

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

A NATION IN DECLINE

Al Brown

It would be difficult to find an age when people were more aimless and lacking in purpose than they are today. Could we pinpoint a time when men were more alienated from one another, or when the gods of greed, mammon, and selfishness held greater sway? Politicians and media personalities occasionally get concerned and ask, “What has happened to us?” But no one seems to know, or if they do, they will not admit it. Solutions are offered, but the basic problem, as well as the one effective remedy, is carefully ignored.

A call is occasionally made for personal sacrifice for the well-being of the nation. Do you honestly think this will happen? It is similar to asking a cow to give a strawberry milkshake. She just does not have it in her. Our people do not have it in them either—at least not until they can face the truth. They must be willing to admit what is really wrong and have a sincere desire to change things in the only way that will make a difference.

THE PROBLEM

The basic problem is man’s alienation from God. He is isolated from other men because he is estranged from God. The greater his separation from God, the deeper the rift gets between men. The heathen world was fragmented by selfishness, and the fruit of that selfishness was their gross immorality. The real source of their discord was their refusal to have God in their knowledge. Paul said they—

became vain in their reasonings, and their senseless heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools... Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie...And even as they refused to have God in their knowledge, God gave them up unto a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, hateful to God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, unmerciful (Rom. 1:21-31).

THE UGLY TRUTH

This also describes present-day America. She has banished God from her consciousness. Professing to be wise, fools have expelled the Creator from the nation’s classrooms, legislative bodies, and halls of justice. The nation’s homes lie in ruins. Her churches have degenerated into social welfare agencies. Her doctors turned from healing bodies to murdering babies.

Now, a horde of dope-heads, sodomites, deadbeats, and other assorted social misfits feed on the land like a plague of maggots demanding support from the public coffers. Prisons overflow. Justice is a joke. Murder by the millions—euphemized as abortion—is practiced on a scale that makes Adolf Hitler and his crowd seem like boy scouts. Lawmakers represent—not the people who put them in office—but the highest bidder.

WORLDLY WISDOM’S FAILURE

What caused all this? Simply stated, we listened to the voice of worldly wisdom (liberalism, socialism, humanism, atheism), and this depraved assortment of ravenous wolves destroyed the moral fiber of our people.

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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Editorial...

BIBLE AUTHORITY

[More than 20 years ago I wrote the article that follows these remarks. In said article I was primarily concerned with what is involved in discharging our obligations to God. This necessitated discussing **optional matters**—those ways and means by which we discharge our obligations to God. **Of course, we cannot consider such options, much less determine which of them is the most advantageous for discharging our obligations to God, unless first we ascertain the Bible authority that obligates us to do certain things** (Col. 3:17).

It must be emphasized that determining what those New Testament obligations are can only be accomplished through knowing how the New Testament authorizes. Thus, we must be willing to study honestly and properly **how** the New Testament authorizes us to do anything. Of course, if we dishonest in our study of the Bible, then the other principles of Biblical Hermeneutics (the tools for rightly dividing the Word of truth or ascertaining Bible authority) will not matter.

Having learned our obligations to God, we can expeditiously (in the quickest and best way possible) discharge them (Luke 8:15; 1 Cor. 7:19; 1 The. 4:2; Heb. 5:9; 2 Tim. 2:15). This means that the option chosen must offer an advantage over the other options available to us for discharging said obligations. Determining which option is more advantageous than others for discharging our obligations to God is determined by the circumstances, situations, and the ability of the brethren at any given time and place. **Although the obligations are the same for all churches of Christ, the options for discharging them may differ from church to church for reasons already given.**

As to our diligence in doing God's will, the inspired wise man wrote: "**Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest**" (Ecc. 9:10). And, as Jesus exemplified in His own life, "**I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work**" (John 9:4).

ASCERTAINING OUR OBLIGATIONS TO GOD

I now will include some information pertaining to how the Bible authorizes, specifically how the New Testament of Christ, leads, guides, and directs (authorizes) us to live righteously before God and man. Of course, herein I can do little more than list the basics of how the scriptures authorize and what is involved in the study of ascertaining said authority. They are:

1) We must recognize that the Bible is the Holy Spirit inspired, plenary, verbal, complete, final, objective, and inerrant revelation of God to man (2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 3).

