



Surface Cures

Larry Ray Hafley

Filling a pothole does not fix the road. It is merely a temporary “surface cure.” Make-up does not do away with unwanted lines and wrinkles (sorry, ladies!), it simply hides them from view. A hair-piece will hide my bald spot. It will not restore my hair.

As an example of an attempted “surface cure,” note the following:

“A conference of police chiefs and black leaders recommended . . . that President Clinton establish a presidential commission to study the uneasy relationship between blacks and police officers in America.” The president of the National Urban Coalition, said many young black men have very hostile attitudes toward authority and police in particular. ‘I work with young people every day. . . . The alienation and the resistance among the young is devastating. It’s dangerous for them and for the police. We would like to help the (police) chiefs get their departments more in tune with what the young people need, while we work to make sure the young people are not so anti-social and so hostile.’”

Changing the hearts of “hostile” and “anti-social” people is the only cure. This work cannot be done by a conference, a commission, a coalition, or a police panel. Primarily, it is the work of the home and family.

Conferences are not the cure. Changing the “tune” of police departments is not the solution. Changing the hearts of “hostile” and “anti-social” people is the only cure. This work cannot be done by a conference, a commission, a coalition, or a police panel. Primarily, it is the work of the home and family.

War in the streets has been preceded by a dismantling of the domestic realm. Sexual promiscuity and the celebration of the termination of marriage have produced a generation of “hostile” and “anti-social” young people. The end is not yet. It will become worse. Why? In part, because we are treating the surface. We are filling pot-holes and applying make-up when only a complete overhaul of the heart will do (Prov. 4:23).

As long as society honors “hostile,” “anti-social” misfits (John Lennon, Dennis Rodman, and Curt Cobain come to mind) as heroes while it seeks *see “Surface Cures” on p. 696*

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Editorial

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The Temptations Related to Church Growth

Mike Willis

Across the country church growth seminars are conducted among denominational and liberal folks designed to teach others how to cause churches to grow. None of us is content with dead and dying churches; we want to see souls saved, those who are fallen away restored, and churches growing so that buildings must be enlarged. We are encouraged to see exhortations to greater faithfulness in proclaiming the gospel to the lost, reaching out to unsaved men and women with the gospel of the grace of God. However, this is not what is occurring in church growth seminars.

Things One Must Do To Make the Church Grow

The program for church growth can be analyzed. It's the same for almost all of the denominations and it almost always involves the following things:

1. Generic preaching. Preaching that draws the crowds must be positive, feel-good preaching. This preaching eschews doctrinal sermons that discuss such topics as inherited depravity, impossibility of apostasy, election, grace and works, and other such weighty topics. Rather, the content of such sermons must be things that meet the needs of the audience — how to overcome depression, how to raise teenaged children, how to survive mid-life crisis, and such like topics.

The sermons must also not emphasize sin, except in vague, general terms. Everyone is against sin, so preaching must condemn generic sin, but never become specific to address such things as divorce and remarriage, immodest dress, dancing, social drinking, gambling, or other relevant issues that might leave anyone in the audience feeling condemned when they depart the worship services. If he feels condemned, he may not return for services next week.

Furthermore, the pulpit must not be used to condemn another's religion. Sermons that expose the false doctrines taught by the Mormons, Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, and other denominations are avoided, because they may "offend" some visitor who would never return to the services. After all, this is the aim of the sermon — to present a message

See "Church Growth" p. 696

Why Did You Send For Me?

Connie W. Adams

On the instruction of an angel of God, Cornelius, the Roman centurion, sent men to Joppa to locate Simon Peter and bring him to the house of Cornelius. Peter himself had received a vision in which he was told not to call common or unclean what God had cleansed. The next day, Peter and six Jewish brethren accompanied these messengers to Caesarea to the house of the centurion. Upon arrival, they found a collection of kinsmen and friends of Cornelius. Peter said, "Therefore came I unto you without gainsaying, as soon as I was sent for: I ask therefore for what intent ye have sent for me?" (Acts 10:29).

That was a fair question then and it is a fair one now when brethren send for a preacher either to come and live along them or for a gospel meeting. Sometimes the expectations of the preacher and those of the people who sent for him are not the same. Therein lies the cause of misunderstandings, friction, and sometimes division.

Why He Did NOT Send For Peter

Peter did not come to be idolized and venerated and to establish a cult built around his personality. In fact, when Cornelius fell down before Peter when he arrived, Peter quickly told him to "stand up; I myself also am a man" (v. 26). There is no indication that Peter delayed for a few moments to savor this adulation. If a preacher comes to a place expecting to be put on some sort of pedestal to be adored but never questioned, then there are going to be some rough times. There is something wrong with the general view that the preacher alone is responsible for the success or failure of the work. He may well be a contributing factor in either case, but the work must be built around him. Peter was a messenger of the gospel. The message was not his. He was obligated to deliver it without change.

He did not send for Peter to entertain and amuse himself, his kindred or his friends with bursts of eloquence, one-liners, and pitiful stories to make them cry. The motive in sending for him was much nobler than that. Sadly, that is what untaught or worldly minded church members want and expect. They will come in droves to hear such delivered by gifted speakers but they will stay away when such adornments are missing.

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He did not send for Peter to take over his God-given responsibilities. That is what some think the work of a preacher to be. They want an official socializer who will be visible at all the right times and places to enhance the image of the church before the world. You know, someone who can convince the community that he is a “good ole boy.” They want someone to do all their personal work for them. Sometimes brethren will advertise for a preacher and will say “it doesn’t matter if he is able in the pulpit as long as he is a good personal worker.” Is this an advertisement for mediocrity in the pulpit? Paul told Timothy to commit what he had learned to “faithful men who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tim. 2:2). Does this mean that a man is expected to do his part personally in teaching the lost, or does it mean that they are going to fulfill their work by proxy through this hired hand? Cornelius did not depend on Peter, after his arrival to round up his relatives and friends. He did that himself.

He did not send for Peter to organize sports and entertainment for the young people. Peter was not expected to organize some sort of mountain or wilderness survival expedition or lead an adventure to see who could be the first to cross the Mediterranean in a rowboat. He was not to arrange for surfing contests down at the sea. No, his motives were higher than that.

Why DID He Send For Peter?

The angel had said to Cornelius that “he shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved” (Acts 11:14). That very statement told Cornelius that he and his house were lost. The means out of that peril involved the speaking of words. Notice that the angel did not tell him what to do. That was not in the divine plan. God purposed to use human agency in delivering the necessary words. “Preach the word” (2 Tim 4:2). This same Peter said once, “Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life” (John 6:68). Such words are of the utmost importance and urgency. They must be heard at all cost.

“Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17).

Cornelius said, “Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

Observe that he sent “immediately.” It could not wait. “Thou hast done well that thou art come.” Cornelius did his part in sending for Peter. Peter did his part by coming even though his entrance into that house violated every principle of separateness that Peter as a Jew had always observed. Both men showed great faith in God. The Lord’s plan was to bring a faithful messenger of the word together with a man and his house which needed to hear the message. That is how it worked with the Ethiopian treasurer in Acts 8, with the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, with the conversion of Lydia and her house, and other cases in the book of Acts. A faithful preacher was brought together with honest hearts ready to receive the word.

Cornelius and his house were ready to “hear all things commanded thee of God.” How refreshing. If all preachers would go with the determination to deliver a “thus saith the Lord” and be prepared to produce the very place in Scripture where the Lord said it and then had an audience with the mind-set of Cornelius and those he gathered to hear Peter, think what great things could be done for the Lord. Maybe I am missing something, but it appears to me that many congregational troubles and stress in the lives of preachers, grow out of a failure of either the preacher to faithfully deliver the message or the audience who arrives with a desire for something other than that message.

Do you have a preacher living and working among you? Why did you send for him? Preacher, why did you go?

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Question From the Internet

Don Willis

“My question about the Bible is: How many spiritual gifts can a believer get from God? What does the Bible say?”

Reply

There are many spiritual gifts, i.e., gifts from God. His love, his Son, his mercy, his gospel, his daily care, etc.

Miraculous spiritual gifts are discussed in a few instances in the Scriptures. Jesus was in conversation with his apostles (John 13-17), and promised the Holy Spirit unto them (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7-15). The apostles received a measure of the Spirit that was far different from that given to saints.

1 Corinthians 12-14 discusses miraculous gifts given to men. Chapter 12:4-11 discusses the unity of the Spirit in bringing gifts as needed unto men. These are enumerated in 12:28-31. Chapter 13 discusses the importance of love, as far superior to any miraculous gift. Chapter 14 is a regulation of gifts. Prophecy (miraculous teaching) is far superior to speaking in tongues (that which is most seemingly desired), for prophesying edifies the church (14:4).

1 Corinthians 13:8-12 discusses the duration of miraculous gifts. Miraculous gifts were given in part, fragments, glimpses, bit by bit (various translations). When the perfect, complete, wholeness (various translations) comes, that which is in fragments will cease. Miraculous gifts were to cease. Partial inspiration would cease once the complete revelation is given.

Ephesians 4:7-16: Christ ascended upon high and left gifts (v. 11) unto men, for the purposes of equipping the church to function, “till” (v. 13) shows the duration; the ending of the gifts to men. Speaking truth in love is that which builds one up.

