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Priorities and Our Children

Berry Kercheville

I was 15. The classroom was filled with kids from their Freshmen to Senior year. This was a meeting of all the agriculture students to see who would be interested in joining the FFA (Future Farmers of America). I sat timidly as the teacher wrote down the names of students who volunteered. Then all eyes turned to me.

“Are you joining, Kerch?”

“I’d like to join,” I stammered, “but I can’t come to the meetings because I go to church on Wednesday nights.”

From the back of the room someone hollered, “You can’t join if you don’t come to the meetings!”

Then one of the Juniors looked across the aisle and shouted, “What’s the matter with you Kercheville? You want to go to heaven or something?” The room roared with laughter.

A year later, after making straight A’s in my Ag classes, the rule for Wednesday night attendance to the FFA meetings was waived and I was allowed to join. At the end of my Junior year, having never attended a meeting, some members of the club greeted me at school on Thursday morning with the news that I had been voted president of the FFA for the following year. I said, “That’s great! My first order of business is to change the meeting to Thursday nights.”

My parents never told me that I couldn’t attend the FFA meetings. Even years before, when I had Little League games that conflicted with worship, they never made the rule that I had to miss the game. But I did. When it came time for school dances, my parents never forbade me to go. But I didn’t go. It wasn’t that I was an extra good kid. I got more “whippin’s” than any of my siblings. You see, God was first around our house. Spiritual things were a daily topic of conversation. God and his Word were spoken of when we rose up, when we lay down, when we walked by the way (rode in the car), and when we sat in the house

God was first around our house. Spiritual things were a daily topic of conversation. God and his Word were spoken of when we rose up, when we lay down, when we walked by the way (rode in the car), and when we sat in the house (Deut. 6:6-7).

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Editorial

Why I Believe In God

Mike Willis

Modern writers are stating that we live in a post-Christian world, thus indicating that the Christian view of life has been replaced by another moral standard, generally that of humanism. Many Americans who reject atheism are nevertheless accepting the atheist's moral standards. Perhaps, we might be profited to remember why we believe in God.

Have Scientists Proved There Is No God?

Our young people may be tempted to think that scientists have proven that God does not exist. That is not true. Scientists cannot prove God does not exist. This is true because of several things. (1) If one wanted to prove something by the scientific method, he must follow the steps of the scientific method to reach his conclusion. That involves observation and experimentation. God cannot be subjected to the observation and experimentation of scientific test tubes. Hence, whether or not God exists cannot be proven by the scientific method. (2) If one were to affirm that God does not exist, he would have to know everything, for if there was one fact that he did not know, that fact might be that God exists. Only one with the attributes of deity could know that God does not exist. (3) If one were to affirm that God does not exist, he would have to be in all places at the same time, for if there was one place that he was not at any given moment in time, God might be there. Only one with the attributes of deity could not know God does not exist. The scientist who spouts that God does not exist is an arrogant man, indeed.

Science is unqualified to speak on whether or not there is a God, creation, whether or not miracles have ever occurred, and whether or not Jesus was raised from the dead. These things cannot be subjected to the scientific method. Rather, these are historical questions that must be tested by the normal means of ascertaining whether or not an historical fact occurred.

Science and God

We can be thankful that the Christian religion does not agree with late twentieth century science. Science is an ever-growing body of knowledge that is continually being adjusted to explain newly discovered pieces of knowledge. Had the Christian

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“The Rumors of My Demise”

Connie W. Adams

Mark Twain, upon hearing that news was circulating about his death, wrote a notice which said, “The rumors of my demise are greatly exaggerated.” Every now and then someone connected with the institutional folks pronounces the death of what they call “the anti movement.” The most recent announcement of this appeared in *The Spiritual Sword* (October 1997) and was written by Alan E. Highers, the editor of that magazine. Since brother Highers has been the editor of that quarterly publication, it has contained a wealth of very good material on a variety of subjects. Its tone has been militantly conservative especially in relation to serious struggles now going on among the institutional churches. But every now and then, he or one of his writers, takes a swipe at the detested “antis.”

In this recent obituary, brother Highers says that Max Lucado did them all a favor by boldly stating his denominational views on sinners being saved by prayer, the non-essentiality of baptism, and the notion of joining the church of your choice. He says that has awakened many in the brotherhood to the dangers of liberalism and compromise. Then he likens that to a debate proposition which A.C. Grider signed in Meridian, Mississippi while engaged in a debate there with W.L. Totty on what were then simply called “the issues.” It was a prejudicial proposition. Brother Totty knew that and so did brother Grider. Brother Grider had been trying to get brother Totty to debate him in Indianapolis at Garfield Heights where Totty preached. Up to that point no progress had been made in that direction. During their debate in Meridian, brother Totty baited brother Grider with this proposition and said he would meet him at home in Indianapolis if he would sign it. Brother Grider did indeed shock brother Totty and a host of others by signing it. The result was that they did debate at Garfield Heights. The proposition read: “The Bible teaches that it is a sin for the church to take money from its treasury to buy food for hungry destitute children, and those who do so will go to hell.” In the actual debate, brother Grider showed that in benevolence the church is limited to providing for the needs of saints. He pointed out that should any saints have children for whom they were responsible, their needs would include whatever necessary to provide for their own responsibility.

Brother Highers said that the cause with which brother Grider was associated was already in decline but that with the signing of that proposition “his statement finished it off. The effect was not immediate; it

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took time for his statement to circulate; but wherever his statement became known, the influence of the movement failed. It has never been able to exert a significant presence since that time, and most members of the church today are not even aware that such a movement exists.”

The facts need to be kept straight in this matter. Everybody knew at the time that it was a loaded, prejudicial proposition. A.C. Grider did not frame it. W.L. Totty did. Did brother Grider sign it? Yes he did. Was it wise? I doubt it. Brother Grider was of the old school which thought that propositions did not matter that much in a debate as long as the basic differences were aired. I do not share that view nor do many others. Honorable men ought not to attempt to put a debate opponent in such a position. It is about like a Baptist asking a gospel preacher to affirm that all deceased Baptists have gone to hell. None of us should knowingly seek to lead someone into signing prejudicial propositions which create an unlevel ground upon which to conduct a proper debate. Neither should we give advantage by signing such statements.

Wishful Thinking

But Brother Highers is sadly mistaken if he thinks opposition to sponsoring churches, church support of benevolent, edification, or evangelistic organizations is dead. He and his fellow-travelers have little association any more with those they consider the real “antis.” I say that because he and others with whom he associates are now being called “antis” by the more liberal element among them. One of the great sadnesses of the divisions which occurred in the 1950s and 60s is the loss of contact among those who once stood side by side in the battle for truth.

In full-time meeting work over the last 23 years, we have gone to every part of the nation. We have worked among congregations small and large, each of which would be dubbed “anti” by brother Highers and others. Brethren who were told years ago that if they did not disassociate themselves from the “antis,” they would wind up with no place to preach, find their meeting schedules full for the next several years. It is not unheard of for some of these men to have a full schedule for the next five to eight years.

With increasing frequency we are finding people who have fled from institutional churches for a variety of unscriptural practices and have associated themselves with congregations which brother Highers would consider “anti.” A couple of years back we worked in a meeting in Fresno, California where there were nine families which had all recently left an institutional church in the area because of unscriptural practices which they could no longer tolerate. They were euphoric over getting to hear plain Bible preaching. We have found similar situations elsewhere.

Right here in Louisville the so-called “anti” churches

outnumber the institutional churches two to one. This is the city where A.C. Grider preached a number of years and where he spent his last years. In 1962 liberal elements in the city brought Guy N. Woods here to meet A.C. Grider in debate. That was supposed to shut down the “antis” once and for all. What happened? Regardless of what has been told over the years about that debate, it was a watershed event in this area. As a result of it, many people got their eyes opened to the truth and the institutional movement in this city has gradually declined. The Taylor Blvd. congregation where Harold Hazelip was the preacher at the time of the Grider-Woods debate, gradually dwindled to less than 100. At one time it was the largest congregation in Kentucky. They finally sold the building and merged with the church on Bardstown Road which also has dwindled to less than 100. Today, the largest institutional church in Louisville is the Okolona church which numbers about 500. According to their bulletin there were 347 present on November 2 at their second morning worship. They have their Bible study Sunday night and no preaching service. They have in the planning stages a multi-purpose building which will include a gymnasium.

There are today 25 congregations within a 25 mile radius of downtown Louisville which brother Highers would call “anti.” There are that many or more in the Indianapolis area where that proposition was debated which was supposed to “finish off” a movement. There are more than that number in Birmingham. Go to the Houston or Dallas areas and take a good look. The congregation in Louisville where we attend supports 15 men in the work of gospel preaching in various parts of this nation and in two other countries. One brother in this area has made 17 trips to India to preach and train native preachers. One is right now in Brazil. Another spent several years in Kenya. Another plans to spend time each year in the Philippines. My wife and I are to spend January working with brethren in South Africa. Our regret is that we will only be able to work with a very few of the congregations in that country.

Are There Problems?

Yes, you can be sure there are. Some of us are having to contend with some of the same issues which brother Highers and other writers for *The Spiritual Sword* are vigorously addressing. Have some churches withered and died? Absolutely. Are the “antis” less in number than the institutional folks? Certainly. That has been true from the beginning. And by the time the dust settles from present struggles among brother Highers’ peers they are going to be less in number by far than they were. In the final analysis it does not all come down to a head count but to the question as to who is faithful to the Lord and his word.

“If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7). “For we walk

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“Then Paul Stood Up, And Beckoning With His Hand”

Johnie Edwards

Most effective speakers gesture. A gesture is defined by *The American Heritage College Dictionary* as “a motion of the limbs or body made to express thought or to emphasize speech.” Surely every gospel preacher should want to emphasize his sermon. Let’s take a look to see what the Bible teaches about such.

The Apostle Paul Gestured

As Paul was asked by the rulers of the synagogue, “. . . if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on. Then Paul stood up, and *beckoning with his hand* said, Men of Israel, and ye that fear God, give audience” (Acts 13:15-16). The apostle Paul knew that gestures can help to enforce the oral expression in gospel preaching. In Jerusalem, “. . . Paul stood on the stairs, and *beckoned with the hand* unto the people. And when there was made a great silence, he spake unto them in the Hebrew tongue, saying . . .” (Acts 21:40). Paul knew that gestures help communicate ideas and help get and hold attention. It has been said that gesturing is not in keeping with humility. Paul, who gestured, said, “Serving the Lord with all *humility* of mind, and with many tears, and temptations, which befell me by the lying in wait of the Jews” (Acts 20:19). Paul was a humble-gesturing preacher! When the apostle Paul

by faith and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11). “Buy the truth and sell it not” (Prov. 23:23). “Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God; he that abideth in the doctrine hath both the Father and the Son” (2 John 9).

Like Abel, those committed to these Bible truths, being dead, yet speak!