2) Only by words (**signs of ideas or vehicles of thought**) did Jesus communicate His will to us in the New Testament. And, since it is the case that God created us with intellects, rational powers, and free-will we can understand and submit to God's Word if we truly desire to do so (Mat. 5:6; John 8:31, 32; 2 Tim. 2:15; Eph. 3:4; Jam. 1:22, 25; Ecc. 12:13; 2 The. 1:8; 1 Pet. 1:22; 4:17).

3) As previously pointed out, we must also recognize that we are under the authority of Jesus Christ as He has revealed His will to man in the Words of the New Testament (Mat. 26:28a; 28:18; 1 Cor. 2:9-13; Heb. 9:15; Col. 3:17; Heb. 5:9; Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; John 12:48).

4) Furthermore, we must know that the only way any language authorizes anyone to do anything is through its **direct statements, implications, and examples**. The foregoing are coeval to a language and, thus, a part of the communicative element of any language. **No human invented them. We only classified and labeled them according to their function in the communicative element of language.** This was done so they could be identified, defined, referenced, and understood. In grammar, the parts of speech are also identified, defined, etc. for the same reason. If we can understand that a verb was doing what it does in a sentence before it was ever labeled and defined, then we ought to be able to understand the same regarding the terms involved in the study of how the Bible authorizes and how we ascertain said authority. Therefore, along with other matters pertaining to language, if we are to successfully ascertain the authority our Lord from the Words of the New Testament concerning all that we believe and practice, among other things pertaining to the same, we must have a thorough working knowledge of each one of these three previously stated areas. This is the case because they are integral parts of and, therefore, indispensable to the student of the Bible if one is to correctly study the Word of Truth and profit therefrom (2 Tim. 2:15; Jam. 1:18).

Remember, **“The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law”** (Deu. 29:29). As Paul wrote, **“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is”** (Eph. 5:17).

We now turn to the article as I have revised it from the original written over 20 years ago. —**Editor**]

BIBLE AUTHORITY: EXPEDITIOUS MATTERS

Can anyone find in the New Testament where it is explicitly stated (in just so many words) that the church owned, or leased, or rented land and buildings such as is the case today with most churches of Christ in the U.S.A.? Furthermore, can anyone find in the New Testament where the church had Bible classes and Bible class literature to which

we in the churches of Christ in America for the most part have become accustomed? Moreover, where is there explicit (in just so many words) authority in the New Testament for song leaders, song books, restrooms, public address systems, audio and video recorders, baptistries, communion sets, heating and cooling systems, electric lights, running water, telephones, printing presses, copying machines, computers, kitchens, etc., existing in many church buildings today? Remember, we must have New Testament authority for all we believe and practice if we are to be acceptable to God (Col. 3:17). Thus, there must be New Testament authority for the previously listed items. Of course, there is no explicit (in just so many words) authorization in the New Testament for the church to own, lease, or rent lands, buildings, or any thing in the aforementioned list. That being the case, where is the New Testament authority for the church to possess and use the aforementioned things in the work of the church (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet. 4:11)?

OF LANDS AND HOUSES, AND ALL THE REST

There is an **“...assembling of ourselves together”** that Christians are not to forsake—it is an obligation they must discharge. In other words, we are obligated to God to assemble (Heb. 10:25). The church at Troas **“...came together to break bread...”** on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). Furthermore, the church at Corinth came **“...together into one place...”** (1 Cor. 11:20, 33; 14:23). How could these brethren assemble without a place to assemble? Indeed, how can New Testament Christians today, or at any time or anywhere, assemble without a place to assemble? I conclude that a **place** to assemble is authorized because the New Testament obligates Christians to assemble and I know what the definition of an assembly is and how an assembly of people is formed. Thus, the place to assemble is authorized by the New Testament because of what is necessarily involved for people to assemble or convene. Hence, when the church is authorized to assemble, the definition of the word *assemble* demands a place so to do and in it engage in whatever said assembly is authorized by God to do.

In the case of the church coming together into one place, brethren must choose a place that expedites (is advantageous to) the design and purpose for such aforementioned assemblies. The selection of a place to assemble must take into consideration the financial ability of a congregation, it's numerical size, geographic location, accessibility, environment, along with other matters of like nature. “Common sense” would allow for no less of a conclusion. The nature of the place (places) is demanded by that which is authorized—the obligation to be discharged. Obviously, in this area, all manner of optional avenues for discharging the will of heaven is available.

