle.” In Galatians 6:16, those who “walk by the same rule (*kanon*).” He also cites 2 Corinthians 10:13, 15, 16 where it is variously translated as province, rule, line of things, limit, measuring rod. In the NKJV it is translated “sphere” in verse 13 (twice) verse 15 (once) and verse 16 (once). In this text Paul makes it clear that his actions were not at all like the false teachers affecting the church at Corinth.

Here is the text: “We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere which God appointed us — a sphere which especially includes you. For we are not overextending ourselves (as though our authority did not extend to you), for it was to you that we came with the gospel of Christ; not boasting of things beyond measure, that is, in other men’s labors, but having hope, that as your faith is increased, we shall be greatly enlarged by you in our sphere, to preach the gospel in the regions

beyond you, and not to boast in another man’s sphere of accomplishment” (vv. 13-16, NKJV).

Albert Barnes’ partial comments on verse 14: “In coming to preach to you, we have not gone beyond the proper limits assigned us. We have not endeavoured to enlarge the proper boundaries, to stretch the line which limited us, but have kept honestly within the proper limits.” On “sphere” in verse 15, basically Barnes refers us to the above thoughts on verse 13. On “sphere” in verse 16 he says, in part: “The meaning is, that Paul did not mean to boast of what properly belonged to others. He did not claim what they had done as his own. He did not intend to labour within what was properly their bounds, and then to claim the field and the result of the labour as his.”

I am not saying that there is any perfect parallel to the above and to what is being done today by the special centralized churches and their brotherhood elders, only that if the sentiment of heart, love for unity, and their brethren as described by Paul would have been abided by, there never would have been any attempts to “stretch the line.” Elders would not have “endeavoured to enlarge (their) proper boundaries” beyond “the flock of God which is among you” (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2). Churches would have kept “within the proper limits assigned” them by God. Brethren would have stayed within “what was properly their bounds.” Oh what a shame that such was not done in these most important areas. If so, “there (could have been) no division among (us)” (1 Cor. 1:10).

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Do Not Exceed That Which Is Written

It is apparent that within the religious world attitudes toward the authority of Scripture vary quite a lot. It was in the midst of sectarian, denominational strife that a few believers became convinced that the entire denominational mechanisms that existed were contrary to the will of the Father. Instead of arguing over various human religious creeds, Christ would be much better served by discarding all religious creeds of men and simply return to the Bible as our sole authority (and our soul's authority).

A phrase was coined which conveyed this ideal. It said, "We speak where the Bible speaks, and we are silent where the Bible is silent." This phrase well states a biblical principle often ignored today (Matt. 15:9; 28:18-20; Heb. 8:5; 1 Pet. 4:11; 2 John 9; Rev. 22:18, 19). It states our purpose to do only those things which are authorized by the Scripture. We treat God's written word with reverence, accepting it as complete and adequate, and refuse to alter it in any way (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).

This is not a new idea. It is as old as the Scriptures themselves. Our faith in Jesus can be measured by our faith in his word (Luke 6:46). The Lord condemns treating his commandments in a casual way. If we think he will not mind it when we involve his church in things he has not authorized, then we are wrong. If we think proper doctrine and practice does not matter to him as long as we believe in his person, then we have swallowed Satan's lie.

Consider the subject of scriptural authority as it is expressed by the apostle Paul to the church of Christ at Corinth: "Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written, in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other" (1 Cor. 4:6).

THE THINGS FIGURATIVELY APPLIED

"Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively applied to myself and Apollos" (1 Cor. 4:6a). What are the "these things" referred to here by Paul? For the answer, we simply look back into the text to see what Paul had "figuratively

applied" to himself and Apollos. We find the answer in the previous chapter (1 Cor. 3:1-17).

Paul began by saying that the disciples at Corinth were very immature spiritually. Because of this, there was a lot of jealousy and strife at Corinth. This had led to them forming factions within the church, some saying that they were "of Paul" and others that they were "of Apollos" (3:1-5; cf. 1:10-13). They were acting like men with worldly standards and not as disciples of the Lord Jesus in this.

Then Paul used two figures of speech to illustrate the roles he and Apollos had played. First, he says that he had planted and Apollos had watered, but God was causing the growth. Paul and Apollos were only servants; the whole works belonged to God, the workers, the field, and the building (3:5-9).

The second figure of speech was that of building a building. Paul had laid the foundation and others had come after Paul and continued to build on the work he had started. Paul says that the foundation which he had laid was Jesus Christ. No other foundation would do. The disciples at Corinth were being built into a temple of God, and no one ought to destroy the temple of God by trying to lay another foundation than that of Christ Jesus (3:10-17).

Paul had first brought the doctrine of Christ to Corinth. He taught only that which had been given him as an apostle from the Lord. It was the gospel that the believers at Corinth had obeyed. Later, Apollos came to Corinth and continued building on that same foundation. But now, the Corinthians were deviating from that purity of teaching and laying other foundations not of the Lord. Such would only serve to destroy the temple of God.

THE NEED TO KNOW

"... for your sakes" (1 Cor. 4:6b). Paul had warned that "Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (3:16, 17). He warned

that each of us needs “. . . to be careful how he builds, for no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (3:10b, 11). When men begin teaching for their doctrines the religious creeds of men, then they are fostering division, laying other foundations than Christ, and destroying the temple of God. If we are to become what we need to be, then we need to put away the false religious wisdom of men and allow only the word of God to make us wise (3:18-23). Our modern religious world and its leaders most certainly need to accept this truth as much as did the Corinthians!

THE THINGS WRITTEN

“. . . that in us you might learn not to exceed what is written” (1 Cor. 4:6c). The things “written” refer to the written revelation of God. That which we know as the Bible was being delivered in the first century. As soon as these inspired messages were written, they were authoritative and viewed as Scripture (2 Pet. 3:15, 16). To live by faith was to live according to the revealed message of God, whether by the spoken words of the apostles and prophets or by their written teachings. It was through the reading of this message that early Christians gained insight into the mystery of Christ (Eph. 3:4, 5). Men and women of faith continued in this doctrine from the beginning of the gospel era until now (Acts 2:42).