God has revealed all truth! Hebrews 1:1-2; Jude 3; 2 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Romans 1:16-17; Galatians 1:6-11. Everything God desires man to know was given by

divine revelation, recorded by these inspired men (Eph. 3:3-4) in order for us to read and know the will of God!

Men do not raise the dead anymore (Acts 9:36-42). These gifts served their purpose. Mark 16:17-20 shows the signs were given, “. . . the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following.” This salvation was “first . . . spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will” (Heb. 2:3-4).

Paul cautioned individuals, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:8-9).

The gospel of Jesus Christ is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16). There is no need of miraculous gifts today! We walk by faith, and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7). Some think they must have more than the Bible in order to be all that God desires of them.

Whose *claimed* miraculous power is one to believe? The Catholics, Mormons, Pentecostals? They do not all teach the same thing. Truth is not confusing (1 Cor. 14:33). Even if an angel told us something other than revelation, Paul said do not believe him (Gal. 1:8).

“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Miraculous gifts are not necessary to truth. Truth is already confirmed! Let us believe it, obey it, and enjoy the salvation provided by God.

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Postmodernism: An Old Enemy in a New Suit

David McClister

The good news is that secular humanism is on the way out. The bad news is that something worse is taking its place. That something worse is called postmodernism.

Modernism

Before we can define and understand postmodernism, a few words about modernism, its precursor, are in order. “Modernism” is a term that is loosely applied to several philosophical systems including rationalism, empiricism, existentialism, and logical positivism. Don’t let those terms scare you. They are all philosophical systems that have in common the idea that the supernatural either does not exist or if it does it is not a source of significant information for man. In other words, these systems were attempts to do away with God and the miraculous in man’s thinking. Rationalism made reason the determiner of truth. Empiricism said that the only things we may know for certain are the things we know through our senses. Existentialism said that truth is wholly subjective, and what is important is your own self-realization. Logical positivism was empiricism with a twist. It said that no statement has meaning unless it can be verified (usually by some kind of sense observation). It would not be too much of a generalization to say that the goal of these systems was to do away with the idea that man must be subject to revelation from God. Truth, according to these systems, does not come from God.

Modernism has borne its fruits in the last 50 years in several ways. The atheistic, humanistic, evolutionary view of human origins, political structures that emphasize material success from human effort alone (such as Marxism), the idea that morality is relative to culture or situation, the near

deification of science and technology as man’s savior, the rise of radical liberal biblical criticism that strips the Bible of all that is supernatural, secular humanism that makes man the god of this world — all of these are just some of the fruits of modernism that we have seen in our lifetime.

Modernism produced a despair, however. Man denied that he could find anything useful in a supernatural realm (that is, from God). In his search for truth and meaning the only other place man could turn was to this world and to himself. So man looked to the secular world, but the problem was that he found no significance in what he found there. Modernism thus reached a dead end.

Postmodernism

The dead end of modernism has now given rise to a world view known as Postmodernism. Postmodernism asserts that there is no order or rationale to anything, there is nothing that is absolute. Man’s dead end search for truth means that there is no truth in this world. It asserts that order (the idea that things are a certain way) is our creation, our doing, that order is what we impose on the world, but the world itself has no order to it. Furthermore, the order we create and impose on the world is provisional and relative. It can be changed or replaced, it is not permanent. Consistency is not a concern to the postmodernist, for consistency

is order and postmodernists reject the idea of a knowable unchanging order in anything. Postmodernism is thus inherently pluralistic. We are beginning to see this in the people around us. Some people object to abortion and still claim to be “pro-choice,” some people claim to be “Christian” in their thinking and also accept the idea of reincarnation, etc.

It ought to be clear to every Christian that postmodernism is a serious threat not only to our society but to our faith. . . . It is time for us to be strong in the Lord in the face of such a great enemy.

This is the effect of Postmodernism. Without any order or absolute truth, people are free to believe what they want whether it fits with other beliefs or not.

One of the first results of this kind of thinking is that there is no room for any system of thought that claims to be true. Since there are no absolutes there is no absolute truth, and since there is no inherent order, any system of thought that presents itself in an orderly way is dismissed as only one arrangement no better than any other. In short, Christianity, with its systematic presentation of the truth, is the first thing to go out the window with Postmodernism

Some Basic Tenets of Postmodernism

Postmodernism is the old relativism in a new suit of clothes. But it is not the stock relativism we have seen in the past. Existentialism and secular humanism said that truth is relative to the individual. Each person decides for himself what is true or right. Postmodernism also asserts relativism, but says that truth is relative to society. Society determines what is true and right. Things only have the significance that societies give to them.

Technically, a postmodernist would object to our use of the words “true” and “right,” because those words imply absolutes and postmodernists reject any notion of absolutes. They prefer to speak of “significance.” Accordingly, they do not speak of thought systems. They speak of narratives instead. And instead of truth claims, they speak of fictions. The idea is that what we know and believe is not absolutely true or right. It is just that our society has made these ways of thinking significant, our society says they are important (but they are not really true or right). They are, in the end, just our way of looking at things (thus they are narratives, fictions) and they are no better or worse than any other way of looking at things.

This way of thinking has thoroughly pervaded the way literature is read and taught in the major universities of this country. In literary circles the approach is called structuralistic hermeneutics. That’s a fancy way of saying that no literary text (such as the Bible, but any text, such as Melville’s *Moby Dick* is included) must have one meaning. Even what the author himself says he meant is irrelevant to this approach. I recall sitting in a course one time in which various interpretations of a book were being battered around. When one student argued that the author himself could not possibly have meant all of the various things that were proposed, the teacher responded, “What has that got to do with anything?”

Coupled with this belief that society is the source of what is significant is the idea that societies are fundamentally concerned with their own survival, and thus when a society says something is significant it is only manipulating things to retain its power. The expressions of a society

(such as its institutions and its literature) only perpetuate that society’s manipulation of power. There are sinister motives behind it.

This leads to the idea that these institutions need to be viewed not for what they say on their surface, but for what they are trying to protect and what they are trying to control. This approach to things is called Reconstruction. A deconstructionist approach to the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States would say that our country’s founding documents are not about guaranteeing absolute rights, freedoms, and values to all people in our society, but that they are simply tools to legitimize the power of the upper class white men who wrote them. They are actually oppressive documents according to the postmodern deconstructionist reading. We have heard the same things about how history books need to be rewritten, traditional families are obsolete, etc. All of these things, according to postmodernism, are just ways societies manipulate others, and thus they have to go. Included in their sights is the faith, the truth we have from God. Modern theological literature is filled with deconstructionist readings of biblical texts that claim the biblical documents were written only to legitimize the people who wrote them. Thus the Bible, they claim, is just another oppressive document that cannot be taken too seriously.

With the emphasis on society, postmodernism also denies that man is the most important thing in the world. Secular humanism’s exaltation of man has no place in postmodern thinking.

Before we applaud the death of secular humanism at the hands of postmodernism, we should realize that the postmodernists deny that man has any special significance at all. People are no better or no more important than anything else in the world. This is where the modern animal rights and ecological movements have gained their strength. Man is just another living thing on the planet, no more noble and with no more “rights” than spotted owls or pine trees. Man himself is insignificant. Perhaps you can see where this is going. If human life is no more valuable than any other life, then there can be nothing wrong with infanticide, abortion, geriatricide or any other means of population control. Even the so-called ethnic cleansing of Hitler and, more recently, in Bosnia would not be wrong to the postmodernist.

This has been a brief introduction to some of the major tenets of postmodern thought. For further information consult Gene E. Veith, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1994) or Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996). A fuller treatment can be found in Donald Carson, *The Gaggling of God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

The Connection

Peter McPherson

There is a connection between the recently advanced theory, as taught by a few fellows, of the “One Covenant,” “the law” and loose views on marriage, divorce and remarriage. It’s on page 45 of Olan Hicks’ 1978 booklet on Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage as he discusses Romans 7:1-4.

In the course of his fuzzy arguments he says, “The law of Moses did not die and it did not commit fornication. Jesus said he did not come to destroy the law (Matt. 5:17). So it did not die.” Paul said, “the law is holy and just and good” (Rom. 7:12). It did not commit fornication. Hicks further states, “They were released by the act of a third party, Jesus, who was not one of the original parties to the marriage.” Then he concludes, “It is impossible for a marriage covenant to be broken and another one contracted unless the mate either dies or commits fornication, then it appears that Jesus himself has set a bad example, being married to a bride who has been released from a previous marriage by neither of these two ways.”

There it is. To get around Romans 7:1-4 Olan has to have “the law of Moses” continue (well if it isn’t “dead” then it must still be alive). But Olan’s reasoning is nothing less than a perversion and wresting of Scripture with the result being gross error. Ruling out the plain teaching in Romans 7:1-4 and Matthew 19:9 now brother Hicks has the door open for divorces for every cause beside that of death or for fornication, even, by a third party, Jesus himself!