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH—OBLIGATIONS AND OPTIONS

The work of the church is to save souls. She does this by

preaching the gospel to the alien sinner, edifying the saints, and benevolence. Each one of these scriptural obligations demands a place (places) by which the church may discharge them. This is the case with all obligations—options for discharging them must be considered and the ones with the greatest advantage for discharging the same determined and chosen.

Clearly, there are a multiplicity of details involved in saving souls as previously noted. I repeat, regarding choosing options by which to discharge said obligations, the options may vary from church to church. Again, the brethren's knowledge, sacrificial spirit, talents, willingness to work, financial state, numbers, and such like are factors that will determine the option(s) available to a church in order for it to discharge its obligations to God. Please be reminded that options available to one church may not be available to a sister church, but the God-authorized obligations are the same for all churches of Christ.

ELDERS AND CHOOSING OPTIONAL MATTERS

God set elders over each church to determine the options available to the congregation for discharging its obligations to God. Further, an eldership's decisions regarding the most expeditious (advantageous) option(s) whereby the congregation can discharge said obligations are final and binding on the church they oversee (Heb. 13:17). So, besides keeping the church doctrinally sound, opposing false doctrines and their teachers, elders are charged with the responsibility of deciding what optional matters will be employed to discharge the work or obligations of the church. This is the primary function of elders in their day-to-day work of superintending the church they are charged with shepherding.

REGARDING OBLIGATORY MATTERS

We repeat, if people are to faithfully serve Jesus, they must faithfully discharge their New Testament obligations. This is what it means to **“walk by faith”** (2 Cor. 5:7; Also see 1 Cor. 15:58 and Rev. 2:10b). These obligations were not created by mere human beings who willed them into existence. Also, we are not loosed from New Testament authorized obligations because people are ignorant of them or because they disdain them and, therefore, will them not to be obligatory.

ANCIENT AND MODERN EXAMPLES

The first doctrinal problem in the First Century church pertained to making something obligatory that God had not. In other words, certain Jewish brethren taught that Gentile men were obligated to be circumcised in order to become Christians. Thus, they bound on male Gentile converts what God had not bound on them by making and binding a law not authorized by the New Testament. Hence, the standard of fellowship for said Jewish brethren of that time was corrupted when they bound on Gentile men concerning becoming a Christian what God did not. Further, these Judaizing teachers in the church at that time determined to make an optional

matter obligatory. Their actions impacted who they fellowshiped in the church and who they did not. Since that time, a failure on the part of church members (especially elders and preachers) who ought to know how the Bible authorizes, how men ascertain it, what is obligatory, and what is optional has caused all sorts of divisions in the church of our Lord.

MAKING SOMETHING A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP

In the church of today, I have heard brethren pose the following question or something like it. It is, “Are certain brethren going to make a matter(s) a test of fellowship?” The question that ought to be asked is this, “Has God made and revealed in His Word that a certain matter(s) is obligatory regarding our salvation?” If it is obligatory it bears directly on our fellowship with God and one another, for God made it an obligation.

God made obligatory what one must believe and do to be saved from sin and to live faithful to the Lord in His church. He revealed the same in the Words of the New Testament. In so doing, God is the one who placed such obligations on man. Thus, He and He alone, drew the lines of fellowship between man and God as well as who Christians may scripturally fellowship. Our responsibility to God and ourselves for our on spiritual welfare and the purity of the church is to ascertain from the New Testament what He has already determined to be obligatory. For example, I can say with certainty that the baptism of the Great Commission is necessary (obligatory and thus binding) on anyone who desires to become a Christian (as that name is defined and used in the New Testament). Therefore, anyone who refuses to discharge the obligation revealed in Mark 16:16, et al., is not a Christian. Thus, the church of Christ must teach the same to all if we would be faithful to God because He has by the authority of the New Testament obligated the church to do it.

As much as is possible for a human being to know anything about someone else, we can know the church members who are faithful to the Lord and those who are not (including ourselves). Thus, we know who is in fellowship with God and who is not (including ourselves). If we cannot know such, then how would we know to whom we can extend Christian fellowship, to whom we may not, and from whom we must withdraw it? Only those who faithfully discharge their Christian obligations to God are in fellowship with Him (2 John 8-10; Gal. 6:1, 2). Faithful children of God are obligated by the authority of the New Testament to fellowship only those church members who themselves are also faithful children of God.

“ARE CERTAIN BRETHREN GOING TO MAKE A MATTER(S) A TEST OF FELLOWSHIP?”