Paul wanted the brethren at Corinth to understand that they were not to exceed, or go beyond what had been written. To do so would constitute a faithless arrogance with respect to the adequacy of what God had caused to be

written. It still does so today. Learning “not to exceed that which is written” is the same as “speaking where the Bible speaks, and being silent where the Bible is silent.” Failure to maintain this kind of serious respect for God’s written word will certainly cause us to go astray and be lost!

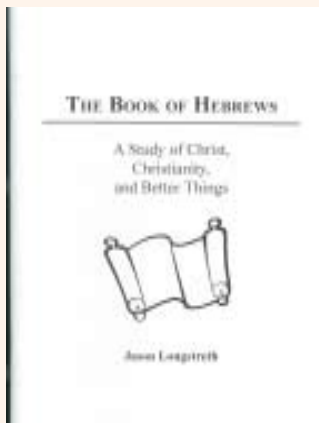
THE ARROGANCE OF HUMAN CREEDS AND RELIGIOUS DIVISION

“. . . in order that no one of you might become arrogant in behalf of one against the other” (1 Cor. 4:6d). It is man’s own arrogance that causes him to be unsatisfied with the Bible as a perfect guide for life and service. Sometimes it takes courage to remain true to the word when it is “out of season” (2 Tim. 4:1-5). But this is where we must take our stand, to be examples of good deeds with “purity of doctrine” (Tit. 2:7).

We need to recognize that we have no authority to bind or loose creeds in the kingdom of Christ; there is only one Lawgiver (Jas. 4:12). It is time to say “enough!” and stand ready to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

Think about this: if all human creeds were discarded in favor of relying only on the teachings of the Bible, religious division would melt away, and our Lord’s desire for unity would be achieved. But if the religious world is unwilling to do so, at least I can resolve to serve the Lord in such a way myself, joining with others who are willing to do the same, standing on his word alone.

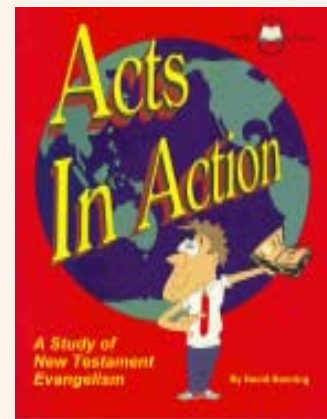
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Sermon on the Mount (24)

Jim McDonald

“Why Beholdest Thou the Mote . . .”

In Matthew 7:1 there is the command “Judge not that ye be not judged.” This command does not rule out *all* judging: civil, church, and righteous judgment is commanded. What kind of judging is forbidden?

Hypocritical judgment is what the Lord condemns. “And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me cast out the mote out of thine eye; and lo, the beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye” (Matt. 7:3-5). The fact that the Lord said “cast out first the beam from thine own eye” indicates that, after looking at one’s self and removing the “beams,” such a one could see clearly how to remove the mote: judgment would in fact occur.

It is right to rebuke the sinner and to condemn sin. But a proper spirit must be present and one must be “morally qualified”: he is not “morally qualified” if he is guilty of the same wrong (or worse) than he condemns in another. In John 8:1-11 certain scribes and Pharisees brought a woman taken in adultery to Jesus. They sought to put the Lord at variance with either Moses’ law or Roman law (John 8:5). This is a perfect example of the kind of judging Jesus forbade. After their persistent questionings, Jesus said: “Let him that is without sin cast the first stone” (John 8:7). From the oldest to the youngest, the accusers left the woman. Jesus asked, “Woman where are thine accusers? Did no man condemn thee?” and she said, “No man, Lord.” Jesus responded, “neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more” (John 8:7-11).

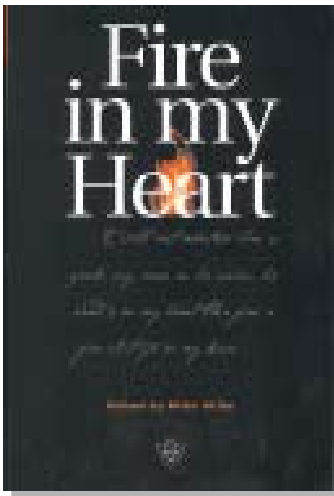
Adultery is a grievous sin but so is hypocrisy: their attempt to snare a just man. They had taken the woman in adultery and brought her to the Lord. Where was the man? Bringing only the woman and not the man showed these were not interested in fulfilling Moses’ law. That law said both man and woman taken in adultery were to be stoned (Lev. 20:10). They further knew they could not execute a

criminal for Romans had taken that right from them (John 18:31). They were not interested in truth; they wanted to trap Jesus and their judgment was hypocritical.

Paul wrote: “Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal. 6:1). It was right to seek to restore an erring brother, which necessitated (1) that he was in error, and (2), pointing out that error to him. But, caution must be exercised. Such correction must be in a “spirit of gentleness.” It must also be done with a man conscious of his own susceptibility to temptation and sin. Men condemn themselves who, with a proud and haughty spirit, condemn others.

“With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you” (Matt. 7:2). This principle is seen in Jesus’ parable of “two Debtors” (Matt. 18:23-35). A man owed his master ten thousand talents, an unpayable debt. When the master commanded that he and all he had be sold for the payment, the servant plead for patience, promising to pay. His Lord had compassion and forgave him his debt. Then that servant found a fellow servant who owed him one hundred shillings and he demanded payment of him. When that servant plead for patience (as he had done,) he refused and cast him into prison. When the Lord of that servant heard what he had done to his fellow servant, he commanded the same be done to him. “With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured unto you.”

So, when we are faced with something in our brother that seems to be sin, before we proceed further, we must do these things. First, it is really wrong? Second, are we “morally qualified” to correct the person in error? Third, is our motive genuine? Fourth, are we prepared to rebuke our brother in a spirit of gentleness? If we can respond “Yes” to all these questions, our judgment will be righteous judgment.