True enough it was Jesus who released the Jews from the Law when he nailed it to the cross when he died (Col. 2:14; Eph. 2:14-15; Heb. 8:13; 10:9-10; 7:12; Rom. 10:4; 8:13; 2 Cor. 3, etc.). Since “the law” was now dead, Christ could lawfully be joined/married to his body, the church (Rom.7:4-6). The church was certainly established after the cross and subsequently to the death of the old Law.

The Law of Moses called for an adulteress to be put to death (Deut. 22:22) not to be merely “called an adulteress.” This proves that the marriage illustration of Romans 7:2-3

Conclusion

The fruits of postmodernism are all around us. The Seinfeld show is a television show in which the comedian Jerry Seinfeld plays a comedian named Jerry Seinfeld. The line between fiction and truth is completely obliterated. It is also a show that prides itself in having no plot to any of the episodes, a reflection of the postmodern idea that there is no real order. “Star Trek: The Next Generation” depicts a world in which time is not linear, reason cannot be trusted, and appearances are not reality. One of the main characters is a robot named Data who is the perfect rational machine who mourns his lack of non-rational abilities. Talk shows such as Springer, Riki Lake, and Maury Povich feature only people in bizarre situations. Perhaps the best daily display

of this philosophy in action is the nightly news.

It ought to be clear to every Christian that postmodernism is a serious threat not only to our society but to our faith. Our children will receive heavy doses of it in the public schools and universities, and the workplace will be more and more influenced by it. It is time for us to be strong in the Lord in the face of such a great enemy.

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Nothing can change the status of a woman or a man that has unscripturally divorced and remarried. The tough truth is this: After-the-fact events (death of the former spouse; adultery of a put away mate) does not change some things.

is applied to the New Testament times, valid now. This is also seen by the fact that the definite article is absent in the Greek from before “law.” “Law” in v. 1 refers to the restraints of any law. Contextually “law” in v. 2 refers to the original marriage law of Genesis 2:23-24, as Jesus pointed out (Matt. 19:4-6). It is “the law of her husband” and from God himself (v. 2). Incidentally as an important aside, the passage is not saying that automatically or even upon repentance one who has been living in an adulterous relationship (who is living with “another man”) is now free just because her former spouse is now dead. The passage is not setting forth that scenario at all. It does not say that. It teaches what a woman freed from her legal husband by his death might do . . . scripturally marry again. But when she is still married to her legal husband, she cannot marry another one without being called an adulteress. Nothing can change the status of a woman or a man that has unscripturally divorced and remarried. Such are not ever free to re-marry with God’s blessings. The tough truth is this: After-the-fact events (death of the former spouse; adultery of a put away mate) does not change some things (Matt. 5:32; John 6:60; Prov. 13:15; Rom. 3:8).

Now back to our refutation proper. Romans 7:12 is not teaching a thing about “the law of Moses” continuing past the cross of Christ, only that while it lasted it was “holy . . . and just and good.” And Matthew 5:17 does not teach that “the law” was not to be done away with at the Cross either. Whenever Jesus perfectly kept the Law by “fulfilling” it in every way he took it out of the way, nailing it to the cross (Col. 2:14; Heb. 4:15; Luke 24:44). In doing so he did not “destroy” its purpose and goal — to bring men to Christ (Rom.10:3; Gal. 3:19-25).

But if “the Law” continues today then not only would Deuteronomy 24:1-2 apply in giving divorces for “some uncleanness” (something short of adultery, pmc), but so would verses 2-4 which prohibits an unscripturally divorced woman who remarries another man from ever returning to her original spouse even if her second husband died (which Romans 7:2 allows; of course conditionally upon her true repentance; remember all the while she has

still been “bound” to her original marriage “covenant of her God” — Prov. 2:17; Matt. 2:14; this makes the difference in this case).

Further the law for committing adultery would also mean certain punishment for violations, even death (Deut. 22:22). But as the Adventists came up with their distinctions without a difference (i.e., the moral law and the ceremonial law), our new “Old Law” teachers have apparently devised some such formula as well, to apply what they want to apply and reject what they want to reject.

The only way that one can attempt to get around the force of Romans 7:2-3 is to put a special spin on it. Then with this text not meaning what it obviously says, and Matthew 19:9 not meaning what it obviously says, one can really scripturally divorce and scripturally remarry for “just any reason” (Matt. 19:3, NKJ) the very thing the Jews came to “test” Jesus about and the very thing that Jesus corrected and gave only one exception to (Matt. 19:4-9)!

Olan says they were “released from the Law” by “the act of a third party, Jesus” yet says the Law “did not die.” Therefore, the idea must be that “the Law” continued, only some were “released from it.” “The Law” did continue to the unbelieving Jew but not with God’s blessing. There are some passages which project the idea that it was the death (spiritual) of the Jews and not the law itself that prompted God to give us a new law, the gospel of Christ (Jer. 31:32; Heb. 8:8), but in the larger picture of the scheme of redemption and considering God’s omniscience “the Law” was temporary and it was meant to die (Gal. 3:19; 4:21-31; 1 Pet. 1:20). And any who try to revive any concept of “the Law of Moses” continuing today or at least “not” dying whether they got the idea from Olan Hicks, the Adventists, or someone else, do so without God’s approval and err greatly (Rom. 2:16; 1:16; John 12:48).

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The Walls of Denominationalism

Daniel Christopher Kinder

(Dan Kinder is a new brother in Christ, a recent convert from Mormonism. This is Dan's first experience in teaching the gospel. He hopes to continue to grow in Christ and be a teacher of the Word. This lesson was his sermon delivered at the Pruett and Lobit St. church in Baytown, Texas. — Larry Hafley)

Good evening. I would like to welcome everyone here tonight and especially those of you that are visiting. Your attendance here tonight makes a statement that you are more interested in godly things than worldly things. I would like to tell you that I am very thankful for the opportunity to share some things with you about the word of God. As some of you know I have purchased a home here in Baytown. I have been going through the process of repairing and remodeling it. As a child, I grew up in the Mormon Church, and in becoming a Christian, I went through a similar process of remodeling my spiritual life. Tonight, I would like to compare the process of remodeling my house to the process of remodeling my spiritual life.

As I moved into my house, I found that it needed some cleaning since it was nearly 30 years old. The first thing I did was look around the house to see what things would be needed to clean it up. After looking my house over, I decided to start in the bathroom of the master bedroom. I began scrubbing off the mildew in the shower, when a ceramic tile fell to the floor. I bent down to pick it up and found that the entire wall, down to the 2 x 4s was rotten and needed to be replaced. Further exploration revealed that the bathroom floor was also in bad shape, the sink had a hole rusted right through it, and there was a leak in the plumbing behind the toilet.

Finally, I decided I was going to have to replace everything in the bathroom to utilize it. Because of the condition of the bathroom, I decided to search, more thoroughly, the entire house. Unfortunately, I found that the rest of my house was in similar shape. Taking all this into consideration, I set out to make these things right.

I tore apart boards. I ripped out tile. I tore out plumbing. I leveled entire walls. I pulled up carpet. I yanked out electrical wires and appliances. Then, I cleaned up this big pile of rubble that I had created. I scooped it all up and put it in bags and boxes to dispose of it. I scraped and swept and cleaned all the walls and floors to prepare to rebuild and reconstruct the rooms. After preparing, I took time to plan out how I was going to rebuild the rooms. I then went and gathered all the supplies and tools I would need to rebuild the rooms. Finally, with hard work and a lot of time, I reconstructed the rooms to look like new.

This entire process took diligent work and lots of time but finally the house became like new. It is this process of renewing my house that I would like to compare to the process that I and many others may go through in tearing down the walls of denominationalism and rebuilding their faith in God's will and their confidence in God's word.

The process I went through in becoming a Christian began when a close friend asked me about the Mormons and polygamy. I briefly talked about my belief and the church's view of polygamy and pointed out that Mormons do not practice polygamy anymore. I like to compare this point in time to when I looked at my house and saw that it needed some work, but did not look close enough to see that deep down it was rotten and corrupted. My friend was not satisfied with my reply and she encouraged me to study more about polygamy and other doctrines, which she claimed were not in the Bible. At that time I did not see this as error in the doctrines of the Mormon Church, I had only been made aware of the absence of such a doctrine in the Bible.

So I began to look deeper into doctrines of the Mormon Church. This is similar to when I found problems in the bathroom and felt it was necessary to look at the house closer for other problems. I began looking at the Mormon teaching by going to my parents to find out more about Mormon practices that I was not familiar with and get

answers to questions that were not clear to me. The only answers my parents could give did not come from the Bible. Those answers instead were from a source that the Mormons claim is modern day revelation. Here are two examples of this:

My Question: Why are elders in the Mormon Church not required to follow qualifications that are pointed out in the Bible in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 5-9?

Their Answer: The words of the Bible are a reflection of the Bible times. The word “elder” does not mean the same thing today as it did back then. The prophet tells us that the only requirements of an elder are that he must be of the accountable age and have the Aaronic priesthood.

My Question: We read In Matthew 16:18 where Jesus says, “. . . on this rock I will build my church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” Why do Mormons believe that Christ’s church as he founded it was lost?

Their Answer: When the apostles died and did not appoint new apostles and did not pass on the authority and power of God that they possessed, the priesthood and the church were lost here on earth.