Is there ever an occasion when the above question should be asked? Yes, there is. It is when brethren attempt to make an optional matter an obligatory act—such as Gentile circumcision in the early church. This is exactly what the various “anti” factions in the Lord's church of the last 100

or so years have done concerning different topics. On the other hand, the “liberal” brethren are those who teach doctrines that loose people from what God in the New Testament has obligated them to discharge. A few examples of liberal brethren are those who teach that the Lord’s Supper may be observed on a day other than the First day of the week, or it is not a sin to use mechanical instruments of music in the worship of the Lord, or the church revealed on the pages of the New Testament is a denomination, or the pious unimmersed are Christians, or faithful church members are authorized by the New Testament to remain in fellowship indefinitely with their brethren who refuse to repent of their failure to discharge an obligatory matter. Thus, they have ceased to “walk by faith” (2 Cor. 5:7).

CONCLUSION

Brethren must be honest and willing at all costs to learn how the Bible and specifically the New Testament authorizes. Also, we must learn how to ascertain New Testament authority for our actions. Thus, we must know what constitutes an obligatory matter. Further, we must consider the options whereby we discharge our obligations to God and not bind options on people as if they were obligatory. Neither, should we by our teaching and/or conduct loose ourselves and oth-

ers from what God obligates all of us to do in order to be saved from sin and remain faithful to Christ in His church. Moreover, we must love God supremely, love our neighbors as ourselves, and love the brethren (Mark 12:30, 31; 1 John 3:14), the proof of which is when we discharge our obligations to God (John 14:15; 1 John 1:6, 7; 2:3-5, 29; 3:7, 24; 5:2; 2 John 1:4, 8-11).

Thus, as members of the Lord’s church we must remove from our lives the thinking that we can fail to discharge our obligations to God and remain pleasing and acceptable to Him. To engage in such thinking is to invite eternal death for ourselves and those we influence to do the same. Whether it is our families, friends, preaching positions, jobs, “chief seats,” or whatever, we must not permit people, positions, relationships, and things to hinder us from discharging our obligations to Jesus through the most advantageous options available. By the mercies of Christ, we beg all to turn from the error(s) of their way and faithfully serve God while there is time for repentance (2 Pet. 3:9-11). This is the way that is right and cannot be wrong.

—David P. Brown, Editor

(Continued From Page 1)

Men can live by God’s standard of righteousness and reap the benefits, or they can ignore that standard and destroy themselves. Most Americans have chosen the latter. God tells us: **“Righteousness exalteth a nation; But sin is a reproach to any people”** (Pro. 14:34). Again, **“the way of the transgressor is hard”** (Pro. 13:15), and we are learning just how hard. Patchwork efforts will doubtless be made to correct some of our most undesirable and shameful problems, but they are doomed for four reasons. (1) Most will not abandon worldly wisdom or the selfishness that lies at the root of immorality. (2) Appealing to worldly, selfish people to practice altruism is wishful thinking. (3) Few will acknowledge Christ as Lord or His wisdom as their guide. (4) Most people will refuse to repent of their rebellion against God.

ALL IS NOT LOST—YET

The government subsidizes fornication by supporting unwed mothers, but the only real solution is for these women (and their partners) to stop fornicating. We can quadruple the size of our prison systems, but people filled with envy, selfishness, and hate will not stop preying on others.

The restoration of sanity and morality to our land will occur only when God is restored to His rightful place in society. We will enjoy peace and tranquility only when men repent of their sin and rebellion against God and live in submission to His will.

A UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY

This is not likely to happen in wholesale lots, but it can

be accomplished one at a time. There is a remnant—God’s faithful—who could have a powerful impact on the country if they would but lose themselves in a cause greater than themselves (the cause of Christ).

The deteriorating moral and spiritual condition of our people has caused even the liberal, humanist-controlled media to express alarm. Opportunities have seldom been greater to preach the pure, simple gospel of Christ to a weary, aimless nation. We will still have to contest every inch of ground with false ideologies and teachers, but what will happen to us if we are content to do nothing while those worldly souls quite literally go to hell? How long will these doors remain open?

THE CALL TO BATTLE

This is a time for stout-hearted, faithful Christians to fearlessly call rebellious people to repentance, as the prophets of old did. As the army of God, we must rise up and assault the citadels of Satan (2 Cor. 10:3-5). We must be willing to spend and be spent in the service of our Lord and for the salvation of men. If we refuse—or fail, are we any less culpable than they?

