

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR ELDERS, PREACHERS, TEACHERS, AND CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

DIVORCE AND CIVIL LAW

Wayne Jackson

Divorce and remarriage are serious moral issues. The law of God, as made known in the New Testament, is the standard of truth that regulates the institution of marriage. The Christian must seek to determine the will of God in times of marital difficulty, neither binding nor loosing where the Lord has not. This article discusses the relationship of divine and civil law to the institution of marriage.

In approaching the subject of divorce and remarriage, the conscientious Bible student wants to be as accurate, and yet as compassionate, as he possibly can be. It is a serious error to “loose” a restriction that the Lord has “bound.” It is also wrong to “bind” an ordinance that God has not “bound” (cf. Matthew 16:18; 18:18).

Out of a zeal for truth, though, some have overlooked certain biblical principles that pertain to the divorce-remarriage controversy. In so doing, they have denied the liberty of remarriage to devout people who very well may have the right to enter a new family relationship.

There are well-intentioned Christians, zealous for the law of God, who have failed to grasp the concept that civil law is always subservient to divine law. It is not that folks openly advocate that the idea that civil law is supreme; such is, however, the logical consequence of certain ideas entertained by some in the church, as they attempt to apply the marriage law of Christ to the more complicated divorce situations they encounter. In view of this, let reflect upon the following.

PRINCIPLES TO BE RECOGNIZED

First, it must be emphasized that civil law is human law. Civil laws, of course, are necessary for the maintenance of order in society. When they are consis-

tent with divine truth, they have the backing of God, and the Christian must submit to these ordinances (Romans 13:1ff).

On the other hand, it must be recognized that humanly-devised laws can be whimsical and arbitrary. Frequently they stand in arrogant contradiction to the higher constitution of God. Accordingly, the servant of Christ is obligated to the “ordinance of man” (I Peter 2:13) only insofar as such is in harmony with the revealed will of the Creator (cf. Acts 4:19; 5:29). Consider the following:

1. Civil authority may not legitimize that which is morally wrong, e.g., the abortion of an unborn child, or the practice of a “same-sex marriage.” Laws implementing these evils may be passed in human legal systems, but they will have no divine authority, and Christians must not seek their sanctions or give them credence.

2. Human law may not *demand* of the child of God that which is morally or religiously wrong. Early Christians who were commanded to offer worship to Caesar refused, even if such meant imprisonment or the forfeiture of their lives.

3. Civil rulers may not *prohibit* that which is right. Should a country outlaw the rite of water baptism (as a means of securing pardon, and entrance into the body of Christ—Acts 2:38; I Corinthians 12:13), faithful children of God would ignore such an ordinance and continue to immerse those desiring to become Christians.

And *why* are these things so? Because *divine law takes precedence over the ordinances crafted by men*.

Further, it must be noted that civil laws have varied from country to country, and in different epochs of Christian history. But sacred law in the regime of Jesus

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Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
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Editorial...

IF THE BLIND LEAD THE BLIND

I never cease to be amazed at the profound and (sometimes) willful ignorance of some of my brethren regarding certain matters. Indeed, “**He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is a folly and shame unto him**” and “**Seest thou a man that is hasty in his words? There is more hope of a fool than of him**” (Proverbs 18:13; 29:20).

As a case in point, I recently read a vituperative letter that scathingly rebuked a brother for his alleged callousedness toward another brother who for approximately twenty- years practiced sexual immorality. Can anyone imagine the extent and depth of this brother’s deception and what it did to his conscience in view of the position he held in the brotherhood? And, only upon being confronted with his sins did he confess them.

In that same letter, amidst all of the charges of how unmerciful the one to whom the letter was addressed is, there was no concern exhibited in the letter for the victims of this self confessed sexual deviant—not one mention of them. Are we to conclude from the letter writer’s failure to mention the victims in this case that his heart is as hard as that of Pharaoh’s of Moses’ day toward the victims of the guilty brother’s previous years of cultivated deviant sexual appetite? I seriously doubt that his failure openly to exhibit his feelings for the victims means that he is any less sorrowful for their ordeal than he is for the brother who confessed his sexual deviancy. At least we hope that is the case.

The letter basically said that the erring brother had repented and confessed his sins before several congregations and, therefore, everyone should go on as if nothing had happened. The attitude expressed in the letter by its author was that if people expected anything else from the brother who had confessed his sins such would place them in the hated camps of the Pharisees, gossipers and tale bearers. Indeed, the author of the letter could conceive of no other reason to publicly note the many years of homosexual and pedophilia activities by the erring brother. And, frankly, no matter what man’s law states, we make little difference in a man who, from approximately age 30 into his 50’s, had sex with boys, whether they were 13 years old or 16 years old. And, in all the confessing of his sins to churches, did he confess his sins to those he

victimized?

To all these learned and pious brethren who are so indignant at those of us who are just as sorry as they are about this erring brother's sin; just as heart broken as they are that he has done what he has and just as happy as they are that he has confessed his sin, we say this: *open your eyes to the very nature of the sin*, the length of time involved in engaging in the sin, and understand that one guilty of such sins does not simply say, "I have sinned and I desire God and my brethren's forgiveness" and it is all over. It is a proven fact that in the great majority of such cases due to the psychological nature of these sins that the person caught up in them falls back into them.

Would any of you loving, merciful and forgiving brethren desire that this repentant man be allowed to teach a class of teen age boys, come over to your house to "baby-sit" your children, or to work regularly or at all with the teenagers in the church? If you would not, does your refusal to allow him to do so mean that none of you have forgiven him and that you are requiring him to "crawl over shattered glass, bathe your feet in tears and beg for your personal forgiveness?"

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO COMMON SENSE?

If a Christian was found guilty of embezzling money from the bank where he worked, went to prison for five years for the crime, was released on probation and had confessed his sins to the church, would the elders be unforgiving and hardhearted because they did not make him the church treasurer? What ever happened to common sense, the totality of the Bible's teaching on such a subject, and the proof born out in one's life that he/she has a terrible weakness in moral character? *Stupidity is not to be confused with mercy, grace, love, kindness or forgiveness.* Seemingly some brethren are ignorant of that fact. Moreover, does forgiveness demand that we forget everything about the nature of such sins? Why would the elders, the board, and staff under and with which the self confessed sexual deviant once worked demand his resignation anyway? To use the silly reasoning of some we must conclude that the previous elders, board and staff, including the one who wrote the pitiful letter, a copy of which we possess, should repent of their lack of "anguish of heart over this human tragedy of incalculable proportions..." and demonstrate their "spirit of kindness, forgiveness, mercy and grief" by letting the repentant brother stay on as director of the

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organization. He has repented, has he not? He has confessed his sins, has he not? Then per the premise of the author of the letter we have referenced, this man should not have his former illicit sexual actions held against him in any way? And, per the reasoning of the letter writer, it seems to me they are holding something against the repentant man since these same pious brethren either made him resign or thought he should and agreed with his decision to resign. Now, if that is not the case, then on what grounds do they think it was best for him to step down from his former position? Let our letter writer answer the last question. And, in view of what he thinks forgiveness means and implies about one's conduct toward a repent sinner, see how he can harmonize his own forgiveness of the brother with his agreement that this repentant brother should no longer be the director of the organization under consideration. Indeed why is his own wife divorcing him if she has forgiven him? Maybe our vitriolic letter writer should get on her case as he did the brother to whom he addressed the letter.

In Texas the state provides a data base of convicted sex offenders. To find out if anyone of them is living near you, all one has to do is go to the appropriate web sight, key in one's Zip Code, and if there are any sex offenders in your Zip Code area the pictures of the sex offender, the offense, and address will appear. This we have done. And, in our neighborhood we have found that there are several sex offenders living close to us. One of the men I see almost every day walking the main street of our neighborhood. Now suppose this is a brother in Christ who has repented, should the state take his picture, etc. off of the sex-offenders web sight? Indeed, why is it there in the first place? The answer is this—**BECAUSE EVEN WORLDLY MINDED LEGISLATORS, JUDGES, AND OTHERS IN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION HAVE MORE SENSE THAN SOME OF MY BRETHREN WHO ALLOW THEIR SICK SENTIMENTALISM TO BLIND THEM WHEN IT COMES TO RECONGNIZING THE FACT THAT THE NATURE OF SEX OFFENDERS IS TO COMMIT SUCH SINS OVER AND OVER AGAIN.**

It is hoped that the following material will help those who are capable of being helped to understand why a confession of sin does not end it all due to the nature of those sins and what they evidence in the psychological makeup of the people who commit them. Evi-

dently some of our brethren are blind as bats to these matters.

The material to follow is how psychiatrists and psychologists see the persons under discussion. I have bolded those parts of the following material that have a greater bearing on this type of case. The following information comes from the website given as endnote one. We have altered no facts in editing it.

PARAPHILIA (SEXUAL PERVERSION) IN GENERAL¹

The medical term applied to many sexual behaviors commonly referred to as kinky, bizarre, or perverted is Paraphilia. A paraphilia is a recurrent and intense sexual urge or sexually arousing fantasy that generally involves either (1) nonhuman objects as in fetishism or bestiality, (2) the suffering or humiliation of oneself or one's partner as in sadism or masochism), or (3) **children or other nonconsenting persons as in pedophilia**, exhibitionism, voyeurism, or obscene phone calls. This article discusses paraphilias in general. The following are specific paraphilias. Later in this article we will only discuss Pedophilia, but not the other paraphilias.