FIRE IN MY HEART

Edited By Mike Willis

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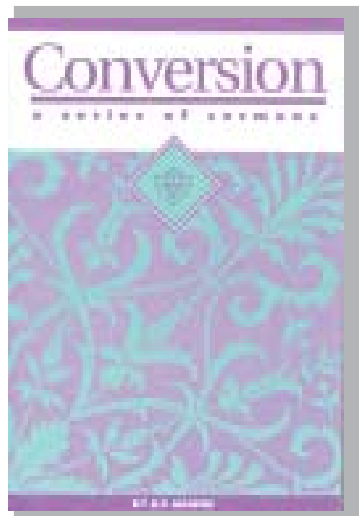
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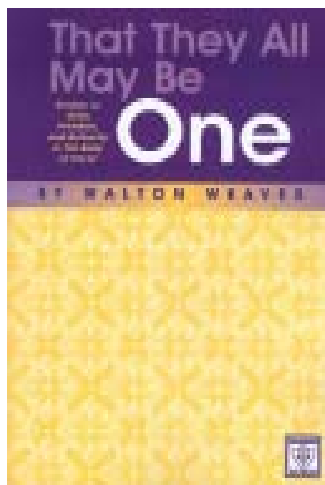
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THAT THEY ALL MAY BE ONE

by Walton Weaver

Walton Weaver presents a good examination of the biblical doctrines of unity and fellowship with a special section which reviews *Free In Christ* by Cecil Hook. Brother L.A. Stauffer writes of this book, "Our thanks to Walton Weaver for a comprehensive study of vital issues that have divided brethren in the past fifty years and threaten to destroy what remains of a brotherhood that is devoted to the original ideals of the restoration movement—oneness in Christ through the pattern of sound words revealed in Scripture. We commend the author for tackling what he himself admits are tough topics. He makes no pretense of simplicity, but acknowledges that these issues are difficult though understandable. This book, if both read and studied, will educate serious Bible students and prepare leaders to convict gainsayers and to protect God's flock from grievous wolves that parade among them in sheep's clothing (see Tit. 1:9; Matt. 7:15-20; Acts 20:28-30)."

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Mind Your Own Business

“Mind your own business” some will say when they find themselves “caught.” “It’s my life and I’ll do what I want to do” some teenagers would put it. The idea is that no one is accountable to anyone else for his actions. This obviously is the idea of the world as we see less and less accountability expected of people. It has also become painfully obvious to me that this idea is making its way into the church. Allow me to clarify what I mean by “it is making its way into the church.” It is being preached in the pulpits of churches claiming to be churches of Christ.

Many would be quick to point out that we are not accountable to men for our actions, but instead, we are accountable to God. It is true that we are accountable to God and that he has the power to judge both the living and the dead (cf. Acts 10:42). It is also true that there is not a man on this earth who has that power. So then, should all rebuke cease? Is there not a single man who can tell another what he may or may not do because Jesus said “judge not”?

One does not need to search very long in the Scriptures to see that indeed rebuke is necessary. In fact I do not believe that I would receive much argument on the point of whether or not we ought to rebuke or “judge” certain matters. We can see where Jesus taught us to rebuke our brother in Luke 17:3. Most would quickly go to 2 Timothy 4:2 where we see that Paul told Timothy to rebuke in the context of preaching the word. So, if these passages are used properly and the rebuking is done in love then what is the problem? The problem is that some aren’t taking the rebuking very well. Some would like to put restriction on whom we may or may not rebuke.

I recently heard a well known preacher imply in a sermon that if you are a member of “congregation A,” then the practices of “congregation B” are no concern of yours, and you don’t have any right to rebuke anyone in that congregation for the things they practice or teach. He put it like this, “It’s none of your business.” I think it is sad that some preachers have taken such a position. I do believe that we need to make sure that the practices of “congregation A” are right in God’s eyes. We need to be ready to give an answer for our practices. But, that does not mean that we ignore false

practices that we see around us. I realize that some fear that the church will end up having a creed if we allow men to decide what is to be taught and what is not. More specifically, if we allow an editor to decide such. There are some who would say that this is being done in *Truth Magazine*. “Those brethren are deciding what the issues are going to be, and then they decide what ‘the brethren’ are going to believe concerning such,” says a critic of the paper. Many would say that such a magazine has no right to publish articles on “the issues.” “It’s none of their business.” It has been my experience in the cases of which I am aware, that they do not *decide* what the issues are but simply look around and *see* what the issues are. Then, once they see what the issues are they write what the word of God says concerning those issues. Are they ever wrong concerning some issues? Possibly. We are all human and err, which is why anyone who writes or preaches concerning God’s word needs to be ready to defend what he says or writes. Indeed anyone who would teach false doctrine, whether by mouth or by pen, needs to be rebuked.

Concerning their deciding the beliefs of the church on these issues, it is no one’s place to proclaim a creed for Christ’s church. The creed has been proclaimed and it is the gospel of Christ. But is it wrong for one to decipher what that gospel says on an issue and proclaim that? Certainly not! It is our duty to do so.

What does the Bible say about such practices? Well, the church at Corinth certainly had some problems. Did Paul decide that such was none of his business and just not worry about it? I think not. He told them through inspiration what to do about those problems. In other words, he rebuked them. But was Paul a member of the church at Corinth? Was Paul an elder there? No and no. Paul simply cared about their souls and wanted them to do what was right. Another example is found in Galatians chapter two. Paul withstands Peter to his face concerning an “issue.” Was Paul a member of the same congregation? No, but he was concerned for Peter and all those on whom he had influence, so he withstood him and he did it “before them all.”

I know that brethren do not like controversy. I do not like

The Church That Jesus Built

PART I

Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? And they said, Some (say) John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven (Matt 16:13-19, ASV).