—Deceased

“And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say” (Luke 6:46)?

SOME CLAIM TO BE SPIRITUAL, AND YET TAKE THEIR STAND WITH EVIL

Bill Jackson

Throughout history, it has been proven that evil triumphs not because of the efforts of those who have openly stood for iniquity all along, but because many “religious” people give evil their support. As we think of church history, and of the present-day liberalism, such liberalism has grown and spread primarily because many who would not claim to be liberal nevertheless took the side of the liberals whenever the issues arose. There are many such illustrations of the same.

Presently, in this area, homosexuality has been much discussed. Amazingly, so many of the “religious” people in the community, led by some of their preachers, give support and encouragement to those who have always favored such sinfulness. If, in this nation, we finally submerged in filth, permissiveness, fornication, and perversion, so very many of the “religious” folks have helped drown us.

Now, for the Bible basis of it all, let us be reminded again that God made them male and female, and in detailing the laws on marriage, “...a MAN shall leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his WIFE...” (Gen. 2:24). When some, in Israel, managed to get their desires twisted and plunged into uncontrolled lusts, they were under this condemnation: it was an abomination for a man to be with another man, sexually, and the sentence was death (Lev. 18: 22; 20:13)! One preacher in our area simply ignored this as “a literalizing of the Bible,” and passed the point off as meaningless. It is very true that we are not under the Old Testament law, but these verses let us know God’s view of such sinfulness, under that law, which happened to be BOTH a religious AND civil law.

Men need, then, to look ahead to the law PRESENTLY IN EFFECT. That law points out God’s thoughts on homosexuality (Rom. 1:26-27), and how that God gave up the Gentiles, because of such sin, to uncleanness, to vile affections, and to a reprobate mind (vs. 24, 25, 28). Those who engaged in such sins are said to be those who did not want to retain God in their knowledge (v. 28). Jesus underscored Genesis 2:24 by citing the same in Matthew 19:5, and thus we know His will in the matter. His law condemns all such misconduct, and we have Corinthians as proof that men/women who once lived in such sins can QUIT IT and OBEY THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST (1 Cor. 6:9-11).

When men move away from God’s standard, step by step they are moving toward a greater and greater degree of filth. When religious people, for the moment thinking they are merely favoring someone’s “rights,” approve of legalizing homosexuality, do they really know the next steps?? Al-

ready, the porno-plague has enveloped homosexuality, sexual abuse of little children, and, of all things, sexual practices with animals! God knew of this excess being advocated by Satan, and thus passed legislation condemning such conduct with animals (Lev. 20:15, 16). We wonder if all the “rights” advocates are willing to endorse this type conduct? It is the next step down the road, whether they wish to see it or not.

When the “religious” people in any community or nation give their support and encouragement to evil, that community or nation has become a sad thing, indeed. Now, of all times, the church of the Lord had best give her all in favor of all that is right, and in opposition to all that is wrong.

—Deceased

[Editorial Comment: The front page article was written in the 1990s by the late brother Al Brown—about 25 years ago. The previous article by the late brother Bill Jackson was written in the winter of 1982—over 38 years ago. Both articles addressed the same sad state of affairs that presently plagues the U.S.A. In the almost 40 years since its writing, bro. Jackson’s predictions about the growth of evil has been repeatedly confirmed in the intervening years. Sadly, the spread of such evil is promoted under the plea that the practice of immorality is one’s civil right. Thus, to declare that homosexuality, et al., is a moral evil is to engage in “hate speech.” Hence, those engaged in such immoral conduct, along with their fellow travelers, do all they can to stigmatize, ostracize, and penalize those who publicly oppose them—all being done in the name of freedom and liberty. Bro. Jackson’s predictions back in 1982 regarding the spread of such filth in America is a reality today and has been for many years. Sadly, the end of this rush to compound, promote, normalize and legalize said immorality continues to gain ground. Therefore, we can only conclude as brethren Brown and Jackson did in the concluding words of their articles.—DPBJ

“WHY TEMPT YE ME?”

W. Ray Duncan

There was never a dull moment in the life of our Master. If He was not being persecuted by one group then He was being tempted by another; they simply would not leave Him alone. On the other hand, neither would He leave them alone. He shot some of the sharpest barbs He had at these religious hypocrites. Nor are all their tribes dead today. If you want to hear a lamentable howl just quote the words of the Master to those who are engulfed in a social gospel and hear them scream just as they did when the Master, who sees all, exposed their hypocrisy.