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made his defence before King Agrippa, he “. . . *stretched forth the hand*, and answered for himself” (Acts 26:1). The stretching forth of one’s hand is gesturing.

Alexander Gestured

As Alexander made a speech before the people, the Bible says that, “. . . Alexander *beckoned with the hand*, and would have made his defence unto the people” (Acts 19:33). No one is saying that a speaker ought to go to the extreme and pace back and forth that would reveal one’s uneasiness and disturb the listener’s concentration.

Ezekiel Gestured

The Lord instructed Ezekiel to motion or gesture with his face, hands and foot. “Son of man, *set thy face* toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel” (Ezek. 21:2). God told his prophet and watchman, Ezekiel, “Thou therefore, son of man, prophesy, and smite thine hands together” (Ezek. 21:14). Certainly actions speak loud. A lot of preachers put absolutely no enthusiasm in their preaching. God admonished Ezekiel to put some life in his preaching when he told him, “Thus saith the Lord God; *Smite with thine hand, and stamp with thy foot*, and say, Alas for all the evil abominations of the house of Israel! for they shall fall by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence” (Ezek. 6:11). A lot of preachers put their audience asleep due to lack of zeal and some action in their preaching; and then blame the people. People don’t normally sleep when I preach, but if they did, I would first examine myself as to my preparation and presentation of the sermon. Beckoning with the hands at the close of the sermon for folks to respond, stamping the foot, smiting the hand, snapping the finger, slapping the knee are certainly fitting to emphasize and get people’s attention!

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Lessons From the Titanic

Dennis Tucker

A few weeks ago my family went to the Titanic Exhibition. All summer long we had been learning about the great disaster. The Titanic was built by White Star Line Company. It was a progressive company and was the first to build ships of 40,000 tons. Their aim was to take advantage of those wanting to travel from Europe to America. Remember, this was before TWA and air travel. They wanted to be the luxury liner of the times.

As we went through the Exhibition, a number of facts caught my attention.

The Titanic was the state-of-the-art boat. White Star had used some of the best and most skilled shipbuilders in Europe. This was not their first big ship. A year earlier the Olympic was put into action. Her size was the same as the Titanic, however, she was built to handle a smaller number of passengers. The Titanic weighed 46,324 tons and was powered by two enormous engines with the horsepower of 30,000. She was the best constructed boat of her time. E.J. Smith was an experienced seaman and chosen to be in charge, partly because he never had a close call in all his years of sailing.

It was a boat of luxury. One reason for the boat's great size, was the desire by White Star Line to build a boat for the rich and famous to travel on. She had smoking rooms for the first class and second class; lounges, a gymnasium, a grand staircase, a hospital, a library for the second class and there was even a swimming pool. Her second class passengers enjoyed luxury usually reserved for only the first class passengers. Most of the first class passengers were part of the select rich in both America and Europe.

They brought their finest clothes, drink and jewelry. It was said that a lot of women brought jewelry for each day. They paraded around living lavishly.

It also struck me the number of people on board. There were 2,278 passengers and crew members. Of that number, 712 were third class. These were the poor immigrants coming to America in hope of a better future. There were whole families who could not speak a word of English, some old and some just babies.

The above facts made this really hit home. Let me mention some lessons we all should learn from this tragedy.



For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever (1 John 2:1-17).

This was a time of arrogance. Some people thought this boat was unsinkable. This was due in part to two reasons: first, she had a double hull; second, she was made of a special metal. One quote at the Exhibition was, "God, Himself could not sink the Titanic."

This arrogance, perhaps led to the decision to cut back on the number of lifeboats. Its original design called for 64 lifeboats, later on it was cut back to 48, and eventually, she had a total of 16.

It was said this was the end of the age of innocence. Really this was a reality check. Men learned the Titanic was sinkable. She was destroyed by one big piece of ice. In the late hours of Sunday, April 14, 1912, she hit an iceberg. She sank in the early hours of April 15th.

Can such arrogance be seen today? Look at the people who believe God does not exist. Some feel as if mankind must save himself Others act as if they will live forever. There will come a time we will all have a reality check and realize we are not immortal but very frail and in need of our God.

And He said to them, "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). The words "take heed" are words of warning. They are saying, "Danger Lies Ahead." Most of the crew and passengers on the Titanic were not taking heed. The winter of 1912 had been an unusually warm one. Icebergs were drifting toward the south in the Atlantic Ocean. The crew of the Titanic had received not less than six warnings on her final day from other ships in the area. Captain Smith slightly changed the course of the ship to place her more toward the south. Despite these efforts, she entered into an ice field.

At 10:55 PM the ship, the Californian, sent a message warning the Titanic of danger. Jack Phillips, the radio operator, sent back the message, "Shut up. We are busy."

Even after they struck the iceberg, the passengers did not see the danger ahead. People on deck used some of the ice to have a snowball fight. One man asked for a piece of ice for his drink.

This helps to explain why the first lifeboats sent away were not fully loaded. Each boat had the capacity to hold 65 people, but most of the early boats had less than 40 on board.

They were not seeing the real danger. They were not taking heed. It was not until they could see the water coming up the grand stairway that some realized what was just ahead.

The same can be said today. A lot of people fail to see the seriousness of sin. They think it is funny. Others are busy enjoying themselves. Still others do not see how close the end is in their lives.

Let us take heed to what Jesus said, "Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming; in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning; lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:33-37).

Another fact is how few were saved. Total number of passengers and crew on board was 2,228. Of that number,

just 705 were saved. This was due to a couple of reasons. Most importantly, there were not enough lifeboats on the ship. Also, many of the boats were not loaded to full capacity. Some thought the earlier boats could come back and pick up additional passengers. If they had been loaded properly about 420 more people could have lived.

"Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it" (Matt. 7:13-14). Unlike the Titanic, the number which can be saved is not limited. We all have the ability to be saved. Jesus died on the cross for all of mankind. God wants us to be saved. "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men" (Tit. 2:11). Why will people be lost? Because they are in sin (Rom.3:23; 6:23). Because they never allowed the blood of Christ to cleanse them of their sins (Eph. 1:7). It is truly sad to see people lost due to either not hearing the word of God or not obeying it (2 Thess. 1:8).

A final fact on the sinking of the Titanic is the time involved. She did not go down immediately. The Titanic struck the iceberg at 12:15 AM. She sunk at 2:20 AM. For those two hours, the people on board had to make choices. Women and children were allowed to get on some of the lifeboats while other lifeboats had some men on board. Fathers and husbands said good-bye to their children and wives. Some families decided to stay together even if it meant dying together. Some spent their last hours living it up. Others were trying to make their lives right with God. Some, such as the crew, sacrificed their lives trying to help the passengers.

"The days of our lives are seventy years; And if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off and we fly away" (Ps. 90:10). Our lives are but a brief moment on God's green earth. We cannot stop the fact of death. We can determine how we will live and the conditions of our soul at the time of our death. We can help those around us (Jas. 1:27). We can be like the apostle Paul, "For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith: Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8).

Note: Much of the historical information in these two articles was taken from, *Titanic The Exhibition*.

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Is This All of the Package?

Lewis Willis

Many years ago, a controversy raged in the Lord's church over church treasury support of human institutions, such as colleges. Faithful brethren contended in those days that there were many other practices, some quite unexpected, that would ultimately be introduced into the practice of those liberal congregations which supported the institutions. Gospel preachers rightly said that the same argument being made in those days to justify church support of human institutions would be used to justify a host of other things as well.

Before long, the controversy moved from church support of institutions to church involvement in recreation through building of gymnasiums, fellowship halls, etc. Brethren used to say that the liberal agenda would be rejected if brethren could only see how far these apostates were willing to go in their departure from the truth. Those who made that statement proved themselves wrong as prophets.

We continue to see and hear one heresy after another, and there is no significant opposition to be found. Some writers are making strong statements about what is happening, but they are powerless to stop the digression because they are not willing to return to the truth themselves. It is difficult for an apostate to halt an apostasy!

Among the apostates trying to stop further digression are H.A. (Buster) Dobbs, editor of the *Firm Foundation*, and Alan E. Highers, editor of *The Spiritual Sword*. Dobbs and Highers regularly attack "liberals," apparently without realizing they are one of those beasts themselves. They praise fellow-liberals when they exclude "anti-institutional people" (that's us, folks) from a listing of those who are God's people (*FF*, 11/97, 2, and *SS*, 10/97, 47). According to these heretics, we are not even Christians! *We do what the Bible authorizes us to do, but that no longer makes one a Christian, according to Dobbs and Highers*. Still, they are terribly upset over the direction their fellow-liberal brethren are going. They regularly oppose men within "the institutional fellowship" such as Max Lucado, Carroll Osburn, and Rubel Shelly. Dobbs, Highers, and these

other birds-of-the-feather liberals, are now at war among themselves, and Dobbs and Highers are losing the battle! What's the battle about?

They are locked in controversy over whether or not they will accept the Christian Church and its mechanical instrument of music into their fellowship. Lucado, Osburn, and Shelley say "Yes," while Dobbs and Highers say "No."

Before a gathering of thousands of liberals in Nashville, called *Jubilee '97*, Shelly read a letter from Victor Knowles, of the Christian Church, apologizing for the division over the introduction of the instrument into the worship of the church which occurred over 90 years ago. Knowles apologized for that, asking liberal brethren to accept his apology and to accept one another as they work together "in the kingdom of God." (You see, according to these men, the Christian Church *is in the kingdom*, but those of us who insist on doing things as authorized in the Scriptures *are not*.) When Shelly read the Knowles statement, it was received "with a mixture of tears and applause."

Shelly then added a statement of his own, "I sincerely express my own regret and sorrow over the divisions that have existed between us. I ask forgiveness for my contributions to them. And I ask all of us to move beyond the rancor and alienation of generations now dead" (From the bulletin where Shelly preaches).

This apology to the Christian Church by Shelly has liberals like Dobbs and Highers in an uproar. They see themselves being lead to the use or acceptance of instrumental music and into fellowship as a denomination with the Christian Church denomination. Dobbs and Highers will not likely follow this course but they, in time, will be listed with a few radicals who are no longer regarded as Christians, just as they now view those of us who are "anti-institutional." They want to eat of the liberal pie, but not all of it. They want a morsel here or there, while they curse the rest of the apostate dinner!

In the current issue of *Wineskins*, (Sept.-Oct., 1997), edited by Shelly, he has begun to lay the foundation for the acceptance of the instrument in worship. If they do not use the instrument themselves, they will fellowship those who do use it. Shelly has begun discrediting the truth about worship, calling it our "tradition" instead of the teaching of God's word. He says "the acts of worship" are not "good theology." Shelly tells us, "It is more precise to say that worship is always *an attitude* of reverence before God that is exhibited by *appropriate actions*" (my emphasis, LW). His point is, as long as your attitude is right, and you (or he) regards what you do as appropriate, God will accept your worship. Don't bother him with the limitations on worship imposed by the Bible (John 4:24; Eph. 5:19), that's nothing but tradition.

