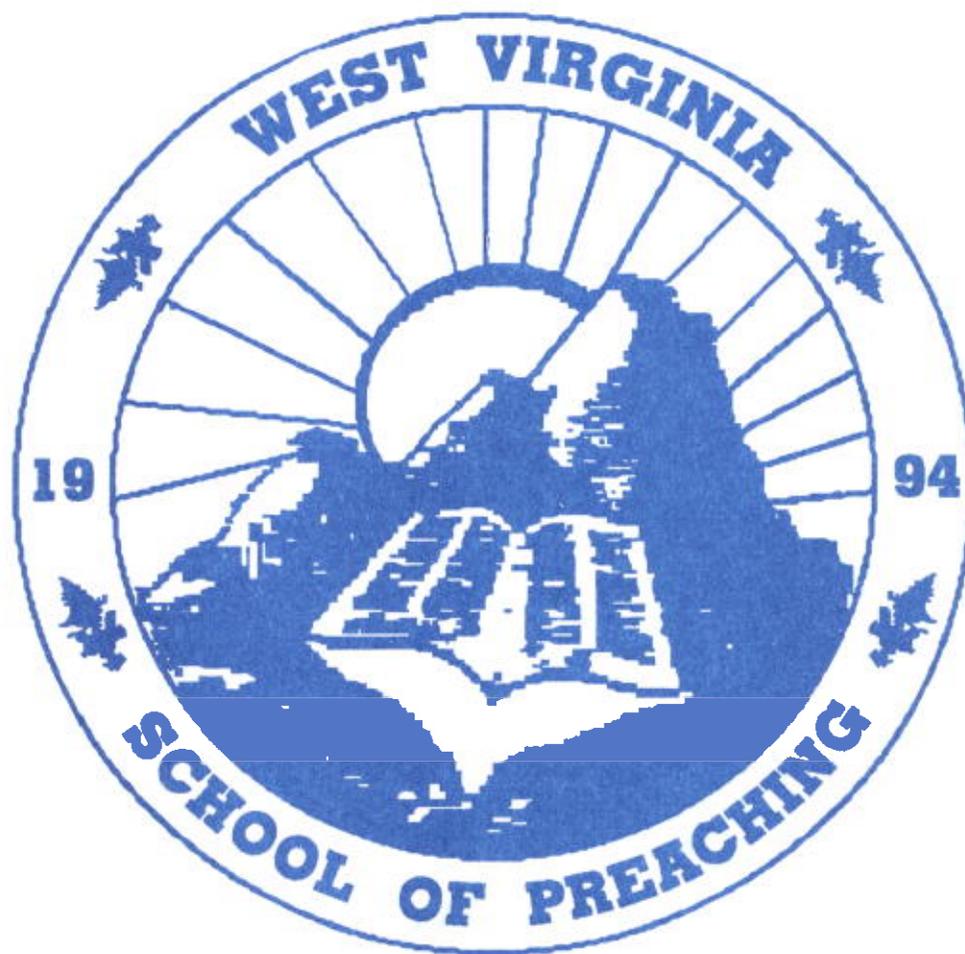


West Virginia School Of Preaching
VICTORY LECTURES

October 28 - November 1, 1996

THEME: CHRISTIANITY VS RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN



CHURCH OF CHRIST
Fourth Street and Willard Avenue
Moundsville, West Virginia 26041

WVSOP LECTURESHIP 1996
Oct 28-Nov 1

CHRISTIANITY VS. RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN

Monday, October 28

6:30-6:55 PM **Congregational Singing**
 7:00-7:30 PM Jesus, the Light of the World..... Tim Hatfield
 7:30-8:15 PM The Battle for the Minds of Men..... Jackie Stearsman

Tuesday, October 29

9:00-9:50 AM Feminism..... Charles Aebi
 10:00-10:50 AM Islam..... Gary Brantley
 11:00-11:50 AM Liberalism, 100 Yrs. Ago & Now..... Emanuel Daugherty
 1:10-2:00 PM Complete In Christ..... Roger Rush
 2:10-3:00 PM Taking Christ Into All the World..... Bruce Daugherty
 3:10-4:00 PM Humanism: Man's Wisdom Vs God's Wisdom..... Doug Petty
 6:30-6:55 PM **Congregational Singing**
 7:00-7:30 PM Jesus, The Way..... Matt Thomas
 7:30-8:15 PM The One True Church..... Jackie Stearsman

Wednesday, October 30

9:00-9:50 AM Pragmatism/Hedonism..... Jackie Stearsman
 10:00-10:50 AM Islam..... Gary Brantley
 11:00-11:50 AM All Sufficiency of the Bible..... F. Higgenbotham
 1:10-2:00 PM Attitude Toward Those In Error..... Burt Jones
 2:10-3:00 PM Influence of Eastern Religions..... Randy Matheny
 3:10-4:00 PM Calvinism..... Steve Higgenbotham
 6:30-6:55 PM **Congregational Singing**
 7:00-7:30 PM Jesus, the Truth..... Justin Odom
 7:30-8:15 PM Jesus is THE Messiah..... Gary Brantley

Thursday, October 31

9:00-9:50 AM Theological Existentialism..... D. Gene West
 10:00-10:50 AM Influence of Eastern Religions..... Randy Matheny
 11:00-11:50 AM The Greatness of Christianity..... Charles Pugh
 1:10-2:00 PM Rationality of the Christian Faith..... David Stevens
 2:10-3:00 PM End of Century Millenium Mania..... Terry Varner
 3:10-4:00 PM Evolution/Atheism..... Glen Hawkins
 6:30-6:55 PM **Congregational Singing**
 7:00-7:30 PM Jesus, the Life..... Pete Allinder
 7:30-8:15 PM Militant Christianity..... Winfred Claiborne

Friday, November 1

9:00-9:50 AM Denominationalism..... Denver Cooper
 10:00-10:50 AM New Age..... Winfred Claiborne
 11:00-11:50 AM Authority In Religion..... Steve Stevens
 1:10-2:00 PM Christianity, The One True Religion..... Dean Miller
 2:10-3:00 PM New Age..... Winfred Claiborne
 3:10-4:00 PM The Relevance of the Cross..... Skip Andrews
 6:30-6:55 PM **Congregational Singing**
 7:00-7:30 PM Jesus, The Great I AM..... Paul Hoover
 7:30-8:15 PM Jesus the Hope of the World..... Winfred Claiborne

JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Tim Hatfield

INTRODUCTION: Matthew 7:13-20

I. There Is A Way That Seemeth Right Unto A Man

A. False Claims Of Being The Light Of The World

1. Antiochus IV Ephiaphenes

a. Daniel 8:9-12

1. He called himself the "illustrious one"

2. He looked upon himself as incarnated manifestation of Olympia Zeus.

b. He set up the worship of Olympian Zeus in Jerusalem.

c. He offered a sow upon the alter in Jerusalem.

d. He killed over 100,000 Jews

e. Daniel 11:36-37

f. Antiochus was brought down Daniel 11:45

2. Herod Agrippa I

a. Acts 12:20-23

b. He was the brother of Herodias

c. He was a friend of Caligula and Claudius

d. Royal apparel

1. Josephus says it was a robe of silver tissue
 2. Similar to the robe worn by the Emperors
 3. The sun caused the garment to glimmer and shine in dazzling brightness.
- e. The voice of a god
1. To win his favor
 2. Perhaps an announcement of peace between the kingdoms
- f. He did not give the glory to God
- g. He was eaten of worms
1. Intestinal worms
 2. Josephus notes Herod lingered five days before his death
3. The Caesars
- a. They were worshipped for bringing peace and prosperity to the land
 - b. They were regarded as incarnations of deity, much like the Pharaohs and Ptolemies before them.
 - c. One of the centers of emperor worship was at Pergamos
Revelation 2:12-13
 - d. This encouraged the persecution of Christians
(Pliny, Letters 10. 96,97)
4. The Popes
- a. He claims to be unerring "when he speaks ex cathedra (that is, when - fulfilling the office of the Pastor and Teacher of all Christians - on his supreme

Apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the Universal church)"

- b. He claims the authority of an apostle
- c. Consider these popes
 - 1. Liberius
 - 2. Zozimus
 - 3. Sixtus 5
 - 4. Alexander 6

B. False Religions

- 1. Hinduism (India)
 - a. Idol worship, meditations, gurus
 - b. Reincarnation
 - c. The goal is to master one's will
 - d. The final destiny is to be one with Brahman
- 2. Buddhism
 - a. Gautama the Buddha, founder
 - b. The middle way, between sensuousness and asceticism
 - c. The goal is Nirvana, a state of bliss
 - d. It is a religion without a God
- 3. Taoist (The Way)
 - a. Tao is the Source of all being, ultimate reality
 - b. The teachings of Lao Tzu in the Tao Te Ching

- c. The goal is to gain as enlightenment, a oneness with the eternal
- 4. Judaism
 - a. National religion
 - b. They believe the Law, but not the New Testament
 - c. Salvation comes by keeping the Law
 - d. They missed the Messiah
- 5. Islam
 - a. Muhammad was the prophet of God (A.D. 571)
 - b. His book is the Qur'an
 - c. Five Pillars
 - 1. Confession of faith
 - 2. Prayers - 5 times a day
 - 3. Fasting - during Ramadan
 - 4. Almsgiving - 2 1/2 percent
 - 5. Pilgrimage to Mecca
- 6. Denomenationalism
 - a. Joseph Smith
 - b. Charles T. Russell
 - c. Mary Baker-Eddy
 - d. William Miller

II. Jesus Is The Light Of The World John 8:12

- A. He is the Light of the world because of his good works
 - 1. Matthew 9:35-36

2. Luke 7:1-10
 3. John 9:1-7, 32
 4. Acts 10:36-38
- B. He is the Light of the world because of his teaching
1. Matthew 7:12; 28-29
 2. John 7:46
 3. Mark 1:21-27
- C. He is the Light of the world because of his love
1. I Corinthians 13:4-8, 13
 2. John 15:9-13
 3. Romans 5:6-8
- D. He is the Light of the world because in him is found the forgiveness of sins
1. Mark 2:1-12
 2. Matthew 26:28
 3. Luke 24:46-47
 4. Colossians 1:20-22

Conclusion: John 1:4-12

Tim Hatfield was born in Columbus, OH on September 7, 1964. He received his B.A. in Bible from Ohio Valley College, in 1986. He has served the Camden Ave. Church of Christ as Associate, and then, Pulpit Minister since 1986. He is married to the former Tammy Bates of Coshocton, OH and they have three children, Jimmy, Jessie, and Jennie.

THE BATTLE FOR THE MINDS OF MEN

Jackie M. Stearsman

INTRODUCTION

- I. Prepared for and Delivered at the West Virginia School of Preaching Lectureship Monday, October 28, 1996.
- II. You are commended for the subject of the Lectureship, ***Christianity vs. Religions and Philosophies of Men.***
- III. I express my appreciation to you for asking me to be a part of the Lectureship.
- IV. The Florida School of Preaching wishes you well in training faithful preachers.
- V. The Battle for the minds of men is our assigned subject for this study.

DISCUSSION

- I. The Battle Is Many Sided.
 - A. It is played out in the political arena.
 - B. It is at the heart of the religious and philosophical debate.
 - C. It results in ethical policies.
- II. The Battle Is Being Waged on Many Fronts Today.
 - A. It goes on in the home.
 - B. It is deeply involved in the educational institutes of the world.
 - C. It confronts churches.
 - D. It involves us in both an individual and collective confrontation.
- III. Education Is the Avenue to the Minds of Men.
 - A. "For as he thinketh within himself, so is he: Eat and drink, saith he to thee; But his heart is not with thee"

(Prov. 23:7. Unless otherwise indicated verses quotes are from the ASV.).

- B. We must love God with all our minds (Matt. 22:37).
- C. We must make a test of all things, hold firm the right and true, and turn from all forms of evil (1 Thess. 5:21-22).
- D. The mind needs to be renewed (Rom. 12:1-2).
- E. God holds us responsible for our mental activity (Matt 12:34-35; Phil. 4:1-9).
- F. The greatest example of mental activity is the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:1-11).
- G. The issue is clear--absolute loyalty to the Christ.

"Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, AND BRINGING EVERY THOUGHT INTO CAPTIVITY TO THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST" (2 Cor. 10:5).

- H. The heart of man (the intellect, the will, the emotions and the conscience) is all involved in the crucial issue before us.
 - 1. The imagination and thoughts of the heart may become evil (Gen. 6:5).
 - 2. The thoughts and intents of the heart may be wrong (Heb. 4:12).
 - 3. The emotions of the heart may be stolen (2 Sam. 15:6).
 - 4. The heart may condemn (1 John 3:12).

IV. The Battle Has Gone on since the Beginning.

- A. The battle was waged in Eden.
 - 1. Adam and Eve were given specific instructions.

2. They could have been victorious over the evil that confronted them.
 3. Eve was deceived and led her husband to doubt and disobey God.
 4. Sin and death entered the human race because Adam and Eve lost battle for the mind of man.
- B. The battle confronted Cain and Able.
1. Cain and Able were give directives from God.
 2. Able chose to follow but Cain chose to disobey.
 3. Able won the battle for the minds of men but lost his earthly life.
- C. The battle was faced by Moses and the children of Israel.
1. Moses and Israel enjoyed a great deliverance (1 Cor. 10:1-13).
 2. Israel failed as she permitted her mind to become corrupted—she doubted what God had mandated, she believed the majority (10 spies) and forfeited her right to the promised land.
 3. The history of Israel is an example for all.
 4. The admonition is clear and certain. "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall. There hath no temptation taken you but such as man can bear: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation make also the way of escape, that ye may be able to endure it" (1 Cor. 10:12).
- D. King Saul lost the battle.
1. Three passages spell out his defeat.
 - a. First Samuel 13:1-14 is the context and the key verse is First Samuel 13:12 "Therefore said I, Now will the Philistines come down

upon me to Gilgal, and I have not entreated the favor of Jehovah: I FORCED MYSELF THEREFORE, AND OFFERED THE BURNT-OFFERING." Saul feared the philistiens.

b. In First Samuel 15:21-24, Saul feared the people and disobeyed.

c. First Samuel 26:21 provides us with his own summary of his life.

"Then said Saul, I have sinned: return, my son David; for I will no more do thee harm, because my life was precious in thine eyes this day: behold, I HAVE PLAYED THE FOOL, AND HAVE ERRED EXCEEDINGLY."

E. King David had to be restored.

1. What man is a greater spiritually than David? (1 Kings 15:5).

2. His mind and emotions led him into sin (Psalm 51:32).

3. Nathan the prophet had to help him clear his head and soul (2 Sam 12:1-12).

F. King Solomon wrote Ecclesiastes to point out the way to fail and the way to succeed.

1. Solomon's quest is stated—to find out what man should do all the days of his life (under the sun) upon the earth (1:3).

2. Vanity of vanity, all is vanity when we do not keep our mind focused properly (1:2).

3. The whole issue is summed up as follows: "This is the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work

into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).

- G. Paul cautions against having the wrong mind set and fighting on the wrong fronts (1 Cor. 1:18-3:23).
1. The wisdom of the world considers Christianity foolishness.
 2. The wisdom of God is revealed in the words of the Bible.
 3. We must be cautious in how we build the kingdom of God—"gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble."
- H. Paul shows the sure way to fail in the battle.
- "For they that are after the flesh mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For the mind of the flesh is death; but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace: because the mind of the flesh is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can it be: and they that are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. 8:5-8).

CONCLUSION

- I. Repentance is fundamental to plan of salvation. The heart of repentance is a changed mind. The end result of repentance is a reformed life.
- II. The battle for the mind continues throughout the life of a Christian.
- III. There will be times when we will find ourselves in thought or deed away from where God would have us. When this is the case we must repent and return to faithfulness.
 - A. Simon the Sorcerer had to do so, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right before God. Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray the Lord, if perhaps the thought of thy heart shall be forgiven thee" (Acts 8:21-22).
 - B. Peter himself had to do bring his actions into harmony with what was demanded by the truth of the gospel. Paul was concerned with Peter's lost condition when he saw that he "walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, ..." (Gal. 2:14).
 - C. Paul was concerned that the Corinthians might have their minds corrupted and be lost in the process. "For I am jealous over you with a godly jealousy: for I espoused you to one husband, that I might present you (as) a pure virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity and the purity that is toward Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2-3).
- IV. We are in a battle for the minds of men—there is no accountable person excused from the battle.
 - A. This battle includes our own minds.
 - B. This battle includes the minds of others.

V. If we succeed in the battle, we must take on the whole armor of God and do all we can to stand (Eph. 6:10-20).

FEMINISM

Charles Aebi

Let me begin by saying that I think women, generally speaking, are better than men. They usually behave better. Their morals are higher. Count the number of women and men in the average worship service, and you will see that women are more spiritually minded than men. Please do not think anything negative that I say here means that I hate women! Women are now and always have been vital in God's plans for His people. Women have an important place in the church and in the home, and women have always had opportunities in business. Women in America spend the majority of the average paycheck, and they have great influence in our world.

SCOPE OF FEMINIST INFLUENCE

In giving me this topic, Emanuel Daugherty wrote, "Your assigned topic is Feminism as it affects the thinking of our world politically, morally, and spiritually. It is a philosophical stance that is contrary to the doctrine of Christ and must be opposed." He is right. In July, 1996 polls, Bob Dole is getting only 33 per cent of women's vote because of his stand on abortion; feminists oppose him, and two-thirds of women are influenced by feminist thinking on the political-moral issue of abortion. Feminism has invaded the political arena and persuaded many women to get actively involved in politics; that's where the power is, they say, and feminism aims to place women in authoritative positions. According to the news media, feminism has persuaded the majority of women--and men--that women should have power over the life or death of their unborn offspring. And that feminists have influenced the church and the spiritual thinking of our times is obvious: women abound in theological societies, seminaries, and pulpits in the denominational world, and there is agitation for

them to occupy positions in the church that the New Testament reserves for men. One woman, whose husband was an elder in one of the dozen churches in a Texas town, told me she would leave the church within two years if they did not allow her to be a preacher. She said she knew she could preach better than any of the current preachers in that town (and some of them are men whose names you would recognize). Her husband heard her and made no comment; therein lies part of the problem! At least, he made no objection to my response to her ambitions.

UNFAIR TREATMENT OF WOMEN HELPS FEMINISM

One reason why women sometimes usurp the position God gives men is that men sometimes treat women unfairly. When husbands renege on their God-given responsibility to be heads of their houses, to rule their households, to train their children, and to provide for their families, wives are forced into positions of leadership. A job is to be done, and if the husband won't do it, the wife must, or it is left undone. Sometimes the same thing happens in churches: men won't take the lead, and elders look to their wives to make their decisions for them. If the men refuse, neglect, or fail to do what God commands them, they are abdicating and should not be surprised when women take over their positions by default.

Women also have been treated unfairly when they have not been paid as much as men for doing the same jobs, and this has fueled the feminist cause. We should not need feminism to teach us that equal wages for equal work is only fair; Jesus in Luke 10:7 said, "The laborer is worthy of his hire," and that is a principle applying to all laborers, men or women.

Feminism has been enhanced by the battering of women, and here again men are at fault. Husbands are to love their wives as their

own bodies and as Christ loved the church (Ephesians 5:25-29), but I know men--some of them Christians--who beat their wives. This is wrong, and deserves more severe treatment than psychological counseling. A man who would beat a woman should hide his face in shame. Physical strength does not give anyone the right to hurt another, and for men to beat women only advances feminism's agenda.

FEMINISM HAS MANY BAD RESULTS

While feminists have been correct in addressing unfairness, the overall thrust of feminism has promoted many evils. Abortion has already been mentioned; the expansion of abortion in America, Europe, and other parts of the world may be the gargantuan crime of the 20th century. The Jewish Holocaust saw over 6,000,000 Jews murdered during World War II, but 34,000,000 babies have been murdered in the last two decades in America alone, to say nothing of the much larger numbers of abortions in Europe and Asia.

Feminism has devalued womanhood and the home in America, because the feminist movement here has been led in part by women who think that motherhood and homemaking are demeaning and beneath their dignity. Caroline Bird in her 1970 book, Born Female, p.244, endorses this concept: "The new liberated women want to remake the world men have created from top to bottom, beginning with the radical reform or abolition of marriage and the family. . .everyone must be free to develop new kinds of families--no-child families, communes, homosexual unions. . ." Jean O'Leary in Report on Sex Bias in the Public School, 3rd edition, said, among other things, "Students should be encouraged to explore alternate life styles, including lesbianism." Betty Friedan, in Declaration of Feminism given upon her appointment to the National Girl Scout Board of Directors in November, 1974, said, "Marriage has existed for the benefit of men and has been a legally sanctioned method of control

over women. The end of the institution of marriage is a necessary condition for the liberation of women. Therefore it is important for us to encourage women to leave their husbands and not to live individually with men." Contrast this with 1 Corinthians 7:4-5 and Hebrews 13:4, for example, and you see that these feminists disdain God's plan for marriage, the family, and the home.

In fact, most feminist leaders have no time for God. The Humanist Manifesto II, pp. 15-16, signed by Betty Friedan and others, says, "As non-theists [i.e., atheists--CJA], we begin with humans, not God; nature, not deity. . .No deity will save us; we must save ourselves." Gloria Steinam, feminist editor of Ms. Magazine, said in the 1970's, "By the year 2000 we will, I hope, raise our children to believe in human potential, not God."

Feminism's emphasis on women doing everything men do is being followed by women, who are smoking more--"You've come a long way, baby"--and catching up with or surpassing men in lung cancer, alcoholism, drug addiction, and gambling addiction. According to NBC's evening news on 7-14-96, women do most of the slot machine gambling at a New Jersey casino, and they predicted that women would soon equal men at the gaming tables. With feminism's blessing, many women are now buying into the general breakdown of moral standards and are following the sorry example of men as compulsive gamblers, drinkers, smokers, fornicators, users of foul language, and spiritually indifferent.

The church suffers from this feminist influence, not only from women becoming as immoral as men and wanting to lead in worship as preachers, song leaders, prayer leaders, and soloists, but also by so many women being made to feel like non-persons unless they work outside the home, even if this neglects their families. When women work in the business world, they have less time to be homemakers and even less time to be personal workers. The church has grown in the past because of the outside-of-worship work that Christian women did. When they are too busy to do it, the family loses, the

church loses, and the Lord loses. Women as homemakers are doing the Lord's work by keeping families intact and training their children in the Lord's way.

SOME WAYS TO COUNTERACT FEMINISM

We can counteract feminism by encouraging men to: (1) be true leaders and providers for their families; (2) love their wives as themselves; (3) take responsibility for leading the church; (4) treat women fairly in the workplace; (5) emphasize the value of the woman in the home and family; (6) publicize and even glamorize the work that women do in the church in teaching and training children in Bible classes and in church, and in preparing for fellowship and other events that promote the church; and (7) preach and teach the truth about all of these things in positive as well as negative ways.

The erroneous emphases of feminism can be counteracted by urging women to: (1) know that stable family life revolves around the mother in the home; (2) value the family and the home above the workplace; (3) recognize the great contribution they can make to the Lord's church by the work they do behind the scenes; (4) not fall for the hype society puts on the push for equality in all things, but understand that serving is not demeaning and having different roles does not imply inferiority; (5) understand that they are worthwhile without feeling they must compete with men in every way; (6) see the pitfalls into which the feminist agenda is driving our whole society; and (7) put Christian values into the church and society in general by both subtle and overt use of the principle behind the adage, "The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world."