No doubt but that the religious leaders of His day would have killed Him long before they did if they had not feared the people (Mark 12:12). It has been demonstrated over and over again that teachers can well get along with any group of people so long as they do not expose the sins and hypocrisy

of their auditors: but let the truth be laid on the line and you will find that religious leaders today are little if any different from the ones Jesus encountered.

As they approached Jesus, so they may make their approach to His servants today and pay them a very fine(?) compliment! They said to Jesus, **“Master, we know that thou art true.”** I am of the opinion that they cared little about whether or not He was true, so long as they could cause His demise. However it is politically wise to “butter Him up” before the kill, it sort of lessens the pain to the truth. His words were true. His heart was true. His motives were as pure as light. They had both the life and testimony of Christ but still they walked in darkness.

They bragged on His courage. **“Thou carest for no man, and regardest not the person of men.”** These hired assassins were as far from the love of truth as were their employers! Even though Jesus was the **“rose of Sharon,”** and the **“bright and morning star,”** their full intent was to involve Him in difficulty that would cause His death. Even though Jesus knew their hearts and character, He demonstrated that their words were true—Truly He did not regard the threatenings of men. Would that all had the same courage.

They even knew the mission on which He had come to our world. **“Thou teachest the way of God the truth.”** If they knew this, then why did they not harken unto Him? This is proof that it is not enough just to know the truth. There must reside within a LOVE for the truth. All the knowledge the world may possess of Jesus will not save until there is LOVE AND OBEDIENCE. It is possible that there are men in high places among the Lord’s people who are little closer to the kingdom than were these Jews! It takes more than ambition and zeal to be a true servant of our Master.

The stage is set and now all they have to do is spring the trap and either the people or the government will do the rest! **“Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?”** The first tragedy is that the people who were dealing with Christ were hypocrites. The second is this, if they were themselves bent on going to perdition why must they trouble the righteous to do it? However, their little plan backfired. How many plans of the wicked have you seen backfire? They may have known the mission of Christ but they did not know the Christ! No man has ever involved Christ in a difficulty. It was not even difficult for Him to answer. We are the ones on trial, and alas, how many are victims rather than conquerors?

The stamp is visible. Look at it! **“Bring me a penny.”** The image and superscription is there for all to see! “What you are speaks so loudly that we cannot hear what you say.” Indeed, there are many whose **“hands feel as the hands of Esau, but their voice is the voice of Jacob.”** Not everything is right in this old world. Whose side are you on? Whose is the image and superscription you bear?

THIS I REMEMBER

B. C. Goodpasture

The lamented T. B. Larimore conducted several meetings at Cookeville, Tennessee, during the early years of this century (20th Century—*Editor*). In attendance at a morning service of one of these meetings was sister Phillip Myers of Livingston. After service, she introduced herself to brother Larimore and told him she was from Livingston. Brother Larimore replied, “I am happy to meet you sister Myers, but the mention of Livingston always brings sad memories to me.” “What is so sad about Livingston?” Sister Myers asked. Brother Larimore said: “The only time in my life that I ever stole anything was at Livingston.” “What in the world did you steal?” Brother Larimore answered, “I was with a detachment of General Zollicoffer’s men which was encamped near Livingston. Along with the other soldiers I entered a widow’s smokehouse, we carried out a keg of Kraut, and I ate a handful of it. This has been on my conscience ever since. I wish I could somehow pay for that kraut.” Sister Myers asked, “Were you camped on the hillside among the big trees?” Brother Larimore said they were. She asked if he remembered a little boy and girl who sometimes visited them, bringing them fresh spring water. He said he remembered them. Sister Myers said, “I was the little girl, the little boy was my brother, and it was my mother’s kraut that you got.”

Brother Larimore reached for his pocketbook, as he said that he wanted to pay for the kraut. Sister Myers said, “You have paid for the kraut a thousand times with your sermon today. Forget it.” The utterly sincere Larimore commented, “You have lifted a burden from my conscience today. I have carried it through the years. I am happy to have this matter settled.”

Many years later I was in the home of Virgil Larimore, a son of T. B. Larimore. I related to him this story. He said, “I am so glad you told me this. I have heard my father say time and again that the only thing he ever stole in his life was a hand full of kraut. He never did tell when and where it happened. I am happy to have the story now complete.” This is a little-known Larimore story.