Interestingly, an article in the same issue of *Wineskins*, by Larry Bridgesmith, instructs on how to make worship more meaningful (8). Bridgesmith tells about a young man struggling for meaning in worship following the suicide of his brother. The worship of the church was not inspiring, failed to meet him in his loss, and his pain was not soothed. He was approached by "a church shepherd" who learned that nothing seemed to make sense anymore; God was nowhere near in the young man's confusion; the church assembly offered no connection with eternity and the answers offered there. The young man was angry as he explained how meaningless worship had become.

Finally, the shepherd asked him where he felt closest to God. He replied, "In my duck blind." He was then told to go there, talk to God about his loss, anger, and confusion, and "then listen for his response." Early on Sunday morning, he headed for his duck blind (never mind that God commands that we assemble: *Heb. 10:25; Acts 20:7*). Throughout the entire day he questioned, accused, and confronted God. He

shouted, argued, and cried out. But, he heard no voice, nor saw he a vision. "He sought an encounter with God with all his heart, head and spirit. His plea was simply, 'If you are there God, if you care about me, show me.'"

Exhausted and emotionally drained after spending the Lord's Day in this fashion, he headed home. But, as he came to the top of a hill, he noticed a beautiful sunset in his rear-view mirror. He stopped and got out to see it more clearly. When he stepped out he noticed a huge stag deer standing between him and God's glorious sunset. The deer looked at him briefly and bounded away. The young man fell to his knees "and worshiped." "The God he thought was not listening came near in ways his heart was prepared to encounter. At that moment, Matt's emotional and spiritual healing began. His questions were answered, his accusations not responded to. But God came near and his presence was unmistakable," according to Bridgesmith.

Does the Bible describe such nonsense as this? Absolutely not! But these liberals are now going to replace "the acts of worship" set forth in the Scriptures with an acceptable attitude and with what they regard as appropriate action. No wonder Buster Dobbs and Alan Highers get upset with this kind of junk. However, they'll get a lot further trying to call people away from such apostasy, if they will return themselves from the apostasy into which they have fallen, and repent! *Is this all of the liberal package?* Probably not. Why can't these brethren see you can't have "just a little liberalism"?

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How Honest Are We?

Quentin McCay

An article in the December 1995 issue of *Reader's Digest* tells of an effort to determine just how honest the American people are. One hundred and twenty wallets with fifty dollars in them were dropped in various places in twelve cities across the United States. These wallets were watched to see how many people would try to return them to the owners. About 65.8 percent of the people who found the wallets returned them. Almost two thirds of the people were honest in the experiment. And 34.2 percent kept the wallets. I wondered if any of these were Christians. What would you have done?

Are you honest? Are you really honest in every thing with everybody at all times? Have you ever been dishonest with your parents, with your teacher in school, with your husband or wife? Have you always been honest with your children? Have you always been honest with God in worship. When you came to "lay by in store" as the Lord prospered you, did you do so dishonestly thinking that no one will know about it? Have you always been honest in paying your taxes to the government? When the clerk at the store gave you too much change as you paid for some article, did you give the extra change back to the clerk? When you forgot to pay for something, but remember later that you did not pay for it, did you return immediately to pay for it? Have you ever found some valuable article and knew the owner? Did keep it? Did you ever fail to pay some debt, however small, thinking that only a few will ever know? We are all acquainted with some preachers who left a community owing debts without arranging to pay the debt later. To these and similar questions we may all desire to plead the 5th.

In representing what someone teaches about a certain subject, did you misrepresent him just a little or maybe a lot? Did you do this deliberately or mistakenly? When you knew that you did not tell the truth about what someone else believes and teaches, did you correct it? Did you just let it slide by without any remorse of conscience? What one says and writes about others has grave consequences.

Vengeful gossip could well destroy the good name of a brother. Those who do this are not being honest. It may be that every one has been dishonest at some point in life, so the question should be, "Are you honest now?" What does the Bible teach about honesty?

Paul said he had, "Renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the Lord of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2 Cor. 4:2).

The word "honesty" means the quality or fact of being honest; uprightness, probity or integrity. It means truthfulness, sincerity, freedom from deceit or fraud. The word "honest" comes from the word meaning honorable, worthy, virtuous. Every individual that has observed the actions of people around him or knows the working of his own heart, will recognize that there is a great need for people to be more honest in one's dealings with others. The "honest and good" heart is the soil in which the word of God, which is the seed of the kingdom, can germinate and produce a life acceptable to God (Luke 8:15).

Honesty and the Marriage Bond

When a man and a woman pledge their love one to the other, they must be honest about these sacred promises. As they make their plans for the wedding, they must be free from deceit. When they stand before the one who hears their wedding vows and say, "I do," they must be sincere and completely honest in making their vows. If all were sincere in making their vows before God, there would be no unhappy families. All marriage problems would be quickly solved if the relationships were based upon honesty and virtue. One reason marriages fail is that one or both parties are not honest. The husband is to love his wife (Eph. 5:25), and the wife is to love her husband (Tit. 2:4). The love that binds them together should last, "till death do you part." When one becomes a Christian it is forever. There is no thought of forsaking our Lord. So it is when two souls

are joined in the holy bonds of marriage, it is as long as they both shall live. Honesty, sincerity, virtue, love, and honor are the ties that bind them together as one. What a great difference it would make if all marriages were built upon honesty!

Honesty Among Christians

When the church was to select men to be appointed over the business of the daily ministration of the neglected widows, the first qualification for those selected was that one be “of *honest* report” (Acts 6:3). Paul says that Christians must “provide things *honest* in the sight of all men.” Among the many instructions given to Christians in Romans 12, Paul says, “Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things *honest* in the sight of men” (Rom. 12:17). Paul also says, in 2 Corinthians 8:21, that one is to *honestly* provide things in the sight of the Lord. “*Providing for honest things*, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.” Paul prays that God’s people *do that which is honest* (2 Cor. 13:7). Christians are to *think* about things that are *honest*. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, *whatsoever things are honest*, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*” (Phil. 4:8). A person is what he thinks (Prov. 23:7). When Christians think honestly about one another, there will be peace among them. One will not wish any harm, but only good things for others. Though people differ sometimes about important things, there is no reason for one to be dishonest in thought or actions toward others. What a difference it would make for peace if all of God’s people would be honest in all things before God and all men!

Honesty in Politics

If one reads the daily news or listens to the news on radio or television with any discernment, one is aware that there is much dishonesty among the leaders of the nations of the earth. What a wonderful world this world would be if all politicians were transported far beyond the Northern Sea. What the world needs are good, honest, sincere, and virtuous statesmen. As we look about us in the political realm, we discover that dishonesty has been sown with an unsparing hand. And according to the newspapers they are bringing an abundant harvest. What a difference it would make if all politicians would be forced to state accurately what his opponent believes.

Honesty in Religion

One may be honest in religious error. However, when one learns that he is in error and remains so, he is dishonest. When one learns that he is in error, he will cease to be in error or he will cease to be honest. In religious matters, one must be honest. Those who preach and teach the word of God must be completely honest toward God and those he teaches. One who is honest will teach the people the truth,

though it may offend and make people quake. A dishonest teacher will compromise with those of the world with little principle or conscience. We need more honesty and godly fear in the pulpit and in the pew. Preachers should be honest with each other as they discuss differences. One should be very sure that what he says about another person is true. One should not rely on what someone else says, but should be very sure. In religious debates with sectarian preachers or debates between brethren one must be honest in representing what the other believes and teaches. It would be a good idea in debates if both disputants were required to state clearly what his opponent believes each time he begins to speak and before he answers or refutes his opponent’s position.

There are many contributing factors to dishonesty. Children see dishonesty in their parents and are trained to be dishonest. Selfishness and covetousness contribute to dishonesty. But God demands that one be honest toward everyone, about everything at all times.

Honesty the Best Policy

“Honesty is the best policy,” is an old adage. One should be honest, not because of policy, but because it is the only right and proper policy. Honesty and any other policy cannot be mixed. Like mixing water and oil, one will come to the top and the other will sink to the bottom. One who is honest because it is the best policy would not be honest if it were not for policy. One should live by this eternal principle of honesty because it is right. It is never right to be dishonest.

Ananias and Sapphira

Ananias and Sapphira are examples of dishonesty (Acts 5:1-11). “And Joses, who by the apostles was surnamed Barnabas, (which is, being interpreted, The son of consolation,) a Levite, and of the county of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money, and laid it at the apostles feet.” This was to assist the needy saints in Jerusalem. Ananias and Sapphira owned some land. They sold it and gave part of the money to be used to assist the needy saints. Because of their desire for the praise of men, and because of their greedy love for money they kept back part of the price. It would have been perfectly permissible for them to do so. But they said in so many words that they gave it all, like Barnabas did. Satan filled their heart. They lied to God, they lied to the Holy Spirit, and they lied to Peter. They both fell dead because of their dishonesty.

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Renew Promptly!

Perversions of the Gospel

James P. Needham

Social gospelism invaded Protestantism in the early 19th century in Europe and eventually spread throughout the Protestant churches everywhere. It followed on the heels of what is known as modernism. Modernism is a philosophy of biblical interpretation that denies that the Bible presents a divine pattern of authority, thus man is left to formulate his own concept of doctrine, church work, and worship.

The gospel as God revealed it is pure, unadulterated, unmixed, stand alone, self-sufficient, self-contained, independent, and man needs nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else.

To know and appreciate the gospel one must be convinced of all the above. Throughout its history, however, few have fully understood and accepted these salient facts. From the very beginning of the gospel men have mixed it with human philosophies and concepts in a vain and futile effort to help it out. Paul said to the Galatians, "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would **pervert** the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6, 7). To pervert a thing is to add something to it that destroys its purity.

We must understand that the gospel is a divine revelation and the fulfillment of God's eternal purpose (Eph. 3:10), and as such, when it was fully revealed it nullified and made all previous remedial systems obsolete and void and became absolutely sufficient and fully adequate in and of itself. Paul said, "The law was our school master to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith, but after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal. 1:6, 7). "He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second" (Heb 10:9). The gospel is the *perfect* law of liberty (Jas. 1:25), that was once for all delivered (Jude 3), and it furnishes us

completely unto all good works (2 Tim. 3:16, 17), and makes available to us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness (2 Pet. 1:3), and makes one *complete* in Christ (Col 2:10).

In this article I shall look at perversions of the gospel throughout its history, and challenge all men to be satisfied with the gospel as God delivered it for only then is it "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). Obviously, space prohibits extensive documentation or refutation of the perversions mentioned, though that has been done on many occasions. Most readers will be acquainted with what I shall mention. It should be understood that a perverted gospel is to the spiritual well-being of man what poison food is to his physical well-being.