Heaven had long planned for it and both angels and men had long wondered about the church, which would bring to pass the fullness of the hidden purpose of God (Eph. 1:3ff; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Eph. 3:1-11). Involved in the plans of God for the church were the demonstrating of his wise plan for man's redemption and the securing of such a

spiritual privilege for all human beings, Jews and Gentiles alike. It should not surprise any reader that the Christ would here introduce such a subject into the discussion with his trusted associates, into whose hands the work of establishing the church would soon fall. After gaining insight into the varied opinions of men about his identity, Jesus then directly asked the disciples of their understanding of who he was. Peter's response was so profound and timely that here Jesus used the opportunity to anticipate the church, as her existence would rest upon the solid base of truth acknowledged by the apostle. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

THE FOUNDATION OF THE CHURCH

In Peter's confession we hear the two elements of Jesus' person — his Messianic role and his divine nature. Squarely upon this foundation would the people of God, the church, rest. No building is any stronger and more permanent than its foundation; expensive and elaborate buildings begin with foundations planted deep in the earth. Thus God secured for the church a stable and an enduring foundation.

In Old Testament prophecy the Messiah was depicted as

controversy. But there is something that needs to be realized. When the word of God is preached there will always be controversy. What book has caused more controversy? Jesus told us that he came to bring a sword (Matt. 10:34). His word will cause division. What good is the unity that so many preach if it is not "in the Lord" (Eph. 4:3ff).

This attitude of "my problems are none of your business" needs to be stopped. If it is not, I fear where it will lead. Let's take this argument for a moment and follow it through. If it is the case that we do not pay attention to "the issues" that are facing other congregations, then what all do we need to stop preaching about? Well, there are churches who would say that it is doctrinally sound to support secular institutions. According to this philosophy we cannot write or preach about such an issue and we cannot say anything to a member of that congregation because after all "its

none of our business" what goes on there. What about the necessity of baptism or instrumental music or many other thing that a church or preacher decides to endorse against the teaching of the Scriptures? It is not only our business to expose such false teaching but it is our duty to do our best to stop false teaching that we are aware of.

Let us all beware of false teachers lest we be led away by such (2 Pet. 3:17). Let us all be concerned about the word of God and spreading its truth to the world so that many will be saved!

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deity (Isa. 7:14; 9:6; Mic. 5:2). Though they stress different aspects of his role in the world, the witnesses of the Christ all agree concerning his divine nature in their accounts in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The full force of prophecy also presented him as the Messiah, the “anointed one,” which finds its New Testament equivalent in the word for Christ. Its meaning stems from the practice of anointing, used there to acknowledge one as God’s choice for a particular office. Prophets, priests, and kings were often shown to be God’s men for the office through the ceremony of pouring oil upon the individual’s head. The question arises about which office of the three Jesus was meant to fill. We do not have to choose one over the others, for Jesus came to fill all three — prophet, priest, and king.

He is that prophet like Moses, speaking for God with authority and finality (Deut. 18:15-18). In fact, he is God’s final prophet, coming after a long line of divinely sent spokesmen (Heb. 1:1-2). His prophetic role comes “in these last days,” in connection with God’s final arrangement for mankind. Jesus also is God’s priest (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17). One of the astounding portraits of the Christ in the Hebrew letter is that of his high priestly role, as he offered himself for the world’s sins and then took the blood of his own offering into the holiest of holies in heaven. We lose something of the Christ’s significance if we ignore him as king. The same passage in Psalm 110 also speaks of his people (subjects) being willing in the day of his power (royal, kingly), and Zechariah declares the simultaneous execution of his dual roles as priest and king on his throne (6:13). Jesus assumed none of these roles and undertook no initiative on his own, but he did all in subjection to the Father’s will. For all of this work he had been “christed,” anointed by the Father. So secure was his standing with God and the basis for it — his messiahship and his deity — that not even the gates of Hades would be able to prevail against the building of the church in the death of the Savior. What certainty the affirmations of the Approved One here conveyed!

Could there be any more solid and enduring foundation for the church? The attempts of men to start their own religious organizations have always manifested their own plans and ideals, but Christ came in demonstration of that eternal wisdom planned by God before the world began. When the church sprang forth on the earth, beginning on the first Pentecost after Jesus’ resurrection from the tomb, she came out of the divine womb as a consequence of people’s willingness to hear the prophet, submit to the king, and benefit from the priestly work of Christ. Such was the substance of Peter’s confession and such also was the very

foundation of Christ’s people, his church. Only in hearing him, bowing before him, and being cleansed by him does anyone have any standing with God and any part in his church. Whatever foundation the church has and whatever permanence Christians enjoy in God’s long-range plan, we owe to the foundation laid by Christ for his church. Such a foundation assures a people trusting in the One sent by the Father and anointed by him.

PART 2 — BUILDER AND OWNER

“I will build My church.” Whatever might have existed in earlier times and have been called “church” was not what Jesus here promised to build (Acts 7:38). What he anticipated would be something that he would initiate and would be peculiarly his own. It is true that Jesus did not personally construct the church while on the earth but left such work for his apostles to carry out after his ascension to heaven (Acts 2). For this work he sent the Spirit of truth to guide them (John 16:13). Through their proclamation of him as Lord and Christ and people’s reception of the gospel message, the church began to take shape as the materials were being formed. This building process was possible because Jesus had laid the foundation by this time through demonstration of his messiahship and deity. It was for the belief of people that he demonstrated beyond honest and reasonable doubt that he was who he claimed to be; apart from that belief and the willingness to act upon it there could be no church. From heaven he sent the Spirit and from heaven he supervised the building of his church. It was, and is, his because all that pertains to it is part of his work: (1) His deity was his by essential nature and his messianic role was his by the Father’s appointment, giving the foundation its divine quality. (2) All who compose the church are his by their willing reception of the gospel, including its message that he is God’s Son with power, giving the superstructure its relationship to Christ. To state the same principle another way, we would say that all members of Christ’s body have been filtered through the gospel, which admits only penitent, baptized believers into the church. By virtue of their belief of the gospel and their penitent obedience in baptism, they are saved from their sins and added by Christ to the church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47). Thus saved and added by him, they are his — “My church.”