My Reply: What leads you to the conclusion that the church was lost?

Their Reply: Joseph Smith’s vision and his account of the restoration are more than enough proof that the church was lost. If it was restored, it had to have been lost. Joseph Smith, who was only fourteen years old at that time, and his witnesses could not have made this whole thing up.

Unsatisfied with the answers I was given, I was directed to a man who has taught the principles and teachings of the Book of Mormon for almost 20 years. When I met with the teacher, he had similar replies and almost exactly the same attitude about modern day revelation. His attitude was that the words from the modern day prophet overrule any words from the prophets of the past and even the words of the Bible. They sometimes go so far as to completely deny the black and white print of the Bible claiming that it was “translated incorrectly.” The attitude taken by both my parents and the teacher convinced me to study more and learn more about the beliefs and doctrines that I had accepted by being baptized into the Mormon Church. Additionally I was challenged to read the Book of Mormon from cover to cover and pray diligently to God to let me know that the Book of Mormon was true. So I took the challenge. Just like when I searched deeper in my house and found rotted boards, as I dug deeper into the Mormon religion, the doctrines seemed to get more and more corrupt and farther from the truth. So as I read and prayed, I compiled a list of discrepancies between the doctrines of

the Mormon Church and the doctrines of the Bible. As I was finishing the completion of the Book of Mormon, I again met with this teacher to go over my list of discrepancies. As we went over each question, he twisted and turned the words of the Bible to compliment the Book of Mormon and the doctrines of the Mormon Church. An illustration of this is in Ezekiel 37 starting in verse 15 where it says:

Again the word of the Lord came to me, saying, As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: “For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.” Then take another stick and write on it, “For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and for all the house of Israel, his companions.” Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand.

In these verses, the Mormons believe that the sticks are really scrolls on which the records of the people were written. They further state that a scroll would surely have rotted away because of the tough climate of the American continent, where the golden plates were supposedly stored. The Mormons claim that this stick of Ephraim, referred to in Ezekiel 37, needed to be kept on golden plates instead of a scroll to preserve it. It is these golden plates that Joseph Smith, the founder of the Mormon faith, supposedly found with the help of an angel. Joseph Smith further claimed that he was divinely inspired in translating the golden plates into what is now called the Book of Mormon. So we can see that Mormons must manipulate of the words of the Bible to compliment the Book of Mormon. Besides that, the word translated into “stick” in these verses means post or tree, but that’s another lesson all its own. Continuing on, we went down the list of differences and finally came to the conclusion that every question I had, he had an answer that in some way led to modern day revelation. Reaching this conclusion, I realized that no matter what I brought up, he had been taught with an answer that would compliment the teachings of the Mormon Church even if it meant denying the word of God. The fact of the matter is that the Bible either speaks of modern day revelation or it does not. And as we look in the Bible we are assured that modern day revelation is NOT a principle read about. One such assurance is in Jude 3, where it says:

Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints.

As in these verses and elsewhere, the Bible does not speak of prophets after Christ’s coming that need to reveal God’s will to us. God has given us his will in the words of the Bible. As we concluded our discussion, I decided to bring up one more topic that I felt was taught crystal clear in the Bible and saw no way the teacher could squirm his way out. The subject was adultery. I asked how the Mormon Church could condone any sin but specifically the sin of

adultery. He then tried to express that the church did not agree with adultery and did not teach that adultery is acceptable. I mentioned that I knew of several couples at the Mormon Church who had been divorced and remarried and that the cause of their divorce was not fornication, which is the only reason God gives to justify divorce. He then replied by saying, "We believe that God does not expect us to live that way."

As this ended our study, I left in unbelief but determined to make things right in my life. I spent the next month or so reading the Bible and studying it. As I read more, my confidence in the Bible grew stronger little by little. This reminds me of when I rebuilt the rooms in my house. It took lots of time and effort, but eventually the rooms turned out just right. The studying, pondering, and praying led to a time when everything seemed to come together. It became an undeniable fact that the Mormon teachings did not agree with the principles of the Bible. Realizing this, it became extremely difficult for me as I had to clean out all the false doctrines and principles that the Mormon Church had put into my head. I was even angry for a time because I felt like everyone I knew had been lying to me my whole life or at least deceiving me. These feelings subsided though as I found the loving, caring, comforting truth in the word of God and in the congregation here. Finally, I realized that my soul was in danger because I had not yet been baptized into the Lord's body. The danger I saw led me to come forth believing, repenting, confessing, and being baptized into the one body of God's people.

In summary, it took a long process of tearing down walls of belief in a faith that originated from the mind of men. It took work and commitment to read, study, and see the errors in the church I had seen my whole life. It took time and effort to clean up the mess of errors and rebuild correct principles from the truth of God's word.

Tonight I would like you to examine your life. Take the time to be sure that your life is right with God and you seek his will. If you are not a Christian, do you know how to become a Christian? Listen very carefully to the words of the Bible as the eternal destination of your soul depends on it. Acts 2:37-38 reads:

Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Then Peter said to them, "Repent and let everyone of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Here we see that the people listening to the apostles heard the will of God. They then understood his will and because of that they saw the need to be right with God. They then asked what they should do to be right with

God. Following, as we read in Acts 2:41 those who gladly received his word were baptized and were added to the Lord's body. Tonight you have heard what you need to do to be saved. If you need to respond to the gospel call or if you have sinned or fallen away from the faith, we invite you to come forth while we stand and sing.

1810 Space Park Dr., Houston, Texas 77058

Her Aged Angel Face

Larry Ray Hafley

Her aged, angel face,
Lined with heaven's grace,
Gazed sadly at her love
Who lay asleep
In his pain so deep.

A lifetime of memories,
Photos of the mind,
Left her sad eyes
Mournful and blind
With fearful tears
Which trickled o'er years
And through the skies.

No words came;
So, her anguish went untold,
But when an unspeakable groan
Escaped her soul
Her needs by heaven were known.

We clasp her close,
While unseen hosts
Held her tender and near.
Gently they bound her again
To him who is her life's cheer.

And so she found peace
And without a bitter trace,
A loving smile gave sweet grace
To her aged, angel face.

Truman Smith

“Congregations of the Lord’s Church”

How long will it be before many of the so-called “conservative” brethren begin embracing the sponsoring church method of church cooperation?

Well, I do not wish to be a killjoy or a prophet of doom; for it is simply not my nature to always be engaging in such. I am not like George Burns said, “a man who feels bad when he feels good for fear he’ll feel worse when he feels better.” I am really an optimist. However, I remember back in the 50s when gospel preachers in whom I had the greatest confidence, after fighting faithfully for the “old paths” with both tongue and pen, some of whom engaged in numerous debates at the outbreak of institutional practices among churches of Christ, completed their years of service on the side that favored the sponsoring church arrangement. And how sad many of us were to learn of such a brother having gone that way! Therefore I cannot feel too optimistic about some of “us” today. Am I not accurate when I say that I sense a general softening among some in our own ranks? Please prove to me that it is not so! Could it be that it is only a bad dream from which I must soon awaken? I would most sincerely hope that to be the case.

No, I have not learned of any among us who have started advocating unscriptural church cooperation among churches, nor have I known of any “conservative” churches of Christ that have even begun to stray in this way. However, there are indications that some might be beginning to lean in that direction in attitude. Perhaps there are some who do not fully understand the principles involved in these issues. Seldom is there ever a public discussion between brethren any more; nor, as for that matter, any private studies of this nature going on either. But I am hearing more and more of our brethren who are beginning to use such expressions as “a congregation of the church of Christ.” Let us not lose sight of the fact that it was just such concepts of the church that paved the way for most of the innovations that have taken place over the last forty or so years among God’s people.

We are hearing the “speech of Ashdod” (Neh.13:23f)! What happened to the idea that each local congregation is a church in and of itself (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1)? Their concept is that each congregation is a part of the universal church of Christ. Brethren, this is denominationalism pure and simple!

I recently noted in a bulletin published by an “institutional” church in Fort Worth an announcement of the “Eleventh Annual Tarrant County Area Combined Assembly” to be held on September 15, 1996 in the JR Theatre at the Fort Worth/Tarrant County Convention Center. They say this affair is being sponsored by “The Tarrant County Area Churches of Christ.” Well, I know a number of churches of Christ in Tarrant County that are not involved in this meeting because they know it is unscriptural in both organization and practice. The preacher for the Fort Worth church that published the bulletin said: “One of the ‘BIG’ events coming up in the month of September, Lord willing, will be the combined assembly for congregations of the Lord’s church in Tarrant County . . . This year’s combined assembly is especially important to us at Bridgewood, because this time around we are the hosts!”

Please observe that this is to be a “BIG” event! This whole affair reminds me of the fact that Alexander Campbell and others, back in the early 1800s reached the conclusion that since it was impossible for one congregation to “go . . . into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,” they started the American Christian Missionary Society, a combining of many churches. Their desire was to do things in a “BIG” way! But even “our brethren” are beginning to speak of “congregations of the Lord’s church,” indicating that they are already allowing their minds to get conditioned for such in practice. If not, why not! Let us not begin using the “speech of Ashdod”!