1. Fetishism
2. Sexual Sadism and Masochism
3. Pedophilia
4. Voyeurism (Peeping Tom)
5. Exhibitionism
6. Obscene Phone Calls
7. Bestiality
8. Other Paraphilias

Paraphiliacs are fixated on a narrow range of sexual objects or situations that are not normally sexually arousing to others. The more severe the paraphilia, the more likely it will interfere with the capacity for reciprocal, affectionate sexual activity. A severe paraphilia causes an individual to act compulsively, alone and in secret, and blocks development of an enduring sexual relationship based on mutual affection.

... a full-fledged paraphilia has nothing optional or elective about it. It is a usurper that takes over completely. Its injunctions are compulsory and must be obeyed, no matter what else they might interfere with. They may interfere during any waking hour... They defy voluntary attempts at control.²

Severe paraphilia is a concern as behavior is out of control, and the consequences of this for professional performance are unpredictable. Another concern is that paraphilias are not stable. They tend to become

worse over time, or during periods of stress when sound judgment is most important. Some paraphilias such as pedophilia, exhibitionism, making obscene phone calls, voyeurism and frotteurism involve criminal offenses and should also be evaluated under Criminal Conduct.

Clinical psychologists and psychiatrists find that when an individual has one paraphilia, there are often other paraphilias present as well. The childhood trauma suspected of causing the paraphilia may also have other residual effects on psychological adjustment.³ Personality disturbances frequently accompany paraphilia. Symptoms of depression may develop and be accompanied by an increase in the frequency and intensity of the paraphilic behavior.⁴

When paraphilic behavior is reported, the known behavior may be only the tip of a much larger iceberg, as many sex offenders either cannot or will not cooperate fully even during a clinical interview when immunity from prosecution is guaranteed.⁵

Paraphilias are classified as mental illnesses in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (fourth edition, revised)*. However, paraphilic fantasies or behavior are not always indicative of illness. They often exist in less severe forms that are not dysfunctional in any way, do not impede the development of reciprocal affectionate relationships, do not harm the individual or others, and do not entail criminal offenses... If acted out, they may be done in private and either alone or in a playful manner with a willing partner. They may be practiced occasionally by choice, rather than constantly by compulsion.⁶ Although unusual, such mild paraphilias do not cause an individual to be less reliable or trustworthy, nor do they indicate emotional disturbance or make a person more vulnerable to blackmail than many other types of personal secrets. Many fetishes, in particular, fall into this category.

"Imagining unusual sexual situations or behaviors to enhance stimulation or arousal is not uncommon."⁷ Fantasies are generally not a security problem as long as they are not acted out. The fantasies themselves are beyond conscious control; the failure to act on them indicates that behavior is under control. Fantasies may be a problem, however, if they are vivid and frequent and the individual feels threatened by them; **in such cases, the individual's reaction to the fantasy could be symptomatic of an emotional prob-**

lem that requires medical evaluation.

In other words, paraphilias exist with various degrees of severity. The security adjudicator dealing with a case of paraphilia must determine whether the paraphilia is severe enough to affect reliability, trustworthiness or job performance. Assessment by a mental health professional may be vital in making this judgment.

No hard data are available on the prevalence of paraphilias in the general population. **People with these disorders tend not to regard themselves as ill, and usually come to the attention of mental health professionals only when their behavior has brought them into conflict with sexual partners or the law.** Judging from the large commercial market in paraphilic pornography and paraphernalia, the prevalence in the community is believed to be far higher than that indicated by statistics from clinical facilities. **Males are far more prone to paraphilias than females.** For cases in which sexual masochism has developed to the point of paraphilia, for example, the sex ratio is estimated to be 20 males for each female.⁸ Many other paraphilias are practically never diagnosed in females. **There appears to be no difference in the prevalence of paraphilias among homosexuals and heterosexuals.**⁹ Of course we must emphasize that the Bible points out that homosexuality is deviant behavior for which a person is responsible.

The study of sex offenders noted above showed that most offenders had developed deviant sexual interests and fantasies by age 12 or 13. The age of onset is relevant, as it is generally believed that the earlier deviant behavior begins, the more difficult it is to treat effectively. For half or more of the offenders, the age at which the offenses began was before age 15 for voyeurism, before age 16 for homosexual sex with children, before age 17 for frotteurism, and before age 18 for exhibitionism. A different study of sex offenders has shown that about 90% have a history of more than one paraphilia at some point in their lives. **Pedophiles might also engage in exhibitionism, sadism, or fetishism, for example. Engaging in one deviant behavior may break down the barriers to others.**¹⁰

There is no cure for paraphilia in the sense of complete eradication or reversal of its cause. It can be treated to ameliorate its consequences, but relapse is not unusual.¹¹

PEDOPHILIA

Pedophilia is a criminal activity with a high rate

of recidivism, and treatment is often ineffective. It is, therefore, a serious security concern.

From a narrow psychiatric perspective, pedophilia is defined as recurrent, intense sexual urges and fantasies involving sexual activity with children prior to puberty, which generally means age 13 or younger.¹² This includes only a small part of the group commonly known as child molesters, however. Other child molesters sometimes described as pedophiles focus on pubescent children, or engage in sexual acts with children only occasionally in response to opportunity or when sexual outlets with adults are blocked for some reason. The following paragraphs apply to pedophilia as a narrowly defined psychiatric disorder.

Given the stigma attached to pedophilia and ambiguities in definition, researchers have been unable to assemble valid statistics on its prevalence in the population as a whole. National statistics on arrests for sex offenses are not broken down by type of offense. **Pedophilia is most common in males, although it does occasionally occur in women.**¹³ Many pedophiles are attracted to children of a specific age, such as girls ages eight to ten. **Those attracted to boys usually prefer slightly older children.** Attraction to girls is more common than to boys, although some pedophiles are sexually aroused by both young boys and young girls.¹⁴

The type of activity engaged in by pedophiles varies greatly. **It may be limited to undressing and observing the child, or it may include fondling the child, exposing themselves or other sexual acts. The activity is often rationalized as having “educational value” for the child.**

Pedophiles are most commonly found in three distinct age groups: adolescents, **mid-to-late thirties**, and **over age fifty**. Many pedophiles have a history of being sexually abused themselves when they were children.¹⁵ **Estimates of the percentage who were abused themselves as children range from about 28% to 80%.**

The popular stereotype of a child molester as a stranger who lurks around schools and playgrounds with a bag of candy is only partially correct. There are several different types of pedophiles. In about 10% of the cases the sexual act is an impulsive action with a stranger as the victim. **In the most common form of pedophilia, the pedophile exploits a child already known to him, the action is not impulsive,**

and it often begins with a form of courtship in which the pedophile befriends the child with stories, games, and disarming companionship. In about 15% of cases the victim is a relative, and the sexual contact is a form of incest. **This type of pedophile generally treats his victims very well, as he must gain their confidence and ensure they do not tell others.** Another type of pedophile, and the least common type, has a history of antisocial behavior and may feel a strong hostility toward women. This type may assault his victim and cause severe physical harm.¹⁶

Many pedophiles have a great many victims before they are caught. One study found a ratio of only one arrest per 30 acts of child molestation, and that child molesters often engage in a variety of deviant behaviors. Many who molest young girls also molest young boys. Many who molest children outside their family also engage in incest within their family.¹⁷ It is common practice for pedophiles to claim that they were drunk as an excuse to reduce the stigma and lessen the chances of punishment. They may convince others that instead of needing punishment or psychiatric treatment they simply need to stop getting drunk.¹⁸

Few offenders are actually sentenced to jail for sexual abuse of children. One study of 173 cases brought to prosecution found that 44% were dismissed, 22% voluntarily accepted a lesser plea, 11% were found guilty of a lesser charge, and only 2% were found guilty as charged. The other 20% were either still pending, terminated because the offender was committed to a mental institution or absconded, or no information was available.¹⁹

We close with this astute observance of Dr. Bernard Mooney of the CIA. **“Sexual behavior is a barometer, and a highly sensitive barometer, of the ‘whole person.’ When things go awry, sexual behavior is one of the first places where we see it.”**²⁰

ENDNOTES

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—David P. Brown, Editor

Assistant Editorial...

THE SIN OF INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC

Most people worship God using musical instruments with their singing. I offer this article to get us to think about the practice in light of the scriptures. Let's notice some arguments which have been given to justify its use.

"I LIKE IT."

This one is short and sweet. There are many who make all of their religious decisions based on their personal preferences. They love the sound of the musical instruments. It is "moving" and "soul stirring," therefore God must like it. They sometimes say, "I don't see anything wrong with it." This is the wrong approach. The widespread use of the instrument is certainly a testimony to the fact that many people like it, but the whims of men are not the same as the will of the Almighty. When people use the "I like it" approach, I like to bring up peanut butter and jelly. What if I argued that I like peanut butter and jelly, therefore it should be placed on the Lord's Table? Why most would think me daft, and rightly so. But I have just as much right to argue for peanut butter and jelly on the Lord's Supper as they do for mechanical instruments in the worship of the Lord. Both are without any scriptural support.