Jewish Perversions

The Jews were likely the first to pervert the gospel. Early in the New Testament we find them intermingling the gospel with the Old Testament system. The epistles of Romans, Colossians, Galatians, and Hebrews deal with this problem. Almost every church of the first century was troubled by this perversion. The Jews tried to tell God whom he could save and how. Some of the "believing" Jews were willing to accept Gentiles into the church only if they would first become Jews, that is, be circumcised and keep the law. In the Book of Romans Paul says several times that "there is no difference" between Jews and Gentiles. (Rom 10:12) "For there

is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.” The church at Antioch had much contention about this matter, and finally sent Paul and Silas to Jerusalem where they received a letter dictated by the Holy Spirit that exempted the Gentiles from such necessities.

(a) *The Essene perversion*: The Essenes were a Jewish sect which held the belief that human flesh is evil. They were ascetic in their life style, separating themselves from the world. They ate only food that was prepared by consecrated hands, did no work on the Sabbath, abstained from the gratification of all natural urges as much as possible including marriage. They, therefore believed in salvation by *sinless perfection*. They thought if man could live the life of angels on earth he would be saved. Thus they believed man could be saved by his own righteousness.

Greek Perversions

The Grecian or Gentile world in the first and second centuries was contaminated by human philosophy. Grecian culture and society had wielded a powerful influence over the world long after the demise of the Grecian empire. Grecian philosophy is still studied in our colleges and universities. The Grecian philosophy which had the greatest impact on the gospel was Gnosticism. The word comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning to know. Gnosticism had two wings: the Docetics and the Cerinthians.

(a) *The Docetics* denied the actual humanity of Jesus. They believed that all matter is evil, and since the human body is matter, it is therefore evil. This led them to deny that God actually inhabited human flesh because God would not tabernacle in an evil human body. Jesus was just a transient apparition of Divine power, a phantom that flitted across the stage of time and was not God in the flesh.

(b) *The Cerinthians* distinguished

between Jesus and the Christ. Jesus was a man, and Christ was the divine power which descended *upon* Jesus at his baptism and ascended *from* him on the cross. Thus, Christ did not die on the cross, Jesus the man did.

These philosophies had far-reaching implications. The Gnostics predicated salvation upon perfect knowledge in the inner man; the evil flesh did not matter; thus they often lived profligate lives. This was the result of believing that the body is evil, and since that was the case, let the body do what comes naturally because the sins of the outer man have no effect upon the inner man. As one can see, this was a forerunner of Calvin’s perseverance of the saints. Some Calvinists make the same argument in defense of the erroneous doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy.

Gnosticism means that Jesus died in vain, for if God’s Son did not die upon the cross, there is no redemption from sin. Gnosticism would emasculate the gospel, robbing it of its redemptive power which would leave man to roam free in the wilderness of sin and drink liberally from the evil springs of the wicked world.

The books of Colossians and First John are heavily weighted with refutations of this philosophy. Paul said to the Corinthians that “. . . the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness. And again, The Lord knoweth the thoughts of the wise, that they are vain” (1 Cor 3:19-20).

We can say then that the Gnostics believed in salvation by *perfect knowledge* and the Essenes believe in salvation by *sinless perfection*; or to put it another way, they both believed in salvation by *human works*, one by *intellectual perfection* and the other by *moral perfection*. Both conflict with plain Bible teaching (Eph. 2:8, 9; Tit. 3:5; Isa. 64:6).

It is almost beyond belief that doctrines similar to Gnosticism continue to trouble the church and pervert the gospel of Christ. The belief that Jesus was “just an ordinary guy like you and me” is exceedingly close to Gnosticism.

Pagan Perversions

True religion has nearly always existed in a pagan world, and has been frequently invaded by it. We are all familiar with the Israelites’ frequent adoption of pagan gods in Old Testament times. The religion of Christ was born into a society steeped in paganism. Early Christians were constantly warned to keep themselves from idols (1 John 5:21), and those things which pertained unto it, like the eating of its sacrificial meats under certain circumstances, the keeping of its festivals, and its profligate lifestyle (fornication was an act of pagan worship). Nearly all the epistles make reference to these matters (compare the First Corinthian letter, particularly chapter 5).

Paganism had a tremendous influence in the apostasy that culminated in Roman Catholicism. Pagan Rome was Christianity’s most vehement persecutor because the Christians refused to worship the emperor who was thought to be divine. His image was erected throughout the empire, and Roman citizens were expected to burn incense to it. Christians refused to do this, considering it to be idolatry, thus were looked upon as subversives and were called atheists. It was difficult for Christians to make a living in the Roman Empire because of this. To prosper in the Roman Empire one had to be a member of the trade guilds (unions), membership in which depended upon one’s worshiping the emperor. Since Christians refused to do so, they were bared from the guilds, and thus could not ply their trades in Roman society (Rev. 13:17). Many Christians had their personal assets confiscated as enemies of the state (Heb 10:34), and many thousands were killed.

While the situation looked hopeless from a human standpoint, all things are possible with God and human persistence. Pagan Rome was eventually conquered by “Christianity” when Constantine, “the first Christian emperor,” came to power in A.D. 321. He favored the Christians, outlawed their persecution, abolished crucifixion, and declared Sunday a national holiday. “Christianity” became the state religion of the empire. While this looks great from the standpoint of the Christians, it was a fatal day for the church. Unconverted pagans poured into the church by the thousands to be members of the same religious group approved by the emperor! Pagan temples became church buildings, and as time went on, doctrine and practice accommodated the pagan’s festivals, images, holy days, etc. This is the origin of Christmas, Easter, the adoration of the virgin Mary in imitation of the feminine goddesses of paganism, and a host of other practices and observances of the Catholic Church. Gradually the organization of the church copied the organization of the Roman Empire, and eventually a religious dictator (the pope) was appointed by an evil Roman emperor in imitation of Pagan Rome. Thus the gospel was mixed with paganism and a dictatorial political system and the rest is history! Catholic literature admits that Catholic doctrine and practice is an admixture of paganism, “Christianity,” and Roman politics.

Perversions of Protestantism

The 16th century Protestant Reformation sparked by Martin Luther and others was an effort to return to the Bible, but he and others never arrived at the truth. Luther became disgusted with the corruption he found in Catholicism and its doctrine of salvation by human works, and swung to the other extreme and taught the doctrine of salvation by faith without works (faith only) and mixed the gospel with his own theology. The Protestants never completely severed themselves in doctrine and practice from the Catholicism they were protesting because they retained much that was peculiar to Catholicism.

Much of the theology of the Protestants finds its roots in the works of Thomas Aquinas, Augustine, and others. These were the formulators of Catholic theology: Total depravity, predestination, faith only, sprinkling and pouring for baptism, etc. Protestantism had no thoroughly organized and integrated theology until the time of John Calvin. At age 23 he wrote his *Institutes of Religion*, and put it all together and formulated the basis of all Protestant religion. Calvin summarized his theology under five cardinal points:

1. Man is born guilty of Adam’s sin, is spiritually dead, unable to think a good thought or do a good deed without the grace of God preventing — *Total depravity*.
2. God determined before the creation of the world which men and angels would be saved and which would be lost, and the number is so fixed that not one cannot be added to it or taken from it; the non-elect are reprobated and doomed

for hell without remedy; the elect will be saved regardless of how they live — *Unconditional election*.

3. Christ atoned only for the elect; did not die for all men, only the elect — *Limited atonement*.

4. Since man is born spiritually dead, he cannot act, so cannot believe, so since he cannot think a good thought or do a good deed without the grace of God preventing, the only way he can ever believe is for God to give him the gift of faith which he does by sending the Holy Spirit to change his depraved heart — *Irresistible grace*.

5. Since man is unable to do anything in his own salvation, being spiritually dead, God has to do everything. So, since God does all the saving, if one of the elect is ever lost it would be God’s fault, and we can’t have that, so once man is saved he can never be lost — *Perseverance of the saints* (impossibility of apostasy).

Originally, nearly all Protestant churches bought this whole package, but with the passing of time and with much dissension, parts of it have been dropped, but just about 100 percent of today’s Protestant churches are influenced to a large degree by Calvinian theology, particularly the doctrines of total depravity, the direct operation of the Holy Spirit, sprinkling for baptism, and salvation by faith only.

Thus, the gospel has been and is perverted by human theology, largely Calvinism. Human theology is the pure word of God strained through the fine mesh of human opinion! Theologians are described by Paul when he speaks of those who are “*Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth*” (2 Tim 3:7).

Social Gospel Perversions

Social gospelism invaded Protestantism in the early 19th century in Europe and eventually spread throughout the Protestant churches everywhere. It followed on the heels of what is known as modernism. Modernism is a philosophy of biblical interpretation that denies that the Bible presents a divine pattern of authority, thus man is left to formulate his own concept of doctrine, church work, and worship. Modernism denies the verbal inspiration of the Bible, all miracles, and sees Christ only as a great teacher and philanthropist, thus the primary mission of the church is to make this world a better place in which to live rather than look for pie in the sky by and by! This gave rise to churches building soup kitchens, gymnasiums and other recreational facilities, orphan and old folks homes, schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, counseling centers, apartment complexes, etc. all to minister more to the flesh while neglecting the spirit. Social betterment became the primary mission of the church, and man’s need for salvation from sin was minimized.

Perversions of the Gospel Within the Church

If you have ever wondered about the origin of such things among churches of Christ, there you have it. It did not come from the Bible, but from modernism and Protestantism. Just as unconverted pagans brought into the church their pagan practices, so half-converted Protestants brought into the church the social gospel and other denominational concepts and philosophies. When the church brings half-taught people into the church they sow the seeds of apostasy. As time goes on these half-taught persons become Bible class teachers, elders, deacons, and even preachers. The results of this are self-evident; witness our history over the last 50 years. Most of the above mentioned social gospel projects found in the churches of Christ had their origin in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The Lord's church was brought to the Americas by European immigrants. Those who planted it on this continent came from the British Isles, and had been influenced by brethren there before coming here.

Thomas and Alexander Campbell, Barton Stone, and others came out of Calvinistic denominations and planted the church in the new world. They preached and wrote against denominationalism in terms that many of their descendants would consider too harsh, and which many now try to soft-peddle as they vainly try to rewrite history. These brethren were exceedingly successful in communicating the pure gospel to multitudes of people, and thousands and thousands abandoned their denominational heritage and embraced the truth. It is a disservice to these valiant men to say that they were trying to unite men in denominationalism. They called men out of denominationalism to the one church built by Jesus on the basis of the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. They did not promote unity in diversity, or try to persuade men to agree to disagree.

(a) *The missionary society*: Alexander Campbell who had spoken so harshly of denominationalism and its societies became enamored with world evangelism and what the "universal church" could do to effect it. He argued that since God did not specify a universal organization for the church, that meant that he intended for us to formulate our own. This was in direct contradiction to his former teaching. His rationale was that all the churches banded together can do what no single church can do, so he became the first president of the missionary society formed in Cincinnati, Ohio on October 21, 1849. Thus the die was cast and a philosophy postulated, namely, *what God has not specified we are at liberty to do*. This, of course, is the concept that the silence of the Scriptures is not restrictive. This philosophy led to all kinds of innovations in the years that followed.