And we can urge everyone to: (1) follow the principles of Christ in the New Testament in all aspects of moral and spiritual life; (2) let your neighbors and political leaders know how you

feel about the feminist agenda; (3) not let feminist leaders and speakers intimidate you, in the name of equal rights, into going along with their anti-Christian views; (3) teach and practice the equality taught in Galatians 3:26-28 -- that women become Christians in the same way as men, by obeying the gospel of Christ and becoming children of God by faith and baptism.

Charles J. Aebi was born in Webster, PA., and was raised in Aleppo and Clover Hill, PA. He has a Bachelors degree from the Pennsylvania State University, a Masters degree from Abilene Christian University, and a Doctors degree from Ohio University. He has taught Bible at Ohio Valley College since 1964 and served as academic dean at the college for fifteen years. He has preached both full-time and part-time in PA, WV, and Texas and has preached gospel meetings in various states and foreign countries.

Charles has taught Bible classes, developed Bible class curriculum, and conducted workshops on Bible classes, church leadership, family relationships, and current issues in WV, PA, OH, KY, and Massachusetts. He has been a frequent speaker on college lectureships and on the Ohio Valley and the Pennsylvania Labor Day Lectureships.

He is married to Imogene McDonough Aebi, they have four children and twelve grandchildren.

ISLAM: ORIGIN AND MAJOR DIVISIONS

Garry K. Brantley

Muhammad, Founder of Islam

The origin of Islam can be traced back to Muhammad (var. sp.: Muhammed, Mohammed), who was born c. A.D. 570 at Mecca, the holy city in western Saudi Arabia. According to Islamic tradition, Muhammad, at the age of forty, began to receive revelations from God through the angel Gabriel. In his first alleged encounter with the heavenly messenger, Gabriel appeared to him and, either by choking or some other life-threatening gesture, forced Muhammad into submission. "Read," Gabriel demanded, "in the name of thy Lord, who created man from clots of blood" (*sura* 96:1).

Since the encounter was both violent and accompanied by convulsions that sent him into an unconscious trance, Muhammad at first was unsure of the source of his vision. He feared that he possessed one of the *jinn* (demon-like creatures) commonly believed to inhabit Arab poets and soothsayers. Khadija, his wife, and others, however, assured Muhammad of the divine source of his visions.

Muhammad's Rejection and Flight from Mecca

Once convinced that his first revelatory experiences in the desert were from God, Muhammad began to denounce openly the polytheism of his people and to proclaim his newly-found, rigid form of monotheism. Muhammad's monotheistic message threatened the financial interests of many in Mecca who profited from the regular pilgrimages of polytheists to their city. Thus, Muhammad met with considerable opposition, and succeeded in making only a few converts. Eventually, Muhammad and his small band of followers fled from Mecca to Medina on July 16, 622. This "flight" from Mecca, which

Muslims call the Hijra, marks the official beginning of the Islamic religion.

Unlike his experience at Mecca, Muhammad enjoyed greater success in Medina, though it was not as extensive as he desired--especially among the Jews. Rather than embracing him for his monotheism, the Jews eventually rejected Muhammad's prophetic claims, and criticized his inaccurate accounts of Old Testament events. To maintain the divine origin of his revelations, Muhammad charged the Jews with either corrupting, or misquoting, their own scriptures. This allegation further heightened the tension between Muhammad's followers and the Jews, and eventually precipitated the banishment or massacre of Jewish tribes in that area.

The Return to Mecca

Once his relationship with the Jews was severed, Muhammad no longer looked to Jerusalem, but refocused on Mecca as the center of the Islamic religion. Muhammad's renewed interest in Mecca necessitated his purging the town of its polytheism, thus bringing it into harmony with the monotheism of Islam. Enlisting the help of nomadic Arab tribes, Muhammad led a series of armed raids on Mecca, and in A.D. 630 he captured the city with no resistance. Mecca quickly was purged of all its polytheistic symbols, became the focal point of the religion of the one true God. Before his death in A.D. 632 (11 A.H.), Muhammad had made great strides in unifying the Arab tribes throughout the Arabian peninsula under the banner of Islam.

Major Divisions of Islam

Since Muhammad neither left a male heir, nor named a successor (Caliph or Khalifa), his death created an immediate leadership crisis in Islam. The Islamic community that survived Muhammad was faced with the crucial, and delicate decision of appointing a Caliph. Naming such an individual, however, proved to be a difficult and divisive

task. Along with other issues of interpretation, the role of, and criteria for appointing, the Caliph eventually fragmented Islam into two major divisions that remain today: Sunni and Shi'a.

The Sunni

The Sunni branch, claiming approximately 90% of all Muslims, argued that the Caliph should belong to Muhammad's tribe, the *Qurayah*, and that the community should choose him by the process of consensus (*ijma*). Within thirty years of Muhammad's death, four Caliphs were appointed in succession: Abu Bakr (632-634), 'Umar (634-644), 'Uthman (644-656), and 'Ali (656-661). Because of their chronological proximity to Muhammad, Sunnis believe that the *sunna* (behavior or practice) of these four Caliphs, together with the Prophet's, is authoritative for all Muslims. In fact, the Sunnis derive their name from this emphasis on the *sunna*.

The Shi'a

The other major branch of Islam, which claims about 10% of the Muslim population and exists primarily in Iraq and Iran, is the more militant Shi'a. The Shi'ites splintered from the Sunnis primarily over the question of the Caliphate. Regarding this matter, there are specifically two points of disagreement between Shi'ites and Sunnis. First, the Shi'ites place more rigid genealogical restrictions on the Caliph than do the Sunnis. On the one hand, Sunnis believe that the Caliph should be a descendent of Muhammad's tribe. On the other hand, Shi'ites argue that the Caliph should descend specifically from 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law. In fact, the word Shi'ite means "partisan" and indicates that Shi'ites are "partisans of 'Ali".

Second, unlike the Sunnis, Shi'ite Muslims believe that the Islamic leader, whom they call the imam, is more than merely a guardian of Muhammad's prophetic legacy. Rather, Muhammad bequeathed 'Ali with his *wilaya* (i.e., his

"spiritual abilities"), enabling him to interpret the Qur'an and to lead the Islamic community infallibly.

Sufis

Though more a movement within, rather than a sect of, Islam, a third identifiable group that should be mentioned is the Sufis. Reacting to the externally-oriented, and legalistic disposition of the Islamic religious system, Sufis seek a direct personal, mystical experience of God and His divine love. The word Sufism usually is translated "mysticism," which reflects this emphasis on a personal religious experience. Since Sufis, who belong to either the Sunni or Shi'a sect, desire more than an intellectual knowledge of Allah they are prone to a number of superstitious practices, placing much value on personal reflection and asceticism.

Conclusion

The pluralism of Islam runs much deeper than indicated in this brief survey. And, the theological heterogeneity of Islam should be respected by anyone who attempts to understand the complexion and thought patterns of this world religion. Hence, any encounter with a Muslim or Islamic organization must first involve an identification of the particular sect under consideration together with its peculiar beliefs. Once this is done, then a more healthy dialogue can ensue.

LIBERALISM: 100 YEARS AGO AND TODAY

Emanuel B. Daugherty

Introduction:

A. It is the purpose of this lecture to give a brief account of the great surge of liberalism that the churches of Christ are experiencing at this time, and show some of the comparisons to what was happening in the brotherhood one hundred years ago.

B. That history is repeating itself none can honestly deny. "Those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

I. DEFINING THE STRUGGLE

A. **Classic Liberalism** - That which denies the deity of Christ, the historicity of Christ, the need for his atonement, etc. This liberalism is usually associated with academicians and professors in far away denominational graduate seminaries. They dabble in philosophical, fanciful, abstract concepts. Barth, Bultman, Kierkegard, and Tillich are names that come to mind. Folks in the local churches have, by and large, kept themselves from these "far away places with strange sounding names."

B. **Liberalism within the churches of Christ.** There is another definition of liberalism that is more in line with Bible teaching. All teaching that attempts to loose where God has bound is liberalism. It is taking liberties with the teaching of the Bible (2 Jn 9). The liberalism which we are facing has to do with that which is much nearer to us; liberalism that is being espoused by the every day run of Christians: men and women, preachers, elders, deacons, Bible class teachers, and youth ministers, members on a local level, within congregations of the churches of Christ all over the United States. These members have been deceived, duped and deluded. Their doctrine is

distorted. The course of their Christian walk has shifted. Their congregations are not what they were just 10 years ago. Their attitude is different. The emphasis of their preaching is different. Their worship is different. Why has all this happened? They have accepted a liberal mindset.

1. Let me itemize some things that are taking place among brethren that show that this giant leap into liberalism is taking place in many churches at the present time.

Drama, skits and plays instead of preaching.

Special music--choirs, solos, quartets and contemporary music which is, in many cases, laced with false teaching and concepts, and in some places "Christian rock" music. **Instrumental music** in worship is a matter of opinion not a matter of faith and has simply been "voted" into practice in some churches. **The Lord's supper may be eaten on days other than the Lord's day** and on special occasions like birthdays and weddings.

Some insist that one must **pray with hands uplifted and bodies swaying.**

Hand clapping to show approval of preachers, singers, etc.

Holiday worship services on Christmas and Easter complete with Christmas trees in the foyer and Easter egg hunts on the front lawn.

Organic and theistic evolution being accepted as true while the first eleven chapters of Genesis are described as myth and legend.

Many are teaching that we are **saved only by grace** with no acts of obedience on man's part.

Others teach the old denominational doctrine of **faith only**.

Women are said to have as much authority in the realm of leadership and worship as male that looses where God has bound is liberalism.

Open membership. "Anyone who calls God Father is my brother."

One does not have to know that baptism is for the remission of sins.

Agnosticism--You cannot prove the existence of God. Faith is a leap in the dark.

Philosophies of men--Existentialism, Humanism, Pragmatism, Rationalism, Pluralism, etc.

Unity in diversity. Two do not have to be agreed in order to walk together.

No eternal punishment. The wicked are annihilated.

Christians are not governed by law. The Scriptures are not absolute and binding.

The dedication of babies to the Lord in a special religious service.

Inferior Bible translations used and endorsed.

Sunday night cell groups and cluster groups.

Elders have no authority.

Moral issues--many false positions on divorce and remarriage, abortion defended, homosexuals defended, gambling and the lottery defended, immodest apparel.

Attacks on the virgin birth of Christ.

Attacks on hermeneutics--Reasoning and logic are ridiculed. The gospel is not a pattern. They advocate a "core gospel," wherein they teach that we may have

fellowship with denominations as long as we agree on the basics of Christ--his death burial and resurrection. All other disagreements should not affect our fellowship.

2. These, and many more are the problems that liberalism is pushing on local churches.

C. **Something has happened, these folks have change!** They no longer wish to associate with those who would insist on "calling Bible things by Bible names and doing Bible things in Bible ways." While we have emphasized that we are set on restoring the church of the New Testament, they don't believe we can identify, let alone restore the New Testament church today. They do not like to hear sermons on sound doctrine, the plan of salvation, the one true church, the wages of sin, walking by faith, etc.

1. These folks frown on that kind of preaching. They say it is irrelevant, it is out dated, it is not in step with the times; that we cannot get modern men and women to attend churches that preach and teach on these themes. They say we cannot preach the sermons of the 40's, 50's and 60's. But those are years when the church made some of its greatest growth! I still have in my files an article from the Associated Press news service saying the churches of Christ are the fastest growing church in the United States. They say the world is changing, times have changed, the church must change if it is to survive.

2. They say that those who insist on sound doctrine are legalists, dogmatic and old fashioned. We need love, tolerance and understanding. However, their love and tolerance does not extend to those who oppose their liberal practices.

3. This liberalism among us has caused great difficulty and

heartache. It has divided churches and families. It has split our great beloved brotherhood. Many of our people will go into apostasy, and, unless they repent, be lost forever.

D. What has happened? What has brought on this radical change in the Lord's church and among His people? What has brought about this departure from the faith, from the very fundamentals of Bible authority? What is this "new thing" that has engulfed us, overwhelmed us, and is threatening to destroy us?

II. DETERMINING THE SOURCE

A. "There are always those who believe they sense something in the "spirit" of a thing contrary to what may be found in its "letter"; or, who, reacting against what they consider a radical extreme of isolationism devote their energies to polarizing a movement. The restoration period came to know these individuals following the war between the states. The church appeared to them to be too narrow and restricted, and the ambition therefore was to lift the brotherhood to a "dignified church" in a world of denominationalism, commanding at least some respect from these religious bodies. With the passing of years the number of men to take the lead in this type of thought became legion." (Search for the Ancient Order, Vol 2, p250).

B. This is a very telling statement as to the "how" and "why" of liberalism one hundred years ago and today.

1. **Every departure from God begins with an attitude that will lead one to add to or take from the word of God.** Men are not satisfied with things as God gave them. Biblical illustrations of this point are numerous.

- a. Satan's deception of Eve (Gen 3).
 - b. Cain and Abel's sacrifices (Gen 4).
 - c. Nadab and Abihu (Lev 10).
 - d. Israel's desire for a king (1 Sam 8:5ff).
2. About the middle of the 19th century some well intentioned but strong-willed individuals decided to "improve" on the Lord's arrangement of the church.
- a. A change was needed in the worship, and thus the introduction of mechanical instruments of music into the worship of the church.
 - b. The mission of the church could be improved upon, so they devised the American Missionary Society and the Foreign Christian Missionary Society. To get the women involved the Christian Women's Board of Missions was invented.
 - c. The benevolent work of the church needed help, so they in 1886 they started the National Benevolent Association.
 - d. The Church Extention Fund was started to help local churches build meeting houses. The plea of the churches for aid in this cause helps us to see the supra organization and "society craze" that swept the churches in the latter part of the 19th century: "You have organized us into congregations through district, state, and national evangelists, but you have provided no plan by which we can get church homes in places where we cannot build except by some outside help." (History of the Disciples of Christ, p650)
3. Thus it is readily seen that the entire divine organization of the church was surpassed by organizational

schemes devised solely from the minds of men.

4. Though diligently opposed by such men as **Tolbert Fanning, David Lipscomb, Benjamin Franklin, Jacob Creath, Jr.** and a host of others, the die had been cast. There was simply nothing left to do but to separate from these liberal brethren and continue their stance with the Scriptures as their guide.

III. DECIDING THE STAND

A. "It is evident that the grave question perplexing the Restoration movement has always been and continues to be, 'Where does the realm of human judgment and action begin and end?' While the Church of Christ is harassed by those who fail to understand where it *begins*, the Disciples are troubled by those who do not know where it *ends*.

Within the last generation, the Church of Christ has made a phenomenal growth. This is due to two things: (1) Its people have stood like the Rock of Gibraltar for "the faith which was once delivered unto the saints," amid the doubt and confusion superinduced by liberalism. They have challenged the spirit of compromise and worldliness and dared to be a peculiar people teaching and practicing what they believe is the Bible way of life. (2) They have come to realize that the silences of the Scriptures must be respected as well as the commandments of Scripture, but that obedience to its silences permits freedom of judgment and action. Old chasms of division are being replaced by ever-widening agreement and ground for fellowship." (Christian's Only, p313).

B. Why is it that our brethren who are so intent on making the

church like the denominations cannot see what they are doing?!

1. The answer for some is that **they are doing what they want to do no matter what the cost!** They will not read or heed anything with a Biblical conservative viewpoint. They are determined to change the church and there's no stopping them. When one asks for Bible proof, or cites the Scriptures they cry out, "You worship the Bible, not God!" Or, "You're a legalist!" Such charges are made from ignorance of the truth, stated from emotion and not from reason.

2. For others they are so trusting, loving and soft-hearted (soft-headed), that they just couldn't imagine some of these men could actually be teaching false doctrine.

C. Of the forty two colleges run by the brethren at the end of the last century, thirty five of them went into apostasy. Eighty-five percent of the restoration churches went into apostasy (Piloting the Strait, p.25). In a discussion with a college president a few years ago, I remarked that I did not want to see that college go the way of Bethany, Butler, Hiram, and others. He was highly offended that I would even think it could happen.

C. If we are to preserve the church of the New Testament for our posterity there are certain things that must take place:

1. **Mark and avoid those obvious sources of liberal doctrine.**

a. **Colleges and universities** that are constantly hosting lectureships spouting liberalism. Abilene, Pepperdine, and Lipscomb have been leading the way.

b. Preachers, teachers and professors who have been in the forefront in broadcasting their seeds of error. Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Lynn Anderson,

Carroll Osbourn, Mike Cope, Bill Banowsky, Joe Beam, Jeff Walling, and many, many more. Do not use these men, do not invite them to speak, do not support them in any way.

c. Identify **publications** that are sources of error: Magazines--**Wineskins, Image, Restoration Quarterly**, etc. Advise brethren not to subscribe to them. Let them die a quick death!

d. Books that espouse liberalism. **The Peaceable Kingdom: Essays Favoring Non-Sectarian Christianity** (Carroll Osborn), **The Church in Transition** (James Woodroof), **The Second Incarnation** (Rubel Shelly), **Navigating the Winds of Change** (Lynn Anderson), **The Core Gospel** (Bill Love), **Voices From the Distant Past** (C.Leonard Allen), and a great flood of other liberal publications, flowing especially from Abilene University.

2. Vigorously mount the attack! Preach on these things! Inform the brethren!

a. Warn brethren to be aware of what is literally taking place before their eyes. Give them positive proof. Show them from the Scriptures the error that is being taught. Warn them not to aid and abet those who are destroying the church (2 Jn 9-11). Give them no sympathy or support.

b. "Preach the Word!" (2 Tim 4:2). Unsheathe the sword of the Spirit and be on the attack against the doctrinal errors of our day (Eph 6:10ff).

3. Don't give yourself over to a bitter, vitriolic spirit that vents itself on others. Don't give in to a spirit of pessimism. Hold to God's unchanging hand. Trust the Lord

to see His people through the on-coming apostasy.

4. Promote sound doctrine by holding up the hands of those who are fighting the good fight. Subscribe to magazines and periodicals that hold to the faith of the gospel.

5. Keep yourself pure--Morally and doctrinally. Don't give Satan an advantage over you (2 Cor 2:11; 1 Tim 4:16).

6. Contend earnestly for the faith, be set for it's defense (Jude 3, Phil 1:17). Preach and teach to build up the local church.

Conclusion:

A. To those liberal brethren who are forcing changes in the church by their haughty, arrogant attitudes ("The church must change, and if it resists change we will drag it kicking and screaming into the 21st century"), we close with these words of Tolbert Fanning to the liberals of his day who were forcing the Missionary Societies on the church: "Do brethren, read the New Testament more carefully, and study a little more of the history of the early Christians, before you drive us from you." (The Hazard of the Die, p186).

SUGGESTED READING

Piloting the Strait, A Guidebook for Assessing Change in Churches of Christ, Dave Miller, P.O. Box 210667, Bedford, TX 76095. This is a thorough expose of liberalism in the church of the Lord. Sain Publications, 1996. Must reading for all who love the church.

Change Agents and Churches of Christ, William Woodson, School of Bible Emphasis, 1994. Another valuable and much needed book.

The Hazard of the Die, Tolbert Fanning and the Restoration Movement,
James R. Wilburn, Sweet Publishing, 1969

Christians Only, A History of the Restoration Movement, James
DeForest Murch, Standard Publishing, 1962

The Search for the Ancient Order, Volumes 1&2. Earl Irvin West,
Gospel Advocate

Elder Ben Franklin: Eye of the Storm, Earl Irvin West, Religious Book
Service, 1983

Comprehensive History of the Disciples of Christ, W.T.Moore, Revell,
1909. William T.Moore is identified as one of the foremost liberals
of the past century.

Attitudes and Consequences in the Restoration Movement, Homer Hailey,
Old Paths Book Club, 1952

The Restoration: the Winds of Change, Jim Laws, editor. Spiritual
Sword Lectures, 1993

Restoration, Then and Now, M.H.Tucker, East Tennessee School of
Preaching and Missions Lectures, 1983

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

BORN:Philippi, West Virginia
BAPTIZED: February 5, 1950 by Meris Wright
EDUCATION: Trumbull County Public Schools, Memphis School
of Preaching, Alabama Christian School of Religion
PREACHING: Alkire Road, Columbus, OH, Dewey Ave St Marys,
WV, Hillview Terrace (Director WV School of Preaching)
Moundsville, WV
GOSPEL MEETINGS: Ohio, West Virginia, Virginia, Tennessee,
Kentucky, North Carolina, Alabama, Florida, Illinois
MARRIED: Judith R. Null
CHILDREN: Bruce, preaches Beville Rd Daytona Beach, FL,
Ramona Haynes, Columbus, OH, Rachel Cornell, Columbus, OH,
Rebecca Poe, husband preaches Needmore Rd Dayton, OH
EIGHT GRANDCHILDREN

COMPLETE IN CHRIST

Roger A. Rush

For many years now the Mormons have run an ad in *TV Guide*, *Reader's Digest*, and perhaps elsewhere under the caption: "***There is Another Testament of Jesus Christ.***" The following quotation is taken from those ads:

The Book of Mormon , Another Testament of Jesus Christ, contains the account of His appearance in ancient America following His resurrection.

The advertisement then proceeds to argue that the Book of Mormon is a continuation of the New Testament record. The Bible, they say, is the word of God, but so is the book of Mormon. Should there be a conflict between the two, and there are many, Mormons would argue that their book offers the true doctrine of Jesus Christ, and that the New Testament errs whenever a discrepancy between the two is found. How do we respond to such a claim?

In the first place, the New Testament offers a somber warning to any who would add to, or take from the inspired text. (Galatians 1:6 Reevaluations 22:18,19). The Book of Mormon is an addition to the New Testament. As such, it is condemned. Mrs. Emma Smith (wife of Joseph Smith, **translator** of the Book of Mormon) said, regarding the work of translation:

In writing for your father I frequently wrote day by day, often sitting at the table close by him, he sitting with his face buried in his hat, with the stone in it, and dictating hour after hour, with nothing between us (**Religious Delusions**, J.V. Coombs, Cincinnati: The Standard Publishing Company, 1904, pp.59,60.)

The Book of Mormon did not result from the translation of special "golden plates", but from the fertile imagination of a man with his head buried in his hat. It was in no sense inspired by God.

The Book of Mormon is filled with errors. Over 5,000 corrections have been made in grammar, composition, thought, and teaching since the book's inception. It, like every other addition, revelation, and new discovery of truth, contradicts the clear teaching of God's word that we are "complete in Christ" (Colossians 2:10), and that we have been "given all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3).

What has been said regarding the Book of Mormon can be said with the same confidence regarding the publications of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society, the pronouncements of the New Age Movement, and all other segments of the religious world which deny the authority of Christ, and seek to go beyond the revelation of His divine will as set forth in the New Testament (including some within our own fellowship who have suddenly discovered new meaning in the text regarding unity and cooperation with denominations, a new role for women in the church, and a tolerance for or acceptance of immorality).

A number of articles have been published of late calling into question the reliability of the New Testament account of the life and ministry of Jesus. Of special note are several stories regarding the findings of the **Jesus Seminar**. Some will immediately ask, "Who, or what, is the **Jesus Seminar**, and are their findings trustworthy?"

According to an article in **USA WEEKEND** (December 18-20, 1992), the **Jesus Seminar** was founded in 1985 as a kind of "Jesus think tank," and is one of the most skeptical groups studying the issues of the historical Jesus. The members of the **Jesus Seminar** are described as "a cross section of mainly liberal Bible academics, most drawn from seminaries and universities: believers and non-believers; clergy and laity; Catholics, Protestants and several Jews." Further, it is reported that film maker Paul Verhoven (**Robocop**, **Basic Instinct**) has attended a number of sessions and has plans to use the findings in a movie about the life of Jesus.