"THEY USED INSTRUMENTS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT"

We hear, "Well, David used a harp." These

people need to be forced to see the fallacy of this argument. What they are saying is this, "I can do whatever David, or some other Old Testament character did." This simply will not hold water. We are no longer under the Old Testament (Colossians 2:14, Ephesians 3:15). David sacrificed bulls and goats by the dozens under the system of worship he lived with. David had multiple wives, but such would be wrong today (Matthew 19:1-9). The New Testament simply does not authorize mechanical instruments of music being used in worship.

"THE BIBLE DOESN'T SAY WE CAN'T USE THEM"

This is sometimes styled "There's not a 'Thou Shall Not' passage on this subject." This argument stems from a common misconception. Many believe if something is not expressly condemned it is okay. Hence, "Where does it say you can't." These types of questions and statements betray a lack of understanding of basic biblical principles concerning authority. The Bible does not have to explicitly condemn something for it to be sinful. Notice a few examples that will show the fallacious nature of this position. Where in the Bible are men forbidden to beat their wives? There is no such explicit statement. Yet would any right thinking person argue that such is approved of God? I hope not. In Ephesians 5:25,28 we read,

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.” The principles set out in these verses (and many others) would certainly keep a faithful man from abusing his wife. The point should be obvious, we all can recognize the basic principles in these areas. God does not have to explicitly (in so many words) condemn each possible sin. If He did the Bible would be so large no human could lift it.

“IT’S AN AID TO SINGING”

This argument has been around for a long time, and is just as false today as it ever has been. These individuals attempt to justify the instrument by saying it is the same thing as using a song book or song leader. They claim it is an expedient. Let us look at this a little closer. In the days of Noah, God told him to build an ark out of Gopher wood. Tools (hammer, saw, wooden pegs etc.) would have been expedients (aides) in carrying out what God had commanded. Could Noah have used oak, pine or maple? No, for they are alternate types of wood. Notice the Lord’s Supper. God said to use unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. Trays and communion cups are aids (they help us carry out the command). But if we added peanut butter and jelly (because it helps me...) this is not an aid, it is a parallel entity, both are foods, it is an unauthorized addition.

The same is true with singing. There are some legitimate aids to singing. A song leader, song books, a microphone, etc. But, if a mechanical instrument is brought in it is not an aid, it is an addition because it is a parallel entity, it is a different kind of music. God has said what kind of music He wants; it is singing, not playing. Playing is no more an aid to singing than taking a car is to walking.

“THE WORD PSALLO INCLUDES PLAYING AN INSTRUMENT”

This is another argument that has been put forth. Notice Ephesians 5:19, **“Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord.”** The phrase **“making melody”** is from the Greek word *psallo*. When we trace the etymology of the word we find that it meant, “to pluck, or play a stringed instrument.” What is sometimes overlooked by those who want to use this verse (phrase) to grasp authority for mechanical instruments in worship is the scope of the phrase. The passage would be teaching that each per-

son was must sing and each person must play a stringed instrument. I have not met the person who would affirm this, but it does follow their basic position. The truth is that we are to play something, but it is not a manmade instrument of music. The type of instrument to be played is specified in the passage. We are to sing and make melody IN OUR HEARTS. The heart is to be played before the God of heaven. Not an organ, piano, or any other musical instrument. The word *psallo* is much like the Greek word *baptizo*. The former means to play and the latter to immerse, but neither word indicates the “what.” The Bible supplies that. We are to play our heart and we are to be baptized in water. These are a few arguments that have been offered in attempts to justify singing with a mechanical musical instrument. I hope we have shown the futility of such attempts.

WHY IS IT SINFUL TO USE THE INSTRUMENT?

Notice that we do not oppose mechanical instruments because we do not like them. I enjoy mechanical musical instruments. We do not have a personal aversion to them. Many members of the churches of Christ are music lovers. Many of our young people are members of school bands and the like. We do not oppose them simply out of a sense of duty to “our traditions.” Our opposition is really quite simple, they are wrong because there is no authority for them. This statement is based on the assumption that we must have authority for all that we do in religion (which is the truth and can be verified; Colossians 3:17). If we are going to be true to God we must recognize this principle.

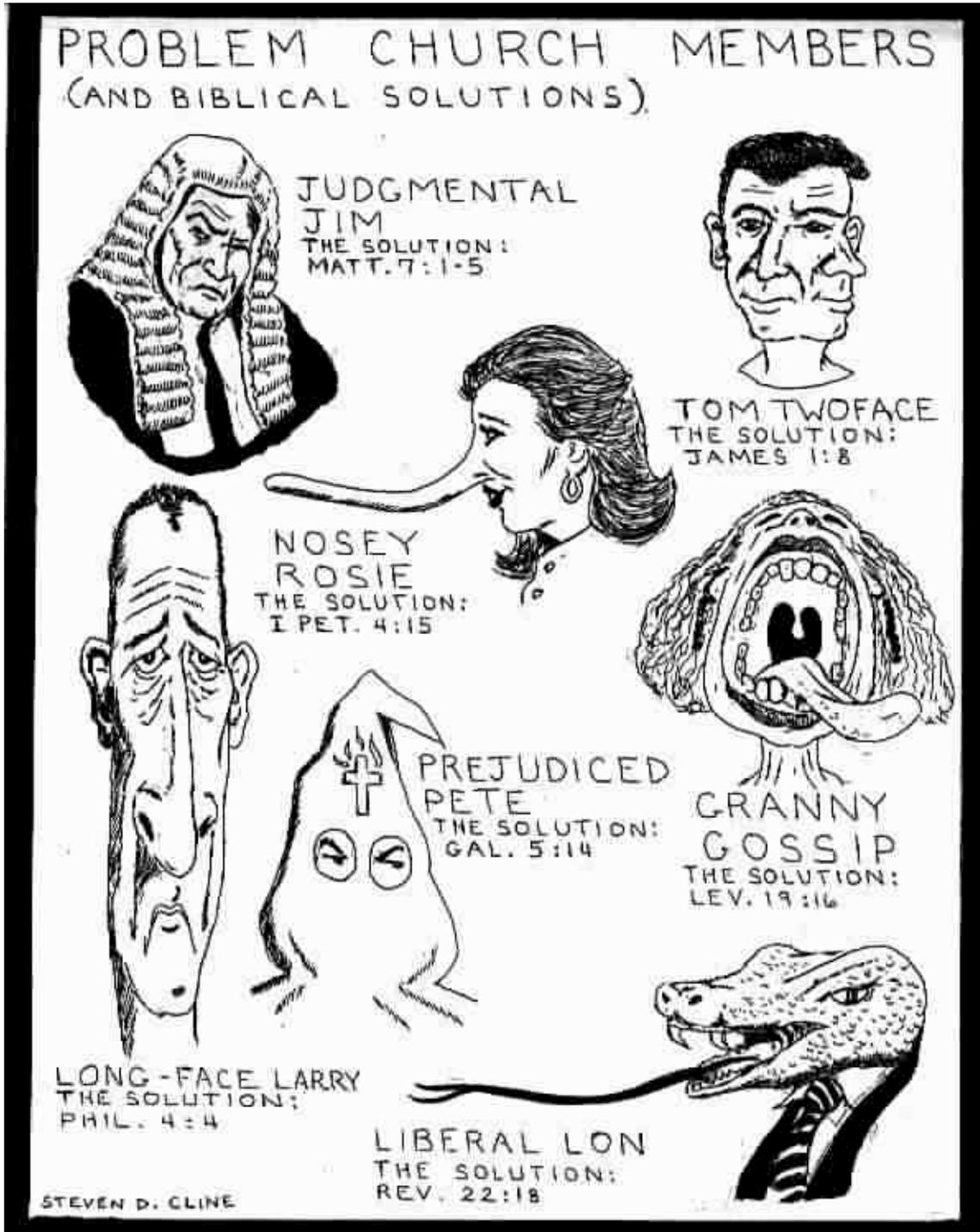
The Bible is full of examples of the need to respect the authority of God and His word. Nadab and Abihu were killed with fire from heaven when they offered a fire which God had not authorized in worship. It was not that God said, “I don’t want this type of fire,” but He had authorized one type and they offered another. The same is true today. We must worship God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24; 17:17); with our hearts and according to His word. Where there is no word there can be no faith (Romans 10:17; 14:23). This is where all questions as to what is acceptable to God are settled. Where is it in the Bible (II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:3)? God has made it clear that He has given us all that we need. He wants us to be humble enough of heart to allow Him to lead us and not add to what He has given (Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18,19). We need to stand firm in our opposition to this innovation of men to the worship of God.

We must worship God His way. God is a spirit and for worship to be acceptable to Him it must be spiritual. It must come from our heart, our inner man. We should worship God with every fiber of our being. Our worship is to also be in truth, as God has directed in His word (John 4:24; 17:17).

The Bible also speaks of different types of worship: vain worship (Matthew 15:7-9); ignorant wor-

ship (Acts 17:23); and true worship (John 4:23). True worship is the only one of the three that has any benefit at all. Notice, that true worship involves the right object (God); the right attitude (in spirit); and the right way (in truth). We need to make sure that we meet this criteria in every act of worship we offer to the Lord.

—Michael Light, Assistant Editor



Divorce and Civil Law

(Continued from Page 1)

Christ will be consistent, and it will remain stable. One's approach to the marriage situation must take this timeless truth into consideration.