Only as we believe him and act according to his instructions as head of the church do we honor the One who built the church. There ought to be no inclination to speak or act as if the church is “our church.” Whatever positive traits characterize the body of Christ are derived from Christ,

our foundation and builder. Redeemed with the price of his blood, all in the church are his property, with no property rights of our own. Paul explained that “ye are not your own, for ye were bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Only by viewing ourselves as being his possession and conducting ourselves in accord with his will can we glorify the Lord, whose we are.

TIME OF BUILDING

Jesus looked to the future in his promise to build the church. “I will build My church.” Nothing that originated before this discussion between Jesus and the disciples was the Lord’s church, for Jesus said it still had to be built. It is sometimes claimed by men that the church had its inception at creation, in the call of Israel out of Egypt, or during the preparatory ministry of John the baptizer; but each such claim falls on its face as untrue against the clear light of Jesus’ promise of the future building of his church.

A bit of study will reveal why Jesus could not have earlier build his church. Though Jesus was divine before his entry into this world by being born to Mary, his deity was not demonstrated to men. The same can be said of his role as messiah, for the Father’s plan to send him into the world with his approval did not become obvious to men until Jesus had come to earth, lived, died, been buried, been resurrected from the dead, and ascended to heaven. Peter confessed Jesus in Matthew 16 because divine revelation caused him to do so. Divine revelation that would benefit all people awaited future events. Only when Jesus had completed his earthly career did people in general have a firm basis for belief in him, and only after his coronation at God’s right hand did he begin to exert his regal power as king. The foundation of the church thus depended on his life, death, resurrection, and reign. If the church had been built before Jesus ascended, there would have been no foundation. It is no surprise that Jesus built his church only after he had left earth. Only then was it demonstrable that the gates of Hades could not deter the building of his church. Only then would the gospel message be proclaimed in the name of the risen Christ (Luke 24:26-27). Only then were people called upon to repent and be baptized in the name of Christ (Acts 2:38). Only then were baptized believers added by the Lord to the church (Acts 2:47). Any attempt to build the church before Pentecost in Acts 2 would have been truly premature, lacking the certainty that it could have later enjoyed.

PART 3 — WHAT JESUS BUILT

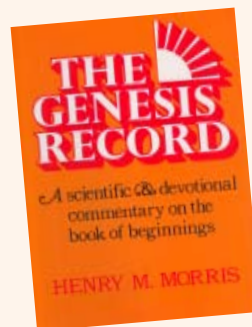
In studying what Jesus promised and built, we learn that God’s people composed the church. The people that he had so long sought through Old Testament times and arrangements were now built upon the foundation that he himself had laid. Different figures used in the New Testament teach us what Jesus built.

From the standpoint of their loyalty to God, his people

were the family of God, made up of spiritual children (1 Tim. 3:15). From the viewpoint of their privileges and responsibilities under the reign of Christ, they are citizens in the spiritual kingdom (Col. 1:13). As people married to Christ and demonstrating their allegiance to him, they are his bride (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:22-32). In their relation to Christ as master and teacher, those in the church are disciples and Christians (Acts 11:26). In their connection with each other, they sometimes are portrayed as members of a body headed by Christ (Eph. 1:23). While it is not the body of Ephesians 1:23, even in a local-church context the members are compared to a physical body (1 Cor. 12:12-27). As those empowered to serve and worship God for themselves, apart from human mediation, Christians are priests in the holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5). The makeup of the Lord’s church is easily learned by such a comparison with these figures, for they all convey helpful information about God’s people, built upon the foundation of Jesus Christ. In other words, we see in all such figures/illustrations the connection of the church to the very foundation laid by the Lord, for all of them depend on the acceptance of Jesus’ divine messiahship. Only when people hear God’s prophet, bow before the reigning king, and are cleansed by the high priest’s atoning work can they become part of the church or enter any of the parallel relationships mentioned in this paragraph.

What Jesus did on Pentecost in beginning the church, he continues to do by the same means of gospel preaching and obedience on the part of individuals (1 Pet. 2:5). The work of redemption, finalized in Christ’s work, must be applied to individuals through the work of preaching the

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gospel. As long as people are responding in faith to the gospel, living stones “are being built” into the spiritual house (NKJV rendering of Peter’s verse). The spiritual house begun on that memorable Pentecost is an unfinished work, because the Lord’s delay of his coming mean more souls can be saved (2 Pet. 3:15).

It reasonably follows the preceding line of thought that those built by Christ into his church would designated as his people. Whatever the Lord called them is what they ought to call themselves. Earlier parallel relationships teach us what the Lord sometimes called his people. No formal (proper) name is there found that must be always employed to the exclusion of the other names. Brethren insisting on one such name ought to face this reality. Brethren seeking to escape association with the teaching/practice mandated by Christ, by avoidance of some name found in the New Testament, ought also to face this reality.

GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of heaven, he alluded to that which had brought him to earth and which both he and his predecessor John had announced as being near. “Kingdom” often conveys its basic meaning of reign or dominion, but here Jesus most likely referred to the church as being interchangeable with the kingdom (an extended meaning referring to those over whom Jesus rules — that is, who have accepted his rule). Jesus began his reign upon his return to heaven and later began the church when Peter used the keys of the kingdom to open the church to human beings. The government of the Lord’s church is that of a kingdom, because Christ is king over this spiritual realm.

Lee Woodward, a close friend and fellow-teacher, frequently told his new classes at the beginning of the school year that his classroom was not a democracy, but a dictatorship. He simply meant that he was the one in charge in the classroom, not that he ruled as a tyrant. All need to understand that Jesus is in charge in the church. The church is not governed by an oligarchy, a democracy, or an aristocracy. Neither the majority nor the minority rules the church; Jesus does! He is king, raised from the dead and exalted to his position by God the Father (Acts 13:32-39). Those in his church have willingly accepted his rule. For this reason no member of any congregation should act as if he rules the church. No one has the right to usurp the kingly role of Christ, who alone enjoys the approval of heaven in His role.