Some of the more controversial findings of the **Jesus Seminar**

include a denial that Jesus ever uttered the Lord's Prayer, or delivered the Sermon on the Mount. According to an article in **U.S. News & World Report** (July 1, 1991), they claim that only 17 of the 111 sayings of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark are authentic, based on "historical analysis."

The Seminar has published the **Gospel of Mark, Red Letter Edition**. In this much abbreviated gospel, the words they are most confident Jesus spoke are printed in red; those which they believe he probably spoke are printed in pink; words which he probably did not say but reflect his thinking are printed in gray, and words they believe he could not have spoken are in black. As a result, there is only one complete red verse in the entire book: "Pay to the emperor whatever belongs to the emperor and to God whatever belongs to God" (Mark 12:17).

Regarding the findings of the **Jesus Seminar**, Howard Clark Kee, a New Testament professor emeritus at the Boston University, has called the seminar's tactics "an academic disgrace" (**U.S. News & World Report**, (July 1, 1991). Given the makeup of the **Jesus Seminar**, it is not surprising that the words and deeds of Jesus are called in question. These are liberal theologians with little regard for such fundamental beliefs as the deity of Christ or the inspiration of Scripture. Their findings are ludicrous and unworthy of all the attention they have received.

Luke, the author of the third gospel, wrote "that we might know the exact truth" about Jesus (Luke 1:4) We can have far more confidence in what he and the other gospel writers have to say than anything coming from the **Jesus Seminar**.

There are those who believe that our faith is built around a fallacy. The Bible, they argue, is not the word of God. Our world was not created, it just happened. Jesus Christ, if he lived at all, was nothing like the picture painted by today's preachers.

Time (April 8, 1996) focused once more on the debate. Jesus made the cover. In the past the magazine has drawn attention to the

liberal claims of the **Jesus Seminar**. This time, however, they offered at least a token response to their outlandish claims.

Is there any real reason for us to question the validity of the Biblical record, and especially the New Testament account of Christ and His church? Frankly, research into the past is not as easy as we would like. There are no old newspapers, file footage of events, or tape recordings to be consulted. It is impossible to verify the gospel story with these modern methods. Obviously, we cannot go back and interview the main participants in the saga. And, there is not that much extra-biblical material from the period to be examined. But, what does exist in no way destroys the credibility of the Scriptures.

Among the earliest believers, however, there would have been opportunity to consult with eyewitnesses, to verify facts, to determine truth. And, there is no doubt, that such was done. The writers of the New Testament claim to have been eyewitnesses of the things which they describe. Peter wrote: "**We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty**" (2Peter 1:16). John said much the same thing (1 John 1:1-3).

The antiquity of the Bible, and in particular the New Testament, is undeniable. Given the age of Scripture and the events described, who would be in a better position to accurately represent the true Jesus, His contemporaries, or a group of self-appointed liberals in the twentieth century with an agenda to destroy the credibility of the Bible and Christianity?

There are many highly educated, scholarly men and women who accept the historical reliability of the Scriptures. Our faith in Jesus Christ is built on a solid foundation. Those who take the time to learn the facts, if they are fair minded, will have no doubt that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and the Biblical record of His life and ministry is true! The record is reliable. We should have confidence in it and the Christ it reveals.

Paul's epistle to the Colossians was written to combat the false notion that New Testament Christianity was lacking in some respects. Colossae was a city of Phrygia in Asia Minor, located about 100 miles east of Ephesus on the Lycus River. It was one of three cities of importance in that area, Laodicea and Hierapolis being the other two. It was the smallest of the three, and while the other two thrived, Colossae eventually died out. The letter to the church in that city was written while Paul was a prisoner (4:3,18).

During the mid 50's Paul worked at Ephesus. From Ephesus he and his colleagues evangelized the entire province of Asia (Acts 19:10). It was during that period that the church was established at Colossae. From prison Paul received word from Epaphras concerning the church there. Much of what he heard was encouraging (1:3-6; 2:5). But, there was also cause for alarm (2:8). Elements of Greek philosophy and myth (2:8) combined with Jewish legalism (2:16) had infiltrated the church. This heresy, among other things, called for the worshipping of angels (2:18).

The false teaching which threatened the welfare of the church in C o l o s s a e i n v o l v e d f i v e elements: **1)** philosophical (2:8); **2)** Judaists (2:11,14,16,17); **3)** worship of angels (2:10,15,18,19); **4)** ascetic rules (2:20-23); **5)** attempts to limit the greatness and authority of Christ and the sufficiency of His redemptive work (1:14-20; 2:8-10,17,19). Colossians countered these heresies and called the church back to the pure faith. Of Jesus, Paul wrote:

For in him dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power (2:9,10).

In Jesus Christ they were complete. They were recipients of the fullness of Christ. With Jesus there was nothing lacking. In this letter Paul established the preeminence of Christ (1:1-29), warned of the dangers of false teachers (2:1-3,4), and made an appeal to the church for genuine Christian living (3:5-4:18).

Christians are made complete in Christ because of His central role in every important area of our physical and spiritual lives. The preeminence of Jesus is asserted in seven specific areas:

- 1)The preeminence of Christ in Salvation(1:13,14)
- 2)The preeminence of Christ in Creation(1:16,17)
- 3)The preeminence of Christ in the Church(1:18)
- 4)The preeminence of Christ in Reconciliation(1:20,21)
- 5)The preeminence of Christ in Preaching(1:28)
- 6)The preeminence of Christ in Daily Life(3:1-5)
- 7)The preeminence of Christ in Worship and Service(3:16,17,23)

There is no aspect of our lives here, or hereafter, which is not impacted by the life and teaching of God's Son. Everything necessary for our well--being(body, soul, and spirit) is found in Jesus and His word.

Jesus cannot be improved upon. We need no other Savior and no toleration for all the impostors(false religions) which claim to give man what can be found only in Jesus Christ(Acts4:12). We need no other law. The gospel of Jesus Christ is sufficient. We must live by it, for we will someday be judged by it(John 12:48).

Although there are many who seek to undermine the authority of Jesus, and the credibility of His word, His church will stand long after the last critic has been silenced. His is an eternal kingdom, and we are complete in Him!

Roger Rush is a native of Fairmont, West Virginia. He has served as minister of the Sixth and Washington Steets Church of Christ in Marietta, Ohio since October of 1985.

He is married to the former Diane Bond of Senecaville,Ohio, and they have two children Angela and Adam.

Before coming to Sixth and Washington, he served the following congregations: Hundred Church of Christ, Hundred,WV; Little Hocking Church of Christ in Little Hocking, OH; and Lower Paw Paw Church of Christ near Lower Salem, OH.

WORLD CHRISTIANS OR WORLDLY CHRISTIANS?

Bruce Daugherty

Text: 2 Timothy 2:20-21

Learning Level: 4 - *Decision*

Purpose Statement: After hearing the lesson, the learner will resolve to cleanse himself/herself from dishonorable uses, set himself/herself apart, to place themselves in the hands of Christ, and to be equipped for the good work of world evangelism.

Introduction: It used to be that the only people in America who studied about world religions were people who were training to be missionaries. It also used to be the case that the only ones doing world evangelism were the missionaries who went to foreign countries. This is not the case anymore.

The necessity of studying the world religions and the opportunities of world evangelism have become sharply focused as the world has come to our doorstep! Let me share just a few examples from my home in Daytona Beach:

1. My next door neighbor is an immigrant from Indonesia.
2. Our congregation includes a family from Nigeria.
3. Our county includes a large Hispanic speaking population.
4. Among the traditional religious bodies and cults are these groups:
 - a. Islamic worship and study centers.
 - b. Two Jewish synagogues.
 - c. A Russian orthodox church.
 - d. A Coptic orthodox church
 - d. A Ba'hai temple.
 - e. Even a center for the study and practice of witchcraft.

With the presence of so many religiously diverse people in our communities and with the advent of technology that allows world wide communication in seconds, it is imperative that all Christians be knowledgeable of the tenets of the major world religions and that all Christians be equipped for world evangelism! The challenge for the Church in 1996 is whether we will be world Christians or worldly Christians? The difference between the two rests, I believe, in the type of heart or mindset that we hold.

This study will seek to focus on having the heart(or mindset) of God, Christ, and the New Testament Christians. Then the study will focus on how we can have a heart that God can use for world evangelism.

I. The New Testament Reveals the Heart of God

A. World evangelism was the purpose of Jesus' ministry
(Luke 4:16-30; Luke 19:10):

1. Jesus said that the Messianic prophecy was fulfilled in His day.
2. He was anointed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.
3. His mission was:
 - a. to preach the good news to the poor.
 - b. to proclaim freedom for the captives.
 - c. and to proclaim eyesight for the blind.
 - d. to release the oppressed.
 - e. to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.
4. His mission was two-fold:
 - a. to announce deliverance from sin.
 - b. to accomplish deliverance - which was done in His death, burial, and resurrection.
5. It is noteworthy that on this occasion Jesus used two Gentile examples of belief and obedience to demonstrate the unwillingness of His own people to accept Him. If unreceptiveness is the case in our

local evangelism, let us not overlook the many places around the world who prove themselves to be every bit as receptive and obedient as the widow of Zarephath and the Syrian captain.

- C. The commission to the Apostle's was world wide in scope (**Matthew 28:18-20**):
 - 1. It rested upon the authority of the risen Christ.
 - 2. It had the purpose of making disciples of all nations (ethnic groups).
 - 3. It was to be carried out "as you go."
 - 4. The Apostles obeyed Christ (**1 Corinthians 15:10**).
 - 5. Theirs was a never ending commission (**2 Timothy 2:2**).
- D. The history of the early church reveals their far reaching efforts:
 - 1. Devout Jews from every nation were present and receptive on the day of Pentecost (**Acts 2:5,9-11, 41, 47**).
 - 2. Though persecuted they went everywhere preaching the word (**Acts 8:4**).
 - 3. The gospel crossed ethnic barriers (**Acts 8:5, 27; 10:33; 11:19-21**).
 - 4. The gospel spread throughout the Mediterranean world (**Romans 15:19, 23-24; Colossians 1:23**). The enormous number of ancient translations of the portions of the New Testament gives ample testimony to the widespread diffusion of the gospel and the mission-mindedness of the early Christians.

II. Three Hearts in Joppa

- A. Jonah's Heart - typical Israelite of his era:
 - 1. Prophetic advisor to king Jeroboam II (**2 Kings 14:25**).

2. Height of expansion of the Northern kingdom.
 3. Assyria looms on the horizon.
 4. Jonah was intensely nationalistic. To paraphrase the mindset: "We Jews are the just ones and the other nations are just pagans and do not deserve God's favors, especially those who are our enemies."
- B. The Heart of God as revealed by Jonah's own words in **Jonah 4:2**:
1. Gracious
 2. Merciful
 3. Abundant to loving kindness
 4. Slow to wrath - longsuffering
 5. Changes from the judgement threatened if men will repent.
- C. Because of His love for all men as revealed in this statement concerning His character, God rebukes Jonah for his lack of concern for others.
- D. Another heart in Joppa - **Acts 10**
1. God needs another preacher.
 2. Peter's nationalism is every bit as deep-seated as was Jonah's. Peter's heart must first be changed.
 3. The vision
 4. The understanding of the vision.
 - a. Not about food.
 - b. About people and removing prejudice and nationalism so that the gospel may be proclaimed to all.
 - c. "I perceive that God is no respecter of persons" (**Acts 10:34**).
 5. Peter's obedience as he baptizes the household of Cornelius.

III. A Heart God Can Use - 2 Timothy 2:21

- A. Cleansing.
- B. Set apart.
- C. Useful to the Master.
- D. Prepared for every good work.

Conclusion: The world has enough Jonahs in it. What is needed is more followers of the one who was "greater than Jonah" (Matthew 12:41).

Let us allow God to perform heart surgery on us so that we will no longer be worldly Christians but world Christians!

Bruce Daugherty - Bruce received a B.A. in Bible from Freed-Hardeman University (1981) and is currently working toward a M.A. in Bible from Southern Christian University. Served two years with the Reynoldsburg (Ohio) Church of Christ ('81-'83). Served for 6.5 years in Cervignano, Italy ('83-90). Currently preaching for the Beville Road congregation in Daytona Beach, FL. and serving as an instructor in the Florida School of Preaching. He is the son of a gospel preacher, Emanuel Daugherty of Moundsville, WV., and is married to the former Gayle Gleaton of Stockbridge, GA. They have two sons: Michael and Vincent.

HUMANISM - Man's Wisdom vs God's Wisdom

Douglas A. Petty

Secular humanism has been called the intellectual spirit of the age. Its influence can be seen and felt in many ways in our society. Indeed, many people who don't even know what secular humanism is live with some of it's presuppositions because they've been fed them (mainly through the media and our educational systems) without realizing it.

Because of the limitation on time, we will focus our study today on answering three important questions concerning secular humanism. Question number one - **What is secular humanism?** Question number two - **What is its origin?** And question number three - **What are the consequences of secular humanism?**

What is secular humanism? Please consider the following definitions: "Humanism is the name of a current rationalistic, philosophical-theological movement that denies the supernatural in favor of man himself being the ultimate or highest thing of significance in our universe" (J.D. Thomas, GOSPEL ADVOCATE, Jan. 22, 1981). "I use the word humanist to mean someone who believes that humans are just as much a natural phenomenon as an animal or a plant; that our bodies, minds and souls were not supernaturally created but are products of evolution, and that we are not under the control or guidance of any supernatural being or beings, but have to rely on ourselves and our own powers" (Julian Huxley, world famous evolutionary biologist and humanist). "The central

Humanist value is the individual person achieving fulfillment in life through freedom of choice and gratification of human desires, in the absence of moral codes" (Francis Hill). "Humanism is a philosophy which suggests that man must look to human experience for moral and spiritual guidance, without believing that there is a supernatural God or divine power to support or guide him (Wayne Jackson). "Humanism is a philosophical and religious view as well as an organized movement which rejects all forms of supernaturalism, including belief in God and His revelation, the Bible. Humanists believe that man creates his own morality and values. Humanism is the deification of man. Man becomes god because there is no God" (Darrell Conley).

Humanism is nothing other than the American version of atheism, which positively says, "We believe in", rather than negatively, "We don't believe in God." But understand this - it is the same old thing; pure, unadulterated atheism. And one of the inevitable results of humanism or atheism is the demise of all eternal standards or truths!

In **humanism** God is dethroned, man is deified. The Bible is relegated to an antiquated Book which has some "nice stories" and teaches some "helpful principles". Salvation (needed???) from sin (what is that?) is a relic of the superstitious past. The biblical account of creation by a supernatural being is rejected, denied, vilified, and made fun of. And man (the lowly animal who pulled himself out of the muck and mire by his own bootstraps) has no purpose or destiny beyond this life - NONE.

Brother Robert R. Taylor, Jr. Wrote: "Our generation is fond of two little words - **IN** and **OUT**. **IN** is the accepted,

the desired, the going thing; *OUT* is the rejected, the despised, that which cannot be tolerated by modern man. In Humanism God is *OUT*; man is *IN*. Creation is *OUT*; evolution is *IN*. Absolute morality is *OUT*; situation ethics and fickle moral standards are *IN*. The Bible is *OUT*; the Humanist Manifesto (1 & 2) are *IN*."

Sad is the day that lowly man comes to the conclusion that he, and he alone, has the wisdom, knowledge, and ability to chart his own course in life. That he is in total control and has no need of help, guidance, or assistance from a supernatural being (if there were such a being). When man finds himself in this state of mind he has totally ignored or rejected the implied warnings of the prophet Jeremiah: "O Lord, I know that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23), and of the great sage Solomon who wrote: "There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

No, it is not man who is in control; it is not man who is sovereign - it is God! The scriptures clearly and beautifully depict God's sovereignty: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and power, and the glory, and the victory and the majesty; for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; Thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all. Both riches and honor came of thee, and thou reignest over all; and in thy hand is power and might; and in thy hand is to make great, and to give strength unto all" (1 Chron. 29:11-12). And listen to the words of the apostle Paul: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out;

. . . . For of him, and through him, and to him are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen." (Romans 11:33-36). The whole attitude of the scriptures is, "Let God be true, but every man a liar" (Romans 3:4).

Now let us consider the second question; what is the origin of humanism (where did it come from)? Since within the definition of humanism we find the desire of man to be god and independent of God, then humanism began in the Garden of Eden. The serpent lied to Eve, "For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). Eve, believing and desiring this, ate of the forbidden fruit. In her actions we find that at the very root of humanism is sinful pride and an arrogant heart. It is because of this arrogant pride that man desires to elevate himself and to reject God.

Further study finds that humanism, as an organized movement, began around 500 BC among the Grecian philosophers known as Sophists. Among them we find Protagoras (485-415 BC) who taught that no authority resided external to man and there was no such thing as a standard which contained objective truth. These basic principles became the foundation of the humanistic philosophy of life. It is no wonder that Paul said to the Greeks at Corinth, "Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For seeing that in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom knew not God, it was God's good pleasure through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe . . . Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men" (1 Cor. 1:20-21, 25). Even today we find that secular

humanism rests squarely upon these two primary foundational stones.

While humanism as enjoyed varying degrees of success down through the ages, it has been within the last century that two Humanistic documents have been written (one in 1933 and the other in 1973) which together form the "BIBLE" of modern secular humanism. These two documents, unlike any before them, set forth clearly and defiantly the true intent and purpose of this movement - ***the worship and deification of man and the total demise of God.*** Due to the limitations of time we are not able to discuss these documents and their abominable teachings in detail. However, they have been reproduced and included, as an appendix to this manuscript, in order that you might study them for yourself.

This brings us to our final question - **What are some of the consequences of secular humanism?** While there are many consequences of secular humanism; I want us to focus our attention on three of them.

First is **Moral Relativism.** Moral relativism means that there are no absolute statements (which would come from an absolute standard). In other words, you could not say that adultery is always wrong because sometimes it may be right. You could not say that murder is always wrong because, while it is usually wrong, it might sometimes be right in certain circumstances. **(As you have probably already noticed, moral relativism is "close kin" to situation ethics).**

The secular humanist believes that there is no absolute standard of authority when it comes to moral and ethical conduct! Consider the message of the following poem:

*It all depends on where you are,
It all depends on what you are,
It all depends on what you feel,
It all depends on how you feel.
It all depends on how you're raised,
It all depends on what is praised,
What's right today is wrong tomorrow,
Joy in France, in England sorrow.
It all depends on point of view,
Australia or Timbuktu,
In Rome do as the Romans do.
If tastes just happen to agree,
Then you have morality.
But where there are conflicting trends,
It all depends, it all depends*

This becomes the predominate view when one believes there is no absolute standard of authority!

However, God's will for human behavior is not a matter of subjective speculation which every man figures out for himself. Since morality and ethical conduct is grounded in the unchanging nature of God (**Mal. 3:6; 1 Pet. 1:15**), it is absolute - not relative, not cultural, not situational. Rather, Jehovah has spoken and His mind has been made known to man through objective, Biblical revelation.

Secular humanist will argue there are no moral absolutes until you impinge on their territory! In July of 1984, Bryant Gumble interviewed Hugh Hefner on the "Today" show. It was right after *Penthouse* magazine had published nude photos of Vanessa Williams, who was Miss America at the time. *Penthouse* was selling well, and *Playboy* was suffering. Hefner said *Penthouse* was **morally** wrong because Miss Williams had not

posed for the purpose of having the photos published. If that's not the pot calling the kettle black I wouldn't know what is! You see, Hefner has implied for years that there are no moral absolutes, but when it impinged on his business, he changed his mind.

Everyone has moral absolutes (whether they want to admit it or not), but Christians know where they come from. They are rooted in the goodness and authority of God, our creator.

The second consequence of secular humanism is **Lack of Regard/Respect For Life**. Humanists seek the dignity of man, but they don't know how to go about it. We know that man is made in the image of God. But B. F. Skinner, a noted secular humanist, said, "Not like God. More like a dog!" Man, for Skinner, is just like Pavlov's dog - he responds to the right stimuli. If you feed him the right things, he'll respond in the right way.

In his book **The Great Evangelical Disaster**, Francis Schaeffer discussed this low view of man: "When one accepts the secular humanists view that the final reality is only material and energy shaped by chance, then human life is lowered to the level of animal existence. There are only two classifications - nonlife and life. And if one thinks of human life as basically no different from animal life, why not treat people the same way? And so it first becomes easy to kill children in the womb, and then if one does not like the way they turn out, to kill children after they are born After all, according to the secular humanist, human life is not intrinsically different from animal life - so why should it be treated differently?"

Abortion is a good example of the logical consequences of secular humanism. It's promoted in the second **Humanist Manifesto**. If you discount passages like **Genesis 1** and **Psalm 139**, then abortion is judged only on expediency. Since *Rowe vs Wade* in 1973, it's been expedient over 15,000,000 times in our country. Just two years ago Peter Singer wrote in favor of abortion in the **Journal of Pediatrics**: "*Only the fact that the defective infant is a member of this species, homo Sapiens, leads it to be treated differently from the dog or pig. Species membership alone, however, is not morally relevant.*"

Abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia are but dominoes in a line; abortion has fallen, infanticide is tottering, and euthanasia may soon follow. As we see the hundreds of thousands of lives being prematurely snuffed out each year, we also see that the value of God-given life has been cheapened. Men have placed themselves in the place of God, deciding who deserves to live and who does not.

The third consequence of secular humanism is **the elevation of man over God**. Secular humanism exalts human reason as supreme. It is the placing of man at the center of all things and making him the measure of all things. In secular humanism man becomes god.

In the opening paragraphs of the **Humanist Manifesto II** we find the following statement: "*As in 1933, humanists still believe that traditional theism, especially faith in the prayer-hearing God, assumed to love and care for persons, to hear and understand their prayers, and to be able to do something about them, is an unproved and outmoded faith.*" By stating that "*traditional theism*" (belief in God) is

"unproved and outmoded", the humanist quickly gets rid of God and enthrones himself.

However, the infallible and majestic word of God tells a different story. In **Isaiah 55:8-9** we find the prophet declaring the truth concerning God's superiority over man: "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts higher than your thoughts." Robert R. Taylor, Jr. put it in very clear terms when he wrote: "*Jehovah -- not puny, weak, finite, sin-filled and soon-to-die man -- is the high, holy and lofty one who majestically and marvelously inhabits eternity.*" He went on to say that, "*Little man pales into deep inferiority and utter insignificance when he seeks to exalt himself above God or in the place of God.*"

The humanist gets rid of God because he wants to be rid of God - he wants to live life with no strings attached! It's not that man cannot know of God, it's that he does not want to know. He wants to believe that he, and he alone, is in control of all things pertaining to his life and his destiny. And for those who want to deceive themselves into thinking this is true (while rejecting real truth), the deception comes in the form of "the lie": "**And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie**" (2 Thess. 2:10-11).

The problem of man is not that he doesn't know what to do but that he knows and chooses to do evil anyway. The attitude of many today is a perfect reflection, a mirror

image, of the attitude found among the people during the days of the judges and the work of Micah: ". . . but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6).

While we have yet to feel the full force of the destructive teachings of secular humanism, its effects in our society are undeniable. We are finding that we are living in a society where morality and righteousness is ridiculed and evil has become a virtue. God clearly pronounces judgment on those who will "call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness" (Isa. 5:20)

Man must remember that it is the fool that hath said "there is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

Doug is a native of Wood County, West Virginia and he and his wife, Lynne, have three sons: Scott, Brent and Chris. His parents, Gene and Becky Petty, attend the North End congregation in Parkersburg where Gene serves as an elder. Doug formerly served as a law enforcement officer in West Virginia and Ohio.