(b) *Benevolent societies*. Following the formation of the missionary society, a human institution to do evangelism

for the churches, a benevolent society was created, though not much was said about it, being overshadowed by the enthusiasm for the missionary society.

(c) *Instrumental music*: It is impossible to open the silence-of-the-Scriptures gate to admit only one innovation. Logically, if we are at liberty to practice one thing on the basis of the silence of the Scriptures, we are at liberty to practice everything the scriptures do not mention. The sky is the limit! So, in 1860, the first instrument of music was introduced at Midway, Kentucky. As time went by, it became the wedge that divided churches all over the country, thus the origin of the Christian Church which, using this philosophy, returned to denominationalism. Many innovations followed on the heels of the missionary society and instrumental music. With the passing of time the Christian church became too liberal for many, and so it split into the Disciples of Christ denomination and the conservative churches called "churches of Christ" which gave up the missionary society and the ultra liberal views but kept instrumental music. While they oppose the missionary society of the Disciples of Christ denomination, they have something just as unscriptural, namely, the North American Christian Convention of the churches of Christ. There's not a dime's worth of difference in principle between this and the old missionary society.

The Institutional and Congregational Cooperation Perversions

The division over the missionary society and instrumental music left the churches of Christ small and struggling. By means of legal action, the Christian Church brethren took away most of the buildings and the majority of the brethren. They predicted that the "non-progressives" would soon die on the vine, and be non-existent. They underestimated the resilience and resolve of the brethren they despised and left behind. Few in number and poor financially, these brethren put their shoulders to the wheel and preached the gospel in school houses, brush arbors, and anywhere else they had opportunity, and within a few years they outnumbered the "progressive" churches in number of members and congregations. The Christian Churches dwindled in membership for lack of a distinctive plea and gradually came to admit to being just another denomination.

The conservative churches of Christ (non-instrumental) became a powerful force following the division. There was a tremendous up-surge following World War II, and at one time reportedly was rated the fastest growing church in the United States. But as in the 1800s, they could not stand prosperity, and so repeated the same mistakes of the past. It is said that those who refuse to learn from history are doomed to repeat it. Many brethren proved this with a vengeance as I shall show.

(a) *Benevolent societies*: One or two orphan homes eventually were founded by brethren who survived the Christian Church division. None of them antedating the turn of the 20th century. Churches were lulled into supporting them without ever detecting the parallel between them and the missionary society which they had vehemently opposed. There were a few voices raised against them on this basis, but hardly anyone took notice of it until the 1940s when this point was brought clearly into focus.

(b) *Church contributions to colleges*: In the 1940s a controversy arose over putting the colleges operated by brethren in the budgets of the churches. This controversy was sparked by G.C. Brewer, N.B. Hardeman and others. It reached its peak in a lengthy exchange of articles between Foy E. Wallace, Jr. and N.B. Hardeman in the *Bible Banner* and the *Gospel Advocate*. This controversy was taken to a new level and involved the orphan and old folks homes when Hardeman drew a parallel between church contributions to these benevolent societies and church contributions to the colleges, arguing that “they stand or fall together.” The advancement of this idea brought to the forefront the issue of church support of orphan homes, and so the controversy focused upon that issue only to return to the college issue later.

For several years the controversy over the right of churches to support orphan homes was heatedly discussed in the major journals and orally by well-known brethren from both sides. Those opposed were portrayed in the most reprehensible terms. They were called orphan haters, and people who would let poor little orphans starve before they would give it a cold biscuit, anti’s, etc. All this resulted in the breaking down of the brethren’s resistance to the church’s working through separate human organizations and led to an escalation of orphan homes and church contributions to them.

I am safe in saying that at the end of the Wallace-Hardeman discussion of the college-in-the-church-budget issue only a few brethren agreed with Hardeman. Some leading men who agreed with him on church support of orphan homes never agreed with him on the college issue, notably, Guy N. Woods, and others of similar stature. Brother Woods became their “champion” debater on the orphan’s home issue, but remained opposed, though not vociferously, to church contributions to colleges. In order to keep his standing among the liberal churches, he had to put his views on the college question on the “back burner,” though, to my knowledge, he held them until his death.

A return to the college-in-the-church-budget issue was inevitable, because, as Hardeman stated, “The college and the orphan homes stand or fall together.” The prolonged and heated discussion of the right of churches to support the orphan homes had tremendous emotional impact upon

the brethren’s opposition to church contributions to colleges. They were not willing to give up church support of orphan homes, so they had to swallow church support of the colleges or be convicted of inconsistency. Hardeman’s statement that “they stand or fall together” had now come full circle, and feeling that the time was ripe, Batsell Barrett Baxter, head of the Bible department at David Lipscomb College, floated this balloon again, quoting Hardeman’s statement in an article in the *Gospel Advocate* in a plea for church support of the colleges. Among his fellow-travelers, hardly an opposing voice was raised, though there was some slight opposition, which, seemingly, had very little, if any, impact. The bottom line of all this is that many of the churches aligned with the ultra liberal persuasion now contribute regularly to the colleges, as well as to orphan homes. It is quite significant that those among the ultra liberals, who in the past have opposed church support of the colleges, are as silent as a tomb on the subject these days.

(c) *The congregational cooperation perversion*. Following World War II, there was an upsurge of interest in world evangelism. The war had devastated Europe and Japan in the defeat of Hitler and godless Naziism and Japanese imperialism. The church in America was growing by leaps and bounds, and much enthusiasm was generated for taking the gospel to Germany, Italy, and Japan. Some of the larger American churches jumped into the forefront and sought to take charge of “mission” work in given areas. Broadway in Lubbock became the sponsoring church for Germany, Union Avenue in Memphis for the work in Japan, etc. Their idea was that since they had assumed the oversight of the work in a given area, any other churches that wanted to help in those areas must funnel their contributions through them. They would choose the preachers, define their territory of labor, set their compensation, and oversee their work and send reports to the supporting churches.

Sponsoring churches were not a new idea. Such arrangements were the forerunners of the missionary society in the 1800s, and reared their heads again about the turn of the century in West Tennessee, Texas, and perhaps some other localities. These were strongly opposed by David Lipscomb and others. Opposition to church contributions to orphan and old folks homes and the sponsoring churches dominated the scene from the late 1940s to the late 1960s, or there about.

The sponsoring church arrangement was a perversion of the *organization* of the church, and the orphan and old folks homes were a perversion its *mission*. Controversy over these matters ran parallel both in time and intensity. The periodicals were filled with opposing articles, and several debates were conducted by able brethren from both sides, some of which are still in print.

(d) *Current perversions*: Perversions of the gospel are always a work in progress; they never cease. Man is determined to make God in his own image, and his law into that which will serve his own purposes and justify his own actions and desires. The churches and brethren who fought the battles of the 1940s, 50s and 60s have done a good job of defending the gospel from those who would pervert it. Those of the second and third generation from those struggles bear no battle scars, and feel no pain from the heat of the struggle. Many of them have no appreciation of their heritage, but gradually are gravitating toward the errors of the past. Unfortunately and unexplainably, they have the leadership and encouragement from some who were engaged in the struggles of the past and who were quite active in it as their writings will testify.

But this is true to the history of past apostasies. Nobody ever spoke more decisively against denominationalism and its human societies than did Alexander Campbell, and yet he came to urge the missionary society upon the brethren and became its first president. Those who led in the battles of the 1940s to the 1960s against churches contributing to human organizations came to urge churches to contribute to a legal defense fund (a brotherhood treasury) which they would administer to try to rescue a brother's trust fund (a human organization) from the liberals, and in so doing, compromised and surrendered the principles for which they had contended for the last 40 or so years. In the course of that skirmish some of the brethren who supposedly were well grounded in these principles defended that proposal. I have often said, and firmly believe, that crises or issues don't make a man, they define him. In writing about this situation I asked the question, "Who will lead the church into the next apostasy?" I answered, "Probably some of those who led us in opposition to the last one." Sadly that prediction is coming true. At this point in my life and after some 50 years of preaching the gospel, I have to ask myself the question, "Who, really, is sound in the faith?" I have found that brethren don't always deserve the reputations they have. It is truthfully said, "Reputation is what men think of you; character is what God knows about you." I am convinced that some brethren's opposition to error depends upon who espouses it. I know this to be true because when a well-known and beloved brother espoused and publicly advocated error on the marriage question he was defended on the bases of his reputation and how much good he had done. It seems as though one can, by reputation and well doing, earn doctrinal immunity, so he can teach whatever he pleases without being called a false teacher and be kept in the fellowship of the brethren with impunity.

Today we are being told by those who should know better, that the marriage, divorce, and remarriage controversy should be settled by the principles of Romans 14. That is, we should just agree to disagree; draw no lines of fellowship, and let each believe and practice what he

pleases. That is to say that God cares not what we believe on this question. If this question belongs in Romans 14, then it matters not to God what one believes on it as long as he doesn't try to press it on others. One wonders if they would also put homosexuality and homosexual "marriages" in Romans 14. Will they put church contributions to human institutions and sponsoring churches there also, and what about instrumental music and premillennialism, and if not, why not? If one thing that matters to God can be put in Romans 14, then anything that matters to him can be placed there. The man doesn't live who can prove otherwise, and he who thinks he can is obligated to list the things that can be governed by the principles of Romans 14, and those which cannot.

Conclusion

It is easy to see the devastating effects of perverting the gospel. The matter is clear cut: the gospel delivered by divine inspiration is complete and all-sufficient, or it is worthless. If any part of it can be subtracted from it or added to it, who is to decide what can be subtracted or added? If you can subtract or add something, so can everyone else, so the gospel becomes useless and every man becomes a law unto himself and nothing is prohibited. This is why the gospel is complete and final and man is forbidden to tamper with it in any way (Gal. 1:8,9).

It is difficult for the church to avoid being invaded and influenced by the society in which it exists as history abundantly proves. Without unwavering and childlike faith in the all-sufficiency of the gospel, man's inventions look better than God's stipulations. Without this faith, centralized control of authority and resources looks better than congregational autonomy and independence; church-furnished recreation and general benevolence look better than evangelism, edification, and benevolence from the church limited to needy saints; instrumental music, choirs, solos, and special group singing look better than teaching the pure gospel, contributing on the first day of the week, singing, prayer and the communion; Human institutions to do the work of the church look better than each church quietly planning and doing its own work; Unity in diversity is more pleasant than buckling on the whole armor of God and contending earnestly for the faith; Fellowshiping the denominations while ignoring their false doctrines looks better than constantly exposing their errors; defending brethren who teach error looks better than exposing them; and unity in diversity among brethren looks better than standing for the purity of the church.

But if one possesses the child-like faith in the all-sufficiency of the gospel as God revealed it, these innovations are absurd and repugnant. These errors have been borrowed from Protestantism thus originate in human wisdom which is foolishness to God (1 Cor. 3:19).

1600 Oneco Ave., Winter Park, Florida 32789-1638

Occasions of Stumbling

Daniel H. King Sr.