THE APPLICATION TO DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Some years ago the highly respected **Guy N. Woods** aptly noted that "divorce is a civil, legal action having nothing whatsoever to do with determining the moral and religious principles involved. It is the Lord's edict, not man's, that governs" (*Gospel Advocate*, December 7, 1978, p. 771). This factor absolutely must be taken into consideration in analyzing divorce/remarriage cases. Consider some instances that illustrate the application of this truth.

1. Jesus Christ, by implication, authorizes a divorce, and subsequent remarriage, for an *innocent* spouse whose marriage covenant has been violated by his or her partner's sexual infidelity (Matthew 5:32; 19:9).

Suppose, though, that the state does not allow a

person to file for a divorce on the ground of fornication or adultery? What if the only "legal" cause is that ambiguous "irreconcilable differences"? Is the victim helpless in such a situation? Must he or she remain single forever—just because the civil authorities refuse to acknowledge the God-given reason for the severance of a marriage?

Surely not. And why not? Because divine law cannot be negated by arbitrary human law.

2. Consider another circumstance. A wife discovers that her husband has been having a sustained adulterous relationship with another woman. She is devastated and begs him to desist. She offers to forgive him, and pleads with him to restore the sanctity of their home. She attempts to be patient, hoping he will return to his senses (cf. Luke 15:17). As she lingers, praying for reconciliation, he files for divorce (which he obtains), and then secures his mistress as a new mate.

What, now, is the betrayed wife's plight? She may not obtain a "legal" divorce, for that has been finalized already. Is she utterly helpless, a pathetic victim of the circumstances of "civil law"—a law that cares nothing

for sacred truth relative to the marriage relationship? Is she bound to remain single for the remainder of her life—just because he preceded her to the "court house" while she longed for his repentance?

Some would so argue. They allege that because *he* divorced her, rather than the reverse being the case, she has no option but to remain celibate. It is claimed that "no divorced person" is free to marry. The idea is erroneous, because it overlooks the principles set forth above. It does not take into consideration the "sum" of divine truth on this moral-legal issue (Psalm 119:160 ASV).

Here are the facts. The adulterous husband had no cause for filing a divorce. He was the culprit—not his wife. The fact that the civil authorities processed his unscriptural petition means nothing at all. Human law cannot "trump" the law of God!

Moreover, the reality that the civil system would not grant to the wife the option of an "on paper" divorce (due to her husband's previous action), does not alter the fact that she had the moral right to legally dissolve her marriage. And, she chooses, to remarry eventually.

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CONCLUSION

It must be emphasized, then, that marriage is a divine institution. The Creator of the human family ordained the relationship. He alone has the right to regulate it.

Civil authorities may seek to revise, annul, or replace sacred Law, but truth remains inviolate. The

scripture cannot be broken (John 10:35). Divorce and remarriage cases, therefore, must be judged upon the basis of the facts, and the application of Heaven's law. No other criteria will suffice.

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THE FORK IN THE ROAD

Lennie Reagan

Yogi Berra is quoted as saying, "If you come to a fork in the road, take it!" Although Mr. Berra was an excellent baseball player, his advice does not help much when it comes to spiritual matters. The choices we make have consequences. Many choices are not really that important; but, there are some decisions we make that have lifelong and even eternal consequences.

Our Lord presents us with this ultimate choice:

Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it (Matthew 7:13-14).

Will you give attention to the choices? Christ over sin, difficult over easy, narrow over wide, few people over the majority of people, life over death. We are responsible for making the decision and these decisions carry eternal consequences.

God has always called for His people to make a choice. It was through Moses that God called for His people to make this choice:

See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil: In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it (Deuteronomy 30:15-16).

The choice is focused on some eternally important matters: good or evil, life or death, and a decision had to be made.

Joshua set a choice before the Israelites as they prepared to enter the land of promise:

And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (Joshua 24:15).

Were they going to serve the false gods the first generation out of Egypt served or were they going to serve the Lord God? A decision had to be made which would have eternal consequences.

Many congregations have toned down or even abandoned the idea of the necessity of choice in matters of the Bible. The argument stems from a false concept which has created room for every one's belief system. Some congregations of the Lord's church offer a "traditional" service and the next hour they offer a more "open" worship assembly. It does not matter what you want, just order it and the spiritual chefs will cook and serve it up with a smile.

These same congregations take the same approach to the gospel message and the hope of salvation. Men are not confronted about their journey on the broad way because they do not want to close any doors. How will men ever come to make the decision to enter the strait gate if both roads are presented as good as the other?

The Lord's church cannot stand behind a multitude of roads and be legitimate. If the gospel of Christ is true, everything else is a lie. If Christ is the Savior of the body (and He is), those who do not obey His Word are eternally lost. Peter spoke of that narrow road: "**Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved**" (Acts 4:12). Paul wrote of that narrow road:

But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them (II Corinthians 4:3-4).

The choice is between two destinations, eternal life or death. And yes, the gate is that narrow.

—P.O. Box 351
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"GET THEE BEHIND ME, SATAN"

Brock Hartwigsen

Jesus' statement to Peter "**get thee behind me, Satan**" (Matthew 16:23) at first glance sounds like His statement to the Devil "**get thee hence, Satan**" (Matthew 4:10). However, they are quite different and we can learn an important lesson from the difference.

In Matthew 4 the Devil had been tempting Jesus and Jesus finally said to him "hupage satana," which literally means "get you away adversary." When it comes to the devil, we need to understand that there is no rhyme nor reason for us to have any discussion, interplay or relationship with him. We need to follow Jesus' example and in plain English tell him to "get lost!"

In Matthew 16 Jesus had just told the apostles "**that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day**" (vs. 21). The very next verse says that "**Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee**" (vs.

22). Jesus then told Peter "**hupage opiso mou Satan.**" The inclusion of the words *opiso mou* changes the meaning of Jesus statement. *Opiso mou* means "behind me." Jesus did not tell Peter, whom He identified here as an adversary (Satan) to "get lost" as He told the devil but to "get behind Him." He told the Devil to leave. He told Peter, in essence, to follow Him, not try to lead Him.

Jesus had just told the apostles where He was going and Peter, instead of being a faithful follower of Jesus, tried to lead Jesus. When it comes to Jesus and His disciples, He is the leader and we are to be the followers.

Sadly, many professed Christians today try to lead instead of simply following. The Bible does not specifically forbid mechanical instruments of music, it just condones acappella music. There are some disciples who are trying to lead the church into the use of mechanical music instead of simply following Jesus' lead given to us through the inspired writings of the apostles. The Bible does specifically forbid women taking a leadership roll over men, i.e., teaching, preaching, etc., when men are present. Yet, there are those who follow Peter's example and say "this shall not be." These brethren are trying to lead the church into accepting women in public teaching roles instead of simply following Jesus' lead given to us through the inspired writings of the apostles (I Timothy 2:11-15).

These misguided adversarial disciples need to be told to get behind Jesus and follow Him and not to try to lead the church in a way contrary to Jesus' lead. Anyone, no matter how high and noble his motives may be, who tries to lead the disciples of Jesus in way contrary to Jesus' lead is an adversary of Jesus, a satan.

There are numerous teachings in the Bible about church discipline. These clearly teach that the time must come when the faithful must sadly repeat Jesus' admonishment to these satans and simply tell them to "**get thee hence, Satan.**" When it comes to these adversaries of Jesus we need to understand that there is no rhyme nor reason for us to have any discussion, interplay or relationship with them until they repent of leading astray and simply get behind Jesus and follow His lead.

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WAS JESUS A TROUBLEMAKER?

David B. Jones

According to Webster's Dictionary a "troublemaker" is "one who troubles, afflicts or disturbs the peace." Another source says "one who stirred up trouble or strife." In the Old Testament wicked king Ahab once asked Elijah: "...**Art thou he that troubleth Israel?**" (I Kings 18:17). The Hebrew word used there means to disturb or afflict. This is the exact same meaning that is given to this word in our modern language. Therefore, Elijah's answer is paramount to our discussion: "**And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.**" (I Kings 18:18). Elijah was not the troubler of Israel because he was one who spoke for God. Ahab thought Elijah was a troubler because Ahab's actions did not match the words of God. Notice what God recorded about Ahab:

And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him (I Kings 16:30-31).

Those who forsake the commands of God are those who trouble or disturb the spiritual things. Ahab and his family were the true troublemakers of Israel because they did not do what God said. The fact that Elijah pointed out their sins troubled Ahab, but not God. Although Elijah was a troubler of Ahab, he did not trouble Israel because he did what God wanted.

Today those who preach the truth in love are called troublemakers. Those who stand in the old paths and seek the good way are called radicals and unloving by the "loving" ones of God. Those who stand in the gap and declare the whole counsel of God are said to be those who need the spirit of Christ and they need to preach as did the Savior. So we ask in this article, "Was Jesus a troublemaker?" When His teachings and examples are examined, would our critics of today find any fault with the perfect Son of God? When investigated, His words did trouble some. We will notice a few of these.

JESUS TROUBLED THE DEMONIC DEVILS

The scriptures reveal that during the lifetime of

our Lord and His apostles, God allowed some evil spirits to escape temporarily from the abyss and indwell people upon the earth. A careful study of these instances shows the purpose of this indwelling was to provide a place for God's power through Christ and His apostles over these evil spirits and thus God's power over the power of the Devil. In Mark one we read:

And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes. And there was in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come—to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him. And, they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him. And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee (Mark 1:21-28).