His education includes: 1969 graduate of Williamstown High School; and has taken coursed at Ohio State University, Washington County Technical School, Marietta College, Glenville State College, and the University of Kentucky. Doug's Bible training was obtained at White's Ferry Road School of Preaching, West Monroe, LA.

He is currently the minister at the Hopewell congregation in Wood Co., and has served there for the past 10 years. Doug has also served congregations at Pennsboro, WV; Mandeville, LA and Greensburg, KY. He has worked with church youth camps, spoken at various lectureships, and held gospel meetings in 7 states.

Jesus, The Way

Matthew R. Thomas

Introduction

1. Various groups propose to know the way of salvation.
 - a. "Belief alone saves."
 - b. "Grace alone saves."
 - c. "Works of merit save."
 - d. "Grace and works save."
2. Amidst the various ways by which people proclaim to be saved, is there one right way?
 - a. Yes, there is! John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by me."
 - b. Also 2 John 9, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son."
 - c. Jesus is "the Way." To follow in "the way" is to obey Jesus Christ.
3. Why are there so many "churches" if there is only one way?
 - a. Because of unbelief.
 - b. Because of disobedience.
4. Yet, there is a way which is right for man to follow, and to be saved. (John 3:16.)
 - a. It is singular - Jesus claims there is only one way.
 - b. It is strait - it involves obedience to overcome the challenges.
 - c. It is settled - it is the way for all men at all times.
5. Keep in mind that the same mouth that has spoken the magnificent creation into existence has also spoken of a way in which men are saved. Such power cannot be altered.

Discussion

- I. "THE WAY" IS SINGULAR. (John 14:6, "I am the Way, the Truth

and the Life. No man cometh to the Father but by Me.")

- A. There is only one author. (Heb. 5:9; 12:2.)
 - 1. He has not authored more than one plan of salvation. (Eph. 4:5.)
 - 2. He has not authored more than one way of righteous living. (I Cor. 14:33.)
 - 3. Because God is one, His way is one. (Eph. 4:3-6.)
 - B. There is only one course.
 - 1. There are not different roads leading to the same heaven. (Mt. 7:21-23.)
 - 2. The way Christ has prepared for us is the only way to get to heaven. (Acts 4:12.)
 - 3. Any time one adds to or takes away from the New Testament, he creates a new way.
 - 4. Man-made methods do not save! (Col. 2:20-23.)
 - C. There is only one outcome.
 - 1. If all follow the way of the New Testament, there would be only one result. (I Cor. 1:10.)
 - 2. "The Bible only makes Christians only."
 - 3. If Jesus is the Way, to say that there is more than one way by which we can be saved is to say that there is more than one Jesus by which we may be saved. (1 Cor. 1:13 - Imagine a body with many heads!)
- II. "THE WAY" IS STRAIT. (Matthew 7:14, "Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.")
- A. The gate is strait.
 - 1. Jesus is the "gate." He is also described as the "door." (John 10:7.)
 - 2. Strait means "confined." There are boundaries set in which we must remain. (2 Tim. 2:5.)
 - 3. We must enter through the door of Christ, not the door of our choice.
 - B. The way is narrow. (NKJV - "difficult.")
 - 1. It is narrow - it must be sought out. People do not stumble into it, they must look for it.

2. It is difficult because there are obstacles in the way.

(Ex.- Letters to the 7 churches of Asia.)

3. It is difficult because it requires faith in God's ways, and not our own.

4. There is not room to turn to the right or the left and still be on the path.

5. Though the way is difficult, it is not grievous. (1 Jn. 5:3.)

C. The way is rewarding.

1. Heb. 11:6, "...for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

2. II Timothy 4:7-8, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

III. "THE WAY" IS SETTLED. (I Timothy 2:4, "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.")

A. The way is manifest to all who seek it.

1. Acts 17: 26-27, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us."

2. Romans 1:20, "For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse."

B. The way is settled in heaven forever. (Psalm 119:89, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.")

1. Those who do not like "the Way" cannot change it or create their own way. (2 Pet. 3:16.)

2. It is not established according to what "seems" right to men. Prov. 14:12, "There is a way which seemeth right unto a

man, but the end thereof are the ways of death."

3. The way does not change with each generation.

4. If the Way is in Jesus Christ then it is like a rock - stable, unchanging. (Heb. 13:8.)

5. The one who obeys His words is like a wise man who built his house upon the rock. (Mt. 7:24.)

Conclusion

1. Jesus is "The Way." The New Testament represents His words, which teach "the way" of salvation. (Jn. 16:13,14.)
2. The way is:
 - a. Singular - there can only be one way, because Jesus is one.
 - b. Strait - it is a difficult and narrow path to follow, but leads to the greatest reward.
 - c. Settled - it is the promise of God.
3. The Christian's responsibility is to preserve the way!
 - a. The way of salvation is left in the hands of the church. We must learn it, walk it, and teach it!
 - b. Will you preserve and teach the way?

Matthew Richard Thomas - Student, WVSOP class of 1997. Graduate of Ohio University, 1991.

Wife - Monica Sue Thomas

Children - Kolton Oakley, 5; Taylor Evelyn, 2. Hometown: Seville, Ohio. Last residence: Mt. Vernon, Ohio.

Age: 27 yrs.

THE ONE TRUE CHURCH

Jackie M. Stearsman

INTRODUCTION

- I. Prepared for and Delivered at the West Virginia School of Preaching Lectureship Monday, October 29, 1996.
- II. I Am Thankful to Be Before You a Second Time in this Lectureship.
- III. The One True Church Is an Important Subject and I Am Grateful for the Assignment.

DISCUSSION

- I. The One True Church must Be Understood If People Are to Be Saved.
 - A. Since the body is the church (Col. 1:18) and Jesus is the saviour of the body (Eph. 5:23), there is no salvation apart from the one true church.
 - B. The religious world in general does not understand the church.
 1. Some view the church as nonessential.
 2. Some view the church as an invisible entity with no clear understanding of church membership.
 3. Millennial factions view the church as secondary in God's plan.
 4. Roman and Greek Catholic churches make claims about the church that are false.
 5. Cultic sects are wrong in their identity of the church.
 - C. The "unchurched" do not understand the one true church.
 - D. Some within the church are misrepresenting the church.
 1. Some due to ignorance and lack of study misrepresent the church.

2. Others with deviate views are creating confusion and leading people astray.

II. The Church Is an Exclusive Fellowship.

- A. It contains all the saved and only the saved since the first Pentecost following the resurrection of the Christ.
- B. Its exclusiveness was known in the Bible.

1. It was known as "the Way" (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 24:14, 22).
2. It was view by many as a despised sect (Acts 24:5, 14; 28:22).
3. Paul could receive letters from officials, travel to distant places, arrest members, and bring them to persecution for being members of the church (Acts 9:1-2, 13-14; 26:10-12).
4. QUESTIONS: Do you think those not understanding the one true church could do as Paul did? Whom would they arrest? On what terms?
5. Paul himself was hounded and rejected by many for promoting the one true church (II Cor. 11:23-12:10).
6. Paul (and other inspired writers) could compose letters to specific persons and local congregations (see the introduction to the Epistles).
7. QUESTIONS: Do you think those not understanding the one true church could write as Paul and others did? To whom would they address a letter? Who would receive and accept their letters?

III. The Following Passages Present a Very Specific Picture of the One True Church.

- A. The Bible teaches that there is but one body. "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called in one hope. . ." (Eph. 4:4).

- B. The Bible teaches that the body is the church.
1. "And he put all things in subjection under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all (Eph. 1:22-23).
 2. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).
- C. Since the body is the church, we must accept what the Bible teaches about the one true church. I am placing in bold print the word church after the term body since in these contexts the meaning is the same. How could statements be more clear and specific than these?
1. "For as the body [**THE CHURCH**] is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body [**THE CHURCH**], being many, are one body [**ONE CHURCH**]; so also is Christ. For in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body [**ONE CHURCH**], whether Jews or Greeks, whether bond or free; and were all made to drink of one Spirit. For the body [**THE CHURCH**] is not one member, but many" (I Cor. 12:12-14).
 2. "But now they are many members, but one body [**ONE CHURCH**]" (I Cor. 12:20).
 3. "That there should be no schism in the body [**THE CHURCH**]; but (that) the members should have the same care one for another" (I Cor. 12:25).
 4. "Now ye are the body [**THE CHURCH**] of Christ, and severally members thereof (I Cor. 12:27).
 5. QUESTIONS: Will those who cite some of what Paul says on grace or love cite what he says about the church? If not, why not?

IV. The One True Church Is Not a Denomination.

- A. Most denominational preachers know their denomination is not the one true church, and many will admit it.
1. I have assigned students to call and question denominational preachers about the church, and I have never had one student to tell me that the denominational preacher told them that his church was the one true church.
 2. Students were instructed to ask denominational preachers in their area the following questions—
 - a. Do you have to be a member of your denomination to go to heaven?
 - b. Do you have to be a member of your denomination to be saved?
 - c. Do you have to be a member of your denomination to live a good Christian life?
 - d. Do you have to be a member of your denomination to worship God acceptably?
 - e. If it is not a catholic or some radical sect, the answer they received for the questions above was NO.
- B. Since no denomination may successfully claim to be the one true church, is it possible for all denominations to make up the church?
1. Who would permit me to teach on a sustained basis the contradictory doctrines of all denominations?
 2. THINK: What do denominations teach on baptism, worship, priesthood, pastors, elders, morals (homosexuality, fornication), and women preachers?
 3. You know that denominational people occupy every side of the issues (and many others) just cited. Do

you think for a moment that I could hold a position teaching all these contradictory doctrines?

4. QUESTION: If one person may not preach all these contradictory positions, how can it be right for denominational people and some brethren to teach conflicting doctrines?
 5. If we try to justify some denominations as being the one true church which ones will we include? Which ones will we exclude? On what basis? Who decides?
 6. Upholding denominationalism can never lead us to the one true church.
- C. Some preachers teach that there are good people in all denominations. The Bible teaches that division is sinful (I Cor. 1:10). What are we hearing? Who is saying it? What are we teaching?
- V. Ephesians 5:22-33 Provides Insight into the One True Church.
- A. Headship
 1. Who is head of denominational churches?
 2. How do you become head of a denominational church?
 3. How is the Pope selected?
 4. The head of a church says much about that church.
 5. The one true church has a head second to none.
 - B. The Saviour
 1. Christ is the saviour of His church, the one true church.
 2. Who is the saviour of denominational churches?
 3. Who is the saviour of the Catholic church?
 4. Why would anyone desire to be a member of a church that does not have Christ as the saviour?
 - C. Subjection

1. We are servants of the one to whom we submit (Rom. 6:16-18).
 2. We are either submitting to Christ or we are submitting to men.
 3. When we submit to the doctrines of men we are not servants of Christ (Matt. 15:8-9; II John 9-11; Phil. 3:15-21).
 4. If men may understand submission and binding obligations in a husband and wife relationship, they may understand it in religion.
- D. Sanctification
1. What distinguishes denominationalism and most religious groups?
 - a. Is it not their doctrines (Creeds, Manuals, Disciplines)?
 - b. Is it not some form of initiation--usually a man made mode of baptism. While a Bible term may be used, it is most often given a completely different meaning?
 2. Jesus sanctifies his church by the Word (John 17:17).
 3. Jesus sanctifies his church by water baptism in His name for the remission of sins (Mark 16:15-16; Acts 2:36; 22:16).
- E. How are we to be a glorious church--without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:27)?
1. Some would have the one true church as corrupt in teaching and manner as denominationalism.
 2. We must not promote a doctrinally corrupt church.
 3. Jesus will present His church without spot or wrinkle, holy and without blemish--if we have a different view we need to correct it.

4. What stable man is satisfied with a corrupt wife? Where did we get the idea that Jesus will accept a corrupt church?
- F. What we cherish and nourish says much about us.
1. If we love our companions in marriage, we will do all within our power to nourish and cherish them above all others.
 2. If we love the Lord and His church, we will do all within our power to nourish and cherish the the one true church (II Pet. 1:7; I John 4:20-21; 5:1-3).
 3. When a person degrades the one true church, having become a member of it, that person demonstrates to all the depth of his spiritual corruption.
 4. The seat of those heaping scorn upon the one true church are not people who love the Lord (Psalm 1:1; I Tim. 1:12-13).
- G. Leaving and Cleaving
1. What have you left--to what do you cleave?
 2. In marriage to leave and cleave to ones companion is most essential for successful growth and development in that bond.
 3. It is no less important in religion.
 4. Think of what Paul had to leave and that to which he clung so tenaciously (Phil. 3:1-21).
 5. How many do you know who could change religions as did Paul?
 6. How many do you know who hold to past religions even when they are shown the religions are not Bible based?
 7. How many are trying night and day to sway us from the one true church into the denominations of men?

8. Do we understand the importance of leaving and cleaving?

CONCLUSION

- I. We must be in the one true church if we are to be saved.
- II. We must understand the exclusiveness of the one true church if we would avoid spiritual corruption.
- III. Every church is either made by God or it is made by man.
- IV. Every person is either in the one true church or that person is in a man made church.
- V. What do men say about the one true church? What do we say about the one true church? Will Jesus commend our expressions about His one true church?

PRAGMATISM AND HEDONISM

Jackie M. Stearsman

INTRODUCTION

- I. We Need to Understand the Philosophies of Men, and We must Understand That They Compete for the Place of God and True Religion in Our Life.
 - A. Religion and/or Philosophy represents man's attempt to explain his entire life.
 - B. When a person explains one aspect of his life in relationship to others, he has become a philosopher or a religious devotee.
 - C. Many problems are the direct result of false religions and/or deficient philosophies.
 - D. Philosophy often dominates religious principles (I Cor. 1:18-3:23).
- II. In this Study We Will Do the Following--
 - A. Define Pragmatism and Hedonism.
 - B. Show That Pragmatism and Hedonism Are Exemplified in the Book of Judges.
 - C. Show That Pragmatism and Hedonism Are Very Prominent Today.
 - D. Show How We May Avoid The False Philosophies of Pragmatism and Hedonism in Religion.

DISCUSSION

- I. Pragmatism and Hedonism Are Defined as Follows--
 - A. Pragmatism may be defined in a number of ways.
 1. From *The American Heritage Dictionary*-- "A movement consisting of varying but associated theories, . . . and distinguished by the doctrine that the

meaning of an idea or a proposition lies in its observable practical consequences."

2. From *The Grolier Multimedia Encyclopedia*--
"Fundamental to pragmatism is a strong antiabsolutism: the conviction that all principles are to be regarded as working hypotheses rather than as metaphysically binding axioms." Again, "Pragmatism thus tends toward a philosophical Naturalism" Further, "The influence of Darwinism on pragmatic thought is further seen in its evolutionary approach, which holds that what is true for one time or place may not be true for another--that reality, as well as human knowledge of it, is constantly evolving, as is morality." Still further, "One major pragmatic criterion for truth is agreement on the part of the community of investigators in the long run. Truth tends to be that which gets accepted in the free competition of ideas."

B. Hedonism may also be defined in a number of ways depending on the discipline under consideration.

1. From *The American Heritage Dictionary*--"1. Pursuit of or devotion to pleasure, especially to the pleasures of the senses. 2. *Philosophy* The ethical doctrine holding that only what is pleasant or has pleasant consequences is intrinsically good. 3. *Psychology* The doctrine holding that behavior is motivated by the desire for pleasure and the avoidance of pain."
2. From *the Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*--"In ethics, the doctrine that pleasure or happiness is the highest good in life."

3. *The Warren-Barnhart Debate* considered Psychological Hedonism. Study it for in-depth purposes.
- II. Pragmatism and Hedonism Are Exemplified in the Book of Judges.
- A. "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 17:6; 21:25).
 - B. Study the work of Gideon in the light of Pragmatic Philosophy and Hedonism (6:1-9:57).
 1. What produced the need for deliverance?
 2. How did God show it was not by the principle of Pragmatism Philosophy and Hedonism that Gideon's campaign against the Midianites would succeed?
 3. What mistake did Gideon later make (8:24-27)? Could the principles of Pragmatism or Hedonism have played a part in this decision?
 - C. Study the work of Jephthah in the light of Pragmatic Philosophy and Hedonism (10:6-12:7).
 1. What produced the need for deliverance?
 2. Did Pragmatic and Hedonistic principles contribute to any of his decisions?
 - D. Study the work of Samson in the light of Pragmatic Philosophy and Hedonism (13:1-16:31).
 1. What to you think motivated Samson when it came to women?
 2. What dominated Samson's rage when things did not go his way?
 3. What were the consequences of his actions to himself?
 4. God may use disobedient people to bring about his ultimate will.
 - E. A Moral Commentary is presented in the last chapters of Judges (17:1-21:25).

1. What may be learned about Pragmatism and Hedonism from Micah's image and private priest (17:1-18:31)?
 2. What lessons are to be learned from the abuse of the Levite's concubine by the men of Benjamin and the near extermination of them by the other tribes (19:1-26)?
 3. God's evaluation--"In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (21:25).
- F. Contrast the lessons from the Book of Ruth, which came from the same historical period.
1. Did Ruth and Boaz operate from the principles of Pragmatic Philosophy and Hedonism?
 2. Did a higher principle directed their actions?
- III. The Philosophies of Pragmatism and Hedonism Are Very Prominent Today.
- A. Pragmatism
1. Some promote a new "paradigm" and a new "hermeneutic" resulting in a broader fellowship.
 2. Some expect a dollar convert ratio in planning evangelistic thrusts.
 3. Some try to attract and hold people by most any means.
 - a. How are some trying to reach the youth?
 - b. How are some building churches?
 - c. Is it with wood, hay, stubble, gold, silver, costly stones (I Cor. 3:12)?
 4. Some would modify the teaching of the Bible because of the dilemma created when truth is taught--James S. Woodroof, *The Divorce Dilemma*.
 5. Some would mold teaching to fit society--
 - a. Teaching on baptism to be changed

- b. Teaching on church government to be changed
- c. Teaching on morals to be changed
- d. Teaching on worship to be changed
- e. Teaching on the role of women in public services to be changed
- f. Teaching on the one true church to be changed--when and where did the church begin? Is it sectarian to teach the true church?
- g. Teaching to be determined by "educated elite"
- h. Teaching that depreciates the Bible--Is the Bible understandable? Applicable? Without contradiction?

B. Hedonism

1. Hedonism is forbidden by the Bible. "But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be **LOVERS OF SELF**, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good, traitors, headstrong, puffed up, **LOVERS OF PLEASURE RATHER THAN LOVERS OF GOD**; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power therefore. **FROM THESE ALSO TURN AWAY**" (II Tim. 2:1-5).
2. In religion, are we to please God or man (Gal. 1:10-12)?
3. Does the Bible give explicit warnings about being directed by pleasure?
 - a. **"HE THAT LOVETH PLEASURE SHALL BE A POOR MAN:** He that loveth wine and oil shall not be rich" (Prov. 21:17).

- b. "BUT SHE THAT GIVETH HERSELF TO PLEASURE IS DEAD WHILE SHE LIVETH" (I Tim. 5:6). See also Second Timothy 2:1-5 and Titus 3:3.
4. Do some give up the Faith due to the pain created by obedience (Matt. 13:21-22; II Tim. 4:10)?
 5. How does Paul's life refute the philosophy of Hedonism (I Cor. 15:19; II Cor. 12:9-18)?
 6. How does the life and death of the Christ refute the Philosophy of Hedonism?
- IV. How May We Avoid the False Philosophies of Pragmatism and Hedonism in Religion?
- A. We must have a firm commitment to the teaching of the Bible (Isa. 55:6-11; Eph. 5:11; II John 9-11; Phil. 3:15-19).
 - B. We must understand that Jesus said we are to be careful for the very least command and to teach men to do the same. "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass away from the law, till all things be accomplished. **WHOSOEVER THEREFORE SHALL BREAK ONE OF THESE LEAST COMMANDMENTS, AND SHALL TEACH MEN SO, SHALL BE CALLED LEAST IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN: BUT WHOSOEVER SHALL DO AND TEACH THEM, HE SHALL BE CALLED GREAT IN THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN**" (Matt. 5:17-19).
 - C. We must understand what it means to Love the Lord.
 1. Those not loving the Lord are anathema (I Cor. 16:22).
 2. If we love the Lord, we will keep his commandments (John 14:15).

3. In keeping the commandments of God, we perfect our love for Him (I John 2:3-6).
- D. We must refuse to act without divine authority (Col. 3:17).
- E. We must be courageous to do all that God authorizes, not turning to the right or the left (Josh. 1:2-9).
- F. We must never forget the admonition of the first Psalm, "Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the wicked, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of scoffers: But his delight is in the law of Jehovah; And on his law doth he meditate day and night" (Psalm 1:1-2).

CONCLUSION

- I. Perhaps the greatest Pragmatist and Hedonist in the Bible was Solomon.
- II. In Solomon's life we may see the success and failures of these Philosophies of life.
 - A. His life demonstrated the quest for pleasure.
 - B. He entered his reign with a nation of unimaginable wealth.
 - C. He ended his 40 year reign with a nation that was bankrupt.
 - D. He chronicles his pursuits of life in Ecclesiastes.
 - E. His conclusion for life is straightforward.
 1. Pursue pragmatic and hedonistic principles and all will be in vain: "Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher; all is vanity" (Eccl. 12:8).

2. The ultimate goal for man's life is stated and may not be successfully refuted. "(This is) the end of the matter; all hath been heard: fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole (duty) of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every hidden thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil" (Eccl. 12:13-14).
- III. Every time that we consider what is best for us personally, for our family, for the church, let us never forget the admonition of Solomon.
 - A. Place God and his will first and we will have optimum success and pleasure.
 - B. Exalt anything else and the ultimate end will be in vain.
- IV. Know for a certainty that you can not start with man made philosophies, continue with them, and end up with God, happiness, and ultimate success.
- V. We are placed in this world in order to make our choice for God. Before this life is over we must make that choice or void all hope of everlasting joy.
- VI. In the Bible, the pragmatic and hedonistic tests of life are displayed for us. We may know without experiences all the failures of others; likewise, we may know without experiences the successes of others.
- VII. The choice is ours: Is it Pragmatism and Hedonism, or is it God (Matt. 6:33)?

ISLAM AND CHRISTIANITY: POINTS OF TENSION

Garry K. Brantley

Preliminary Considerations

Due to the global proliferation of Islam, at least two considerations should guide an analysis of, and response to, the non-Christian world religion. First, as indicated in part one of this series, Islam is not a monolithic system, but contains several identifiable sects and movements. Not all Muslims engage in, or support, the terrorist activity of fundamentalist Islamic sects. In fact, nonextremist Muslims have decried the intolerant Islam preached by militant fanatics. Thus, a Christian response to Islam must guard against stereotyping Muslims as bloodthirsty rogues with no regard for human life.

Second, we need to be sensitive to, and try to appreciate, the anti-west/U.S. sentiment among many Middle Eastern Muslims. Historically, Muslims have equated, and continue to equate, the West with Christianity. From this perspective, Christian and Muslim nations have had a long history of conflict, leaving both with animosity toward one another. The Crusades, Colonial subjugation, and the establishment of the State of Israel, are the bitter lenses through which Muslims view Western society, and the U.S. in particular. While we might legitimately argue that they have skewed history to an extent, we must approach Muslims with sensitivities toward their, and our, past if we are to have any success in reaching Muslims with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Christianity and Islam: Points of Tension

While on a superficial level it appears that Christianity and Islam share common theological ground in

some particulars (e.g., monotheism), a closer exposes several fundamental differences between the two religions.