Those of us who are a little bit clumsy will understand perfectly why it is that we have stumbled or fallen. Someone else always causes it. They leave things lying about in all the wrong places! Living-room tables are the most notorious culprits. Whoever first thought of them was probably a mean and hateful person. I seem to trip over them most often when I am not wearing shoes. Thus, I not only trip and fall, but am left with a bruised and wounded foot for several days. I also have a terrible problem with doorways. Most door openings are built for people with slender shoulders. Those of us who are wider of girth, especially if we are also clumsy, can have an awful time with them. As I write this article, I have a big bruise and a very sore shoulder because I caught the edge of the doorjamb going from one room to another in my home. The world is filled with occasions of stumbling to those of us who are awkward or (more politely) “ungraceful.”

Under the law one can be sued in court and found liable for damages for leaving an obstacle that others could stumble over on his property. This is one of the reasons that we have homeowners insurance, i.e., to protect against such lawsuits, and to pay the liability if we are deemed responsible.

We must also be aware that we are responsible for the obstacles we may place in the path of others spiritually. Jesus taught that we may be held accountable for the impediments which we, knowingly or unknowingly, put before others: *“Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come; but woe to that man through whom the occasion cometh!”* (Matt. 18:7). As the Lord spoke of children, he addressed the issue of spiritual culpability with these words: *“And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me: But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea”* (Matt. 18:5-6).

Each of us needs to be apprised of several important truths which are vividly brought out in these important texts:

1. The World Is Filled With Occasions of Stumbling.

A person who is clumsy does not have to look very far to find something to stumble over. Neither does a child who is learning to walk. He will even trip over the carpet itself out in the middle of an otherwise empty floor space. More than once, though, I have seen an older brother or sister topple the little one who is getting all of the parent’s attention. Usually, attention is only one of the things they received from the incident, and not of the kind they counted on!

“Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling! for it must needs be that the occasions come.” “It is a minefield out there!” the Lord says. None of us who have tried for several years to live the life of a Christian would ever tell a new convert anything different from this. An immature Christian must be aware that occasions of stumbling come in many forms: false doctrines, loose morals, older Christians who are weak or indifferent, pressure from people of the world to conform to their lifestyles and attitudes, etc. If we are aware that the world is like this, then we may prepare more fully, and keep our eyes open for those occasions.

2. The World Is Cursed For Such Occasions of Stumbling.

“Woe unto the world because of occasions of stumbling!” and, “But whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble, it is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea.” The world in general, most of it certainly, is headed down the road that leads to perdition (Matt. 7:13-14). The question for the Christian is whether we want to go down that road. If we do, then we know it will take us to the same place that it is taking the rest of the world. The road from Nashville to Memphis winds up in Memphis. It’s that simple. There are no exceptions. Each of us has others who are depending upon us for help and support, spiritually speaking. If we fail to provide the wholesome spiritual advice, the love and encouragement — and most important of all — the illustration of what a Christian ought to be and do, then we will have become an “occasion of stumbling” which will provide them with just the excuse they may be looking for to quit trying.

Hell Hath No Fury

Steve Willis

This is from a review of a review of their new publication: *The Mystery of Salvation*. The book has not been available to the reviewers at the time of writing, but this is based on interviews and reports from England:

“On the 11th day of January, *Anno Domini* MCMXCVI, the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England published a 220-page report, *The Mystery of Salvation*. There the theologians of the ‘middle way’ declare there is indeed a Hell. But it’s not a place of suffering, physical or otherwise. It is ‘total non-being.’

“‘Total non-being,’ marvels a skeptical [sic] Peter Kreeft, a philosopher at Boston College and author of *A Handbook on Christian Apologetics*. ‘Hell exists, but if you’re there, you don’t. They endorse the existence of what isn’t, the being of non-being. How very inclusive.’

“Two weeks after its publication, *The Mystery of Salva-*

tion is still non-existent at the Anglican Church of Canada’s headquarters in Toronto. But according to media reports from London, the document treats the bare-bones existence of hell as a logical necessity. ‘No one can be compulsorily installed in heaven,’ it is quoted as saying. ‘The possibility remains for each human being of a final rejection of God’” (*Alberta Report*, “Hell hath no fury — at all” [Jan 29, 1996], 32).

Some of this doctrine seems similar to the Jehovah’s Witness teaching on hell, and not a lot different than that presented by Edward Fudge in his book *The Fire that Consumes*. Fudge is mentioned and answered in a book, *Repent or Perish (With a Special Reference to the Conservative Attack on Hell)* by John H Gerstner. (**Note:** Gerstner to holds the Calvinist doctrine that children are born in guilt and in sin and he denies baptismal regeneration.)

3. Occasions of Stumbling Are A Necessary Part of the Human Dilemma and the Divine Plan. “It must needs be that the occasions come. . .” said the Savior. They have been around since Eve handed the forbidden fruit to her husband, he tried it also, and they both fell into sin. They will be here so long as the world stands. Such tests fulfill an important part in God’s strategy for his world, since they prove the mettle of a man, whether he will stand up under trial: “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he hath been approved, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to them that love him*” (Jas. 1:12).

4. Woe To The Man Through Whom Occasions of Stumbling Come. Even though they are an essential part of the world as it is presently constructed, and it suits the plan of God for there to be obstacles to righteousness and faithfulness, nevertheless the person who acts as an occasion of stumbling to others is not therefore free of responsibility or

guilt for what he has done. “Woe to the man. . .” said Jesus. The portrait which the Lord paints in the mind’s eye is not a pretty one: “It is profitable for him that a great millstone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea” (v. 6). It would be a ghastly and macabre thing to be thrown into the depths with a heavy weight tied to the neck! The Lord said “it would be better. . .” (NIV) than being a stumbling-block to others! Let us be ever mindful of our example before others. Let us never provide an “occasion of stumbling” which may lead to another’s fall from grace and loss of heaven, for in the process we may well lose out on heaven ourselves.

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Philippine Profiles (4)

Jim McDonald

“And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: and Jesus also was bidden, and his disciples, to the marriage” (John 2:1f). Inasmuch as God himself saw the need that man has for a mate and filled that need with the creation of Eve, it was altogether fitting that Jesus should attend such a ceremony. We have both attended and performed wedding ceremonies here in the States and have witnessed a great number of Philippine weddings. The first Filipino wedding I saw was in Ilocos Norte. A couple had been living together for several years; they had conceived and borne several children, but they had never been married legally. They came in contact with the gospel. Brethren knew of their marital status and would not baptize them until first they legalized their union. So, surrounded by well-wishers, future brethren, and their children, they were joined together as husband and wife and then carried to the south China Sea and were baptized. I often am asked about the faithfulness of the many who are baptized there. I cannot attest of all, but this couple has remained faithful during the past four and one-half years since their wedding day. A year or so ago there was a “mass wedding” at the same place. Five couples (I think) living in the same condition, legalized their union before brethren would immerse them. I suspect that not all brethren in the Philippines have that sort of conviction these Ilocos brethren have, but they ought to.

Planning for weddings may bring problems for both families of the engaged couple. This is true not only here in the States but there in the Islands as well. Some problems have a common denominator: finances. Wherever there is a wedding someone has to “foot the bill.” Here in the States it is normally the parents of the bride who bear the cost of such, but in the Philippines, it is the parents of the groom.

Superstitions abound about weddings, here and there. Recently a brother wrote to tell of a problem he had. His daughter planned a September wedding this year. Later his son determined he would also marry this year. So what is

the problem with that? Only that the future daughter-in-law’s parents are Catholic and they believe the prevalent superstition that if a brother and sister both marry within the same year, something bad will happen to one or the other of their families. The problem was solved when an “authority on the superstition” said that if the brother and sister should marry in the same ceremony, there would be no problem. A hurried September wedding was planned for the son and his fiancée.

Do we smile at such? It isn’t only in the Philippines that superstitions exist about marriages. When I was about to perform my first wedding ceremony (45 years ago), we were arranging a place for where the wedding party would stand since it was to be a “home wedding.” The bride’s mother was horrified at our selection because it meant that the wooden slats in the floor ran “the wrong way.” According to the superstition, if the couple should stand on different slats so that “cracks” were between them, they would have friction all their married life. To insure harmony and peace, they must both stand on the same slat! We changed the position for the wedding party. Today the couple is still together. He is an elder in the Lord’s church and they have fine grown children, all Christians. One could never find a more loving, happy couple, but I don’t think standing on the same slat in the floor had anything to do with that!

At one time every married couple here in the States had a couple of witnesses of their wedding who also signed their licenses. In the Philippines all attending the ceremony are invited to sign the licenses as witnesses. Philippine tradition is that the first witnesses are designated as “compadres” or “kumpadres” which means “co-parents.” The bridal couple views them with great respect and regards them as a part of their family. In the eventuality of discord between the couple, it is the duty of the compadres to help them mend their ways.

On our last trip to the Philippines, brother Marrs and I

arrived at the place we were scheduled to speak and found a wedding in progress. At such social occasions as weddings (and funerals) brethren use these as opportunities to preach the word, and so we did! Both brother Marrs and I preached that day to a house full of both brethren and guests; and sitting in front of the whole audience for the whole preaching service was the newly wed bride and groom, still dressed in all their wedding finery! Addenda: Eight (I think) souls responded to the invitation and were baptized into Christ.

Support Needed

The following letter came from Virgil B. Villanueva, Eastside church of Christ, 9802 Lambayang, Sultan Kudarat, Republic of the Philippines upon his having heard of the death of Cecil Willis.

“The news about Cecil’s death is very much shocking. Truly we have lost a valiant and fearless soldier of the cross. To the Filipino brethren, we have lost a real friend and brother with big, big heart. Oh his love and deep concern for the Philippine work is far beyond measure, he always stood ready to give a helping hand many times going out of himself, stretching out his head to find a way how he could extend help. My family and I are one among those numerous brethren who were benefited by such a generosity of a brother who looked not only for his own but that of others also (Phil. 2:4; 1 Cor. 10:24, 33). He will be long remembered among us, though dead he will continue to speak. The many congregations that were started, church buildings that were erected, will stand high and tall to remind us of Cecil. He is there waving his hands to every preacher who goes out to preach.

“Brother Jim, I now surely lost Cecil’s support. The last letter I got from him was dated May 3, with the enclosed support for that month. To date, I have not yet received any word from his son-in-law about his death. Wally Little wrote me about it. . . . if you know of any church or individual who is interested in having a part in sharing financially in the most noble work the world ever had of reaching and saving the lost for Christ please, endorse me for support. I’ve lost \$100 a month, supposed to be \$50 starting this month as per the last letter of Cecil to me.”

Brother Vilanueva had been supported by Cecil’s generosity and love for many years. Virgil has had his own share of woes. His son was mortally wounded and efforts to save his life brought great and burdensome bills to Virgil. Several helped Virgil to bear this burden, including, I believe, Cecil. Cecil cannot continue his monthly support of this one whom he felt worthy. Is there some brother or church that will pick up what Cecil can no longer do that the work Virgil is doing might go on in the civil strife-torn region in which he lives?