Notice that Jesus taught and the people were amazed at His doctrine or teaching. It was something like they had never heard before.

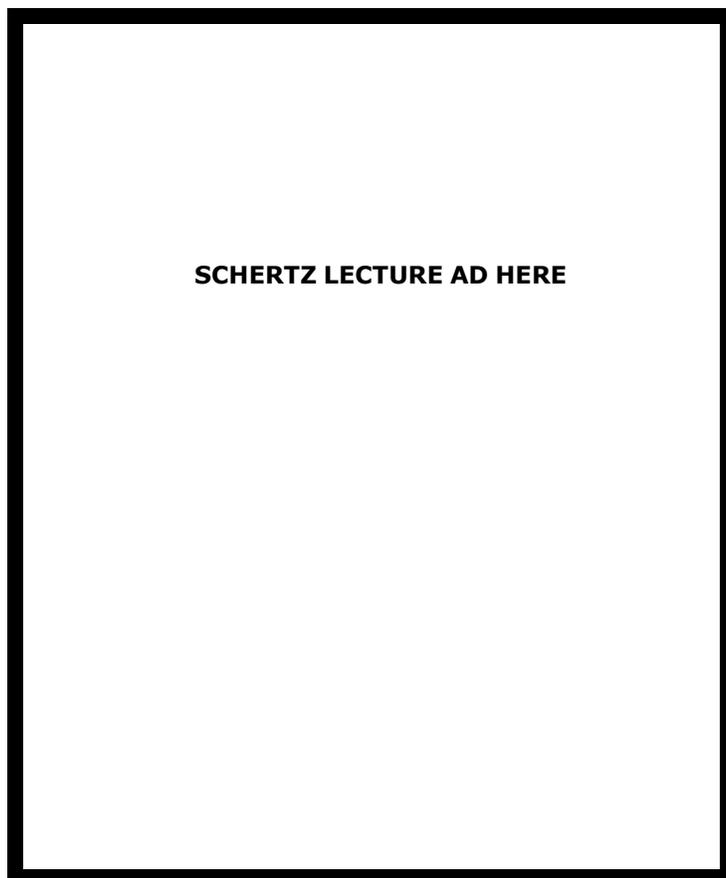
To affirm the authority of His Son's teaching, God revealed the casting out of this demon. We note that the demon acknowledged Jesus as the Holy One of God, but Jesus rebuked him. Jesus proved His power and authority over the Devil by commanding the demon to hold his peace and to come out of the man. No doubt, this was troubling to this demon. However, Jesus spoke for God and as the authority of God, therefore He could not allow the people to place their faith in the words of a demon. Jesus commanded silence on the part of the demon to show God's power and to illustrate forever that Satan's words are nowhere equal to God's!

On another occasion Jesus came in contact with two evil spirits in the Gergesenes (Matthew 8:28ff). It is interesting what these demonic devils asked Him: "**And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?**"

(Matthew 8:29). They knew their end! They knew that at the end of time they would be destroyed from the presence of Jesus:

In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (II Thessalonians 1:8-10).

Therefore, the words of the Lord troubled these demons because they knew they were not saved and they knew who would win the ultimate victory. According to some today, Jesus should have allowed the demons to believe as they wanted to and should not have been so critical of their ideas. Some, even among the churches of Christ, claim there is no such thing as an absolute standard of authority. On the two occasions cited above, if one could speak to those demons who were troubled by the words of the Lord, he would know that Jesus was a troublemaker to them! They knew Jesus was God's Son, but His words still troubled them.



JESUS TROUBLED THE "PIOUS" PHARISEES

The Son of God not only troubled the demonic devils, but he also troubled the "pious" Pharisees, that is, the "self-pious" Pharisees. These placed their word on the same level and equal to the word of God. The sect of the Pharisees had its beginning around 165 B.C. A group of Jews attempted to adhere to the word of God so closely that they "separated" themselves from the rest of the Jews, hence the meaning of the word "pharisee," "separated one." They, however, allowed themselves in time to become so radical in their thinking that they actually restricted the law of God more than the Law did itself. In addition, they added some of their traditions to the Law in their own minds and, by their additions, made the law of God of none effect. In fact, Jesus said this of the Pharisees:

Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:3-9).

The self-righteous Pharisees had made a feeble attempt to sidestep the command of God to provide for their parents by making a tradition which involved their giving a false "gift" to the priests (Mark 7:11). Jesus scolded them and condemned their additions as hypocritical and vain. No doubt, this rebuking by Jesus "troubled" them, especially since they were the teachers of the Law.

On another occasion Jesus called them self-righteous:

And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance (Matthew 9:10-13).

When Jesus called them "righteous," He was using sarcasm as He rebuked them for

their haughtiness. They had elevated themselves above the rest of the Jews and had justified their lack of love and compassion. They felt they were healthy and everyone else constituted the sick (spiritual) of the world. They did know the Law but they also had incorrectly interpreted and applied it in many parts.

The most scathing rebuke of the Pharisees is found in Matthew chapter twenty-three. Jesus rebukes them for their: [1] hypocrisy (3); [2] haughtiness (4-5); [3] self-elevation (6-10); [4] incorrect teaching of the Law (12-22); [5] omission of obedience (23); [6] binding of their traditions (24-33); and [7] their ultimate rejection of Him (34-39). The fact that He troubled them is seen as they conspired against Him, having Him crucified at the hands of the Roman government. Although He was the answer to all the prophecies made by all the Old Testament prophets, He did not fit their mold of a Messiah. He demanded that they be people of sacrifice and submission.

His teachings troubled them and they rebelled against Him. On more than one occasion they sought to stone Him to death, but they feared the people and sometimes He slipped their midst: **“And they sought to lay hold on him, but feared the people: for they knew that he had spoken the parable against them: and they left him, and went their way”** (Mark 12:12); **“And the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people”** (Luke 22:2). He taught them the truth and they did not desire to hear the truth.

People are not that different today. When sound and solid gospel preachers teach the truth today, many are troubled. Among those troubled are those who have elevated their own ways and their teachings to the level of God’s word. Today we hear it like this: “I don’t see anything wrong with that,” or “If that was good enough for my grandmother or grandfather, it is good enough for me.” When we kindly point out the difference between family traditions and the truth, we are accused of being troublemakers. But, then the Lord was also!

JESUS TROUBLED HIS DOUBTING DISCIPLES

Jesus also troubled those who walked the closest to Him. On one occasion Jesus walked on the water and troubled His disciples: **“And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid”** (Matthew 14:26-27). They did not have enough faith to believe that Jesus would be concerned enough to

come to them or that He could actually walk on the water.

His Lordship troubled them because they did not fully understand His mission. After Jesus had explained He would build His church on His Deity, He revealed to them that He would be killed and then raised the third day at which time Peter rebuked Him saying: **“...Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee”** (Matthew 16:22). The Lord’s words troubled His doubting disciple Peter.

Today, the words of the Lord trouble His doubting followers who doubt there is but one church. The doubters among us love to flock to the “Community Church,” so-called. They love to try and extend the lines of fellowship outside the one body of Christ. They seek to find new ways of entrance into the one kingdom of Christ. However, the words of the Lord ring true and sound today as then: **“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”** (Matthew 16:18). The Lord promised to build ONE and that is exactly how many He built and paid for. Anyone who is “troubled” by His words needs to re-examine his/her faith and build that faith once again by a study of the words of the Lord.

Was Jesus a “trouble-maker?” Yes, for some He was and still is for others even today.

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The Walls of Jericho

Gene Litke

In Joshua the 6th chapter we read about the Lord's instructing Joshua to take the fortified City of Jericho in the Land of Canaan. Once a day for six days the Israelites were to walk around the city led by seven priests blowing ram's horns. On the seventh day the Lord told the Israelites to walk around the city seven times and on command give a mighty shout and the walls would collapse. The Israelites followed the Lord's commands, the walls collapsed, and the Israelite army razed the city.

I earn my living working as a geologist and in one of my trade journals I encountered an article by a geologist, **Amos Nun**, who studied the northern Red Sea area including the site of Jericho. Jericho was built on a large fault system that generated numerous earthquakes which caused it to collapse and be rebuilt more than twenty times throughout history. In the various layers they found crushed human bodies and skulls under collapsed buildings and walls. This is the same type of damage caused by an earthquake in Iran a while back. Nun concluded that ancient historians embellished these earthquake events and often credited conquering armies for the destruction intimating that may be the case in the biblical account. Nun helped write a documentary film about Jericho entitled "The Walls Came Tumbling Down."

The question I ask is— "Do articles and films such of this aid us or inhibit our study and belief in the Bible text? Could God have used an earthquake to achieve the destruction of Jericho? As Christians we know that the God who created all things could certainly use the forces of his creation to accomplish his goals. We have to look no farther than the Flood of Noah's time where God caused it to rain for forty days and nights along with other sources, flooding the world and destroying sinful mankind. In the New Testament when Christ was crucified and died on the cross— Matthew 27:51 tells us the "**earth did quake and the rocks rent (torn)**" upon his death.

The study of Jericho gives evidence of collapsed walls and buildings and could support the biblical account—but there is not a one-for-one correlation of Joshua 6 event from the geological and archaeological studies in the area. And in contrast—the fact the scientific studies recognized a fault and earthquake zone at the site of Jericho—does not invalidate the biblical account of the walls collapse through a miracle by God.