Monotheism of Islam

Unlike the biblical concept of God that allows for diversity within the singular divine essence, the monotheism of Islam is so rigid and inflexible that it repudiates two crucial, and inextricably-linked, doctrines of historic Christianity.

1. The Trinity. Islam takes issue, and condemns, the trinitarian concept of God--an important tenet of historic Christianity. The Qur'an cautions the "people of the book" (i.e., Christians) against calling God "Trinity" for "God is only one God" (*sura* 4:171), and offers no hope of forgiveness to those who embrace the idea (*sura* 4:116).

2. The Deity of Jesus. Consistent with Islam's repudiation of the Trinitarian idea of God, the Qur'an, though it exalts Jesus in many particulars, explicitly denies the deity of Jesus. While the Qur'an acknowledges that Jesus was a miraculous "sign" and divine "blessing" (19:21), Islamic Christology is totally devoid of divine content (*sura* 20:357). Thus, while Christianity and Islam share a common monotheistic belief, there is no resolving their Christological differences as they stand.

The Atonement of Jesus Christ

Islam, contrary to the core beliefs of the Gospel, charges that Jesus actually did not die on the cross. Rather, someone who resembled Jesus was mistakenly crucified in Jesus' place (most likely, Judas; *sura* 4:157-158). By implication, therefore, Muslims reject Jesus' vicarious suffering for sinful humanity--a central tenet of the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Means of Salvation

As a corollary to its denial of Jesus' death, Islam differs significantly with Christianity regarding the means

of humankind's salvation. In the Christian system, salvation is not by human works of merit, but by God's grace through an expressive faith in the redemptive act of Christ on the cross (Eph. 2:8-9). Islam, however, has no place for a suffering savior in its redemptive system. It does not view human beings as enslaved by sin without the ability of self-emancipation. Though it emphasizes the role of God's mercy and forgiveness in salvation, Islam teaches that God's pleasure, and thus one's place in Heaven, are earned (cf. *suras* 2:207; 39:69). In the final analysis, according to Islam, humankind's spiritual need is not for a divine savior, but simply for divine guidance.

Conclusion

While many subtle differences between Islam and Christianity could be highlighted, we have attempted in this chapter to articulate the fundamental distinctions between these two religious systems. Though there are many similarities between Islam and Christianity, and many admirable teachings within Islam (e.g., almsgiving, devotion to God, etc.), a comparative analysis of these two religions demonstrates how hopelessly dissimilar they really are. The basic tenets of one subvert the basic tenets of the other. Even the monotheistic ground apparently shared by these two world religions proves to be separated by a gaping theological canyon with the adherents of both systems standing on opposite sides. In short, Islam and Christianity prove to be two, distinctly separate, and incompatible systems of thought.

THE ALL SUFFICIENCY OF THE BIBLE

Frank Higginbotham

The Bible is not just an average book written by men but rather an inspired book given to us by God. Numerous passages in the Bible claim that it is inspired. We frequently read of the prophets of the Old Testament claiming that what they spoke came from God. (Jeremiah 1:4). The New Testament also makes this claim. One passage that tells us clearly how the Bible was given to us is 1 Corinthians 2:9 -14. The Apostle Paul explains how the Bible came. He first describes the revelation of God as being something that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." This revelation was in the mind of God. How then, can man know what God has prepared? The answer is given by Paul using an illustration. No one can know what is in another's mind unless the man chooses to reveal it to him. Even so, no man can know the mind of God unless God reveals it. Paul then makes the argument that the men who wrote the Bible did so as God gave them the 'words' which the Holy Ghost teacheth. This is obviously a claim for verbal inspiration. In 2 Peter 1:19-21 Peter explains that we can depend on the revelation of God because it did not come by private interpretation. This is speaking about how the Bible was written and does not have reference to someone 'privately interpreting' the Word of God. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

We all have recently watched as our television presented the commercials of the Mormon church making the claim that they have for us a revelation in addition to the Bible. It is called a 'companion' volume. The message is that the Bible is not complete and we need this extra volume to have all of the truth. They are careful to leave the impression that there is no contradiction of

the Bible in their book, either in its existence or in its contents. It should be clear to anyone who has read the book that there are numerous contradiction of the Bible. The birth place of Jesus and the length of time that there was darkness at the death of Christ, are too obvious to miss. However, does not even the existence of the book of Mormon pose a contradiction to the Bible? Many people today are governed by human creeds. All of the various different religious movements have human creeds or doctrines to govern them. While some look to the Koran and others look to the disciplines and manuals, is this not a denial of the completeness of the Bible? (Matthew 15:8,9). Does the Bible claim completeness? One passage that affirms the completeness of the Bible is often appealed to in order to show that the Bible does not have all we need. Read carefully John 20:30,31. Instead of this passage saying that there are many essentials left out of this book, it says the very opposite. Certainly there are things that Jesus did that the Bible does not record. However, all that we need is recorded. There is, in the Bible all that we need to make us believers in Christ and to give us life through His name. Peter tells us that we have all that has to do with life and godliness. (2 Peter 1:3). Thus, we conclude that the Bible has all we need to take us to Heaven.

Can the Bible claim that it is sufficient and the claims of the creeds and books of men that it is not all that we need, both be true at the same time? Certainly not. Either it is a complete book as it claims or it is a book of lies. All creditability for the Bible hinges on this claim. The acceptance of the position that the Bible is not all sufficient, is one of the very clear reasons that we have so many people that have little if any confidence in the Word of God.

It is time now to look at a passage that shows how the Bible meets all of the needs of man. Paul in writing to Timothy reminds him that he had known the holy scriptures from the time of his youth. (2 Timothy 3:14-17). After affirming that the scriptures

came by inspiration, Paul shows four areas in which we need help. After listing these areas, he then states that the Bible supplies all of these needs. They thus make the man of God, perfect and completely furnished to every good work. Carefully observe how the Word of God meets these needs.

The scriptures furnish us with doctrine. Paul told Timothy to take heed to himself and to the doctrine. In so doing, he would both save himself and others that he had taught. (1 Timothy 4:16). In giving instruction to Timothy regarding preaching, Paul exhorted him to preach the word because the time would come when men would not endure sound doctrine. (2 Timothy 4:1-4). Titus was told to speak the things that become sound doctrine. (Titus 2:1). Doctrine is so important that it is stated unless we remain in the doctrine of Christ, we do not have God or His Son. (2 John 9 -11). We are even forbidden to receive a person into our house or bid him god-speed if he does not bring the doctrine of Christ. There is a clear contrast in the Bible between the doctrines of men and the doctrine of Christ. The Bible claim is that it provides us with the doctrine of Christ. We need no more. The curse of Heaven is on the person who perverts the gospel of Christ. We need only the doctrine revealed in the Bible. Jesus stated that those who do the will of the Father in Heaven are the ones who will enter into life. (Matthew 7:21-23). This is not so of those who practice and teach another doctrine. In the doctrine of Christ we learn such great truths as the fact that Jesus is divine. He is eternal even as the Father is eternal. The importance of this is seen in the fact that Jesus said unless we believe that He is the Christ, we shall die in our sins. The doctrine of Christ tells us of the church of Christ. Jesus promised to build it and He is the savior of this body. (Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 5:23). We also learn of God's way of salvation in the doctrine of Christ.

The Bible is sufficient for reproof. This is the idea that someone points out an error in our lives and rebukes us for this practice. Many examples of this are found in God's word. David

was reproved by Nathan when he had sinned with Bathsheba. Upon realizing the terribleness of his sin, he stated that he had sinned. Peter was rebuked by Paul when he was guilty of hypocrisy. Paul wrote a strong letter of rebuke to the church at Corinth. Those who were rebuked were reproved by the Word of God. We need no other book to do this.

The Bible is sufficient for correction. It is one thing to have an error in our life pointed out but it is another to make the necessary correction. The Bible is described as the mirror of the soul. We use a mirror to make necessary changes in our outward appearance. We see what we look like and then try to improve what we see. This is also true of our spiritual life. We are prone to make mistakes. The Bible serves as a mirror to let us know what we look like in the sight of God. Without this mirror, we would not know what is acceptable with God. After consulting the Bible about our lives we have the opportunity to correct them. We are taught how to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. (Titus 2:11,12). Paul told Timothy that his writings were for the purpose of telling how to 'behave' in the church. This does not have reference to behavior in the meeting house. Many people have lost sight of proper behavior as we assemble for worship, but this teaching has to do with our every day conduct. People read our behavior and it reflects on the church either favorably or unfavorably. When we learn by the Bible that our conduct is poor, we then correct it before it is too late.

The Bible is also sufficient for instruction in righteousness. The righteousness of God is revealed in God's Word. (Psalms 119:172; Romans 1:16 -17). Each of us need instruction from God. We need direction for our lives. We do not want to fill our lives with the works of the flesh. We desire the fruit of the Spirit. (Galatians 5:19 -21). We are instructed in regard to spiritual growth. Daily we must add characteristics that make us stronger in the faith. (2 Peter 1: 5 -10). We receive instruction concerning the importance of the kingdom of God. We must seek it first in our

lives. (Matthew 6:33). We are taught to be faithful to the Lord. This instruction is very important. Some seem to think that God has promised eternal life to the unfaithful. A wicked life does not become pure just because we die. Preachers leave the impression that the most unfaithful members of the church have a promise and hope. The Bible teaches that the crown of life is for the faithful. (Revelation 2:10).

Either the Bible is all that we need to guide us in religion or it is a false book. Surely, we must all conclude that it is the inspired and complete word of God that furnishes all we need.

Frank Higginbotham-Frank was born in New Martinsville, WV on February 21, 1933. Son of Mr. and Mrs. A.G. Higginbotham. Attended public schools and was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville. Was graduated from Florida Christian College in Tampa, FL. Began first located work with the Columbia Street Church of Christ in Fairmont, WV ('54-'56) and then moved to Wellsburg, WV ('56-'58) and then to West Street in Weirton, WV ('58-'64) and then to Chester, WV ('64- 0. Currently in 32th year of work with this congregation. Radio Preaching: WETZ in New Martinsville, WMMN in Fairmont, WEIR in Weirton, and WOHI in East Liverpool, OH. Television Program: WSTV Steubenville. Conducts 8-10 meetings per year. Has been speaker on Ohio Valley College Lectures 5 times and on the Ohio Valley Lectures 21 times and the Greater Kanawha Valley Lectures 8 times. Married to the former Rose Marie King (1954). Two children: Amy Jane married to Brent Gallagher (Preacher at Oakwood Road Church of Christ, Fairmont, WV); and Steven Franklin (Preacher at Glasgow, KY).

ATTITUDE TOWARD THOSE IN ERROR

Burt Jones

Introduction:

- A. There appears to be a pervasive idea engulfing the brotherhood; that of insensitivity and tackiness in our manner of approach to the erring.
- B. Each of us has a specific duty and manner of conduct toward such fellow members of the body of our Lord.
- C. The very title of this great lectureship signals the idea of our ultimate goal in rescuing these souls who have succumbed to the vice grip of the world.

Identifying the One in Error

- A. "A man overtaken in a fault."
- B. Paul did not say "if a man deliberately walks into sin, or, if a man simply refuses to do right." There are those ERRING-those in ERROR.
- C. This lesson will be expanded to address those who deliberately embrace error. The Galatian text of the apostle Paul is appropriate also for this erring soul, not knowing the truth.

Our Responsibility Toward the Erring.

- A. Paul did not say to ignore error.
 - 1. We are not to "pass on the other side" when error is seen.
 - 2. We are not to wash our hands in the water of irresponsibility, saying, "It's none of my business; I will not meddle in their lives or their affairs."
 - 3. Turning our face away is such an easy way out, but the Bible teaches that we ARE our brother's keeper.
- B. We ARE Not To Condone Error.

1. This is a familiar attitude in these days of compromise and change agents.

2. So many people are prone to say "just forget it."

C. We ARE Not To Gossip About It.

1. Moral failures and Biblical ignorance of others is not to be made a topic of general conversation.

2. There are those who consider gossip and a capricious attitude toward those in error as their favorite indoor and outdoor sport.

D. We ARE Not To Reprove And Condemn.

1. Imagine the reaction of a person in error if we approach them in a demeaning and humiliating way saying "You ought to be ashamed-" "What makes you believe that way?" "That is the dumbest position I have ever heard."

E. Paul Said To Restore Such An One.

1. When Jesus called James and John to be apostles they were "mending their nets" (Matthew 4:21) and fitting them for usefulness.

2. Whose duty is it to lovingly but firmly correct those in error? (a) brethren

(b) "ye which are spiritual" (Romans 8:14,15:1)

The Spirit In Which This Duty Is To Be Performed.

A. In the spirit of meekness. In love, sympathetically assisting those in error to discover the truth.

B. "Considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted."

1. Understanding how easily we may err.

(a) We may have the temptation to consciously err or to subtly stray from the Way.

(b) We may be "mending" the error in others while being blind to our own.

Conclusion:

A. Galatians 6:2

1. By restoring a brother; by bringing those in error to the truth, you help another human being to call heaven home.
2. The great work of Christ was to educate; to mend broken lives.
3. When we act Christ-like, we become fellow workers with Him and partakers of His likeness.

B. James 5:19,20.

- C. Our attitude toward those in error should be that we do not have an "attitude" toward those in error.

Burt Jones - Burt is a native of Gadsden, Al. After having spent most of his life as Episcopalian, and having a military and business background, he obeyed the gospel, and one week later began his preacher training. He is the father of three children, Dinah, Geoffrey, and Clayton. Burt holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Jacksonville University and a Masters of Arts degree in Middle Eastern History from Youngstown State University. He is a former combat officer during the Vietnam era. He is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching. He is also the composer of the hymn, "Safe In His Arms". Jones additionally is the instructor in the popular four part video series on music fundamentals "Singing with Grace", and the author of the Music Fundamentals pamphlet published by Proclamation Press, Memphis, TN. Burt presently conducts gospel meetings and singing workshops throughout the brotherhood. He teaches Bible and English at the **West Virginia School of Preaching.**

HINDUISM

A Brief Overview

Randall F. Matheny

Introduction:

- A. The major religion of the Indian sub-continent.
 - 1. 90 percent of world's Hindus live in India.
 - 2. Claims to be oldest religion--dating back 3000 years.
 - 3. Significant minorities in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar (Burma), S. Africa, Trinidad, Europe and the United States of America.
 - B. Hinduism is difficult to define:
 - 1. No single founder.
 - 2. Origin lost in antiquity.
 - 3. Not "one" holy book, but many.
 - 4. No single, unifying, underlying doctrine - great diversity in belief and practice.
 - 5. Accommodates great variety of sects, cults, theologies, philosophies.
 - 6. Polytheistic, but generally views all gods as aspects of the absolute, but unknowable, Brahman.
- I. Hinduism is **syncretistic** (attempts the reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles, practices, or parties).
- A. Assumes all religions lead to God.
 - B. Has assimilated much from other religions, and is perpetually evolving.
 - 1. "Mature Harappan Culture"
 - a. Developed civilization of Indus R. Valley c. 2300-1500 BC.
 - b. Had its own religion.
 - c. Invaded by Aryans (ethnic kin of Medes and Persians) c. 1500 BC, thus, new forms of religion introduced.
 - 2. Aryan contributions:
 - a. Indo-European language.
 - b. **Sanskrit** writing system.
 - c. "**Vedas**"--collection of hymns to various deities, headed by:
 - (1) Brahma--creator.
 - (2) Vishnu--sustainer/preserver.
 - (3) Shiva--destroyer.
 - d. Aryan worship:

- (1) Household religion.
 - (2) Veneration of ancestors.
 - (3) Polytheistic--mostly male gods.
 - (4) Ritual sacrifice of animals, accompanied by hymns, incantations and sacrificial formulas recorded in Vedas.
3. Macedonian influence: 327-325 BC (Alexander the Great invaded the Punjab, defeated several Indian rulers).
 4. Islamic influence: Beginning in the 8th century AD (although Islam in India was more influenced by Hinduism).
 5. Christian influence: Perhaps as early as 52 AD when tradition suggests that the apostle Thomas arrived on the west coast of India.
 - a. Roman Catholicism developed as a result of Jesuit missionaries in the 16th century.
 - b. Protestant missionaries have been successful among tribals and scheduled caste (outcastes) beginning with Baptist William Carey's arrival in 1793.
 6. Sikkism originated as a hybrid of aspects of Hinduism and Islam in the early 16th century AD -- founder: Guru Nanak.
- II. Hinduism's philosophy of sin:
- A. Assumes spark of the divine to be in each human, thus calling a person a sinner is irrational.
 1. To some Hindus sin is not real.
 2. It is not viewed as something which condemns.
 3. Consequently, no need is seen for a savior.
 - B. Sin is subject to diverse interpretation.
 1. It may be committing bad deeds.
 2. Violating one's conscience.
 3. Entirely nonexistent.
- III. The doctrines of **reincarnation** and **karma** (concepts not found until *Upanishads* (600-300 BC)).
- A. **Reincarnation** (transmigration of souls): belief that souls of the dead return to earth in another form or body, especially in a new human body.
 - B. **Karma**: behavior in the past determines fate in the present, and deeds in the present determine fate in the future.
 1. Goal is to be freed from cycle of birth, death and rebirth.
 2. End result is **moksha**, freedom from rebirth and complete identification with Brahman.
- IV. Hindu concept of God:

- A. **Pantheistic:** God is identical with the world (creation), the transcendent reality of which the material universe and man are only manifestations; denies God's personality and tends to identify him with nature.
 - B. **Polytheistic:** The doctrine of or belief in more than one god or in many gods.
 - 1. Headed by three primary deities:
 - a. **Brahma:** the detached and distant creator, never represented by an image.
 - b. **Vishnu:** the sustainer and protector from evil, incarnated in various avatars, most notably Rama and Krishna.
 - c. **Shiva:** the destroyer, who is also identified with nature, and reproductive renewal.
 - 2. Modern Hinduism boasts **33 crore** (330 million) gods, most of which are younger, or no older, than Christianity.
 - C. **Monistic:** In the sense of the theory that there is only one basic substance or principle as the ground of reality, that being God.
 - 1. Vedantic Hinduism insists that God is the only reality and that the physical realm is only an appearance.
 - 2. Thus, if anything demands proof, it is not of God, but of physical perception.
- V. The Bible's answer to Hinduism:
- A. Only the Bible speaks clearly and definitively to the reality of sin.
 - 1. It's universal reality (Rom. 3:10-11, 23; 5:12).
 - 2. A human choice (Ezk. 18:4, 19-20; Rom. 1:18-21).
 - 3. It's effect (Isa. 59:1-2; Rom. 6:23; 1 Pet. 3:12; Rev. 20:10-15).
 - 4. It's sole remedy (Mat. 1:21, 26:28; Lk. 17:10; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 6:3-6; Acts 2:38-39; 1 Jn. 2:1-3).
 - B. There is but one way to God and eternal salvation (Mat. 7:13-14; Jn. 14:6; Gal. 1:6-9; 2 Thes. 1:7-9).
 - 1. Truth has been made known (Jn. 1:17; 17:17).
 - 2. Truth is able to be known (Jn. 8:31-32).
 - 3. Truth is able to be obeyed (1 Pet. 1:22-23).
 - C. Physical life and death are one time experiences (Heb. 9:27-28; Ecc. 12:1-7).
 - 1. We must make the best of this life, for it is the only one that we will live on earth.

2. The Bible teaches resurrection rather than reincarnation (Jn. 5:25-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-21).
- D. God is creator, but distinct from creation (Gen. 1:1).
1. He is one, eternal God (De. 32:39-40).
 2. He is almighty (Rev. 4:8).
 3. He is not worshipped by, or through, the fruit of human minds and hands (Acts 17:24-25).

Conclusion:

- A. Hinduism is primarily a local religion.
 1. Difficult to define.
 2. Specific origin lost in antiquity.
- B. Hinduism attempts to accomodate opposing, contradictory philosophies, principles and practices.
 1. Modern Hinduism is a continuously evolving assimilation of a multitude of religious philosophies and principles.
 2. Concludes all religions lead to God.
- C. Hinduism's philosophy of sin is subjective.
- D. The goal of Hinduism is **moksha**, freedom from rebirth and complete identification with God (Brahman).
 1. Reincarnation is fundamental to this goal.
 2. Karma affects the quantity and quality of reincarnations necessary to achieve the goal.
- E. Hinduism's concept of God is pantheistic, polytheistic and monistic.
- F. The Bible answers Hinduism with clarity and hope:
 1. By identifying, defining, and providing a solution for sin.
 2. By revealing and identifying the one eternal, almighty God of heaven and earth.
 3. By clearly defining the one way to God and eternal salvation.
 4. By revealing truth in such a way as to be known and obeyed.
 5. By revealing and explaining life, death and judgment as to be experienced once by each individual.

Randall F. Matheny - Randy is married to Pamela S. Matheny. One child Evan Floyd Matheny. He is a native of Ohio and spent eight years in the U.S. Air Force being discharged in 1979. He received a Bachelor of Arts in Bible from Ohio Valley College in 1983. He has been preaching the gospel since 1980: Newport Ohio 1981-84; mission work in southern West Virginia (Rainelle and Union) 1985-89; first trip to India 1987; dedicated full time to Lord's work in India under the oversight of the elders of the Washington Street Church of Christ, Saint Albans, West Virginia, 1989 to present. He is currently a resident of Cross Lanes, WV.

CALVINISM

Steve Higginbotham

John Calvin (1509 - 1564) was one of the great reformers in Switzerland in the sixteenth century. At the mid point in Calvin's life (1536), he published his "Institutes of the Christian Religion." In these books, he set forth a system of doctrine that has been accepted by millions who have followed him. When studying his system of doctrine, one must conclude that his "system" is quite logical. Each point of doctrine builds on the previous doctrine. However, the very foundation of this system is based on a false premise (the doctrine of original sin), thus the entire system crumbles.

Calvinism has been well defined, and easily remembered by an acrostic of the word "tulip."

- T - Total Depravity
- U - Unconditional Election
- L - Limited Atonement
- I - Irresistable Grace
- P - Perserverance Of The Saints

Let's briefly define each of these doctrinal platforms.

Total Depravity is the belief that all men are born dead in sin. Calvin said, "All men are conceived in sin, and born the children of wrath indisposed to all saving good, propense to evil, dead in sin, and slaves of sin; and without the regenerating grace of the Holy Spirit, they neither are willing nor able to return to God, to correct their depraved nature, or to dispose themselves to the correction of it."

Unconditional Election must then logically follow. Since all men are wholly depraved, unable to do good, if anyone is to be saved, God must choose them unconditionally, apart from faith and obedience, since they are unable to perform such noble acts. Calvin taught that God, before the foundation of the world, elected certain individuals to go to Heaven and certain individuals to go to Hell.

Limited Atonement is the next step in Calvinism. If God did indeed choose before the foundation of the world individuals who would be saved and who would be lost, then it would follow that Christ's atoning death was only for the elect. Calvin said, "God willed that Christ, through the blood of the cross, should out of every people, tribe, nation, and language, efficaciously redeem all those, and those only, who were from eternity chosen to salvation, and given to him by the Father." Needless to say, the non-elect person is left with no means of salvation.

Irresistible Grace is the next step in the platform. It is the belief that God directs the Holy Spirit to touch the hearts of all those totally depraved individuals God has elected for salvation, who on their own do not have the ability to make a step toward God. According to this doctrine, once God chooses an individual and sends his Spirit upon him, the Spirit's persuasion is so great that the sinner cannot refuse God's offer of salvation, but is compelled to accept God's grace.