P.O. Box 155032, Lufkin, Texas 75915-5032

“Priorities” continued from front page

(Deut. 6:6-7). We were never specifically “told” to read our Bible. We were encouraged to because Mom and Dad were always reading and teaching us what they read. The message we got was loud and clear: *nothing* came before God and doing his will.

That doesn’t seem to be the standard in many families any more. In each of the six gospel meetings I have preached this past year, I have had at least one person come up to me and say something like, “These lessons have been so good I sure hate to miss tomorrow night, but we have (fill in the blank: soccer, back to school night, Girl Scouts, etc.)” One person told me he wouldn’t be back for Sunday evening worship because of a “soccer-fest.” When I replied in amazement, “You are missing worship for soccer?” He said, “Oh, I’ll get the tape!” Unfortunately, he had missed the point. However, my biggest surprise is not that many Christians are putting the world’s things before the Lord, but that they are so open about it. They act like no one in their right mind would deny a child their special activity just to go to worship. In fact, it isn’t the child that is feeling deprived, it is the parent.

Revelation 12:11 states, “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death.*” We as parents need to be practicing and teaching this kind of fierce, unwavering commitment to the Lord. Even the threat of death will not quiet the word of our testimony. Children recognize priorities in their simplest form. We cannot say, “It is *only* Wednesday evening worship or *only* Sunday evening worship.” It is what we do “instead of” something else that expresses what is important. It is whether we take time every week to tell our children about Abraham, Joseph, Daniel, and all the others, that makes a difference when they must make similar decisions. It is what we get most excited about and make sacrifices to do, that tells others, especially our children, where our heart is. “*For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*” (Matt. 6:21).

From Echo of Truth, Olney, Illinois, November 23, 1997

Jesus Christ Today
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“Believe in God” continued from page 2

religion been in harmony with first century science, how outdated that would be today. Similarly, twentieth century science will be replaced by twenty-first century science. We can be thankful that our Bibles do not totally agree with our contemporary sciences.

Design Indicates A Designer

One of the primary reasons for believing in God is the evidence of design. Design is all around us. Modern scientists explain the obvious design in our world as the product of billions of years of unguided evolution. Nevertheless, they admit that creatures are marvelously adjusted to their respective environment. We call this design.

Here are some evidences of design in the universe:

1. *The eye.* The wise man of old said, “The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the Lord hath made even both of them” (Prov 20:12). Each eye is fitted to its environment.

Consider the eye of the fish. “For instance; these laws (laws of the refraction of light passing through objects, MW) require in order to produce the same effect, that the rays of light, in passing from water into the eye, should be refracted by a more convex surface, than when it passes out of air into the eye. Accordingly we find that the eye of the fish, in that part of it called the crystalline lens, is much rounder than the eye of the terrestrial animals. What plainer manifestation of design can there be than this difference?” (*The Works of William Paley* 391).

“The fish has larger eyes proportionately because he is down there where light rays do not penetrate as well as through air” (Luther Blackmon, *God or Evolution*).

Consider the eye of the eel. “In the eel, which has to work its head through sand and gravel, the roughest and hardest substances, there is placed before the eye, and at some distance from it, a transparent, horny, convex case or covering, which, without obstructing sight, defends the organ” (Paley 393).

Consider the eye of birds: “The eye of the eagle is one of the marvels of nature. He can see a field mouse in the grass a quarter of mile away. He also must be able to see at a very close range when he dives into the grass or water to seize his victim. The eyes of all birds must have this variation in distance of vision. They must be able to see at great distances, especially the meat eaters, as they fly over the landscape. Then they must be able to see at a few inches when they are eating. ‘Chance might produce a wart or a mole, but never an eye’” (Blackmon 15-16).

Have you considered the tear duct of the eye? “It is easily perceived that the eye must want moisture: but could

the want of the eye generate the gland which produces the tear, or bore the hole by which it is discharged, — a hole through the bone?” (Paley 394).

2. *The Skeletal System.* “Between each two of the bones of the spine there is a soft cushion which is known as the intervertebral disk. This serves like a ball bearing and a shock absorber. . . Its presence permits the bones of the spine to rotate more easily one on the other” (*Illustrated Medical and Health Encyclopedia*, Ed. by Morris Fishbein, M.D., 1932).

“Then, secondly, in order to afford a passage for the descent of the medullary substance, each of these bones is bored through the middle in such a manner, as that, when put together, the hole in one bone falls into line, and corresponds with the holes in the two bones continuous to it” (Paley 405).

3. *The Universe:* “The earth makes an annual trip around the Sun of more than 292 million miles, traveling at the speed of about 70,000 miles an hour. Did you ever look up the word ‘year’ in the dictionary? Webster says, ‘the length of time it takes the earth to make one complete revolution around the sun: 365 days, 5 hours, 48 minutes and 45.51 seconds.’ Leap year takes care of the time above 365 days. That is why we have leap year. For all these thousands of years the earth has made this annual trip and is never off time one second. There was never a WATCH made to operate with such precision. Then some little ‘popgun’ sticks his claws behind his gulluses and says ‘that an eternal, self-existent God designed and created all this is not to be thought of’” (Blackmon 11-12).

4. *The Woodpecker:* “The woodpecker has feet specially designed for holding to the upright body of a tree. His tail feathers are designed for a brace to help hold his body in proper position while he works on the tree. His bill is like a chisel, tough and sharp for digging into the tree. There is a cushion behind that tough beak to protect his head from the beating it would get from his banging his bill against the tree. Then this bird has a tongue with a barb on the end which enables him to reach into the hole he digs in the tree and get the worm or ant which he somehow knew was there before he started all this work.

“But, not only must the various organs of his body conform in this manner, but his surroundings must also conform. The bird’s barbed tongue, unique bill, strong tail feathers, cushion in the head and unusual feet would serve no purpose unless there were worms and bugs in the tree. Now if you want to be with the ‘in’ crowd you must believe that all these characteristics were developed over a period of many millions of years, while Mr. Woodpecker was adapting to his environment. This all comes easy to the twentieth century woodpecker. He has been this way

all his life. But how about the woodpecker before he developed all the wonderful accessories? The old timers must have really had it tough. Many of them doubtless starved before their bills got hard enough to bore into a tree; others wound up punch drunk from banging their heads against trees before the cushion developed in their heads. I cannot help wondering also why the worms and bugs did not develop some escape mechanism while the woodpecker was developing all this. The worm does not seem to have much going for him, but he is still with us in abundance” (Blackmon 17-18).

5. *Instinct* is defined as “an inborn tendency to behave in a way characteristic of a species; natural, unacquired mode of response to stimuli.” One cannot explain instinct without God.

The Water Spider. “Like other spiders the water spider is an air-breathing animal. But it lives under water. . . When we examine this spider we find his body covered with hairs that keep it from becoming wet when in the water. In order to live under water and raise its young there, it must weave a waterproof cell or balloon, capable of holding enough air for breathing purposes — remember this critter breathes air — not water. To have the balloon it had to have the instinct and material to make it. It spins under water an egg-shaped balloon, open at the bottom for entrance and egress. Then it attaches the balloon to a rock or something to hold it under water. Now it has to fill this balloon with air. To accomplish this its hind legs are covered with hair and are so constructed that they can take hold of a large bubble of air and take it down under the water and into the balloon. When it has made several trips with this light cargo the balloon is full of air and the water has been forced out by the air. Here the eggs are laid in the upper part of the house and the family is in business” (Blackmon 23-24).

The Salmon fish: “The salmon fish live in a cycle of four years, no more, and always return to the waters of their nativity to die. They are hatched in rivers of the northwest, and shortly thereafter go out to sea where they stay until time for them to spawn and die. When they return to their native waters they always find the same river or creek in which they were spawned. If they start up some other stream they immediately recognize their mistake, go back and continue up the coast until they find the right stream. Here they spawn and die. How are they able to identify their birthplace after years in the sea? The word is instinct. But try defining the word without getting back to a wisdom that did not and could not evolve from a lump of dead matter” (Blackmon 24).

The Eel: “Both the American and the European eels are spawned in the waters off the coast of Bermuda. Then after a while they go to their native land. There has never been found an European eel in American waters nor an

American eel in European waters. How does the eel find his way ‘home’ when he has never been home? Not only this, but the mating time for the European eel is months later than the American eel so that they will have time to get to the spawning waters, the distance being much greater to Europe” (Blackmon 25).

Where Did the Design in the Universe Originate?

Is it possible to explain these evidences of design on the basis of unguided evolution, the survival of the fittest, or mere chance? The probability of this much design coming from unguided chance is nil. If you were to put 10 pennies in your pocket numbered 1-10 and then attempt to take out number 1, put it back, take out number 2, put it back, take out number 3. . . 10, the chance of this occurring is 1 in 10 BILLION!

Someone has compared a universe created by chance, by unguided evolution, to *Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary* being produced by an explosion at a print shop or to the 1998 Cadillac being produced by an explosion at the junk yard! How many explosions would have to occur before either was produced? Yet the evidences of design in the dictionary and car are much less remarkable than what exists in one human body, much less in all of the animals of this creation!

There is not enough time in any evolutionist’s view of the age of the world to explain the many adaptations of nature on the basis of unguided, chance development. A universe 4.5 billion years old is much too young for what we see to have developed by undirected chance evolution. Indeed, a universe 45 billions old would still be too young!

The only other alternative is to believe in a designer. That Designer, the Christian calls God.

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Obituary

Hayden Mahan

A truly great "sweet singer of Israel" has gone the way of all the earth. Hayden Mahan, a faithful and strong gospel preacher, an excellent song leader and teacher of "singing schools," died October 24, 1997 in a hospital in Little Rock, while undergoing heart surgery. I first met him in March 1949 when I first began to preach. He came to teach a "singing school" for the Crowder, Missouri church. We have been close friends through all the years.

Hayden was born near Damascus, Arkansas and grew up in the Rabbit Ridge church a few miles northwest of there and was teaching the Sunday morning auditorium class for this church until his death. He preached at Holland and Cardwell, Missouri in the late 40s and until the mid-50s, at which time he moved to Marshall and lived in that community until his death. He preached for the church in Marshall for many years, than at Big Flat, some 20 miles east of his home, for a number of years. After he stopped his "full time" work, he preached for several different churches in that part of Arkansas. The last of which was at Pyatt, where he had preached the Sunday before his death.

Back in 1948 he was a teacher, along with Austin Taylor, in the famous "Texas Singing Normal." He was very popular in his part of the world as a teacher of "singing schools." As a song leader, he was "tops." He has lead singing for a number of meetings in which I have preached and our friendship was enriched by each. Last April he visited three nights of a meeting with the Stone Street church in Jonesboro, and on Thursday night, the 24th, just six months before his death, he lead the singing. This was to be the last time he would lead the singing where I was preaching.