How do we as Christians deal with data from the science, archeology, or secular history in the modern world today? At the turn of the twentieth-century

one of the arguments against the validity of the Bible was that there was no archeological or historical evidence of people and places mentioned in the Bible such as the great Hittite Empire mentioned some forty times in the Old Testament. Then in 1906 **Hugo Winckler** discovered a library of 10,000 clay tablets that completely documented the Hittite Empire. In this case archeology confirmed the Biblical account.

What about secular history? We often use secular historical information to augment our understanding of the Bible. A good example is the writings of Josephus who recorded many of the events surrounding the first century church in the Roman Empire. He reportedly was with Titus at the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and recorded the events in seven books entitled *History of the Jewish Wars*. **Josephus** recognized the existence of Jesus Christ, probably from first person accounts and even recorded the stoning death of James, "the brother of Jesus called the Christ". Therefore, secular history can be used to supplement and strengthen our belief in the biblical accounts.

Today there is a host of data available to us from overlapping studies in the sciences, archeology, theology, and secular history. One reason I chose to address this topic is because television in the last few years has presented numerous documentaries or docu-dramas about the Biblical texts and persons in the Bible. If you have PBS, the Discovery Channel, the Biography Channel, the Learning Channel, or the Mystery Channel, you probably have seen one of these shows. I have collected a number of these the last couple of years. Although they often accurately quote Bible scriptures, show great computer graphics of the geography and architecture at the time, they often put their own spin on the scientific, historical, and political data and question the validity of the biblical accounts. I have three examples. My purpose is not to systematically refute their conclusions but to generally review the type of information being shown to us today.

MOSES AND THE EXODUS (2003) BY THE LEARNING CHANNEL

This show portrays the plagues of Egypt and the parting of the Red Sea as the result of a natural disaster. They concluded that a large volcanic eruption in the Mediterranean Sea created the large pillar of fire and smoke that led the Israelites out of Egypt. The ten plagues were caused by the ash from the volcanic eruptions which poisoned the Nile River turning it red as blood. This drove the frogs onto the land (2nd plague). The death of the frogs caused outbreaks of flies and

lice (3rd and 4th plagues) which in turn infected the cattle (5th plague) and caused boils to humans (6th plague). They also claim a large tidal wave caused by a volcanic eruption could have caused the parting of the Red Sea.

ANCIENT EVIDENCE - WHO KILLED JESUS (2003) THE DISCOVERY CHANNEL

This video treats the death of Jesus as a murder investigation and identifies three suspects who caused Jesus's death. The first suspect was the high priest, Caiaphus, who stood to lose his power and fortune if the Mosaic Law and priesthood were eliminated. The second suspect was Pontius Pilate who hated the Jewish people he governed. Although he washed his hands of Jesus's death, he was the person who allowed him to be crucified. The third suspect was surprisingly Jesus himself. The video suggests Jesus was a rebel who may have actually believed he was doing God's will and martyred himself to fulfill his destiny. This is an interesting video, but it is obvious the producers question the deity of Christ.

PETER AND PAUL (2002) BY THE PBS

This show depicts Peter and Paul as political rivals seeking control of the first century Church. Peter is considered a poorly educated fisherman and actually referred to him as a "country bumpkin" who sought to keep the Church for Jewish Christians. Paul is depicted as a well educated and sophisticated man supported by the Gentile Church—and ultimately Paul's vision the Church eventually won out over his political rival Peter.

I mentioned these three but there are numerous other examples. In viewing these, there are several common traits in the way these are presented to the public. They are presented as documentaries in the same manner they would if they were showing a video of Texas History or some other subject. In listening to those scientists, archeologists, historians, and theologians who contribute to the stories, one can separate them into two distinct groups of people who are used as commentators and expert witnesses. The first group are the non-Christians or atheists, and the second group are the so-called "Christian" or "Jewish" scholars.

Those who are "Non-Christians" are seeking to portray the Biblical texts as untrue or mythical folklores. In fact I saw a new show called Ancient Mysteries not long ago that chronicled the life of King David in the Old Testament. Their conclusion was David's true character was that of the wicked man who took Bathsheba for his pleasure and caused her husband Uriah to be killed. They claim the good-hearted and repentant David was an embellishment of the Old Testament writers. They kept referring to the Old Testament prophets and writers as "spin doctors" to use our

modern vernacular. Ironically it was the show's writers and producers who were "spinning" the facts.

The second group of scientists, archeologists, historians, and theologians are those who generally support the Biblical accounts, but often in a way that supports their particular doctrine or religious groups. If they cite a theologian from Notre Dame University, he interprets events through the eyes of the universal Catholic Church. If they interview a Jewish Rabbi from a Hebrew university in Israel, then he is not going to acknowledge the deity of Christ as the Messiah. Many others also try to inject their particular brand of religion into the shows.

As New Testament Christians we have to be on guard for these shows—particularly if we watch them with our children. We must be prepared to challenge false teachings and distortions of the Bible texts just as we would from any other source.

Why? Because if we ever come to the point where we have doubts or believe part of the Bible is inaccurate, then we must discard the entire Bible as the infallible word of God and the basis for our beliefs. It is a very serious matter and could cause us to lose our souls forever.

Ephesians 6:11 tells us to **"put on the whole armor of God, that we may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil."** Ephesians 6:17 tells us to take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the Word of God. Every time we have doubt about the Bible, we have lost our sword and we are eventually left unprotected against false teachings. We give Satan the opening he needs to turn us away from God.

We know the Bible scriptures are divinely inspired. In the Old Testament in Isaiah 51:16, the Lord tells Isaiah: **"I have put my words in thy mouth"** and II Samuel 23:2 states: **"The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue"**

We find similar passages in the New Testament such as in II Timothy 3:16 where Paul writes: **"All Scripture is given by inspiration of God—and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness..."**

The Lord said in Matthew 24:35: **"Heaven and Earth shall pass away but my words shall not pass away."**

The divinely inspired word of God will survive to the end of time and we will be judged by the words it contains. I Corinthians 14:33 tells us: **"God is not the author of confusion"**; Hebrews 6:17-18 tells us **"God's counsel is "immutable" (unchanging) and it is impossible for God to lie."** Let us review what we just read: 1) God expects us to study and understand his word, 2) the Old and New Testaments are divinely inspired, 3) God does not try to confuse us, 4)

God does not lie to us, 5) God is immutable—his word does not change, 6) and his word will not disappear from this world, and 7) we will be judged by it at the end of time. Therefore, I must accept the Bible as truth and use it as a proof text against all false teachings.

God created man with the ability to use logic and gain knowledge from the things around him. Each generation of mankind builds on the knowledge of the previous generations. All we have to do is go to a library full of books and see the proof—or today we can just type a subject into the computer on the internet and receive hundreds or even thousands of references in almost any subject.

The Bible contains scientific data, archeological facts, and historical facts, and, as Christians, we must accept it as fact as part of our faith. I came across a quote from **Keith Mosher, Sr.** who wrote that “Biblical archeology is led by the (Bible) manuscripts and not the other way around.” I think that statement can be broadened. The Bible leads man to understand the world around him whether it be the created universe, government, history, family relationships, his purpose in life or ultimately his salvation. Man need look no further than the divinely inspired word of God to find the answers. Mathew 7:7 tells us: **“Ask, and it shall be given you; Seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For everyone that asketh receiveth; And he that seeketh findeth:**

And to him who knocketh it shall be opened.”

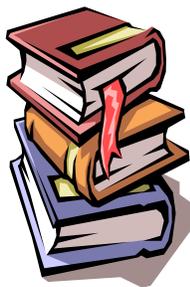
It is a matter of faith that we believe Bible is the word of God! Hebrews 11:1 states: **“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen”** and verse 3 tells us: **“through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.”** And verse 6 states: **“without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”**

When we began we discussed how the walls of Jericho fell down. Joshua 6 tells us what God told the Israelites must do to bring down the walls of Jericho. They followed his instructions and the walls fell down. Hebrews 11:30 in that great chapter on faith tells us how the walls came down. Hebrews 11:30: **“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed for seven days.”**

I believe the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God and it reveals God’s plan of salvation for each one of us. If we follow the example shown of the Israelites—by listening to God’s word and doing as he commands us—we can be victorious and have everlasting life in heaven with God and all his glory.

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SHOULD EVERYONE SING?

L. O. Sanderson

It is no secret that too many Christians fail or refuse to sing hymns of prayer and praise or gospel songs of admonition to others; and when one is exhorted to join in the sacrifice of our lips in praise, the answer is, “I can’t sing,” or “my voice will not respond” (even though they can talk a blue streak!), or “I simply am not musically inclined” (though they play records, radio, attend musicals, and even enjoy singing!). It is agreed that we are born with varied degrees of the senses of pitch and rhythm—it is difficult to believe that anyone is born with none. But the question is: Should everybody sing? Is one more obligated to try than another? Can one who is talented do the singing for another who is not as talented? Has God authorized a practice in the kingdom of His Son which cannot be obeyed?