Perserverance Of The Saints is the final tenant of Calvinism. It simply states that the limited elect will perservere to the end and be saved, and that without the loss of a single one. Calvin wrote, "God, who is rich in mercy, from his immutable purpose of election, does not wholly take away his Holy spirit from his own, even in lamentable falls; nor does he so permit them to glide down that they should fall from grace of adoption and the state of

justification; or commit the 'sin unto death', or against the Holy Spirit; that being deserted by him, they should cast themselves headstrong into eternal destruction."

For a brief refutation of each tenant of Calvinism, note the following passages:

Total Depravity - (Hebrews 12:9; Ezekiel 18:20; Matthew 18:3; Isaiah 53:6).

Unconditional Election - (Acts 10:34-35; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Titus 3:5).

Limited Atonement - (John 3:16; Revelation 22:17; Acts 10:35; Matthew 11:28-30).

Irresistible Grace - (1 Thessalonians 5:19; Acts 7:51; Hebrews 10:29).

Perserverance Of The Saints - (Galatians 5:4; Hebrews 3:12; 1 Timothy 4:1-4).

Calvinism starts wrong and ends wrong. It is dangerous because it distorts the truth about man's beginning, and thus can have an impact upon man's eternal destiny. One of the tragic things about Calvinism is that it is finding its way into the Lord's church. We, as members of the Lord's body, must rise up and withstand the inroads this erroneous doctrine is making.

In summary, I have heard it said that Calvinism is the belief that if you are searching for salvation, you can't find it; if you find it, you can't lose it; and if you lose it, you never had it in the first place.

Steve Higginbotham
107 Trappers Trail
Glasgow, KY 42141
(502) 678-3191
<http://www.church-of-christ.org/~shiggi>

JESUS: THE TRUTH

John 14:6

Justin Odom

INTRODUCTION

Of all the claims Jesus made during his ministry on this earth, possibly the most important one he made is found in John, chapter 14, verse 6:

"...I am the way, the truth, and the life..."

Although the claim to be Christ, the anointed of God, is important, Jesus himself said men would come and claim this in Matthew 24:24-

"For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect"

But what makes the claim of Jesus to be the Christ genuine is what he stated in John 14:6 - "I am the truth". The meaning in this scripture is not merely ethical truth, but truth in all its fulness and scope, as embodied in Him. He is the perfect expression of truth. But how can we know for sure this man IS the truth as He claims? How do we even know what truth is? Does truth come from the minds of men, or something higher? We will look at these questions in this lesson concerning Jesus: The Truth.

I. Where did truth find its beginning?

- A. Some people say truth is purely subjective. The way YOU feel about any given subject can be truthful if YOU feel that way and cannot be truth to someone else. This is the problem. How YOU feel. In spite of God saying in the Bible you have to hear, believe, repent, confess, and be baptized to be saved, men FEEL all you have to do is believe to be saved and accept that as truth. The

same could be said about the instrument in worship.

- B. We know all things had a beginning (Genesis 1,2), and all things were made by God. John records in John 1:1-5 that Jesus, the same that makes this claim to be the truth, was in the beginning and He had a part in the creation of the world. John also states the Deity of Jesus.
- C. God created man with a soul (Genesis 2:7), and with this soul God gave us the ability to think, reason, and obey. But it was not until the fall of man that the difference between good and evil is recognized. God knew what was good and what was evil. (Genesis 2:17, 3:5)
- D. The fall of man was due to a sin, the very first sin we read about in the Bible. God told Adam and Eve not to eat of a certain tree for they would die (Genesis 2:17). Satan then told Eve if she ate of the tree, she would not die (Genesis 3:4). Who is right?

1. Genesis 5:5

2. John 8:44,45

- a. The people were of their father, the Devil.
- b. But Jesus had words of truth and they did not believe Him.
- c. Satan is associated with lies.
- d. Jesus is associated with truth.

II. Truth of Jesus from the truth of all men.

A. Not all men tell lies. Man is capable of telling the truth. We know what truth is. But we also know what a lie is and we have the ability to choose what to tell when asked.

B. Not so with God. It is impossible for Him to lie. (Hebrews 6:18)

C. Remember that Jesus is God? (John 1:1-5). It is impossible for Jesus to lie therefore the truth must be in Him!

III. Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell

in thy Holy hill? (Psalm 15:1)

A. He that walks uprightly. (2)

B. He who works righteousness. (2)

C. He who speaks the truth in his heart. (2)

D. Telling the truth not matter how bad it hurts. (4)

CONCLUSION

In this lesson we have looked at the claim of Jesus being the truth. We have noticed that truth had a beginning and that beginning was with God, not man. We saw the truth of Jesus from the truth of men and that we can trust Jesus when He tells us something regardless of what men say. One last proof that Jesus is the truth is in the way we pattern our lives to Jesus. We tell the truth because Jesus did and if Jesus was a liar, then we are liars and the Bible tells us where all liars will be in eternity (Revelation 21:8).

Justin Odom was born at Watertown, New York, in 1975. He moved to West Virginia at the age of six weeks and except for a year spent in Florida at the age of five, has been a life long resident of West Virginia. He was buried with Christ in baptism on April 14, 1990, at Reader, WV by Eddie Cooper. After graduating from Valley High School in Pine Grove, WV, in 1993 he attended West Virginia Northern Community College. In August 1995 he transferred to the **West Virginia School of Preaching** in Moundsville where he is now a second year student. Justin ministers for the Lord at various churches each Sunday at Pricetown, Long Valley, Wileyville, or Reader. He is engaged to Kristina Deagel from Moundsville and plans to be married on July 5, 1997.

JESUS IS THE MESSIAH

Garry K. Brantley

Messianic Prophecies

The Old Testament is replete with both specific references and general allusions to a Messiah Who would enter into human history and establish God's eternal kingdom (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; Mic. 4:1-8; Jer. 23:5-8). The community of Israel looked forward with great anticipation to this time, which to them would be an eschatological event, signaling the culmination of their national history. In the time of Jesus, however, there was no Jewish consensus regarding the specific nature and work of the long-awaited Messiah.

The Dead Sea Scrolls provide insight into the messianic concepts within the Jewish community. Though scholars continue to debate the issue, apparently the community of Qumran believed in multiple messiahs who would hold specific roles. One document, called the "Manual of Discipline," reflects their anticipation that "the Prophet and the Messiahs [plural] of Aaron and Israel" shortly would come. From this somewhat obscure text (as most are at Qumran), scholars concluded that the Qumran community looked for both priestly and royal Messiahs. The priestly figure would preside in matters of the Law and ritual, while the royal figure would be a Davidic descendant and lead God's forces into battle. Other scholars have argued that the Dead Sea community believed in only one messianic figure. The current consensus is, however, that the role of Messiah at Qumran involved a militaristic dimension apparently directed at Rome. It appears that, before His resurrection, Jesus' disciples defined His Messianism from such a perspective--one that did not embrace His vicarious death (Matt. 16:21-23). While much confusion surrounded the

precise function of the Messiah, the Jews at the time of Jesus fully expected Messiah to enter into their history.

Jesus: The Messiah

In the midst of these highly-speculative, messianic misconceptions, Jesus began preaching the kingdom of God, and identifying Himself as the Messiah (cf. Mk. 1:15; Matt. 16:17-20; Lk. 4: 18-21; 24:25-27). Contrary to popular thinking, however, Jesus redefined the role of Messiah as One Who came to free all humanity, not from national tyranny, but from the oppression of sin (Jn. 8:30-36). Since Jesus did not meet the political and religious expectations of the Jewish rulers, His messianic claims were rejected and He eventually was put to death.

Despite His scandalous death, the apostles and early Christians demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled the biblical description of Messiah. Matthew's gospel, with its prolific appeal to prophetic utterances and detailed attention to Jesus' royal pedigree, demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah. Both Peter and Paul, in their evangelistic sermons, likewise declared that Jesus fulfilled in every detail the messianic hope of Israel (cf. Acts 2:22-36; Acts 17:1-4). When comparing messianic prophecies with the life of Jesus as depicted in the New Testament, such an amazing correspondence occurs that it is evident that Jesus is the Messiah.

For example, the Messiah was to belong to the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10), descend through the royal Davidic line (2 Sam. 7:12ff.), and be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14). In each particular, Jesus meets these familial criteria (cf. Heb. 7:14; Matt. 1; Luke 1:26-38). Prophetic chronology placed the coming of Messiah during the Roman empire (Dan. 2:44), and 70 prophetic weeks (490 years) would transpire from the time the command went forth to rebuild Jerusalem

until the emergence of Messiah (Dan. 9:25). Of course, Jesus did live during the Roman era and, despite interpretive difficulties in determining the exact date that the restoration of Jerusalem was decreed, Jesus also falls within that prophetic time-frame.

A close inspection of the prophetic oracles indicates that the Messiah, though human, would participate in the divine nature (cf. Mic. 5:2; Zech. 13:7). Because He would be essentially divine, the Messiah would bear the name of Yahweh, the covenant name of God (Jer. 23:6). Consistent with these ontological descriptions of Messiah, Jesus was both God and human (Jn. 1:1-3,14), and called Himself by the divine name (Jn. 8:58). As predicted by Isaiah (11:2), the Spirit of God was upon Jesus during His earthly ministry, and is reflected in His gentle and compelling teaching methods (Isa. 42:1-4; cf. Matt. 12:18-21). Further, the particular events surrounding His crucifixion precisely fulfilled prophetic predictions regarding the Messiah's betrayal, death, burial and resurrection (cf. Psa. 41:9; Zech. 11:12; Isa. 53).

Conclusion

For those who take biblical information seriously, the evidence is overwhelming. Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and it is through Him, and only through Him, that we have access to eternal life.

THEOLOGICAL EXISTENTIALISM

D. Gene West

Introduction:

1. Existentialism, as a philosophy, is difficult, if not impossible to define.
2. It is more of a historical movement in thinking that claims to trace its beginnings back as far as Socrates, and places heavy emphasis on the writings and thinking of St. Augustine.
3. The modern so-called "Father" of this kind of thinking was a man by the name of Soren Kierkegaard who was a Danish theologian of the last century.
4. Since Existentialism is the kind of philosophy that it is, it can just as easily be atheistic as theistic, and for that reason a French atheist by the name of Jean Paul Sartre is known as the "Father" of atheistic Existentialism. In later years, just prior to his death in the late 1970's, Sartre became a full blown Communist. This will give you some idea of where this type of thinking leads. It is a type of thinking that leads to Humanism, which is the dominant worldly philosophy of our time.
5. Existentialism places great emphasis upon the individual, and upon the subjective feelings of the individual.
6. Kierkegaard taught that one should never try to justify, logically, one's feelings, desires, or beliefs, but that one should simply state them. He taught that one's belief in God should be a "...leap of faith..." which one takes without attempting to prove that there is a God, or give reasons why anyone else should believe in Him. Kierkegaard taught that one should read the Bible, that one could even preach from it, but that he should never try to prove that the Bible is the Word

of God, and that the God revealed in the Bible is the one true, living God. Kierkegaard, himself, did not believe that the Bible is the Word of God, but that for the individual it can contain the Word of God.

7. Kierkegaard taught that we should never try to understand individual existence within a conceptual theme of a kind that would exhibit a **logical** connection between every individual part and the conceptual theme of the whole universe. By that he simply meant that there is no relationship between what we have been and what we are and the rest of the world in which we live.

8. Kierkegaard **argued** against any kind of an argument for the existence of God. He attacked the Ontological Proof in particular and applied his thinking to many other arguments for the existence of God. Faith in God, for him, was not based upon evidence and testimony for the existence of God, but faith in God was what an individual had, by making a choice to believe based upon no evidence whatsoever!

9. There were many other theologian\philosophers of his time who ran with his ideas, and based their theology upon what Kierkegaard had said! Is it not strange that they would not allow us to make a judgment based upon the teaching of the Scriptures, but they would make many judgments based upon what Soren Kierkegaard had said!

10. Among those theologians who spread the disjointed and illogical ideas of Kierkegaard were: Karl Barth, Paul Tillich, and Rudolf Bultmann.

11. Existentialism has come to affect every phase of life from psycho- analysis to faith in God, and to the affairs of every day life. The amazing thing about Existentialism is that it attempts to do, through argumentation, what it claims cannot be done, and that is it attempts to **justify** a certain way of

thinking!

12. Existentialism argues that there are no arguments for the existence of God, or for the nature of that God if he does exist. We simply believe that God exists, and that He is the kind of God the person who believes in him wants him to be!

13. This way of thinking has greatly influenced the thinking of all the liberal religious bodies in the world, especially those who had their beginning in Europe during the great reformation. Every major religious body in America, including the churches of Christ, are affected by this philosophy, and the theology of those bodies, whether based upon the Bible, or on something else, is to some degree being affected by those who uncritically accept what Kierkegaard and others of that time taught.

14. The "Change Agents" in the churches of Christ are preaching the philosophy of Kierkegaard, which they picked up in the Protestant seminaries of the land, to unsuspecting and biblically illiterate members who are swallowing it hook, line, and sinker because it allows for a cheap grace based upon no evidence whatsoever.

I. EXISTENTIALISM TAUGHT IN THE FEBRUARY 1996 LECTURES AT ACU.

A. Bill Banowsky's lecture was a hodge-podge of stuff that covered the spectrum from Existentialism to the justification of plain old Holy-Rollerism in the modern church.

1. He began by pointing out that there are mysteries connected with the Christian faith, and in this point he said that Christ is the mystery of God. But one must not think that because there are mysteries connected with certain aspects of God and his nature, that there is not enough revealed truth for one to base faith upon.

2. He pointed out that brother Batsell Barrett Baxter

found it a great mystery that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit make one God. Then he made the comment that it is more important to have faith in the Godhead than it is to understand it.

a. What Banowsky failed to understand is that there has been enough revealed to us in the Scriptures that we can believe that one God is made up of three personalities. (For example: See the baptism of Jesus in Matthew 3:13-17.)

b. What Banowsky does not understand is that though he does not understand an explanation does not mean that there is none.

3. Banowsky then switched to the problem of evil, and asked why babies are born deformed, as if that were some kind of mystery.

a. Babies are born deformed because of genetic causes, diseases, drugs, and many other causes among which is that man has sinned.

4. Then he thinks that there is some mystery associated with the fact that Christ was, what he called "forced to absolute despair," when on the cross he cried out, "My God, My God, why has thou forsaken me?"

a. There is no mystery connected to this! God forsook Christ upon the cross to die for the sins of the world. God, in his divine justice cannot look upon sin. Christ bore the sins of the world upon the tree, therefore, God turned away from him.

5. Then Banowsky came to make one of the most nonsensical statements that this writer has ever read. He said, "Until you come to that moment when you doubt the meaning of anything, your faith has not come to its fullest." How can faith be at its fullest when it is filled with **doubt**?

B. Turning to the eleventh chapter of Hebrews the speaker avowed that it was the, "Mystical Christ who inspired Moses to account the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

1. The Bible says that Moses, "by faith," esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." There is no mention of a "Mystical Christ," whatever that is!

C. Banowsky then affirmed that, "Life vibrates with the adventure of ambiguity - a big word that means, 'I don't know.'"

1. How does he know that the word "ambiguity" means, "I don't know?"

2. Why does he believe the word "ambiguity" means, "I don't know?"

3. He evidently believes and knows that based upon some evidence such as: (1) Someone told him that! (2) He read it in a book! (3) Some kind of a dictionary somewhere defines the word that way. (Actually, the word comes from ambiguous which means, "having two or more possible meanings, not clear, indefinite, uncertain, vague. Syn. Obscure. So the word does not mean, "I don't know.")

D. Banowsky then corrupts Hebrews 11:1 by quoting it in the following manner, "Faith is **only** the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things unseen." Then based upon the corruption of this text he added, "Therefore at the heart of faith is always ambiguity. Religions without ambiguity is [sic] religions without faith." If religion must be all that ambiguous, how does he **know** that, what makes him **believe** that? Why must he corrupt the text by adding the word **only** to the text?

1. "Unseen" does not mean ambiguous!

2. Because one **hopes** for something does not mean that it is ambiguous!

3. Is faith based upon ambiguity? (Romans 10:13-17 NKJ) (13) For "whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (14) How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? (15) And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!" (16) But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, "Lord, who has believed our report?" (17) So then faith {comes} by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. This passage teaches that faith is built upon the word of God. Is the word of God ambiguous? Certainly not!

4. Notice Jeremiah 31:31-34, and especially verse 34. (31) "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah - (32) "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day {that} I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them," says the Lord. (33) "But this {is} the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, says the Lord, I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (34) "No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," says the Lord. "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin

I will remember no more."

5. See: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16. Our faith is based upon this revelation which came by inspiration from God. There is nothing ambiguous about our faith, and if faith is a matter of not knowing anything for sure, then we could not even be sure that we have faith!

6. If Banowsky were asked if there is a God, and if Jesus Christ is His Son, he would have to say, "I don't know." Then he is not a Believer, but an Agnostic! So, he is telling us the only way to become a true Believer is to be an Agnostic!

7. Or he would have to say, "I believe there is a God, and Jesus Christ is his Son." When asked why he believes those things, he would have to say, "I don't know!" That makes him an Existentialist! But if he were to appeal to one passage of Scripture, which he did in his lecture, he gives up the whole argument that faith must be ambiguous in order to be faith!

E. Then the speaker said, "Let us thank Almighty God that we are saved by the wonderous [sic] mystery of grace." Paul said, (Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJ) (8) For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; {it is} the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast. There is not mystery here! God's Word reveals His grace by revealing an objective faith. My heart, that is, intellect, will, emotions, and conscience accepts that which is revealed in His Word. I have come to believe, that is, have faith which motivates me to action. There is nothing ambiguous about any of this.

a. Notice: (Ephesians 3:1-7 NKJ) (1) For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles - (2) if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which was given to me for you, (3) how that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I wrote

before in a few words, (4) by which, when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), (5) which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets: (6) that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the gospel, (7) of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.

b. If we can understand Paul's knowledge in the mystery of Christ, then there is no ambiguity connected with our faith!

F. Banowsky then adds, "I know it is tough to live with unrelieved ambiguity because that means we are living with unrelieved tension." How does he **know** that? Paul did not live with unrelieved tension, he said, 2 Timothy 1:12 For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day. And again he said, (2 Timothy 4:6-8 NKJ) (6) For I am already being poured out {as a drink offering}, and the time of my departure is at hand. (7) I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (8) Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

II. WHAT WAS THE PURPOSE OF BANOWSKY'S TELLING US THAT WE CANNOT KNOW FOR CERTAIN WHAT IS TO BE BELIEVED IN THE CHRISTIAN REALM? WHY DOES HE WANT A FAITH FILLED WITH AMBIGUITY? (Some quotes from his lecture will tell us precisely where he is going.)

A. "Growing up in Fort Worth, I remember early preachers insisting

that was [sic] no personal indwelling, but that the Spirit could be known only indirectly by knowing the Bible. In other ways were militantly experiential. We rejected any intermediary but Christ. And we stressed the universal priesthood of all believers. *But by deifying the letter of the Bible we placed paper and ink between us and God. Thus inventing our own brand of mediational separation which we so condemned in our Catholic neighbors. But later Fort Worth preachers started quoting the rest of the Bible that we ourselves are living epistles of God, not with ink but the spirit [sic] of the living God, not of the letter of with [sic] the spirit, [sic] for the letter killeth but the spirit [sic] giveth life.* And some even cited that true life which lighteth every man that cometh into the world where he said to literalist [sic] of every age, "but you have not this word in you. You search the scriptures because you think that in them ye shall find eternal life and know ye not that these are they which bear witness of me, and ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." (From a transcript of the lecture)

a. Banowsky, and all his church changing friends, want to do away with the Bible as the standard of our faith! And it is an amazing thing that they use the Bible to try and prove we should not use the Bible as the standard of our faith.

b. There is not one passage in the above quotation, either alluded to or quoted directly that is not taken out of context, and wrested violently to try to prove what Methodist and Charismatic doctrine has been teaching for years. And brethren there is enough such wresting in this paragraph alone, that it would take the rest of the day to show the proper and contextual interpretation of these verses.

c. He wants to fellowship such people as Doctor James

Dobson, and call them Christians, and call their preaching "godly messages," when Dobson does not even believe the Great Commission!

B. He wants to fellowship the Charasmatics! "As a boy, I remember our ridicule of the 'holy-rollers.'" And I remember the Bible verse we painted on the signs our in front of our buildings - 'Come let us reason together.' *But in the last analysis faith is more a matter of intuition and feeling than it is of logic and reason and nobody ever felt this as deeply as the apostle Paul who called the gospel 'the foolishness of God.'*" (Paul did not mean that he believed the Gospel to be "foolishness!" On the contrary, he was using accomodating language and spoke of the Gospel as the unbelieving Gentiles spoke of it. In the same context he said that the "foolishness of God was greater than the wisdom of men.")

C. Banowsky continues: "Intellectual that he was the apostle Paul still made no bones about it - **faith is a trusting leap** away from rationalism. All personal relationship with Christ - all personal relationship with Christ - was not faith and reason, neither was it faith through reason. It was faith no reason. The heart has reason that reason does not know." (HOW DOES HE KNOW THAT? WHO TOLD HIM THAT? WHERE DID HIS INFORMATION COME FROM? THAT IS WHAT IS CALLED A NONSENSE STATEMENT!)

a. Man cannot believe without knowledge! It is impossible! Tell me what you believe about anything about which you know nothing!

D. To attempt to prove that there can be faith without knowledge Banowsky goes on: "We can no more convey our feelings about Christ to a purely rational mind than we can convey the idea of color to a blind man, or in Paul's own words, 'to a natural man, who receiveth not the things of the

Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him, and he cannot know them because they are spiritually discerned." (What is the natural man of whom he speaks here? Paul defines him, he is the one "who receiveth not the things of the Spirit." The man who does not accept the testimony of the Holy Spirit from the Word of God is a natural man, and considers the things of the spiritual realm foolishness. Since he cannot know the things of the Spirit, he cannot believe them. Why? Because "Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.") Our dear deluded brother should read the Scripture with greater discernment because he believes that they are foolish. Consequently, he is not a believer in the biblical sense of the word.

E. He wants us to believe that Christ has sheep outside the fold of his spiritual Body, the church. "Since my religion looks ridiculous to at least half the university professors in America, and since I justify it not by reason, but by faith, how do I treat fairly these Charismatics? Well, instinctively I join John - Master we saw one casting out demons in thy name and we forbade him because he followeth not with us. But Jesus said, Forbid him not. For he that is not against you is for you. [sic] One thing is for certain, we are not superior human beings to them."

a. Who is concerned about how our religion looks to the worldly university professors? (1 Corinthians 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, {are called}.) We must be concerned about how it looks to God!

b. Notice the man casting out demons was **for** Jesus and not **against** Him.

c. We have never claimed to be superior to anyone, but

the Bible is either true or it isn't, it either contains the Gospel or it does not! If it does, we must preach it to men - Mark 16:15 - 16!

CONCLUSION:

Men and women are saved by grace through faith, and not by my feelings about grace and faith. There can be no such thing as faith without evidence that is either empirical or testimonial. Everyone recognizes this as valid in all areas except religion. You cannot believe anything about anything which you know nothing.