Although he was a faithful gospel preacher for more than 60 years, he was more in demand as a singer. He led singing in meetings for C.R. Nichol, Foy E. Wallace, Jr., Harold F. Sharp, Eugene Britnell, and a host of other gospel preachers as you can imagine over a period of 60 years. But more than a song leader and teacher, he knew so many of the song writers and could tell the story behind many of the songs we sing.

The church building was filled the day of the funeral. At least eight gospel preachers besides myself were present. Recorded music, gospel singing, was played for about an hour before the service, and the last fifteen minutes or so was the singing of Hayden and three others in a quarter he had put together while preaching at Holland, Missouri.

He was buried at Marshall, Arkansas in a cemetery surrounded by the beautiful Ozarks, which he loved so much. His wife, Cora Jane, was buried there in December 1994. The marker was in place and the inscription: "I am the resurrection and the life."

He was indeed a "meek and gentle" man, soft spoken and tender hearted. He was a lover of the truth and of those who preached it and stood for it. The wise man said, "*A man that hath friends must show himself friendly; and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Prov. 18:24). Hayden was one of those kind of friends to me. Just six weeks before his death, my wife and I visited with him and spent the night in this home, my last visit with him in this world. We said goodbye to one of our dearest friends on earth, realizing that we have not time to make another friend like this one. But we are both men of hope and truly believe that "When the Roll is Called up Yonder" we'll be there! For, as the song Hayden requested for his funeral says: "This world is not my home." **Billy Moore, Rt. 1, Box 237, Adrian, MO 64720.**

Field Reports



Alan Caldwell, 201 Lynn Ln. #36, Starkville, MS 39759.

Greetings, from your brothers and sisters in Sturgis, Mississippi. Thank you brethren so much for your fervent prayers and support. Let us all thank our God in Heaven for his rich and wonderful blessings.

In April, we hosted a Spring Lectureship regarding Christian Living. Five speakers (Roosevelt Johnson, Earl Mitchell, Mark McCrary, Terry Benton, and David Harwell) taught us lessons on giving, edification, church attendance, modest apparel and dancing. There was good attendance from area Christians and non-Christians. Two of our young people were baptized as a result of the gospel being taught. We rejoice in this news.

June and July were busy months for me as I held meetings in Nacogdoches, Texas and Polkton, North Carolina. The meeting in Texas resulted in two members being restored back into Christ; and the meeting in North Carolina resulted in a Baptist man (who visited the meeting several nights) being baptized. Both meetings had great attendance; new friendships were formed as well. Faithful brethren preached in my absence.

In August, Sturgis hosted another meeting with W.L. Blanton of the Shawnee Church of Christ in Nacogdoches, Texas. Our members were greatly edified; the attendance was wonderful. Several non-Christians came out to hear the gospel.

In September, I had orthopedic surgery on my right foot. Recovery has been slow, but I thank those who have prayed for me and sent me get well cards. I am currently preaching from a chair, but all in all, the gospel is still being preached!

October has been a good month also. Two more of our young men were baptized. They have been helping out with the work by serving the Lord's supper, leading songs, and reading Scripture. We are so blessed to have these young men *wanting* to help out with the work here. Their parents are working extra hard with them by teaching them more about Christ and his church. Our only other (adult) man in our congregation, brother Joe Seals continues to teach the young converts. He enjoys teaching this class. Our attendance at Sturgis continues to hold steady.

In November we had to withdraw from one of our members who went astray. The decision was tough, but we as Christians must do what the Bible says. We continue to pray for her return to the Lord.

I continue to teach and preach every Sunday and Wednesday night. I also continue to preach on two thirty-minute weekly radio programs. One of the radio programs is now on a new radio station in Starkville. I am hoping to reach more listeners; this station has a large African-American audience. I am paying the expenses for this program out of my own pocket, but it is worth every penny; I have already received responses. The other radio program, which caters to a predominantly white audience, is still doing well. I have been with that station since 1993. Truly, the gospel is needed by all men of all races.

The television and newspaper advertisements regarding home Bible studies and correspondence courses are still going strong. I teach and send out courses as the opportunity arises. Please continue to pray for these efforts of teaching the Gospel.

Once again, brethren, thank you so much for your prayers and support. I want to give a special thanks to Ron Halbrook for helping me prepare these reports and *Truth Magazine* for printing the news of our progress. Until my next report, continue to keep the Faith.

David D. Bonner, P.O. Box 926, Lufkin, TX 75902: After working with the Gore Blvd. church of Christ, Lawton, Oklahoma for over 17 ½ years, I am now working with the Fourth & Groesbeck church in Lufkin, Texas.

John Humphries, 8705 Wooded Glen Rd., Louisville, KY

40220: We wish to begin by expressing our deep gratitude to all of you for your prayers and support that made his evangelistic effort possible. John Tyler and I left the USA for India on September 17.

In response to the gospel, 62 precious souls were baptized into Christ. Training classes were held in several cities/villages for gospel preachers and numerous gospel meetings were also conducted. Bibles in the Telugu language of Andhra Pradesh, South India were provided for saints who were too poor to purchase them. Many thousands of gospel tracts were printed. More are being printed, even as we write this report. Thousands of these tracts have been distributed and conversions have come about as a result of the teaching. These conversions include Hindus, Moslems, and denominational people.

I had written three tracts this past summer and had them translated into the Indian languages of South India. The three tracts addressed three population groups in India. The titles were "To Our Hindu Friends," "To Our Islamic Friends," and "To Our Catholic and Denominational Friends." Converts were made through each of these tracts. Two other tracts that I had written earlier were also translated and distributed. Their titles were "Who Will Go To Heaven?" and "Obeying the Gospel." There were several tracts written by Bill Beasley and others that were printed and distributed by the brethren. These tracts are very helpful and a good supply should always be on hand for the Indian preachers. They are a very important tool for them in doing their gospel work. The number of tracts to be printed is only limited by the amount of funds available for the printing. The Indian preachers are always asking for more tracts.

Due to the generosity of several individuals, ten bicycles were purchased for our brethren in India.

Thirty reference Bibles were purchased for the gospel preachers for their study and use.

Due to cyclones (hurricanes) in coastal South India, benevolence was also given to needy saints.

While I was in India, I went to a small town near the village where I was staying and called my dear wife, Elva, on the phone. She told me that she had been experiencing some difficulty and was diagnosed as having colon cancer necessitating surgery as soon as it could be arranged. Of course, I was in shock and realized that I must return home as soon as possible to be with her. I went back to the village and told the brethren that I had to leave for home. After tearful good byes, we left to go back to Hyderabad where the airport is located.

The village, where brother Moses preaches, is a two-day drive from Hyderabad. One also has to cross a very large river (the Godaviri) which is the size of the Ohio River. There

is no bridge close to the village where we were preaching in East Godaviri District near the East Bay of Bengal. We had to hire a barge and cross the monsoon-swollen river at night! Otherwise, we would have had to drive an extra hundred miles upstream for the nearest bridge. Anyway, after driving all night, we reached Hyderabad safely and were soon on our way back to Louisville. Brother John Tyler remained in India and continued with the Bible classes and gospel meetings that were scheduled. The gospel work went on.

Elva has now had the surgery and is doing well. She will begin preventive chemotherapy in a few days. The doctors give her a good outlook for which we are thankful. Pray for her, please.

I started going to India in 1976 and this is the first time that I have had to leave early because of a family emergency.

If anyone has any questions, please contact me. God willing, I will return to India next September. Thank you again for your concern, prayers, and support.

Benevolence Needed

H.E. Phillips, P.O. Box 1631, Lutz, FL 33549: On April of this year, twins (a boy, Tyler, and a girl, Taylor) were born to Kristen and Scott Flatt who live in Lutz, Florida. The babies were delivered by Caesarean procedure and were born healthy. However, Kristen developed a fever and a higher than normal white blood count. The doctors thought it might be caused by an infection that she had developed due to the birth of her twins. After a few days and a few tests there was no change in her blood counts. A hematologist was called in and he made more tests of her blood and discovered a possible bone marrow disorder. She was in the hospital for 17 days and then finally sent home. After a week at home she returned to the hospital for a bone marrow aspiration and biopsy. The results came back that she had Chronic Myelogenous Leukemia.

Kristen is the daughter of Wayne and Allison Kuykendall of Athens, Alabama and granddaughter of Mr. & Mrs. Robert Hendrix of Huntsville, Alabama. Her husband, Scott, is the son of Jerry and Elaine Flatt. His grandparents are H.E. and Polly Phillips and V.L. Flatt all of Tampa, Florida.

Kristen and Scott are a faithful young couple and loved by all who know them. They both have a positive attitude about their future. They put their faith in God to bless them through the hard days and months ahead. We urgently need and ask for the prayers of faithful Christians, publicly and privately. Please pray for her often.

After many months of tests and trips to H. Lee Moffitt in

Tampa, M.D. Anderson in Houston, Texas, and Fred Hutchinson in Seattle, Washington, it was decided that Kristen will receive a bone marrow transplant in Seattle. All of the doctors have told her that a bone marrow transplant is the only way she will survive this disease. Tests were performed on her sisters to be possible donors. Her younger sister, Katie, is a 5 out of 6 match. They searched for a perfect match in the bone marrow bank but did not find one. Katie will be the donor for the transplant. The doctors give Kristen an 80 percent chance of success.

Kristen and Scott, the babies, and their immediate families flew out to Seattle on the day before Thanksgiving. They will rent an apartment, look for furnishings, and try to get settled. After the Thanksgiving holiday their families will return to their homes, except for Elaine and Allison. They must stay to help with the babies and Kristen when she comes home from the hospital. It is very important to Kristen that her babies be there with her during her transplant. The tests begin at the hospital on December 2. The transplant will take place on the December 22 after two weeks of intense treatment. She will then be in the hospital for about six weeks. These days will be critical.

Scott and Kristen have been told that they will be in Seattle at least 5 months and maybe longer. The doctors and hospital expenses are covered by their insurance. The procedure is about \$250,000 to \$300,000. It is conservatively estimated that the living expenses, some medical tests expenses, and travel expenses will be at least \$30,000 to \$45,000. This expense is not covered by insurance. Over \$3,000 has already been paid for some of these expenses. This is a tremendous amount for a young couple like Scott and Kristen, even with help from their families. If you can and will help with some of these expenses, we would be extremely grateful. An account has been opened at the SunTrust Bank in Land O'Lakes, Florida in the name of Kristen Flatt. Please send what you can to Kristen Flatt, P.O. Box 1586, Lutz, Florida 33548. They will be most grateful to you. But most of all we ask your sincere prayers to God for Kristen. All gifts received will go toward Kristen's expenses.

Evangelism Studies

January 31, 1998

Speakers: Harold Comer, Ken Weliever,
Jody Broyles, Ricky Shanks

9:00 A.M.
Central Church of Christ,
2967 N.E. Silver Springs Blvd.,
Ocala, FL 34470.

For lodging and information call 352-629-2413