A number of years ago, during a lecture on the music of the church, one from the audience asked to be recognized. We listened as he reasoned: “There is singing and there is making melody in the heart; both are included in the New Testament teaching. One has the talent to sing audibly, while another can only make melody in the heart.” (And he cited a Bible commentary to prove his point.) However, this writer, who was the speaker of the occasion, just had to ascertain if he thought dual command, connected by the conjunction “and,” could be performed by two people—one doing one part, another the other part—and please God. The auditor’s answer was affirmative. But, and we remarked, this would not hold true in other cases. For instance, the Lord says, **“He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved”**—can one believe, the other be baptized, and both be saved? You say this is absurd. Yes, but not any more than saying, “You make melody in the heart and I will sing with the voice, and we will both please God.” It takes both for one to complete his own obligation.

Surely we can know that God does, or does not, authorize us to sing with the voice from the heart. If he does not, then we do not have to utter praise and devotion—we can eliminate singing altogether! If he does (and the Bible is clear on this point), how can we honor God and admonish others without doing our best singing? The moment we admit that God commands us to sing, rather than offer mechanical praise, we are faced with a searching question: Can we go to heaven while disobeying a command? There is no alternative—to do or not to do, to the best of our ability, is the real concern. One endowed with greater potentiality in song has no stricter duty, no greater reward; neither is one of lesser talent relieved of duty nor denied blessings and rights of participation. As men judge, one can teach

better, lead a better prayer, or give more, but this cannot excuse others from obligations in these realms. If God says sing, and He does, we must do our best.

Paul said to speak (and this is oral expression) psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, **“singing and making melody in your heart”** (Ephesians 5:19); to teach and admonish (and this is with the voice) in the same fashion (Colossians 3:16); with him, it was personal, **“I will sing”** (I Corinthians 14:15), and he practiced it (Acts 16:25). The Hebrews writer said it must be **“in the midst of the church”** (Hebrews 2:12), and that **“by him (Christ), let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name”** (Hebrews 13:15). These and related Scriptures assure that God wants each and all to sing.

Grant that someone has waited too long to do well at singing, he could still try; and, anyway, this should not check our teaching that God expects His children to sing! If this had been emphasized fifty years ago, more, if not all, Christians would be joining in the exercise today. For the sake of the present and coming generations, we must urge God’s pleasure with respect to music in the worship. It is a fact that we must be taught to do what God requires—Jesus taught His disciples to pray, and by what manner; He actually went through the manner of observing and serving the Lord’s supper; we are taught to teach, but must be taught before we can do so. Hence, to sing, we should be taught to sing.

One of the errors of teachers of singing schools in the past is that they pile up a stack of theory and often make the undertaking appear difficult, while underemphasizing the joy of singing, the art of it, and promotion of spirit and understanding in the practice. May the Lord bless every one who strives to improve our singing but may we prove, with Solomon, that **“man should rejoice in his own works.”** The old saying is that “the proof of the pudding is in the eating”—may we also insist that the means and reward in singing is the doing of it! The least a Christian could do to effect improvement is to be on hand and try in every singing effort. The elders, who must of necessity be concerned with the teaching of and by the flock, should certainly encourage one of the most powerful means of teaching and admonishing. If all members of the church should attend worship and Bible study, let us put forth every effort to gain 100 percent attendance; but if we fail, let us not give up. If all are to sing, let us put forth a special effort to attain full participation; but failure with some must not deter our efforts toward better singing.

—deceased

BEHIND THE CODE

Jeff Sweeten

“The New Testament is based on fabrications... Every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith.” —Dan Brown “The Da Vinci Code”

Novelist Dan Brown certainly ruffled feathers with *The Da Vinci Code*. I am sure this New York Times bestseller had Popes for the last 1500 years spinning in their graves. His witty, intriguing style constitutes the antithesis of **Tim LaHaye’s** *Left Behind* series, a kind of antichrist response to the charismatic craze inundating the fiction genre these days. It takes some reading but, finally, on page 346 in a conversation between the two main characters, the real “code” comes to light (or darkens the page, as it were). “(T)he New Testament is based on fabrications.... Every faith in the world is based on fabrication. That is the definition of faith — acceptance of that which we imagine to be true, that which we cannot prove.”

Overtly feminist and pagan in its tenor, Brown does his best to twist history’s mysteries to prove that Jesus was merely human, married to Mary Magdalene, and sired offspring that lived somewhere in France,

protected by a mysterious cult of the “sacred feminine.” To be sure, it is fiction; Brown does not make any absurd claims of legitimacy as did Schonfield in *The Passover Plot* where Jesus was only a swooning Savior, the death, burial, and resurrection portrayed as a mere delusion of determined disciples. Unfortunately, the same evil resides in this fiction as in other, opposite-ended fictions: there is the pretense that the fiction is based on credible evidence, real history, and biblical corroboration. Nothing could be further from the truth.

To believe that Jesus is coming to earth to set up His kingdom (by implication, having failed in His first attempt) is anti-biblical. Yet the *Left Behind* series is founded on that very heresy and has sold in the millions, thank you very little. Likewise, *The Da Vinci Code* is founded on the premise that the Scriptures are unreliable and that feminist paganism is an equally valid expression of “faith.” This is the fiction of pluralism, the flavor of the month with the hyper-tolerant, politically correct crowd. And, mind you, its popularity in no way lends to its credibility or rationality.

Whereas many concerned Christians are wringing their spiritual hands over the demise of moral absolutes and crying out against the fallout (injustice, perversion, and its ilk), we are missing a subtle tool Satan has used often in history. It appears inane and harmless on the surface but breeds both a discontentment for objective truth as well as a relaxed acceptance of agnosticism. It is often the case that a war’s winner is decided not by a crushing defeat but by a broken confidence. The subtle planting of seeds of doubt, with a sprinkle of spiritual egalitarianism, and a person is ripe for a conflicted religious misery that often leads to a complete overthrow of the faith. A case in point: many of our bright young students who come home from college jaded and cynical. (*The Da Vinci Code* was required reading in a recent UTPB college course; big surprise!) Perhaps we should pull off the blinders and realize the extent to which Satan has inundated our culture. “Be careful little eyes what you see,” the children’s song goes. **“For my people are foolish; they know me not; they are stupid children; they have no understanding. They are ‘wise’ in doing evil! But how to do good they know not”** (Jeremiah 4:22, ESV). Look behind the code.

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11:00 am	Misunderstood Bible Passage	Tim Kidwell
12:00 pm	Luncheon	
1:00 pm	Sure Word (1:12-21)	Dub McClish
2:00 pm	False Teachers (2:1-19)	Michael Light
3:00 pm	The Tragedy of Falling Away (2:20-22)	Michael Hatcher
3:45 pm	Questions & Answers	Panel

Sunday, October 2, 2005

9:30am	The Day of the Lord (3:1-10)	Tom Wacaster
10:30 am	Christian Conduct (3:11-14)	Billy Bland
	Lunch Break	
5:00 pm	Ignorance vs. Knowledge (3:15-18)	Billy Bland
6:00 pm	Lessons from the Life of Peter	Tom Wacaster

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One Woman's Perspective...

LOOKING FOR LOOPHOLES

Annette B. Cates

In a documentary/biography of **W. C. Fields**, one of the individuals who was interviewed related that a friend of Fields went to visit the comedian in the hospital shortly before his death. He found Fields reading a Bible. The friend asked why he, an atheist, was reading the Bible. In his deep gravely voice, Fields replied, "Lookin' for loopholes."

As all people who do not abide by God's word learn after death, there are no loopholes (Revelation 22:18-19). Unlike Fields, most people are not atheists. In fact, most have some degree of religious belief. However, like Fields, many are also looking for loopholes. Members of the church are not immune. When someone says he is restudying an issue such as divorce and remarriage, or the use of instrumental music in worship to God, or the role of women in the public assembly, or some moral issue, that person may be saying, "I'm looking for loopholes." This is not to say that we are not to study the things we hear, but we are to do so in the light of God's word (Acts 17:11). There are those who go from preacher to preacher and congregation to congregation until they find some "loophole" they are seeking. Less error would be propagated and swallowed if everyone were to test that which is preached and taught in the light of the Scriptures.

It has always been a temptation for man to follow that which is in his own heart, that which he can twist and rationalize rather than to follow God's instruction. Peter spoke of the "**unlearned and unstable**" who wrest the Scriptures "**unto their own destruction**" (II Peter 2:16). Is that not the course that Adam and Eve followed? When the serpent approached Eve and convinced her that there was a "loophole" in what God had said regarding the forbidden fruit (Genesis 3:1-5), she accepted his word over the clear command of God. Compounding the error, she convinced her husband of the "loophole." During Ezekiel's time, false prophets were guilty of the worst kind of lying—that of giving people the word from their own hearts and not that from God (Ezekiel 13:1-10.)

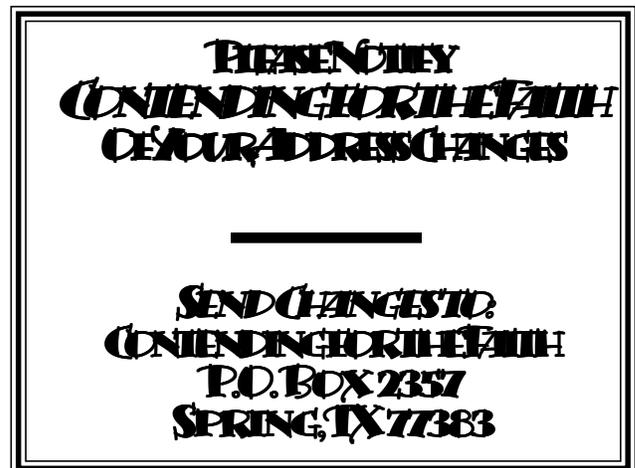
Some might wonder, "Why not give comfort instead of condemnation?" We live in such an age of "political correctness," "consciousness-raising," and "sensitivity training" that we have become quite smooth at softening the truth to the point of non-existence. We have become like parents and little children who would much prefer a candy bar over a spanking, but a child

who grows up on all candy bars and no discipline will not be prepared to live in a civilized world. [As an aside, perhaps that is what is wrong with society today.] A person who gives, or is given, false hope spiritually will not be fit for Heaven.