D.Gene West-Gene was born in Chester, WV, and attended public schools in Hancock County. He earned an Associate in Arts Degree from Freed-Hardeman College, a Bachelor of Arts Degree from West Liberty State College and a Bachelor of Science Degree from Fairmont State College. He has served churches in Martin's Ferry, OH; Kissimmee, Fl; Hundred, Moundsville, Vienna and Fairmont, WV. He presently preaches for Steelton Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV. He was baptized by brother Jess Nutter in 1950. He was the owner and editor of *The Bible Herald* for several years, and has spoken on numerous lectureships and conducts several gospel meetings each year. Gene and his wife, the former Shirley Bissett, have three children: Kandi Davis, Mary Kessinger and Todd and five grandchildren.

THE INFLUENCE OF EASTERN RELIGIONS

Randall F. Matheny

Introduction:

- A. Western thought and Western culture has been influenced by adherents of Eastern religions.
- B. Christians must be aware of these religious and their teachings in order to confront them productively and effectively.
 - 1. This lecture will attempt to identify a few prominent leaders and their movements.
 - 2. Suggest some Biblical responses.

I. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi

- A. 1957 - Founded Transcendental Meditation and Worldwide Spiritual Regeneration.
 - 1. 1959 - Came West where TM became popular in the 1960's.
 - 2. Mental repetition of short words/phrases reaches a deeper level of consciousness.
- B. 1975 - TM-Sidhi and the bubbling bliss of Yogic Flying.
 - 1. Advanced ability to think and act from transcendental consciousness.
 - 2. When practiced as a group, it creates a measurable influence of harmony and progress throughout society.
- C. 1994 - Discovery of the Veda and Vedic Literature in human physiology (eg. inborn in humans).
 - 1. Established the grand unity of creation, of all sciences, and of all religions.
 - 2. Connects each discipline with the transcendental consciousness.
- D. Summary of doctrine and goal:
 - 1. Reason for creation and individual life is the expansion of happiness.
 - 2. Jesus is an enlightened one, no greater than others of the same, including the Maharishi.

II. Chaitanya Mahaprabhu (aka. A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada) (1896-1977) born in Calcutta, India.

- A. Background summary:
 - 1. 1922 - Began lifelong work of broadcasting Vedic knowledge through the English language.
 - 2. 1965 - Came to the United States.
 - 3. 1966 - Established International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKON).
 - 4. 1968 - Created the New Vrindaban experimental

- Vedic community near Moundsville, W.Va.
5. 1972 - Founded Gurukula school, Dallas, Texas, introducing his Vedic system of primary and secondary education.
- B. Basic doctrines and goals:
1. Monistic in theology.
 2. Literal interpretation of Hindu scriptures.
 3. Bible is accepted as a scripture and Jesus as a guru.
 4. Salvation comes by chanting Hare Krishna 1,728 times daily.
- III. **Bhagwan Shri Rajneesh** (aka. Osho) (1931-1990) born: Kuchwada, Madhya Pradesh, India.
- A. His doctrine and its goals:
1. Meditation techniques which give seekers an avenue to experience the ultimate and to discover the thought-less relaxed state of meditation.
 2. Concerning God: God (thus, Christ) is not a person, but a process... Existence is without cause... In the beginning there is no cause so in the end there can be no purpose. (Archaya Rajneesh: *Beyond and Beyond*).
- B. After coming to America:
1. Started a commune, popular with young people.
 2. Deported after four years.
 3. Teachings are propagated by a worldwide network of *Rajneesh Meditation Centers*.
- IV. **Deepak Chopra** - Guru to the Stars, born: New Delhi, India.
- A. Background summary:
1. Immigrated to United States and established a medical practice.
 2. Became disenchanted with American life and turned to study of Ayurveda.
 3. Self-proclaimed champion of a new science aimed at the overthrow of the superstition of materialism. (Los Angeles Times Home Edition: *Followers Flock to Hear Mind-Body Guru Deepak Chopra*, September 19, 1994).
- B. Student of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi and TM.
1. 1986 - Director, Maharishi Ayur-Veda Health Center, Lancaster, Mass.
 2. 1993 - Director, Sharp Institute for Human Potential and Mind-Body Medicine, San Diego.
 3. Celebrity clients include Elizabeth Taylor, Michael Jackson and Michael Milken.
- V. **Nation of Islam** (aka. Black Muslims).

- A. Beliefs (as summarized by Tynetta Muhammad, wife of Elijah (Poole) Muhammad in *The Nation of Islam in America*, a paper presented at the International Symposium on Sufism, San Francisco, Ca., March 29-31, 1996):
1. Founded on the basis of peace in answer to a prayer of Abraham to deliver his people from present servitude in the Western Hemisphere.
 2. To respect the laws of the land, never to carry arms, make war, or be the aggressor.
 3. Teaches the principles of Divine Unity and the Universal Brotherhood of Islam.
 4. Inward and outward cleanliness, good manners and respect to all.
 5. Family is the backbone of society, children to be reared reflecting high morals and training.
 6. To consume the best of foods for longevity; abstain from alcohol, smoking and substance abuse.
 7. To respect and protect our (Muslim) women.
 8. Women are taught a dress code of modesty that will lead to the practice of high morality.
 9. To be an exemplary community expressing the highest spiritual goals for the reform of ourselves and others based on wisdom, knowledge and beauty.
- B. **Wallace D. Fard** (1877-?) (aka. Wallace Fard Muhammad, Walli Farrad).
1. 1930 - Mission initiated: To restore and resurrect his lost and found people, identified as the original members of the Tribe of Shabazz from the lost nation of Asia (Tynetta Muhammad: *The Nation of Islam in America*).
 2. Joined by Elijah Poole, Detroit, Mi.
- C. **Elijah (Poole) Muhammad** (1897-1975) born in Sandersville, Ga.
1. Chosen by Fard Muhammad to be his Divine Representative to his Lost and Found People (Muhammad: *The Nation of Islam in America*).
 2. Leader of the Nation of Islam (later called American Muslim Mission) for 44 years.
 3. Jesus was only a prophet and not the equal of Moses and Muhammad, and his religion was Islam, not the Christianity of the Pope of Rome. (Pittsburgh Courier, 1959).
- D. **Malcom X** (1925-65) born Malcom Little, Omaha, Ne.

1. 1946 - Converted to Nation of Islam while in prison for burglary.
 2. Assisted Elijah Muhammad by starting new Muslim groups throughout the United States.
 3. After a pilgrimage to Mecca, came to believe that whites, like blacks, were victims of a racist society and that Islam would unite all races.
 4. February 21, 1965 - was shot while speaking at a rally in Harlem.
- E. **Louis Farrakhan** (1934-) born Louis Eugene Walcott, Boston, Mass.
1. 1955 - joined Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam (aka. American Muslim Mission).
 2. Taught that the Nation of Islam was the dead from which Jesus was resurrected (*Farrakhan: Jesus Saves*, from Savior's Day address, Chicago, February 26, 1995).
 3. Identifies himself as a servant of Fard and Elijah Muhammad.

VI. Other movements of note:

- A. **Transcendentalism** (noted because of similarities to Hindu philosophy).
1. Mostly active between 1830 and 1855.
 2. Developed in part to rebellion against the *Age of Reason* (17th and 18th centuries).
 - a. Rebelled against science, authority, order and discipline.
 - b. Notable adherents: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller, Orestes Augustus Brownson, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, Bronson Alcott, George Ripley.
 3. Common beliefs of Transcendentalists:
 - a. The essential unity of creation.
 - b. The goodness of humanity.
 - c. The supremacy of insight over logic and reason.
 - d. The renunciation of authority, whether religion, scientific or political.
- B. **Theosophical Society** (noted because of similarities to Hinduism and Transcendentalism)
1. 1875 - Founded in New York by Helena Petrovna Blavatsky (Russian, 1831-91) and Henry Steel Olcott (U.S.A., 1832-1907).
 2. Principles as defined by Blavatsky:
 - a. There is an eternal, unchangeable principle about which there is no

- knowledge, nor is any speculation possible.
 - b. Universe is an eternity in which smaller universes appear and disappear.
 - c. All souls are ultimately identified with an over-soul.
 - d. All souls go through series of rebirths.
 - 3. Goals as defined by Baltavsky:
 - a. Form a nucleus of universal brotherhood.
 - b. Study comparative religion, philosophy and science.
 - c. Investigate the mysterious laws of nature and the unknown power of mankind.
 - 4. View of Jesus Christ: Christ took the body of Jesus, a man, to become a teacher. Eventually all souls become Christ.

VII. The Bible's answer to the influence of Eastern religions:

- A. Christians must understand, believe and teach the biblical explanations for creation and the reason for life (Ecc. 12:13).
 - 1. Uphold and defend the doctrine of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mat. 28:19-20).
 - 2. Uphold and defend Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:17):
 - a. Who he is (Jn. 1:1-18).
 - b. Why he came incarnate (Mat. 1:21).
 - c. The nature of his work (1 Pet.1:18-19).
 - 3. Understand and teach concerning sin, resurrection, judgment and eternal life.
- B. The Bible supplies the instruction and the means for what multitudes seek:
 - 1. Comfort and security.
 - 2. Harmony, equality and justice.
 - 3. Humility, service, responsible citizenship.
 - 4. Morality and the value of every human.
 - 5. Love, peace and compassion.
 - 6. Communion with God.

Conclusion:

- A. No one can doubt the fact that Eastern religions, namely Hinduism and Islam, have had a profound impact upon Western thought and culture, and will continue to do so.
 - 1. Disenchanted popular culture is receptive.
 - 2. Propagated by those in high profile professions, such as the entertainment industry.
 - 3. Has found fertile fields in industry,

- technology and academia.
4. Is appealing to many who feel disfranchised, and those who believe Christianity is a white, European religion.
- B. How can Christianity respond?
1. We must know the Bible.
 2. We must believe what we know.
 3. We must consistently and tirelessly do what we believe.
 4. We must understand somewhat of the people and philosophies we encounter (as Paul used his knowledge to teach those of Acts 17:22ff, esp. v. 28).
 5. Understand, uphold and teach the true, universal nature of Christianity.
 - a. Denominationalism, and Roman Catholicism have formed many prejudices in the minds of non-white, non-Europeans.
 - b. True Christianity is neither white, European, nor Roman Catholic.
 - c. Christ is for the world.

* * * * *

4425 Big Tyler Road
Cross Lanes, WV 25313

THE GREATNESS OF CHRISTIANITY

Charles C. Pugh III

INTRODUCTION:

1. While in banishment at St. Helena, and conversing with General Bertrand, who contended that Jesus was simply a man, the exiled emperor Napoleon said: "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man! There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity" (As quoted by A. T. Pierson, Many Infallible Proofs, Fleming Revell, 1886, pp. 227-28).
2. "The Greatness of Christianity".
 - a. Greatness - "the characteristic of being markedly superior in character or quality."
 - b. Christianity - the religion of Jesus Christ revealed in the sixty six books of the Bible.
 - c. The superior character and quality of the religion of Jesus Christ as revealed in the Bible.

I. THE GREATNESS OF CHRIST.

- A. It is CHRIST-ianity.
 1. No Jesus Christ equals no Christianity.
 2. Christ, and His identity, provide the very foundation of Christianity.
 - a. Matt. 16: 13-18.
 - b. When one becomes a Christian, he(she) believes Jesus is who He claims to be (John 8:24), confesses this faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10) with a mind of repentance (Acts 2:38), is baptized into Christ (Rom. 6:3-4), seeks then to do all things in the name of (by the authority) of Christ (Col. 3:17) and waits for this Jesus to one day come again from heaven

(1 Thess. 1:10). The Christian, though he has not yet seen Christ, loves Him (1 Peter 1:8) and desires that Christ shall be magnified in his body (Philip. 1:20).

B. The greatness of Christ is evidenced by:

1. The greatness of HIS LIFE.
 - a. An actual, historical life.
 - (1). "Born of the seed of David according to the flesh" (Rom. 1:3).
 - (2). 2 Pet. 1:16.
 - b. A unique life (Mark 7:37).
 - c. No book ever written on the deity of Mohammed, Joseph Smith, Mary Baker Eddy, et al.
2. The greatness of HIS WORDS (John 7:46).
3. The greatness of HIS WORKS (John 3:2; 5:36).
4. The greatness of HIS INFLUENCE (John 12:19).
5. The greatness of HIS RESURRECTION (Rom. 1:4).

C. Some tributes to the greatness of Christ.

1. "The character of Jesus exhibits no error, no sinister intention, no imprudence, no ignorance, no evil passion, no impatience, in a word, no fault; but all is perfect uprightness, innocence, wisdom, goodness and truth."

[Simon Greenleaf as quoted by Howard H. Russell, A Lawyer's Examination Of The Bible, 1893, p. 66 -

NOTE: Greenleaf was Royall Professor of Law at Harvard and succeeded Justice Joseph Story as Dane Professor of Law at Harvard in 1846. Greenleaf wrote a work entitled A Treatise on the Law of Evidence (1842) still considered a classic on evidence in the literature of legal procedure. Also wrote An Examination of the Testimony of the Four Evangelists by the Rules of Evidence

Administered in the Courts of Justice (1847)].

2. "You speak of Caesar, Alexander; of their conquests; of the enthusiasm they enkindled in the hearts of their soldiers; but can you conceive of a dead man, making conquests with an army faithful and entirely devoted to His memory? My army has forgotten me while living. Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne and myself, have founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force! Jesus Christ alone founded His empire upon love: and at this hour millions of men would die for Him. I have so inspired multitudes that they would die for me -- but, after all, my presence was necessary -- the lightning of my eye, my voice, a word from me -- then the sacred fire was kindled in their hearts. Now, that I am at St. Helena, alone, chained upon this rock, who fights and wins empires for me? What an abyss between my deep misery and the eternal reign of Christ, who is proclaimed, loved, adored, and whose reign is extending over all the earth!" (Napoleon as quoted by A. T. Pierson, Many Infallible Proofs, p. 231).
3. "And this Christ Jesus, 'the same yesterday, and today and forever' (Heb. 13:8), is literature's loftiest ideal, philosophy's highest personality, criticism's supremest problem, theology's fundamental doctrine, spiritual religion's cardinal necessity -- personally, socially, politically, economically, educationally, scientifically, nationally, internationally, the only hope of our head-dizzy, body-weary, soul-sick, heart-aching, sin-smitten, war-scarred world. Down from the heights of deity to the depths of humanity he came

-- to lift up, not cast down; to deliver, not doom; to bless, not curse; to save many, not destroy men. In life -- misunderstood, misinterpreted, maliciously maligned, he was heaven's bread for earth's hunger; heaven's water for earth's thirst; heaven's light for earth's darkness; heaven's glory for earth's shame, heaven's grace for earth's guilt; heaven's peace for earth's strife; heaven's love for earth's hate; heaven's wealth for earth's poverty; heaven's clothing for earth's nakedness; heaven's salvation for earth's damnation; heaven's life for earth's death. . . . history with him left out is like astronomy with stars omitted, like botany with flowers forgotten, like geology with rocks thrown away. Though he had no stenographer and no pocketbook and owned no real estate, this Jesus is embedded in the world's history, regnant in the world's art, vocal in the world's music, eloquent in the world's literature, vital in the world's political areas and arenas.

That Christ lives is testified to by historians with their Christ-pointing events, by chronologists with their Christ-honoring dates, by geographers with their Christ-blessed places, by architects with their Christ-honoring buildings, by painters with their Christ-praising pictures by sculptors with their Christ-glorifying statues, by poets with their Christ-loving verses. . . .

Of all examples of influence, Jesus is the most vivid and far-reaching. Born in poverty, toil, and hardship, he was a member of a small and despised race which lived under a foreign yoke and whose national existence was destroyed less than forty years after his death. Though he wrote no poems,

gave birth to no elaborate code of laws, spent but three brief years in public life, and was put to death as a malefactor amid the insults and yells of an infuriated mob, he wielded a power incalculable. Many attacks have been made upon Jesus. He came unto his own and his own received him not. Killing him, they buried him in a tomb hewn out of solid rock -- and sealed it with a heavy stone, and set a guard there to watch. But the third day he arose from the grave and smashed at one blow Death's empire of skulls and skeletons -- because, as Peter said, 'it was impossible for him to be holden of it.'

Today he is being crucified afresh and buried over and over again. Once more he is being betrayed in the house of his friends. Some say, 'He was not divine'; but they cannot deny that he lived divinely. Some have tried to divest him of his miraculous power, but he remains immortally the greatest of all miracles."

(R. G. Lee, Grapes From Gospel Vines, Broadman, 1976, pp. 76-77).

4. "The facts of His humanity and of His work and influence in the world forbid us to classify Jesus with men, and the recognition of His divinity alone explains the facts of His humanity. Considered as God-man all is in harmony; miracles take their proper place in the records of His history, and mind and nature, heaven and earth, God and man meet in Jesus, the Christ.
But -- if He be only a man -- He is such a man as were a thousand times worth dying for and following forever, through time and eternity" (Haygood, The

Man of Galilee, p. 60).

5. "The philosophical argument, especially that drawn from the vastness of the universe in comparison with the insignificance of this globe, has sometimes shaken my reason for the faith that is in me; but my heart has always assured me and reassured me that the gospel of Jesus Christ must be a divine reality. The Sermon on the Mount cannot be a mere human production. This belief enters into the very depths of my conscience; the whole history of man proves it."

(Daniel Webster, Many Infallible Proofs, p. 227).

II. THE GREATNESS OF CHRISTIANITY MANIFESTED IN FOUR AREAS.

A. Its greatness INTELLECTUALLY.

1. Christianity is the only religion that honors the law of rationality which states that one ought to justify his conclusions by adequate evidence (1 Thess. 5:21; 1 Pet. 3:15; Acts 26:25, et al).
 - a. Note Acts 26:25 - "I . . . speak words of truth and reason" (NKJ).
 - b. Footnote of NASV states: "Lit. of truth and rationality".
 - c. Sophrosyne (rationality, reason) means "what is intellectually sound" (Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Vol. 7, p. 1097)).
2. Professor George Romanes was a bright young scientist of the last century. He was a personal friend and colleague of Charles Darwin, and a professor at Oxford. Romanes, as a young professor, lost his faith in God. However, he returned to faith and, prior to his death in 1894, he wrote a work entitled A Candid Examination of

Religion. In it he wrote the following:

"The negative evidence is furnished by the nature of man without God

I know from experience the intellectual distractions of scientific research, philosophical speculation, and artistic pleasures; but am also well aware that even when all are taken together and well sweetened to taste, in respect of consequent reputation, means, social position, &c., the whole concoction is but as high confectionery to a starving man. He may cheat himself for a time -- especially if he be a strong man -- into the belief that he is nourishing himself by denying his natural appetite; but soon finds he was made for some altogether different kind of food, even though of much less tastefulness as far as the palate is concerned There is no finality to rest in, while disease and death are always standing in the background. Custom may even blind men to their own misery, so far as not to make them realize what is wanting; yet the want is there.

I take it then as unquestionably true that this whole negative side of the subject proves a vacuum in the soul of man which nothing can fill save faith in God."

(Thoughts On Religion, Charles Gore, ed., pp. 150-52, 1895).

A few days before his death, at the young age of 46, he said, "I have now come to see that faith is intellectually justifiable. It is Christianity or nothing."

(The Life and Letters of
George John Romanes,
1896, p. 349).

B. Its greatness **MORALLY**.

1. The greatest kind of living is Christian living.
 - a. "Dearly, beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; having your conversation honest . . ." (1 Pet. 2:11-12).
 - b. Honest (excellent, NASV; honorable, NKJ) means "beautiful by reason of purity of heart and life . . . morally good, noble" (Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, 12th printing 1973, p. 322).
 - c. Titus 2: 11-12.
2. A Hindu woman was converted to Christianity by hearing the gospel. She suffered much persecution from her husband. One day another Christian asked her, "When your husband is angry and treats you badly, what do you do?" She replied, "I cook his food better; I try to sweep the floor cleaner; I speak mildly, love him tenderly, and show him that when I became a Christian, I became a better wife and a better mother for his children."
The husband could withstand the preaching of others, but he could not withstand the Christian life of his wife. He soon became a Christian with her.
3. The story is told of an army chaplain who was

kneeling beside a wounded soldier on the battlefield. The chaplain asked the soldier if he wanted him to read something from the Bible. The boy near death, replied, "I'd rather have a drink of water; I'm thirsty". The chaplain got the water. Then the young soldier said, "I'm so cold". The chaplain took off his coat and wrapped it around the dying boy. The soldier looked at him for a moment and then said, "If there is something in that book that makes you do these things, please read it to me".

4. These are the words of James Russell Lowell: "The worst kind of religion is no religion at all, and these men living in ease and luxury, indulging themselves in the amusement of going without religion, may be thankful that they live in lands where the gospel they neglect has tamed the beastliness and ferocity of the men who, but for Christianity, might long ago have eaten their carcasses like the South Sea Islanders, or cut off their heads and tanned their hides like the monsters of the French Revolution. When the microscopic search of skepticism, which had hunted the heavens and sounded the seas to disprove the existence of a Creator, has turned its attention to human society and has found a place on this planet ten miles square where a decent man can live in comfort and security, supporting and educating his children unspoiled and unpolluted; a place where age is revered, infancy respected, manhood respected, womanhood honored, and human life held in due regard -- when skeptics can find such a place ten miles square on this globe, where the gospel of Christ has not gone and cleared the way

and laid the foundation and made decency and security possible, it will then be in order for the skeptical literati to move thither and then ventilate their views. But so long as these men are dependent upon the religion which they discard for every privilege they enjoy, they may well hesitate a little before they seek to rob the Christian of his hope, and humanity of its faith, in that Saviour who alone has given to man that hope of life eternal which makes life tolerable and society possible, and robs death of its terrors and the grave of its glooms." (As quoted by Wilbur M. Smith, Therefore Stand, Baker, 1945, p. 32).

C. Its greatness EMOTIONALLY.

1. Christianity provides the only way to truly meet the suffering, adversity, and stress that comes with life on earth (Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:16-18; 1 Pet. 5:7).
2. Christianity is concerned with good mental health (Philip. 4: 6-7).
3. "Christianity lifts up the living, consoles the dying, and offers to all mankind the love of God . . ." (George Sheridan, quoted by Russell, A Lawyer's Examination of the Bible, p. 100).
4. Dr. James C. Fisher, an experienced psychiatrist who had extensive experience of over fifty years of dealing with emotional, mental, and physical problems, expressed the following observation about the greatness of Christianity emotionally:

"I dreamed of writing a handbook that would be simple, practical, easy to understand, easy to follow. It would tell people how to live -- what thoughts and attitudes and philosophies to

cultivate, and what pitfalls to avoid in seeking mental health. I attended every symposium it was possible for me to attend and took notes on the wise words of my teachers and of my colleagues who were leaders in their field. And quite by accident I discovered that such a work had already been completed!

"If you were to take the sum total of all authoritative articles ever written by the most qualified of psychologists and psychiatrists on the subject of mental hygiene -- if you were to combine them and refine them and cleave out the excess verbage -- if you were to take the whole of the meat and none of the parsley, and if you were to have these unadulterated bits of pure scientific knowledge concisely expressed by the most capable of living poets, you would have an awkward and incomplete summation of the Sermon on the Mount. And it would suffer immeasurably through comparison.

"For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in its hands the complete answer to its restless and fruitless yearnings. Here . . . rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimum mental health and contentment."

(Raymond L. Cramer, The Psychology of Jesus and Mental Health, Zondervan, 1959, 16th printing 1974, pp. 14-16).