9 Lilley Lane, Crane, Texas 79731

Suicide Gains Sympathy

John Isaac Edwards

According to an Associated Press article in the *Louisville Courier Journal*, Hallmark Cards Inc. is adding a new dimension to its card collection. Hallmark is making a sympathy card for those who lose someone to suicide. "There was a resounding response for this kind of card," said company spokeswoman Rachel Bolton. The card has a light blue background with a cloudy skyline across the front. At the bottom, a lone sailboat sits on calm water. The message inside describes someone fleeing from life and the impossibility of knowing that person's suffering. It also seeks to reassure the reader that "our compassionate Creator" understands and "already has welcomed" the loved one home.

The attitude of our society toward suicide is changing. More and more people are accepting it, feeling more comfortable with it, and are condoning it. Even well respected physicians are assisting in the process today. It is time that we ask, "What is God's attitude toward suicide, and what does the Bible have to say about it?"

Some Statistics

Now reaching epidemic proportions, suicide is currently the third leading cause of death among teenagers in the United States. Nearly 30,000 Americans commit suicide each year. For every completed suicide, it is estimated that as many as 50 to 100 suicide attempts are made. In the past three decades, the suicide rate among teenagers 15-19 years of age has tripled. One out of four high school students has contemplated suicide in the last year. These figures, furnished by Los Angeles Unified School District Student Health and Human Services Division, underscore the magnitude of the problem and the urgent need to seek a solution to the suicide epidemic.

Suicide In The Bible

There are seven recorded cases of suicide in the Bible.

Six are found in the Old Testament and there is one in the New Testament.

1. *Abimilech*. "Then he called hastily unto the young man his armourbearer, and said unto him, Draw thy sword, and slay me, that men say not of me, A woman slew him. And his young man thrust him through, and he died" (Judg. 9:54). He was slain by his armourbearer, but he ordered it done.

2. *Samson*. "And Samson said, Let me die with the Philistines. And he bowed himself with all his might; and the house fell upon the lords, and upon all the people that were therein. So the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" (Judg. 16:30).

3. *Saul*. "Then said Saul unto his armourbearer, Draw thy sword, and thrust me through therewith; lest these uncircumcised come and thrust me through, and abuse me. But his armourbearer would not; for he was sore afraid. Therefore Saul took a sword, and fell upon it" (1 Sam. 31:4).

4. *Saul's armourbearer*. "And when his armourbearer saw that Saul was dead, he fell likewise upon his sword, and died with him" (1 Sam. 31:5).

5. *Ahithophel*. "And when Ahithophel saw that his counsel was not followed, he saddled his ass, and arose, and get him home to his house, to his city, and put his household in order, and hanged himself, and died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his father" (2 Sam. 17:23).

6. *Zimri*. "And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died" (1 Kings 16:18).

The attitude of our society toward suicide is changing. More and more people are accepting it, feeling more comfortable with it, and are condoning it.

7. *Judas*. "And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matt. 27:5). Luke recorded, "Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1:18).

None of these was a faithful child of God!

What Causes People To Commit Suicide?

There are many common traits among persons who commit suicide. Depression, lack of social support, stress and anxieties, publicity, grief over departed loved ones and a desire to join them, lack of self control, to escape responsibility, sickness and disease, and on and on it goes.

What's Wrong With Suicide?

1. *Suicide is self-murder*. Paul told the Romans, "For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself" (Rom. 13:9). Among the works of the flesh in Galatians 5:19-21 is "murders" and the Holy Spirit revealed, "that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is just as wrong and sinful to kill self as it is to kill another! John recorded, "But the fearful and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Rev. 21: 8). Does that sound to you like the Creator already has welcomed them home?

2. *Suicide is destruction of another's property*. Some may reason, "It is my life and my body and I'll do with it what I please." Well, that's really not the case. Paul asked the Corinthian Christians, "What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). When you take your life you are bringing an end to something that belongs to God!

3. *Suicide is a sin you can't repent of*. Jesus said, "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3). Once you're dead it's too late to make things right with God!

The Answer To Suicide

There is only one answer to suicide — being a faithful Christian. Take the Lord's yoke, not your life! Jesus invites, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find

rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30). God is a compassionate Creator who knows your every trouble, heartache, and sorrow and he cares. Peter wrote, "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). Turn to the Lord, not the bottle, pills, a knife, or a gun!

24 Hour Suicide Prevention Hot Line:
P-R-A-Y-E-R

200 N. Posey St., Salem, Indiana 47167

God Controls It All

Forrest Morris

The mighty grandeur of sitting sun,
magnificently ends the day
Lightning streaks across the sky,
displaying it's brilliant ray.

Thunder finishes with drum-like roll,
as raindrops start their fall
And clouds unfold to reveal therein,
mountain peaks so tall.

Then in radiance, brightly lit,
above the mountains high
Hang the many countless stars,
across the darkening sky.

A rainbow connects east to west,
as Winter winds doth blow
Soon the drops of rain that fall
will turn to whitened snow.

All these things that I observe,
are not mere happenstance
But rather have a purpose here,
and not just left to chance.

I venture further on to say,
that "God Controls It All"
And that is why it's like it is,
on this terrestrial ball.

“Legally Accurate”

Valerie L. Durham

So, does the preeminent Judge let the serpent off the hook, since everything he said was strictly true? Of course not! God saw through the deception and cursed the serpent. It is also prudent to note that the serpent is the father of “legal accuracy.”

There is much talk today about the difference between perjury and legal accuracy as it applies to the United States’ judicial system. Let’s look at some examples of legal accuracy from the Old Testament.

The Serpent

Let us consider what the serpent (the most cunning of any beast of the field) said to Eve when he convinced her to eat the forbidden fruit. “Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen 3:4, 5). If one looks closely at the words the serpent uses in this case, it can be construed that everything he said was “legally accurate.” It was true that Adam and Eve would not die — at least not for many hundreds of years. It was also true that their eyes were open and they, like God, knew the difference between good and evil (Gen. 3:7). So, does the preeminent Judge let the serpent off the hook, since everything he said was strictly true? Of course not! God saw through the deception and cursed the serpent. It is also prudent to note that the serpent is the father of “legal accuracy.” “You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and

the father of it” (John 8:44).

Cain

What were the words Cain used when God confronted him with the murder of his brother? Consider the text: “Then the Lord said to Cain, ‘Where is Abel your brother?’ He (Cain) said, ‘I do not know. Am I my brother’s keeper?’” (Gen 4:9). Cain has a convenient memory lapse here, as he has “forgotten” that he had murdered his brother. He also evades God’s question by asking another question. Do these games work for Cain? Does God fall for these tricks? No, Cain was punished for his deeds. God knows the intents of all men (Ps. 94:11), and the intent of the heart is what constitutes a lie as opposed to the literal words.

Abram

Now Abram (or Abraham, as he is later known) is remembered as the father of the Jews and a faithful follower of God. Yet he is not immune from being guilty of the sin of “legal accuracy.” Consider the following account. “And it came to pass, when he (Abram) was close to entering Egypt, that he said to Sarai his wife, ‘Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, This is his wife; and they will kill me, but they will let you live. Please say you are my sister, that it may be well with me for your sake, and that I may live because of you’”

(Gen 12:11-13). This is what is called a “cover story.” Abram and Sarai had to get their stories straight when asked about their relationship. Was there anything wrong with Abram’s assertion that Sarai was his sister? Sarai was actually Abram’s half-sister, therefore this was a legally accurate statement. However, it is a half-truth which, because of Abram’s intentions, was a whole-lie. There were consequences for Abram’s twisting of the facts. Pharaoh took Sarai into his house and suffered many plagues because of it.

Joseph’s Brothers

Joseph’s brothers were jealous of their father’s preference for Joseph, and although deterred from killing him, they sold him into slavery. They deceived their father into thinking Joseph was dead. “So they (Joseph’s brothers) took Joseph’s tunic, killed a kid of the goats, and dipped the tunic in the blood. Then they sent the tunic of many colors, and brought it to their father and said, ‘We have found this. Do you know whether it is your son’s tunic or not?’ And he recognized it and said, ‘It is my son’s tunic. A wild beast has devoured him. Without doubt Joseph is torn to pieces’” (Gen 37:31-33). Did the brothers lie when they brought the coat to Jacob? They merely asked if it was Joseph’s tunic. Notice, Jacob is the one that wrongly deduced that a beast devoured his son. Maybe Jacob would have determined the truth if he asked follow-up questions to his sons. Is it Jacob’s deficiency that he concluded that Joseph was dead, or was it the brothers’ shortcoming for allowing their father to believe a lie? The answer is clear to any reasonable person.

Saul

King Saul, God’s anointed, was instructed by God to “utterly destroy” the Amalekites for their misdeeds. Saul returned victorious from battle with the king of Amalek and the best of their belongings in tow. Samuel met Saul to tell him of God’s displeasure. “Then Samuel went to Saul, and Saul

said to him, ‘Blessed are you of the Lord! I have performed the commandment of the Lord.’ But Samuel said, ‘What then is this bleating of the sheep in my ears, and the lowing of the oxen which I hear?’ And Saul said, ‘They have brought them from the Amalekites; for the people spared the best of the sheep and the oxen, to sacrifice to the Lord your God; and the rest we have utterly destroyed’” (1 Sam 15:13-15).