In the New Testament, the kingship of Jesus is equated with his role as Lord (Acts 2:36) and head of the church (Eph. 5:23). In all three of these varied expressions — king, head, and Lord, the central idea is that of his authority. The idea

of a king stresses his rule over his people. The image of a head emphasizes his control of the members of his body. The word “Lord” focuses on his position as master over his servants. One cannot be in the church apart from surrendering his own will to that of Christ. The same divine authority that conducts one into the church is also operative in the church for both individual and collective action. It is imperative that all belonging to Christ understand the authority of Christ over them in both connections. Whatever decisions one makes or a local church makes ought to be made in view of the teaching of Christ and his apostles. He is in charge! There is no room in the body of Christ for members who seek to control the head or other members, or for servants who seek to become masters, or for citizens who rise up in rebellion against their king to “boss” the other citizens or their king.

Inherent in Christ’s plan for his people in local churches is the role of a plurality of elders, but they must not act as lords over God’s heritage (1 Pet. 5:3). As examples and wise spiritual leaders, they “stand before” the sheep to show them the way and to teach them to follow. In their oversight there are judgment decisions that they must make, but even here they should consider the needs, wishes, and welfare of the church, not their own selfish desires. In this respect they submit first to Christ and then to their fellow Christians. Elders are not a part of the government in the sense that Jesus is, for they share no legislative power with him. They do, however, occupy a very important role in the functioning of a local church.

PART 4 — THE LAW OF THE CHURCH

After indicating the kingdom aspect of the church, Jesus then spoke of the work of his apostles in binding and loosing. In this expression he referred to the giving of divine law for the welfare of his people. The apostles would serve in very significant positions in this matter, as the Lord showed in his picture of them on thrones during the time of regeneration (being born again) in Matthew 19:28. The authoritative quality of their teaching is here underscored, even as it is in a passage like Acts 2:42, where their teaching was the guide of the early Christians.



Jesus did not mean that they would initiate law, but announce what heaven had decreed. That such is his meaning can be seen in the language employed: “whatever you bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven” (Marshall’s interlinear translation of the Nestle text). Observe that their role as apostles in binding and loosing did not come first, but after heaven’s decree. If such were the case, then God’s eternal plan would be subject to apostolic interpretation, but the opposite is the case. Peter, the apostle here addressed, and the other ones, as seen in Matthew 18:18, shared in the work of binding and loosing. There was no primacy for Peter or any other apostle, in spite of Catholic doctrine to the contrary! The privilege in the work of revelation granted to Peter in Matthew 16 was likewise given to the rest two chapters later.

In a practical sense, what does this concept mean to the church today? It places all in the church under authority to Christ in relation to apostolic teaching. What they taught was theirs by divine inspiration, as part of the process of revelation. Jesus made arrangement for the coming of the Spirit of truth to guide them, as earlier seen in this study. When they thus spoke, they were presenting the words of Christ, whether or not he personally spoke them while on earth. Because of this understanding, we then would make no difference between the words of Christ in red letters in some New Testaments and those of Christ in black, given to the apostles for delivery to earth. In fact, the entire New Testament could easily be printed in red letters for this reason.

This concept also means that the law of Christ relative to all matters addressed in the New Testament must be our authoritative guide. The following aspects of Christ’s plan illustrate the application of that plan to the church today:

1. Law of Entrance: The teaching of Jesus and his apostles relative to becoming Christians is not merely suggestive that we should think along these broad lines, but they constitute the way of passage into the kingdom of God. It is clearly the way of faith in Christ, repentance over sins, and baptism into Christ for the forgiveness of one’s sins (Mark 16:15-16; Luke 24:46-47; Acts 2:38). Only those who conform themselves to the will of the Father will thus enter the kingdom (Matt. 7:21). That this became divine law is seen in the uniform expectations of those who turned to Christ in the cases of conversion in the Book of Acts.

2. Law of Worship: What Jesus taught concerning collective worship in John 4:24 was later expanded in the various statements of Acts and the epistles (Acts 2:42; 1 Cor. 11; 14; Col. 3:16). Worship is not acceptable merely because of some attitude that the worshiper has; God has always prescribed acceptable worship.

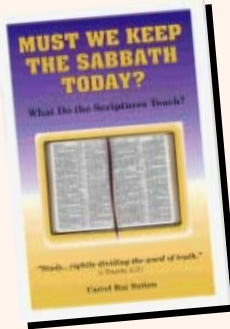
3. Law of Organization: The New Testament pictures local-church organization and nothing more (Phil. 1:2; Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1-4). The current practice of joining local churches together to work in different fields is unknown in the New Testament. Local churches always operated under local elders to do their work.

4. Law of Mission (Work): The mission of Christ to seek and save the lost became the passion of his people, as seen in the examples of congregations dispatching preachers to preach and supporting preachers at home and at a distance. Local churches also edified saints to spiritual maturity and sometimes assisted with emergency needs among the saints. Modern concern with health projects, educational ventures, recreational programs, and social-action efforts are totally alien to the portrait found in the Scriptures.

5. Law of Life: Each Christian is individually related to Christ as his king and head. Matters of attitude, speech, and actions come within this relationship. All that one does and is must conform to the example of Christ

The purpose of this brief presentation in this last section is not to provide exhaustive teaching/scriptures concerning these different matters of Christ’s law, but to illustrate how his law applies in various areas. It is clear that the local church (points 2-4) and the individual Christian (points 1 and 5) must submit to the will of the king. All purchased by his blood belong to him and should glorify him through lives of obedient service. In this way the church built by Jesus Christ will serve as his spiritual body to represent him to the world.

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Must We Keep The Sabbath Today?

by Carroll Ray Sutton

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“Life on Mars” continued from front page

us assume one-celled organisms still live on Mars. How would “everything” be “changed” by that? What would change about the fundamental nature of man and his responsibility? When we understand the Bible’s teaching, microscopic organisms and water on Mars do not change it.

NO CHANGE IN OUR PURPOSE

The wise man, Solomon, summed up our purpose for our existence in these words: “Now all has been heard; here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil” (Eccl. 12:13-14).