Once one of our children asked me why he could not do something that a neighborhood child was allowed to do. I replied, "Because we love you enough to teach you right from wrong." It would have been far easier at the time just to let the children do anything they chose to do as did our neighbor whose child would have been allowed to swing from the rafters in a noose if that were what she wanted. God so loved us that He gave us, not only His only begotten Son (John 3:16), but also a way to access the salvation offered by that sacrifice (Hebrews 5:8, 9). He gave us His word in order that we may know how to live and how to worship Him. "**Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God...**" (I John 3:1). We know what to do, but many of us would rather look for "loopholes."

I do not want to reach the end of my life's journey "lookin' for loopholes." Let all of us recognize and respect the authority of God and His word and live thereby. The reward is worth the effort.

—9194 Lakeside Drive
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The Last Word...

Four Specific Confessions

Kent Bailey

The New Testament term *confession* (homologia) is properly defined as “accordance, agreement, admission and/or declaration.” This subject is truly crucial to our understanding of the Bible. It is just as important as Faith, Repentance, Baptism and a host of other topics that are essential components of the New Testament pattern. It is our purpose in this study to consider four specific confessions as set forth in the New Testament.

THE GOOD CONFSSION

In I Timothy 6:11-12 Paul wrote:

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art called, and didst confess the good confession before many witnesses.

In this passage we note *the good confession*. This accordance, agreement, admission and or declaration was the same confession that Christ made before Pontius Pilate (6:13). It is made with the mouth (Romans 10:9) and is unto one’s Salvation (Romans 10:10).

As we study the Scriptures we note that such is not a particular formulation of words, but rather it is the declaration of a particular truth that Jesus Christ is indeed Deity in the flesh. In noting various New Testament passages such as John 1:49; 11:25-27; Matthew 16:13-18; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-20 in addition to Acts 8:37 we note a variation in the form of words that are used in these texts. However, we note a uniformity of truth that is admitted regarding that Jesus Christ is the Son of the Living God.

When we contrast this *good confession* with the various denominational *professions* of “Salvation already obtained” we note that such is a demonstration that those in the denominations have not made this good confession and therefore have not received New Testament baptism.

THE CONFSSION OF FAITHFULNESS

As the New Testament pattern necessitates the alien sinner to confess faith in Christ prior to baptism for the remission of sins; this same New Testament pattern requires Christians to make a continual declaration of our faith in Christ with our faithful living following our obedience to the gospel of Christ (Romans 2:1-11). This particular confession is made by that which a Christian both does and does not do (Matthew 5:13-

16; Hebrews 10:25; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

The time element involved in this particular confession begins following our baptism when we are “**raised to walk in newness of life**” and must continue throughout our entire life (Hebrews 3:1-6; 4:14; Revelation 2:10). Whenever the child of God fails to confess Christ with the proper manner of life, the result is that of sin (I John 1:6).

THE CONFSSION OF SIN

Not only does God have a law of pardon for the alien sinner consisting of Faith in Christ, Repentance of personal sin, Confession of Christ and Baptism for the remission of sins; God also has a second law of pardon for the fallen, sinful child of God.

In noting passages such as Acts 8:22, James 5:16, and I John 1:7-10, the Scriptures establish a pattern of Repentance, confession of sin, and prayer unto God on behalf of His fallen children. When such takes place in the life of the covenant sinner, restoration thus takes place. This confession must be as public as the knowledge of the sin.

THE CONFSSION OF LIFE OR DEATH

The first three confessions as noted in this particular study are conditioned upon our freedom of personal choice. In order to be saved in Christ and remain within the fellowship of Deity, these confessions must be made.

There is one confession, however, that all will make unto the glory of God the Father that will be the culminating act of our entrance into Heaven, or admission to the regions of the condemned (Philippians 2:5-11). This is the confession of life, or death.

Whereas the good confession must be made preceded by Faith and Repentance and followed by Baptism for the remission of past alien sins, the confession of faithfulness must be made with the totality of our lives; and the confession of sins must be made to enjoy God’s second law of pardon on behalf of the fallen child of God; the totality of humanity will confess the Deity of Christ to the glory of God the Father at the Judgment. This truly will constitute an act of vindication on behalf of God’s scheme of Redemption.

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Holly Pond-Church of Christ, Hwy 278 W., P.O. Box 131, Holly Pond, AL 35083, Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:30 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., (256) 796-6802, (205) 429-2026.

Somerville-Union Church of Christ, located on Hwy 36, one mile east of Hwy 67, Somerville, Alabama, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tom Larkin, evangelist, (256) 778-8955, (256) 778-8961.

Tuscaloosa-East Pointe Church of Christ one block from Exit 76, off I-20, I-59, Sun. 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed., 7 p.m. Abiding in God's Word—The Old Paths. U of A student, visitor, or resident? Welcome! Andy Cates, evangelist. (205)556-3062.

-England-

Cambridge-South Cambridge Church of Christ, Brian Chadwick, 198 Queen Edith's Way, Cambridge. Publishers of "Oracles of God". Tel: (01223) 501861, e-mail: brian.chadwick@ntlworld.com

Cambridgeshire-Ramsey Church of Christ, meeting at the Rainbow Centre, Ramsey, Huntingdon. Sun. 10, 11 a.m.; Wed. (Phone for venue and time); www.Ramsey-church-of-christ.org. Contact Keith Sisman, 001.44.1487.710552; fax:1487.813264 or Keith Sisman.net. Research Website of 1,000 years of the British Church of Christ; www.Traces-of-the-kingdom.org and www.Myth-and-Mystery.org.

-Florida-

Pensacola-Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Saufley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

-Georgia-

Cartersville- Church of Christ, 1319 Joe Frank Harris Pkwy NW 30120-4222. 770-382-6775, www.cartersvillechurchofchrist.org. Sun. 10, 11a.m., 6:30 p.m. Wed. 7:30 p.m. Bobby D. Gayton, evangelist- email: bdgayton@juno.com.

-Indiana-

Evansville-West Side Church of Christ, 3232 Edgewood Dr., Evansville, IN 47712, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 6:30 p.m., Larry Albritton, evangelist.

-Louisiana-

Chalmette-Church of Christ, 200 Delaronde St., Chalmette, LA 70044. Mark Lance, evangelist, (504) 279-9438.

-Massachusetts-

Chicopee-Armory Drive Church of Christ, 26 Armory Drive; Chicopee, MA 01020, in-home, (413) 592-4834, Ken Dion, evangelist.

-Michigan-

Garden City-Church of Christ, 1657 Middlebelt Rd., Garden City, MI (Suburb of Detroit), Sun. 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Dan Goddard, evangelist. (734) 422-8660. www.garden-city-coc.org

-North Carolina-

Rocky Mount-Scheffield Drive Church of Christ, 3309 Scheffield Dr., Rocky Mount, NC 27802 (252) 937-7997.

-Oklahoma-

Porum-Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: lawson@starnetok.net.

-Tennessee-

Memphis-Forest Hill Church of Christ, 3950 Forest Hill-Irene Rd., Memphis, TN 38125. Sun. 9:30, 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. (901) 751-2444, Barry Grider, evangelist.

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Houston area-Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of Spring Bible Institute and the SBI Lectures beginning the last Sunday in February. www.churchesofchrist.com

Hubbard-105 NE 6th St., Hubbard, TX 76648, Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Delbert J. Goines, evangelist; djgoines@writeme.com.

Huntsville-1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9, 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.

Hurst-Northeast Church of Christ, 1313 Karla Dr., P.O. Box 85, Hurst, TX 76053. Sun. 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m. (817) 282-3239, Toney Smith and Dan Flournoy, evangelists.

Lubbock-Southside Church of Christ, 8501 Quaker Ave., Box 64430, Lubbock, TX 79464. Sun. 9:00, 9:55 a.m., 5:00 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m. Sunday worship aired live at 10:15 a.m. over KFYO 790 AM radio. Tommy Hicks, evangelist. (806) 794-5008 or (806)798-1019.

New Braunfels-1130 Hwy. 306, 1.5 miles west of I-35. Sun: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7 p.m. Lynn Parker, evangelist. (830) 625-9367. www.nbchurchofchrist.com.

Richwood-1600 Brazosport, Richwood, TX. Sun. 9:30; 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (979) 265-4256.

Schertz-Church of Christ, 501 Schertz Pkwy., Schertz, TX. (210) 658-0269. Sun. 9:30a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m., take Schertz Pkwy. Exit off I-35, NE of San Antonio, Kenneth Ratcliff and Stan Crowley, evangelists.

-Wyoming-

Cheyenne-High Plains Church of Christ, 421 E. 8th St., Cheyenne, WY 82007, tel. (307) 638-7466, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Tel. (307) 635-2482. evangelist: Tim Cozad.

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