Saul speaks the truth here. Saul did carry out the will of the Lord — almost. Notice how he shifted the blame to the people for bringing the cattle. Saul, was the king and, no doubt, the people would have obeyed his words on the matter. Also, they kept the cattle for a noble purpose — as sacrifice to God. Surely God would overlook this slight transgression of his command since it was for a good cause. God did not accept this explanation, and Samuel explained: “Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams” (1 Sam 15:22). At this point, King Saul was quite popular with the people. They had

the king that they desired. If polled, the Israelites would have likely given Saul a high approval rating at this time for his job performance. What does God think about popularity as a judge of righteousness? In Luke 16:15 our Lord said, “You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.” Saul was punished for his sin with no partiality given to legal accuracy, good intentions, or popularity.

One day, all will stand before the throne on high. The record will be there of all that was done in the flesh, whether good or evil. God knows the hearts and deeds of all men. No one will get off on a technicality. “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matt. 7:21-23).

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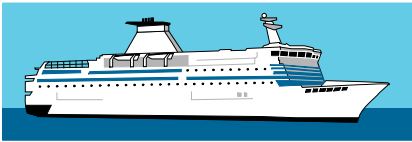
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“Titanic”: Phenomena or Failure

Rodney Pitts



Back a few months ago, I watched for the first time much of the Academy Awards. Although this is quite uncharacteristic of me, I became a bit interested in just how many awards the movie “Titanic” would receive. And, not to disappoint, Titanic received, I believe, eleven awards for its ground breaking special effects, cinematic presentation, and close eye for detail and accuracy in many areas. This was a director’s masterpiece. No other movie has ever presented this tragic voyage with such feeling, flare, and realism. In addition to this, the ill-fated cruise liner provides a backdrop for the also tragic (but fictitious) “love story” of Jack, a “third class street urchin” and Rose, the rich, but “socially chained” soul. It seems that all the pieces were present and carefully put into place. And, entertainment hungry Americans responded appreciatively by turning out in droves, filling the theaters night after night, week after week, with audiences both young and old alike. And, despite being the most expensive movie ever made, I believe “Titanic” now holds the coveted position of the biggest money maker in movie history, surpassing such “giants” as “Star Wars” and “Jurassic Park.” No one can deny that this movie has made itself a place in entertainment history.

Of course, it is not with the technical and cinematic qualities of this movie that this article is concerned. It is the content that I would like to address. Because I have heard Christians rave about how wonderful this movie really is, I thought it might be nice to watch it myself. Before I would do that, however, I decided to take a look at “Screenit.com” on the Internet to see what parts, if any, this movie contained that were objectionable. “www.Screenit.com” is a wonderful site, by the way, for those who are concerned about the moral content of the movies they view. In other words, it is a site tailor-made for Christians. As I logged on the site and looked up “Titanic,” what I saw was

less than encouraging. What is a cinematic wonder is also a moral debacle. And, its success is a sad commentary on the loss of our society’s, and a large number of Christians’, moral compass.

It seems that most of the hoopla surrounding the movie centered on the “love story” between two characters named “Jack” and “Rose.” Although most of us can and do enjoy a love story at times, I am truly concerned that Americans, and especially Christians, became so enthralled with the portrayal of a romance so full of sin and immorality. The whole force of this story is how Jack’s “Bohemian” influence “frees” Rose from her “stiff” and “confining” societal rules and leads her to the “freedom” of a life filled with drunkenness, lasciviousness, and fornication. What a wonderful message to imbibe for Christian parents and children seeking to follow God’s directive that “. . . as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1 Pet. 1:15). What are we thinking?

In addition to this, Screenit.com pointed out that there are several scenes where Rose is nude and another where Jack and Rose are shown in the very act of fornication. And, although no total nudity was shown during this last mentioned scene, does that really matter? Also, nude paintings of Rose are clearly displayed and talk is made between Rose and the crew concerning whether any sexual activity had happened between her and Jack. Brethren, when our children are young we have them sing “Be careful little eyes what you see . . . Be careful little ears what you hear . . .” Is that no longer true for Christians today? Has not the Lord warned us to “keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23) and that “whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matt. 5:28)? Are we not commanded to “abstain from every form of evil” and to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (1 Thess. 5:22; Eph. 5:11)? Surely viewing a movie like this, no matter how “wonderful” the setting might be, cannot be God’s desire for godly Christians.

Holding Fast the Confession of Our Hope

Ken Sils

The writer of the book of Hebrews pleaded with Christians in the first century to place their heart and soul in faith for Jesus the Christ. The writer was aware of rumblings from several members of the church of Christ who were fading away from the faith, plunging headlong into worldliness or back to binding the law of Moses for religious practices. We read in Hebrews 10:23-27, "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, *not* forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries." These are sobering words which reveal serious and eternal consequences for failing to assemble with

saints as the New Testament commands Christians.

God is telling Christians in Hebrews 10:23 to, "hold fast." This means that *there is no room for giving in or giving up*. God is telling us through the Hebrew writer that we cannot give up the confession of our hope. There is only one hope available to men (Eph. 4:4), and that hope is eternal life with God in heaven (Tit. 1:2). It's our only hope, but it's the greatest hope man can have. Really, it is the only hope you need and Christians must understand this principle. We sing from time to time, "This world is not my home, I'm just a passing thru. . . ." Our life on earth is one of faith, commitment, and sacrifice as Paul told Christians in Rome in Romans 12:1-2 to, ". . . present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And *do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*"

And, if the above mentioned immorality were not enough (and it is), Screenit.com also points out that the Titanic contains a wealth of profanity and vulgarity. According to the statistics, Titanic contains some 49 words/phrases of profanity, seventeen of which take the name of our Almighty God, Creator, and judge in vain. And yet, the examiners admit that "with all of the panic and pandemonium toward the end, there may be more exclamations (especially of the religious variety) than noted." Also, Rose is said to have made an obscene gesture with her finger to one of the other passengers. Brethren, is this what we should "pay" to go and see at the theater or "pay" to have piped right into our living rooms? And, more importantly, is this the kind of behavior we would like to see mimicked in our lives and the lives of our children? God forbid (Rom. 6:1-2; Matt. 5:16).

Now, if you have read this and have simply dismissed it as the ramblings of a "moral alarmist," then ask yourself

this question. Would you allow these same people to come into your living room and talk in the same fashion, remove their clothing, and commit the same acts of fornication in front of you, your family, etc., as they have done in front of you on the "silver screen"? If not, why not?

In conclusion I would like to make one last observation. Although I realize that "Titanic" will continue to be lauded by the world for its technical wizardry and dramatic presentation, the focal point of its morally degenerate plot leaves much for the godly Christian to desire. Its success, therefore, is less a phenomena than real evidence of a moral failure for all Christians and our society that willingly chose to patronize (especially repeatedly) such an ungodly portrayal of "love" set before the backdrop of such a tragic event.

136 Cobblestone Creek Rd., NW, Cleveland, Tennessee 37312

To prove our transformation to God, we must hold fast; we must learn our duties towards God revealed in the New Testament and steadfastly obey, grow, and work in the Kingdom of the Lord. However, there were Christians in the first century who did not hold fast. They failed to assemble as God commanded and, in the process, sinned willfully. They rejected the knowledge of the truth by forsaking the assembling of themselves with a congregation of God's people.

Yes, this is another lesson on our need to assemble! Brethren, *failure to assemble with the saints is a major problem among congregations in America today.* Yet, I am persuaded that "forsaking" is really the result of a greater problem, the problem of failing to "hold fast" one's confession of hope. Many members of the church in America are not giving their hearts and souls to Jesus. Worldliness, sin, and sexual immorality are running rampant among some members of the church and many are seeking an avenue for, "having their cake and eating it too," in religious service.

These types of members will attend public worship every now and then or attend just enough to avoid being "noted" (Rom. 16:17-18) for being contrary to the doctrine of "not forsaking the assembling of themselves with the saints" (Heb. 10:25). Then, there are other members who "hop" around from one congregation to another in hopes of finding a group who will allow them to have Jesus, "*just the way they like Him.*" I'm aware, as other gospel preachers are, of members who have been caught in sin, then they quickly write a distraught letter of goodbye to the church, indicating their own "withdrawal" from that congregation, using this letter as an attempt to avoid congregational discipline. I have also witnessed situations where rebellious members attempt to justify their departure from the Lord into worldliness by writing a polite letter to the congregation requesting to have their names taken off the membership list, using some lame excuse for not being able to be a member of that congregation anymore.