Single-celled life on Mars does not “change” the fact that we must fear God. But what does it mean to “fear” God? This Bible word involves two different, but related, facets — terror and reverence. The terror of God causes one to tremble at his presence because of his mighty power (Jer. 5:22). The wicked should be in terror and dread of that power (Heb. 10:26-31). However, the power of God should not only terrify, but cause one to respect and reverence God. We “fear” God when we “stand in awe of Him” (Ps. 33:8). We respect him for his attributes and, consequently, submit to him (1 Pet. 1:15-17).

Neither would Martian life “change” the fact that we are to keep the commandments of God. The Bible is replete with the claims and evidence that it is the divine instruction commanding us to live in accordance with God’s will (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Regardless of what a one-celled organism on Mars does, we must obey the commands of our God (1 John 5:3; John 14:15).

NO CHANGE IN OUR DESTINY

The fact that God will judge all of us based on our actions is not “changed” by a fossilized protozoa from a Martian meteorite or a rover finding a living cell on Martian soil next week. It is still “appointed unto men once to die, and after this comes the judgment” (Heb. 9:27). Whatever may have happened to the life cycle of any unicellular organism on Mars, we must still answer to God and be judged for the things we have done in our bodies, whether good or bad (2 Cor. 5:10).

No, even if the wildest speculation regarding life on Mars is completely factual, it will not change the most fundamental things about our needs and our hopes. We will still be faced with the problem of sin and the need for a Savior (Rom. 3:23; 6:23). We will still need to listen to God’s instruction for us as found within the Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We will still need to abstain from sin and become servants of God through obedience (Rom. 6:15-18). Our hope of heaven following the judgment will still

depend upon God’s provisions in Christ and our response to him in obedient faith (Matt. 7:21-23; 25:31-46; Col. 1:3-6; 1 Pet. 1:3-9).

NO CHANGE IN CREATOR

Furthermore, it would not change one thing about how the universe and life within that universe came into being. The Bible says, “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1). The inspired writer further clarifies that “in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the seas, and all that is in them” (Exod. 20:11). While it may be interesting to hear the speculation about possible water and life existing on Mars, nothing is changed about the identity of the One who created all that is in the heavens and the earth. God created *all of it*, whatever that “all” includes.

It boggles the mind of the Bible believer to see multi-billion dollar programs proposed to “find the origin of life” on this planet or any other when one can open to the first page of a twenty dollar Bible and find the answer — *God is the origin!* When our evolutionary friends thought moon rocks would answer their questions about the origins of the earth, guess what they found? Moon rocks are a great deal like earth rocks! Now they hope to find support for their theories on Mars, but the first pictures show us sand and red rocks amazingly similar to the sand and red rocks I saw as a boy in the Texas panhandle.

However, even if the composition of that sand and rock turn out to be very different from earth sand and rock, what would that prove about the origin of it? Nothing! The question of origin is beyond the scope of science. It can neither be reproduced nor tested by the scientific method. To answer the question of origin, we must accept by faith the historically reliable testimony of the divine witness recorded in the Bible. When it comes to “the beginning,” only *God* can tell us what happened and how it happened. He did so in saying of Christ, “All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made” (John 1:1). Nothing found today or in the future on Mars or any other planet can change the fact that God created all that is in the heavens and the earth in the beginning.

CONCLUSION

While we should expect faithless speculation from worldly people who profess no respect for God’s word, it is shocking to see those professing faith in God and his word, yet rejecting the plain teaching of Scripture due to the faithless pronouncements of “science falsely so called” (1 Tim. 6:20). The recent teachings of Hill Roberts and Shane Scott, which they have never openly repudiated or corrected, exemplify the problem. They have denied the historical fact stated literally by Scripture that “in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the seas,

and all that is in them” (Exod. 20:11). In fact, Hill Roberts said the rocks tell us more about how the world came into existence than does God’s word. He even claimed the “Big Bang” theory is “the Bible believer’s friend.” Though our brother’s views about the creation may be further changed by Martian rocks, the faith of those who trust in God’s word will remain unchanged from his divine testimony. Though it will no doubt be denied by those who accommodate the concepts and timetables of the evolutionary theories into the hybrid theory of their choice, their basic problem is obvious — *they do not really believe the inspired Scripture*. Yes, they will undoubtedly protest, but their fruits are manifest in their teaching.

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“Leader” continued from page 2

Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt. Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plentiful years. And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities. And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine (Gen. 41:33-36).

The advice pleased Pharaoh. He then said, “Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?” (Gen. 41:38). Pharaoh was thinking especially of the divine guidance that Joseph brought — he knew the future because God revealed it to him and he would, therefore, be especially fitted for the administration of the kingdom.

But Joseph’s responsibilities were not limited to foreknowledge. He was in charge of collecting and storing grain. Grain would be as valuable as gold or oil in an economy in which men were starving to death. Joseph was responsible for vast sums of wealth; he made decisions on the dispersal of the grain in Egypt that affected the future of Egypt for many years to come. Can anyone be better fitted for such responsibility than a qualified administrator in whom the Spirit of the Lord is?

As we think about the choice of officials for our own country, can we improve on what Pharaoh said? Certainly that is an improvement over what the men of Israel were thinking when they chose Saul as their king. Saul as described as follows: “a choice young man, and a goodly: and there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he: from his shoulders and upward he was higher than any of the people” (1 Sam. 9:2). America’s choice of a leader usually includes one who is tall and attractive

with a dominating appearance. In more recent years, this person must know how to use the medium of television to get his sound bytes in the evening news. As a result, we also have chosen some leaders with all the spirituality of a King Saul. After Saul was rejected as Israel’s king, he was replaced by a man after God’s own heart (1 Sam. 13:14). Surely David was a better ruler than Saul.

In contrast to Pharaoh’s decision to find a ruler in whom was the Spirit of the Lord, some wicked men in Persia had a totally different view about God-fearing men serving in government. When Daniel was serving in Darius’ kingdom, some men who were jealous of his position, looked for an occasion to make accusation against Daniel. They searched in vain for a basis to accuse him, “but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him” (Dan. 6:4). In their desperation, they said, “We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God” (Dan. 6:5). These men constructed a religious conflict for Daniel in which they could bring charges against him, which resulted in him being cast into a den of lions.