Is it not wonderful to have a conscience like Theophilus Brown Larimore? He died in Santa Ana, California, March 18, 1929.

—Deceased

I can never hide myself from me;
I see what others may never see;
I know what others may never know;
I can never fool myself, and so,
Whatever happens, I want to be
Self-respecting and conscience free

—Edgar Guest

GOD'S TWO LAWS OF PARDON

Author Unknown

When man violates God's will he must seek and receive God's pardon or be lost. Sin is the violation (transgression) of God's law (1 John 3:4). **"For the wages of sin is death"** (Rom. 6:23). Pardon is defined: to free from penalty, to forgive. God's grace allows for pardon when man meets certain conditions for pardon for those who have never been born again, those who are not His children; He has set forth other conditions for those who are His children yet who have transgressed His will.

LAW FOR ALIEN SINNERS

An alien is one who is not a citizen of the Kingdom of God; those who are outside His kingdom, those who are not the children of God. Those outside of salvation, neither do they have God or Christ (Eph. 2:12). Such are **"without God in the world,"** that is dominated and ruled over by Satan (Eph. 2:2, 12). All these, to be in the kingdom of God, must be **"born again...born of water and of the spirit"** (John 3:3, 5).

What does it mean for an alien to be **"born again...born of water and of the Spirit?"** To answer: The Spirit's active part in the new birth is that of revealing God's plan of salvation (1 Cor. 2:9-13). That unrevealed plan (spoken of as the mystery of God) was hidden in the mind of God in ages gone by, **"as it is now [in the Christian age, since Pentecost] revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit"** (Eph. 3:3-5). Those Holy Spirit inspired men received the Spirit's revelation of words and communicated that divine message to the ears and hearts of men. Sinners who heard and obeyed the terms of God's plan of salvation were saved from their sins. Peter, in this connection, said **"ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit... Being born again...by the word of God"** (1 Pet. 1:22-23).

Therefore, alien sinners must first hear the Word of God and believe it. Furthermore, they must repent of their sins or perish (Luke 13:5; Acts 17:30). They must then confess their faith in Christ as the Son of God (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37) and be baptized **"for the remission of sins"** (Acts 2:38). At this point they become born again, saved children of God (1 Pet. 3:20-21). As a penitent baptized believer they are **"then made free from sin"** and have become servants of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18). They are now citizens in the kingdom of God (Eph. 2:19-20; Phi. 3:20).

LAW FOR ERRING CHILDREN

Obedience to the first law of pardon does not keep one from sinning. Paul had to buffet his body **"lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away"** (1 Cor. 9:27). For those who say they have not sinned, John

said they are deceived, the truth is not in them, that such, by their claims make Christ a liar (1 John 1:8, 10). John further recognizes that although a child of God does sin God has provided for him an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1-2). An erring child of God is as much in need of pardon for his sin as is an alien sinner.

God's law of pardon for His children is simply stated: **"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"** (1 John 1:9). The confession is first before the Father: **"Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee"** (Luke 15:18). **"He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy"** (Pro. 28:13). **"I acknowledged my sin unto thee...I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin"** (Psa. 32:5).

Confession may need to be made unto others also. When sins have harmed others, or when sins are publicly committed and known, then confession to others is in order. **"Confess your faults [a lapse or deviation from truth and uprightness; a sin] one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed"** (Jam. 5:16).

The New Testament, in Acts 8, provides us with an example of this law at work. Simon had obeyed God's first law of pardon and, according to the words of Jesus, was saved (Mark 16:16; Acts 8:13). As a child of God he then sinned. Peter describes his condition as perishing (v. 20), **"thy heart is not right in the sight of God"** (v. 21). His sin is spoken of as **"thy wickedness"** which had bound him in iniquity and the gall of bitterness (vv. 23-24). Should Simon submit to God's first law as an alien sinner, No. Once the terms of pardon under the first law are met, they no longer apply to that person. Simon was to submit to God's second law of pardon. Peter told Simon the terms of his pardon: **"Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee"** (v. 22).

CONCLUSION

As God's first law of pardon is not looked to in the forgiveness of sins for one who is born again—neither should an alien sinner attempt to apply the terms of the second law of pardon (repentance and prayer) for the remission of his sins.

God's first law that culminates in baptism is only for the alien sinner. God's second law of pardon, briefly stated as repentance of sin and prayer for forgiveness, is only for the child of God.◆◆