All behaviors of this nature are nothing more than devious and devilish attempts by sinful brethren to avoid being castigated as sinners. Imagine someone attempting to use such ploys belonging to a branch of the U.S. military! When one decides to go AWOL in military service to our country, a letter of polite resignation isn't going to cut the mustard. You can't just quit the military without serious consequences and a member of the church of Christ cannot just quit serving God without eternal consequences. When a member of the church attempts to run from a congregation, brethren need to quit upholding the hands of the rebellious by saying, "*You can't withdraw from those who have withdrawn themselves from us!*" The New Testament is clear. Paul said in 2 Thessalonians 3:14, "And if anyone does not obey our word in this epistle, *note that person* and do not keep company with him, that he may be ashamed." To

"note" someone for rebellion to God's law is to distinguish or to mark that person as living in sin. That person could be on the other side of the world, still running from God, but that does not minimize the obligation God has placed on the congregation one bit. Paul told Timothy and, in the process, told the world in that, ". . . *Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world*" (2 Tim. 4:10). I wonder if Demas wrote Paul a letter saying, "I just can't serve God with you anymore for life has simply become too difficult and I need time to think"? If he did, it surely didn't stop Paul!

The only way we can hold fast to our hope is to become a Christian, worship, and work with a congregation of God's people through thick and thin and be faithful to God's every command until death. Faithful members in churches of Christ do not run from sin, they fight against it and if they fall prey to sin, they overcome it (1 John 2:1-2). If they have problems with their brethren in a congregation, they work them out together in a spirit of love as Jesus commands (Matt. 5:23-24). Real Christians assemble as often as they can for they are determined to "hold fast" to their confession. They want to work in the vineyard of the Lord. *No excuses! No congregational hopping! No running from their problems!* They have virtue, they have brotherly kindness, and they have love for God and each other. They will worship and work with a congregation of God's people. They will stir up their brethren to love and good works. They will assemble with the saints at their every opportunity. Being one with this world is no longer an option for them. Excuse making for lax service and worship is deplorable to them.

My friend, you can't hold fast to God without an absolute determination to obey God's every command. *It is Satan who encourages you to find a way around congregational activity and discipline,* but it is God who says that those who sin willfully have nothing left but, "a certain fearful expectation of judgment" (Heb. 10:27). One of the responsibilities the New Testament has placed upon churches of Christ is to warn sinful brethren of the harsh consequences that rebellion against the Lord will bring. Far too many rebellious members are getting away with sin. We must warn! We must cry out! We must mark the wayward! Brethren, let us never forget the powerful statement in Hebrews 10:31 which says, "*It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God!*"

If you serve God with all your heart and soul, there is a bright hope for us to hold fast to. If you leave the Lord by returning to the ways of the world, there will be death. The choice is ours. No one reading this article can afford to make the wrong choice.

1500 S. Calvert, South Bend, Indiana

The Essential Elements of Righteous Forgiveness

Doug Roush

The disgraceful acts of our President has brought the subject of forgiveness to the attention of our society. It is good that we are talking about forgiveness. It is an important subject.

The Bible instructs us as to the importance of forgiveness. It reveals the character necessary to forgive as well as essential elements that are necessary to be met before forgiveness can be rightfully extended. Many are familiar with the warning from Jesus that unless we forgive others, God will not forgive us. However, our willingness or unwillingness to forgive is not the standard of *forgiveness*; it is simply an indication of our character.

The standard of *forgiveness* is stated in John 7:24: "Judge not according to the appearance, but judge *righteous* judgment." God's word is the standard of *righteousness* (Prov. 2:6-9; 8:1-9; Rom. 1:16-17). The standard of *righteous judgment* is implied in Colossians 3:13. Here we read: "Forbear one another, and forgive one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye." The standard of *forgiveness* is set by Christ and is revealed in God's word. He clearly stated that certain conditions must be met before forgiveness would be granted. All of these conditions can be summed up in one word — *repentance*. Jesus said, "Except you *repent*, you will perish" (Luke 13:3, 5).

What is *repentance*? The literal definition is "to change one's mind." However, the Bible says that the changing of one's mind is to be *demonstrated* by what one *does* as he turns from his sin to do the right thing. The Bible speaks of "bringing forth fruit in keeping with repentance" (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:8). Jesus illustrated this in Matthew 21:28-29 where he told of a son who had refused his father's command to work in the vineyard. The son "answered and said, 'I will not:' *but afterward he repented, and went.*"

Jesus said, ". . . If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and *if he repent*, forgive him."

God forgives when there is *demonstrated repentance*. Our forgiveness of those who have wronged us is endorsed by God when there is *demonstrated repentance* on the part of the offender.

Our president's instructions to his lawyers to defend him against impeachment by arguing that he did not have sexual relations with Monica Lewinsky and that he did not commit perjury or obstruct justice indicates that although he has confessed his sin, he has not repented of it. The only honorable action of repentance for this president is that he resign his office. Only then can there be genuine forgiveness.

He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy. When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice: but when the wicked beareth rule, the people mourn. Whoso loveth wisdom rejoiceth his father: but he that keepeth company with harlots spendeth his substance (Prov. 29:1-3).

I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour (1 Tim. 2:1-3).

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Renew Promptly!

“Surface Cures” continued from front page

to destroy virtue as a virtue, there will be conflict, deadly conflict. When condoms can be passed out in schools where it is forbidden to teach morality from the Bible, there will be blood in the hallways and in the streets. Where abortion and homosexuality are extolled with “charitable broadmindedness,” while a list of the ten commandments cannot be posted in classrooms, there will be drive-by shootings and murder “just to see how it feels to blow someone away.” When students may be led in studies of immoral and pornographic material, but are denied the opportunity to present a biography of Jesus from the gospels as a book report, you need not be surprised when rapes and homosexual liaisons occur on campus during school hours.

By rejecting the Bible’s moral standards, by making light of the sacred union of marriage, we have produced a crop of “hostile,” “anti-social” people. So, while the police chiefs and community leaders are having their conference, they had better post guards outside. If they do not, they may return to a car that has either been stripped or stolen. And if one is caught burglarizing a police car, let him not be accused or charged. After all, the kid could not help it. A racist society made him what he is. He is not to blame. To incarcerate him would make him a victim and deprive him of justice. So, let him go — and plan another conference!

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“Church Growth” continued from page 2

that attracts visitors and makes them want to come back again. Those things in the gospel that may alienate visitors or keep them from returning are systematically passed by and not preached.

As a matter of practice, many of the mega-churches simply refer to themselves as “community churches,” because all denominations are welcome there, without regard to their previous denominational affiliation, beliefs, and practices. This is done even though most community churches maintain ties to their denominational organizations.

2. A “felt needs” ministry. The mega-churches are committed to the ministry of the whole man. Mega churches survey the town to see what spiritual needs they perceive and then aim the direction of their ministry toward meeting those needs. Such churches have programs of work that feature such things as: divorce recovery workshops, grief recovery, overcoming depression, how to become debt-free, aerobic exercises, church sponsored athletics, day-care, pre-school through sixth grade elementary schools, and such like things. Some churches have large restaurants so that a family can stop at the church building to pick up

the children from day-care and school, stay for basketball practice and aerobics, attend a workshop on finances, and have a late supper, all on the church premises. That’s the Wal-mart way!

3. *Contemporary worship.* Church growth seminars address the distaste that the baby-boomers have for traditional worship. Consequently contemporary worship services are developed to attract the baby-boomers. To keep from driving away traditional families, whose contributions and support are necessary to keep the doors open, many mega-churches have two separate worship services. The traditional worship services feature songs like “Amazing Grace,” “Just As I Am,” “Be With Me Lord,” and other timeless hymns sung to the traditional melodies, preaching, prayer, observance of the Lord’s supper, and giving. The contemporary worship services are a bit different. The Sunday morning presentation may present the message in drama, rather than in sermon. A special singing presentation is frequently used, featuring singing that is more contemporary (the range of music may be from Bluegrass gospel, to Southern gospel, to Contemporary gospel, to Rock gospel, depending upon which is most attractive to the community). The presentation is professional and the audience listens, rather than participating, showing its appreciation by clapping and hand raising. The assembly has a decidedly Pentecostal flavor with a Baptist doctrinal emphasis (salvation by faith only, once saved-always saved). The preacher may present his message in a sports shirt, casual slacks, and sneakers. The audience may be seated in a circle of chairs or in a circle sitting on the floor. Both are designed to present the casual approach toward worship. The members who attend may show up wearing jeans and a T-shirt or shorts. The audience may be drinking coffee and eating donuts while the lesson is presented.

The role of women in the public services is more pronounced than in the traditional services. Women are used as public readers of Scripture, to make the announcements, to serve the Lord’s supper, to usher, and to serve in other public roles (including preaching). They are added to the “board of deacons” and appointed as elders and bishops.

Those who raise protest against the changes they witness in worship are hide-bound traditionalists whose old-fogey ways stifle the church’s ability to adjust to the changing times in order to reach out to the modern community.

The Pragmatic Defense

The defense of this change is simple: it works. And, who can deny its success? The mega-churches have thousands in attendance and are constantly growing.

The Temptation To Mimic The Denominations

Witnessing the “success” of the mega-churches, there is a great temptation for Christians to mimic church growth

practices. Consider some of the things that we can specifically identify happening among us:

1. *Change in content of the preaching.* The content of gospel preaching is changing in many churches. Its thrust is distinctly positive (that is, these churches eliminate from their preaching those things that may cause a visitor to be offended and not return). Distinctive gospel sermons that have a heavy theological content are eliminated; the one-church theme is removed; the identifying marks of the New Testament church are not preached; exposing the doctrinal apostasies of the denominations is condemned; preaching that specifically condemns immodest dress is eliminated (one can preach against immodest dress so long as he does not define what it is); etc.