COMPARING TO THE UNITED STATES

As I read of the wicked Persians who attacked Daniel, I think of modern examples parallel to this in which wicked men look for the religious beliefs of qualified men serving in government to find a basis to remove them from office. During the investigation of Clinton’s escapades with Monica Lewinski, the prosecutor Kenneth Starr was criticized as being unfit to prosecute Clinton because of his religious beliefs. Similar comments have been made about Attorney General John Ashcroft.

The liberal establishment views one who has Evangelical views to be a dangerous person to have in politics. His views on abortion, homosexual marriage, and other social issues are so contrary to their own that such men are judged unfit for involvement in American politics. Several Supreme Court appointees have been kept from full vote in the Senate because of their conservative beliefs on these social issues. If a politician openly admits that he prays before he makes decisions of a political nature, political liberals think that he is dangerous. If a judge wants to display the Ten Commandments, he is summarily removed from office. Tell me which approach to spiritual men in politics is presently being followed in America: (1) Pharaoh’s who wanted one in whom the Spirit of God dwells to serve over Egypt, or (2) Persia who sought to exclude Daniel from service because of his religious convictions?

The criteria used for determining for whom to vote may manifest one’s values. When one votes for a politician who openly advocates abortion and homosexual rights because he will do more to stimulate the economy (in one’s judg-

ment), what does this say about the respective values of the voter? Is prosperity more important than righteousness? One will have to answer this question for himself and I dare not judge that everyone who votes differently from me believes that the economy is more important than righteousness. The economy is important because one's primary responsibility in the family is to provide food, clothing, and shelter for one's children. But one gets the impression that sometimes the social issues take a back seat to economy issues when brazenly ungodly men are elected because of their view about the economy whereas equally qualified men who emphasize the importance of these social issues are rejected in the polls because of their religious convictions.

As one approaches the election in the days that lie ahead, let us who are Christians be guided by the principles in Scripture that teach righteousness is truly what exalts a nation (Prov. 14:34), not its missile defenses, its economic

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Dissident Episcopalians Form Conservative Group

Plano, Texas — Dissident Episcopalians upset by the consecration of a homosexual bishop formed an unprecedented national protest group Tuesday — a network of conservatives who pledged to work with one another and oppose church leadership.

“Yet the creation of the Network of Anglican Communion Dioceses and Parishes stopped short of a schism with the Episcopal Church, raising the prospect of fights for local control of the denomination that could be waged church-by-church.

“This has been, for us, a glorious and historic day,” said Pittsburg Bishop Robert Duncan, who will head the network.

“Daniel England, a national church spokesman, countered that the movement, which can claim to represent roughly a 10th of the denomination’s 2.3 million members, would be more worrisome if it had greater support.

“The movement’s founding charter, approved by about 100 delegates from 12 dioceses and other parts of the nation, said decisions by the Episcopal Church ‘have departed from the historic faith and order and have brought immense harm.’
“The majority of overseas church leaders oppose ordaining homosexuals, but conservatives are a minority in the united

States.

“Network leaders contend they’re not leaving the Episcopal Church but the church had left them when it began allowing homosexual clergy and blessings for same-sex couples. November’s consecration of openly gay Bishop V. Gene Robinson of New Hampshire brought the situation to a crisis point.

“. . . It’s still unclear how the ‘church within a church’ that the network leaders created will relate to the denomination’s leaders, and talk of schism was downplayed. One reason is that parishes would likely be forced to surrender their properties to the denomination if they leave” (The Indianapolis Star [January 21, 2004], A6).

Contractors Refuse to Build Abortion Clinic

“Pro-life groups are using a new strategy to stop construction of a Planned Parenthood abortion facility in Austin, Texas. Six weeks after construction began, the project’s general contractor pulled out in November when it could find no sub-contractors willing to provide concrete, plumbing, and other work.

“Local concrete contractor Christ Danze organized the boycott. Danze said every concrete supplier within 60 miles of Austin has agreed not to supply materials. Danze sent a letter to 750 executives of construction-related companies asking them not to participate. Calls and more letters followed, urging companies not to participate in the construction of the facility, which was scheduled to open in 2004 to provide abortions and other services (Christianity Today [February 2004], 17).

Gay Adoption Ban Is Upheld On Appeal

Atlanta — The federal appeals court in Atlanta on Wednesday upheld a Florida law that bans adoption by any homosexual.

“The court, in a ruling written by Judge Stanley Birch, turned down a challenge to the 1977 law filed by four gays seeking to adopt children they are raising.

“We exercise great caution when asked to take sides in an ongoing public policy debate, such as the current one over the compatibility of homosexual conduct with the duties of adoptive parenthood,” Birch wrote, “The state of Florida has made the determination that it is not in the best interests of its displaced children to be adopted by individuals who “engage in current, voluntary homosexual activity” and we have found nothing in the Constitution that forbids this policy judgment.’

“In court filings, the state of Florida has said it prefers to place children in homes with both mothers and fathers and which are stabilized by long-term marriage” (The Indianapolis Star [January 29, 2004], A4).

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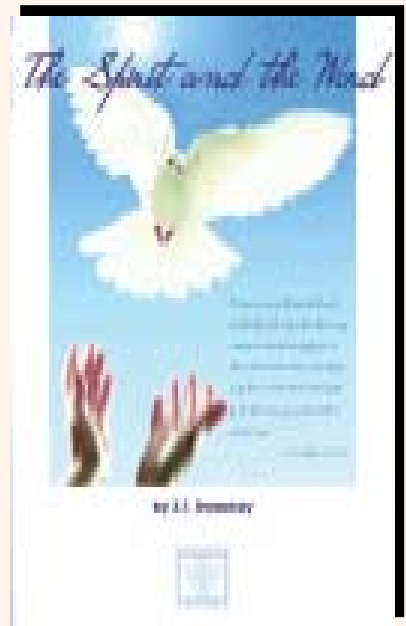
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