Trying to avoid the prejudice the world holds toward the churches of Christ, some have removed “church of Christ” from their meeting house. Signs on the meeting house that say “Christians Meet Here” leave the same impression on the general public as “Community Church” does. This says to the general public, “This is an inter-denominational group, where I can be a member without regard to my denominational ties.”

2. *“Felt needs ministry.”* Our most conservative liberal brethren (the new “antis”) are fighting a battle for their lives to stave off the social gospel of the felt needs ministry. They are so compromised by their acceptance of fellowship halls and the church support of human institutions (colleges, hospitals, orphan homes, old folks homes, etc.) that they have little hope of success. Among ourselves, already we are seeing meetings designed to preach about time management, depression, being debt free, and other such topics that indicate significant movements in the thrust of gospel preaching.

How Can We Compete?

As we witness the growth of the mega-churches, we are tempted to ask, “How can we compete with them?” Our little band of disciples that meets in a plain-jane building in a middle-class neighborhood has little chance of competing with the mega-church with its extravagant building on prime real estate. Why would anyone want to be a member of the church, when he can go over to the mega-church and hear a professional singing group, listen to a dynamic speaker, attend the supper served after services, watch the drama skit, and never be condemned for immodest dress, lack of attendance, or practically anything else in his life?

We tend to forget that this problem has been with the saints since the first century. That little band of disciples in Jerusalem (after the dispersion of Acts 8) had little to offer in comparison with the services at the Jewish temple. They met in the home of one of the disciples. Just across town

on Mount Zion, was a beautiful Temple. Its priests were dressed in priestly vestments. The singing was conducted by the sons of Asaph and sons of Korah, professional choirs. The pageantry and ceremony of their public worship were majestic. Their feasts were festive, not solemn and doleful. How could 20-25 disciples meeting in the house of one of the members compete with the Jewish Temple?

The situation was even worse in pagan cities such as Corinth. The pagan worship was also associated with an impressive temple complex. Their worship included banquets and feasts that tended to drunkenness and excess. What’s more, some of the fertility cults had priestesses that committed fornication with the votaries. How could a little band of disciples compete with the pagan temples for the hearts of those young men and women faced with the choice of Christianity or paganism?

Lest anyone think our situation is so unique that we must make some changes to attract the people in order for the church to grow, we need to be reminded of what circumstances our brethren before us faced. Despite the odds that were against those brethren, look at what happened: the Jewish Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 never to be rebuilt and those fertility cults of the first century have passed from the contemporary scene and are barely known, except by a few archaeologists and historians. But the church of Jesus Christ is alive and well! Let us never be tempted by the appeal of modern church growth seminars to change the church of Jesus Christ into another religion built according to the wisdom of men.

If it should be our lot to preach in a time and place similar to Noah, let us be content to stand alone as a preacher of righteousness, not compromising the gospel to appeal to a generation of hell-bound men!

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Globe, Arizona: The Globe Church of Christ is seeking a sound gospel preacher for full-time work. They are a congregation of 35-40 members. They do not have elders. They own their building and a three bedroom, two bath house for the preacher and his family. Some salary provided. If interested, contact the Globe Church of Christ, P.O. Box 1373, Globe, AZ 85502.

Beckley, West Virginia: The Carriage Drive church of Christ in Beckley, WV is seeking a preacher to work with them. They desire a man who has some years of experience in located work. Brother Warnock has been with the church there for nine years, and he is retiring from full-time located work and will devote his time mostly to conducting gospel meetings and part-time preaching work.

The church there is a peace. The opportunities for growth are excellent as the area is expanding. In addition to being fully self-supporting, the church helps support several preachers in other places. A house is also provided. If interested, please contact Leonard Bragg, 129 Main St., Daniels, WV 25832, 304-252-3223, Edgar Rose, Box 28, White Oak, WV 25989, 304-763-2197, or Alan Rich, 117 S. Jackson Ave., Beckley, WV 25801, 304-253-0318.



Holyfield Admits to Infidelity

“Atlanta — Two days after retaining his IBF and WBA heavyweight titles, and only one week after his second wife gave birth to their first child, Evander Holyfield admitted that he has fathered two children out of wedlock in the past year with previous girlfriends.

“Holyfield now has nine children — the newborn Elijah Jediah to his wife, Janice; three with his first wife, Paulette, from whom he has been divorced since 1991; and five others born out of wedlock to four women.

“Holyfield made the admission in an interview published in Tuesday’s editions of the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*.

“... Holyfield, who is one of nine children born out of wedlock to Annie Holyfield, had his first child with his first wife a year before the two wed in 1985. Evander Jr. is now 14” (*San Antonio Express-News* [September 23, 1998], 5C.

Scandalous Behavior of Church President

“The scandalous behavior of National Baptist Convention USA president Henry Lyons is a case in point. Because Lyons’s peers did not carefully monitor his behavior, he was enabled to carry on an extramarital affair and waste allegedly-ill-gotten monies on extravagances for himself and his lover.

“More scandalous, however, has been the unwillingness of his denomination’s leadership to hold him accountable. (The members are voting by closing their pocketbooks. And rank-and-file clergy, like Cheryl Townsend Gilkey of Cambridge, Massachusetts, are saying that ‘an honorable person would have already offered to resign.’) Though Lyons has been indicted on charges of racketeering, extortion, money laundering, and other financial crimes and has openly admitted to adultery while in office, church leaders have refused to do what would be the best for their church and for Lyons himself — to give him time away from pastoral and denominational responsibilities to let the Lord heal him from his self-inflicted wounds. Protesting that Lyons has not been convicted (yet) of any crime, they are content to leave him in office.

“The scandalous behavior of this church leader is bad enough. But when compounded by the inaction of a denomination in denial, it brings shame on the church of Jesus Christ and sings sinners to sleep with a lullaby of cheap grace. Because Lyons heads a church that represents Jesus Christ’s body on earth, this scandal is in some ways far worse than the misdeeds of the President” (*Christianity Today*, “The President’s Small Group,” Philip Yancey [October 26, 1998], 29).

Doomsday Cult Group Vanishes

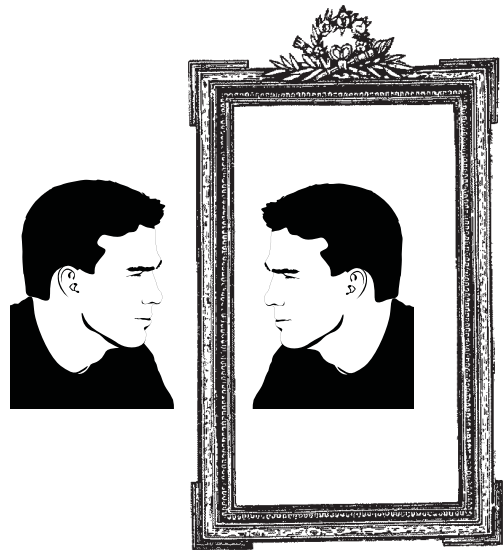
“Denver — The leader of a doomsday cult who predicted the destruction of Denver last weekend has vanished along with about 50 of his followers, raising fears they are bent on mass suicide.

“Followers of Monte Kim Miller’s group, concerned Christians, have sold their belongings and left their homes. Cult watchers believe they might be headed to Jerusalem because of Miller’s belief he would die there in December 1999 and be resurrected three days later.

“Miller, 44, claimed that God was using him as a vehicle to speak to his followers. After prophesying that the Apocalypse would begin with an earthquake in Denver last Saturday, the leader and about 50 followers dropped from sight” (*The Indianapolis Star* [October 16, 1998], A5.

The Man in the Glass

When you get what you want in your struggle for self,
And the world makes you king for a day,
Just go to the mirror and look at yourself.
And see what THAT man has to say.
For it isn't your father or mother or wife
Whose judgment upon you must pass.
The fellow whose verdict counts most in your life
Is the one staring back from the glass.
Some people might think you're a straight-shootin' chum
And call you a wonderful guy.
But the man in the glass says you're only a bum,
If you can't look him straight in the eye.
He's the fellow to please, never mind all the rest.
For he's with you clear up to the end.
And you've passed your most dangerous, difficult test
If the guy in the glass is your friend.
You may fool the whole world down the pathway of
years,
And get pats on the back as you pass.
But your final reward will be heartaches and tears
If you've cheated the man in the glass.



(*The Indianapolis Star*, Ann Landers' Column [Oct. 3, 1998], E2).

Obituary

Thomas Smith Hendricks

Jacksboro resident and Warren County native Thomas Smith Hendricks, 74, died unexpectedly September 3 at River Park Hospital. A retired preacher and a member of the church of Christ, he served his country in the U.S. Army during World War II.

The son of Richard L. and Victoria Lee Smith Hendricks, he is survived by his wife, Mary D. Freeze Hendricks; two daughters, Charlotte G. Johnson of Lakeland, Florida, and Wanda Ann Heaton of Plant City, Florida; seven grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

Services were held Saturday at High's Chapel with David Young and Robert Hall officiating. Burial followed at Shady Grove Cemetery in Coffee County.

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