5. Psalm 119:165.
- D. Its greatness **SPIRITUALLY**.
1. Christianity is superior to all other religions because it alone has the true, efficacious plan for saving man.
 - a. Only the Gospel of Christ, and the plan of salvation revealed therein, is in harmony with (1) the infinite nature of God and (2) the sinful condition of man.
 - b. Rom. 3: 23-28.
 2. The Christian life is a forgiven life (1 John 1:7; Rev. 1:5).
 3. Christianity provides the only rational way to prepare for death.
 - a. The Bible affirms this (Ps. 116:15; Philip. 1:21; 2 Tim. 4:7-8; Rev. 14:13).
 - b. Human experience verifies this:
 - (1). No man who has faithfully lived the Christian life has ever denied it in death.
 - (2). Many who have denied Christianity in life have attempted to renounce their infidelity in death.
 - (3). Voltaire, the French skeptic who boasted that with his single hand he would destroy the edifice (Christianity) it took twelve apostles to rear, died a horrible death. The nurse who was at his bedside said following his death: "For all the wealth in Europe I would not see another infidel die" (See Herbert Lockyer, Last Words of Saints and Sinners, p. 133).
 - (4). "A few years ago the most noted infidel

in our country pronounced a funeral sermon by the graveside of his brother. These were his consoling words: 'Life is a narrow vale between the cold and barren peaks of two eternities. We strive in vain to look beyond the heights. We cry aloud and the only answer is the echo of our wailing cry. Let Voltaire try what he can do to offer condolence to any who have been hitherto disposed to trust the issues of life and death to the chances of unbelief. Here is a flower for your casket: In man there is more wretchedness than in all animals put together. He loves life, and yet he knows that he must die. If he enjoys a transient good he suffers various evils, and is at last devoured by worms. I wish I had never been born.' Contrast these rattling husks with the tender consolations of Christianity. 'Let not your hearts be troubled. Ye believe in God believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you.' Thus Christ flashes the light of His glorious pledge upon the darkness and its murky shadows flee away. 'For me to live is Christ and to die is gain,' says the inspired apostle."

(Russell, A Lawyer's Examination of the Bible, pp. 247-48).

- (5). Of the Bible, George P. Morris wrote:
"The mines of earth no treasures give,
That could this volume buy;

In teaching me the way to live,
It taught me how to die.

4. Only Christianity provides a solid basis for the hope of reunion eternally with those who have lived according to its teaching (1 Thess. 4: 13-18).

CONCLUSION:

1. We have considered the GREATNESS OF CHRISTIANITY as seen in the following:
 - a. The greatness of CHRIST.
 - b. The greatness of Christianity INTELLECTUALLY.
 - c. The greatness of Christianity MORALLY.
 - d. The greatness of Christianity EMOTIONALLY.
 - e. The greatness of Christianity SPIRITUALLY.
2. "Could man have produced it? Man can make his artificial lake, but could he have made the ocean, measured its waters, established its bounds, and correlated it with continents, winds, and suns? Man can erect the granite shaft, but could he have lifted the mountains to the sky and made them awful and sublime? So man could have written many things in the Bible and could have discovered many truths there revealed and sanctioned by the divine name, but could he have invented Christianity as a system? Are there not in it oceans whose waters he did not gather together, and mountains on whose summits he never stood?
. . . . Christianity purifies the heart and corrects the life. It destroys domestic and social tyranny. It elevates woman and secures the education of children. It undermines and destroys all social evils. It promotes science, and brings all nations into commercial harmony. It cares for the imbecile, the deaf and dumb, the blind and the poor, as no other religion does. He who does not accept this statement is ignorant of the facts. It

differs from all other systems in its fitness to become universal. It is founded on man's common religious nature. It meets the wants of all men, those that are deepest and most pressing. It has nothing in it partial and merely ethnic. It is suited to all ages and states of civilization, as well as to all zones. The missionary zeal and effort produced by Christianity are peculiar. It is propagated by the power of truth and love, not by the sword; by the self-sacrifice of its missionaries, and not by despotic power. It is flooding the world with Bibles, and sending the living heralds of the cross into all lands. What other religion can compare with it? . .

. Christianity is the only religion that can endure in the light of reason and science, the only one that a scientific and civilized man can accept and propagate. .

. . . No other religion can produce one hundredth part of the evidence in its support. No other religion presents so clear, so full, and so faultless a revelation of God.

. . . Christianity is unlike all other religions in having a divine founder and savior. It is superior in that Christ is admitted to be superior to all other religious teachers

Christianity comes with a divine sanction. It brought life and immortality to *light*. It gives us not a mere hope and a theory concerning the life to come, but a grand *fact*. . . . The statement is not true that Christianity is just like all other religions

Christianity is *superhuman*: its account of Creation; its unity; its prophecies; its sublime morality; its profound religious principles; its stupendous plan, comprehending time and eternity; its Jesus, a perfect man and a perfect manifestation of God, sinless, faultless, and divine; its triumph over the combined opposition of the Jewish nation and of the Roman Empire; the impossibility, on the

supposition that Jesus was not what he claimed to be and hence in no sense the author of Christianity, that any one of his disciples could have devised such a grand scheme and made it successful -- all concur in demonstrating the supernatural character of this religion. There are no insuperable objections. The author of such a system must have been divine What stronger evidence could be demanded? What stronger evidence is possible?"

(Harvey W. Everett, The Divine Demonstration - A Text-Book of Christian Evidence, Christian Publishing Co., 1884, rep. Gospel Advocate Co., 1972, pp. 201, 239-41, 358).

3. **CHRISTIANITY IS THE ONE, TRUE RELIGION!**

Charles C. Pugh III - Charles is a native of Wood County, WV. He has studied at Ohio Valley College, Harding University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion with graduate study in Philosophy of Religion and Christian Evidences under Thomas B. Warren. He is married to the former Sharron Beeson of Harrisburg, AR. And they have three children: Mindy, Charles, and Nicole. He has spoken on various lectureships, preaches in several gospel meetings yearly, has published articles in various brotherhood publications, and has written numerous weekly articles for area newspapers. He has authored a number of Bible study books and has served as a part-time instructor in Bible at Ohio Valley College. Charles preached his first sermon in July, 1967 at Little Hocking, OH. And has served congregations in Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia. He is beginning his ninth year as minister of the Bridge Street Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV.

THE RATIONALITY OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

David P. Stevens

Introduction.

I. The Old Testament prophet wrote, "Come now, let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). This passage constitutes the Master of the Universe's invitation to men to reason with Him. God has always expected His creature--man--to use his powers of thinking to aid him in understanding His will.

II. Christianity is a religion that honors the "Law of Rationality." The Law of Rationality clearly states that we should draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. In this lesson, we shall attempt to show how Christianity adheres to this law.

III. The main purpose of this lesson will be to show the reasons why Christianity is rational. There are four distinct areas that must be examined in order to see this:

- A. The Nature of God.
- B. The Nature of Truth.
- C. The Nature of Man.
- D. The Nature of Christianity Itself.

Discussion.

I. THE NATURE OF GOD.

A. God is the author of Christianity
(Eph.1:4,5;3:10,11)

B. The Attributes of God determine the rational nature of Christianity.

1. God is Eternal (Ex 3:14; Psa. 9:7).
2. God is Immutable (Psa. 102:27; Mal. 3:6).
3. God is ALL-Wise (I Tim. 1:17; Acts 15:18).
4. God is Perfect (Matt. 5:48).

C. God's nature determines that Christianity will be

free from all inconsistencies, contradictions, and errors.

D. Simply put, Christianity is rational because God is rational.

II. THE NATURE OF TRUTH.

A. Truth comes from God. Truth represents the will, counsel, promises, and precepts of God.

B. Truth is:

1. Absolute (Psa. 119:89).
2. Attainable (John 8:32).
3. Exclusive (John 14:6).
4. Consistent (Psa. 19:9).
5. Pure (Psa. 119:140).
6. Perfect (Psa. 19:7).

C. The nature of truth relates directly to the nature of Christianity since Christianity is founded upon the truth.

D. Simply put, Christianity is rational because truth is rational.

III. THE NATURE OF MAN.

A. Man has been created by God with the ability to be either rational or irrational. The design of the mind of man is the result of the wisdom of God in making man as he is (Psa. 139:14). God made us with the ability to think rationally if we so choose. Stated negatively, there is nothing in the physical make-up of man that would prohibit man from thinking and acting rationally.

B. However there are psychological factors that may lead men to think and act irrationally.

1. To protect established traditions of men.
2. To protect himself from feeling hurt.
3. Pride.
4. Fear.
5. Ignorance.

C. Two examples of irrational statements men sometimes make: (1) "it doesn't make any difference what you believe"; and

(2) "one church is as good as another."

D. Men must respect the Law of Rationality in understanding God's will. God has created us in such a way that it is possible for us to think and act rationally. We must choose to do this in order to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

E. Christianity is rational. It appeals to the rational powers of man.

IV. THE NATURE OF CHRISTIANITY.

A. Christianity is a taught religion. We come to know and understand God's will through reading and patient study of the Scriptures.

B. Christianity is established upon historical reality. The propositions that make up the Christian faith conform to reality. This is a test of truth. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, raised in Nazareth, lived and worked in Palestine (Galilee, Samaria, Judea). He was crucified in Jerusalem, buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea and arose the third day from the tomb. All of these statements are *verifiable* historical facts.

C. The explicit statements in the Bible provide the evidence from which we must choose to think rationally. God has not left us with insufficient evidence to prove His case. It is possible to know that God is and that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. The evidence is given by those who were eye witnesses to the events (Luke 1:1-3). They saw, heard, touched and thus experienced these things. The evidence for Christianity is *reliable*.

D. Further, the physical universe provides much evidence upon which our powers of reason must concentrate and draw correct conclusions. The universe, the human body, the Grand Canyon and the empty tomb provide us with *objective* evidence for God's existence, the great flood in Noah's day, and the resurrection of Christ. God has not left Himself without a witness.

E. Some Examples of the Necessity of the Law of

Rationality within Christianity.

1. I Thess. 5:21. "Prove all things."
2. I Pet. 3:15. "Ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason..."
3. Acts 17:2, "reasoned with them out of the Scriptures."
4. Acts 9:22, "Saul.."confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ."

F. Some examples of the Use of Logic by Christ.

1. Matt. 21:25 --"Jesus used a "constructive dilemma" in this passage. Debaters call it the "horns of a dilemma."
2. Matt. 6:24--An Example of the "Law of Excluded Middle." Jesus said, "no man can serve two masters." There is no middle ground. Either/or propositions honor the law of rationality.
3. Matt. 7:11,12--argument ad minori--ad majus "From the lesser to the greater."
4. John 10:34,35--Another example of ad minori--ad majus. Judges under the OT were referred to as "gods". Jesus far surpasses these judges in rank and therefore it would not be wrong to refer to Him as God.
5. Matt. 4:6--Jesus illustrates that Scripture is explained by Scripture. Satan quotes Psa. 91:11 but gives it too broad of an interpretation. Jesus quotes from Deut. 6:16 to show that Satan made a mistake in his application of the passage from Psalms.

G. Christianity is rational because it respects the Law of Rationality. The apostles and Jesus respected the law of rationality and we must respect it too.

Conclusion

Christianity is a rational religion. It respects the Law of Rationality which states that men must draw only such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence. Knowing the nature of God, the nature of truth, the nature of man and the nature of Christianity, helps us to see this fact.

"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph. 5:17).

David was born April 19, 1956 at Barrackville, WV. He is the son of Earl and Vonda Stevens of Fairmont, WV. He was baptized into Christ May 3, 1969 and began preaching at the age of 15. He graduated from St. Marys High School, St. Marys, WV in 1974. He furthered his training at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg Community College and Fairmont State College. On Jan. 7, 1978, he married Kathy Stewart. They have two children, Rachel and Scott. David began preaching in July of 1971 at Mooresville, WV in a meeting held in conjunction with his dad (Earl) and his brother (Steve). He has held full-time works at New Lexington, OH (1978-1991) and Groveport, OH (1991 to the present). He has been writing a monthly article entitled "Gems From the Greek" for Therefore Stand edited by Terry Varner for the past five years.

END OF CENTURY MILLENNIUM MANIA
W. Terry Varner

INTRODUCTION

A. Religious thought generally produces the reactions of fear, frenzy and great excitement when discussing end-time events; i.e., the second coming of Christ and its attendant doctrines.

B. Historically, this is true as each century comes to a close and our physical calendars date us into a new century. In the year of 2000, we will not only complete the 20th century, but in 2001 we will enter a third millennium (1,000 years) of the Christian era.

C. The nearer we come to the end of the century and the emergence of a new millennium, the more religious prophetic teachers, who are in reality soothsayers, (1) create a false prophetic climate, (2) use unsound hermeneutics (interpretation) of end-time doctrines and (3) laugh all the way to the bank as they enjoy their profits.

"BE NOT SOON SHAKEN IN MIND"

A. Paul warned the Thessalonians concerning the second coming (2 Thess. 2:1-12). Some had become "shaken in mind,...troubled" to the extent they had quit work (2 Thess. 3:10).

B. Over the centuries men have falsely rumored the soon-coming of Christ.¹ Their movements are often a disappointment and an embarrassment to them and disillusionment to their followers. Sadly, true biblical teaching on end-time matters is confused and the truth is often rejected outright.

C. Consider the brief historical panorama of the "shaking of the mind" of religious seekers concerning end-time matters.

1. The Montanist Movement (A.D. 156).²
2. The Doomsday New Year's Eve (A.D. 999).³
3. The Nutty Bookbinder (A.D. 1527).⁴
4. The Millerites (A.D. 1840's).⁵

D. The long centuries have produced many other individuals and groups, cults and non-cults, who have prophesied the second coming of Christ; e.g., Martin Luther, the Jehovah's Witnesses, Herbert W. Armstrong and the World-Wide Church of God (Adventist), The Children of God, etc.

OUR PRESENT DAY DOOMSDAYERS

A. Seeds of our present-day "doomsdayers" can be traced to the founder of the Plymouth Brethren, John N. Darby (1800-1882) of Plymouth, England. He influenced Benjamin W. Newton (1805-1898), a speculative writer of biblical prophecy. The American seed is Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921) of Michigan. Scofield authored the famous *Scofield Reference Bible* (London: Oxford University Press, 1917). It is premillennial from the first page to the last.⁶

B. Much of the current end-time mania can be traced to Hal Lindsey and his first work, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970).⁷ This highly unscriptural and an immensely speculative prophetic work, and his other works,⁸ has had an undue impact on the religious teaching of end-time matters and spawned literally thousands of books, booklets, tracts and articles containing some of the most bizarre interpretations.

C. The key to Lindsey's predictions, which are in abundance and which are followed closely by most premillennial writers, is the re-establishment of the modern state of Israel in 1948, which he and others claim is the fulfillment of Old Testament prophesy.

D. Lindsey took the complex premillennial interpretation of the scholars⁹ and popularized the end-time events. The following quote from the back cover of his latest book, *Planet Earth--2000 A.D.* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, Ltd., 1994), shows the impact and import of Lindsey's writings: "No one to date has offered a more thorough, complete and easy to understand analysis of the current world crises and where they are leading."

E. Lindsey's first work spawned thousands of end-time books by more recent writers.¹⁰ These writings contain some of the most bizarre interpretations of end-time events that one can imagine.

EARTHQUAKING THE "MOUNTAIN PEAKS" OF THE MANIA

A. The end-time millennial mania is built upon the claim that "Christians after the early second century spent little time really defining prophetic truth until the middle of the nineteenth century" (Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 181). In 1994, he writes that "Only now, as mankind approaches the third millennium, do I feel the Holy Spirit has provided me with the proper perspective--The Big Picture, so to speak--on the mind-blowing experiences of the modern world" (*Planet Earth--2000 A.D.*, p. 2, italics mine, WTV).

B. We believe that the "mountain peaks" of end-time millennial mania crumble under the earthquake of biblical evidence and understanding. Consider the following tumbling of their "mountain peaks."

1. **Modern Israel.** The key to the end-time millennial mania is May 14, 1948 when modern Israel became a state in Palestine. This event marks the end-time sign starting the prophetic countdown to Amargeddon and the second coming.¹¹

a. The Land Promise. Tied to the end-time mania is the contention that Israel never realized the land promise of Genesis 15:18-21; Numbers 34:1-13.

b. The earthquake of biblical evidence destroys this contention. Joshua 21:43 states, "So Jehovah gave unto Israel ALL THE LAND which he sware to give unto their fathers." In verse 45, it "all came to pass." (cf., 1 Kings 4:20-21; Neh. 9:23). Israel's right to the land was conditioned upon their faithfulness to God's covenant (Deut. 28-30; see 29:9 and 30:1-10; Jer. 22:30; Ezra 9:8). Modern Israel is not the true Israel today, but rather true Israel is the church of our lord (Rom. 2:28-29), which He purchased with His own blood (Acts 20:28). Paul makes it clear, "they which are the children of the flesh, these ARE NOT the children of God" (Rom. 9:8).

2. **The Rapture and Tribulation.** Lindsey writes that "Christians have tendency sometimes to toss out words which have no meaning to the non-Christian....'Rapture' may be one of those words. It is not found in the Bible, so there is no need to race for your concordance, if you have one" (*Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 137).

a. Lindsey writes that call it what you may it "makes no difference--the important thing is that it will happen" (*Ibid.*). The rapture, in premillennial thought, results from a secret, invisible coming of Christ for His saints, so that they may avoid the seven year tribulation period, and then followed by a visible return of Christ with His raptured saints to reign on earth in Palestine for one thousand years.

Lindsey gives an entire page describing the rapture as "the living end....The ultimate trip." Speaking of the rapture occurring, he writes of an imaginary football game--"our quarterback recovered [a fumble]--he was about a yard from the goal when--zap--no more quarterback--completely gone just like that" (*op. cit.*, p. 136).

b. The earthquake of biblical evidence destroys the premillennial rapture doctrine. The main text they use is 1 Thesalonians 4:16-17, when at the return of Christ [invisible and

secret], the faithful saints "shall be caught up together." The word *harpazo* conveys the idea of "to seize, catch up, snatch away, carry off by force" (Abbott-Smith, *A Manual Greek Lexicon of the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1950, p. 60). The act of being "caught up together" at the coming of Christ is not to escape the seven year great tribulation [which the Bible does not teach], but rather for the purpose that "so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4:17; 1 Cor. 15:24-28).

3. The Antichrist. Major in the scheme of millennialism is the Antichrist.¹² Lindsey designates the Antichrist (singular), as the "Great Dictator" or the "Future Fuehrer" (*Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 10). In discussing the Antichrist, who appears in the last three and one-half years of the tribulation and before the visible coming of Christ, Lindsey, referring to 2 Thessalonians 2:3, calls him "the man of lawlessness [sin, KJV]" and "the son of destruction [perdition, KJV]" (*The Rapture*, p. 126).

a. From these two titles, the Antichrist will (1) oppose God and exalt himself as God, (2) sit in the holy of holies in the third Jewish temple, and (3) proclaim and display himself as God (*op. cit.*, pp. 127-128).

b. The earthquake of biblical evidence destroys the Antichrist theory. The word "Antichrist" occurs only in 1 John 2:18,22; 4:3; 2 John 7. The word means "against Christ;" therefore, refers not to a single personage, but is a reference to the forces of evil at work against Christ.

John says, in contradistinction to the premillennial argument, "even now are there many antichrists" (1 John 2:18). Note, the plural term "antichrists" and the present tense, "now," suggesting the antichrists were present and at work in John's time not centuries from his writing. Also note, John speaks of the "spirit of the antichrist" (1 John 4:3).

This scribe's understanding of the "Antichrist," "the man of sin" and the "son of perdition" is "a personification of all rebellion and lawlessness which claims the right to change the law and commandments God gave to man" (W. Terry Varner, "Book of II Thessalonians," *Study To Show Thyself Approved*, Fifth Annual Virginia Bible Lectureship, May 25-27, 1988, pp. 235-237).

3. The "Third" Temple. The "third" temple is to be built in Jerusalem in the last three and one-half years of the tribulation before the visible return of Christ. This will be done with the protection of the Antichrist (Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 152).

a. For centuries, it has been argued that the Jewish temple

area once sat where the Muslim mosque now stands. This has created bitter strife between the Jews and the Arabs. Lindsey, without documentation, writes: "It has recently been discovered that the holy of holies lies approximately 100 meters north of the Dome of the Rock. This means that the third temple could now be built without disturbing the third holiest Muslim shrine" (*The Rapture*, p. 127, fn. 1).

Why a "third" Jewish temple? John F. Walvoord, a main spokesman for premillennialism, writes that the building of the third temple "would indicate also a literal interpretation of the temple ritual and sacrifices....the sacrifices make it clear that it is a distinct system from the Mosaic, but that it involves animal sacrifices as well as other forms of worship similar to that provided in the Mosaic system" (*The Millennial Kingdom*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959, pp. 310-311). Which are the "sacrifices," distinct from or similar to the Mosaic Law?¹³ Can they be both?

b. The earthquake of the entirety of the New Testament destroys the temple and sacrificial system of the premillennialists. Animal sacrifices served as atonement for sin. The book of Hebrews devastates the need and value of any temple and any future sacrifice beyond that of Christ. Christ's sacrifice was "once" for all (Heb. 7:27). Jesus "appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself" (Heb. 9:26). "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

Perhaps, the following series of blasphemous quotes give us insight and understanding for the need of animal sacrifices and a temple in the millennium.

It can be said at once that His dying was not God's own plan. It was a plan conceived somewhere else, and yielded to by God. God had a plan of atonement by which men who were willing could be saved from sin and its effects. That plan is given in the old Hebrew code....Clearly Jesus' dying does not in any way fit into the old Hebrew *form* of sacrifice....**the horrible features of Jesus' dying, the hatred and cruelty, were no part of the plan of salvation, and not necessary to his plan. There is no cross in God's plan of atonement** (S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks About Jesus*, New York: A. C. Armstrong & Son, 1906, pp. 114-115, 117-118, bold print mine, WTV). There is no need for additional comment!

SOME SERIOUS THOUGHTS TO PONDER

It is our conviction that Hal Lindsey's jigsaw approach to end-time events does great harm to the cause of Christ, the gospel and the church/kingdom for many reasons.

1. His explanations cannot be defended from biblical grounds. His hermeneutic is erroneous and at odds with the Bible.

2. Such manipulations of end-time events create a secret teaching [Gnostic in nature] which is understood by only a few and which is under constant recalculation known only by a certain few. The Bible is not a riddle Book of the future and eternity.

3. Such explanations make the cross foolishness and are thoroughly blasphemous.

4. Non-Christians seeing the juggling and jigsawing the biblical texts related to end-time events are prone to reject Christianity in toto.

A BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE OF THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

The second coming of Christ is probably the most popular subject of the entire Bible. Why not, as it involves for the Christian, especially, matters of momentous nature; e.g., our hope, longings of eternity and our heritage of heaven. An observation concerning the millennial mania is that little is said of significance of the many attendant doctrines involved in the second coming. A brief biblical perspective of the second coming is set forth.

BIBLICAL INJUNCTIONS CONCERNING THE SECOND COMING:

1. Watch For It (Mark 13:30-37; 1 Thess. 5:6).
2. Love It (2 Tim. 4:6-8).
3. Desire It (2 Peter 3:12).
4. Wait For It (Phil. 3:20; 2 Thess 3:5).
5. Live In Preparation For It (2 Peter 3:11-15).
6. Be Ready For It (Matt. 24:44).
7. Find comfort and hope (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

BIBLICAL FACT OF THE SECOND COMING:

1. He "shall appear" (Col. 3:4).
2. He "shall appear the second time without sin unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).
3. He "shall come in like manner as he went away" (Acts 1:11).

BIBLICAL PURPOSES FOR THE SECOND COMING:

1. Raise The Dead (John 5:28-29; Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15).
2. Judge Mankind (Acts 17:30-31; 24:25; Matt. 25:31-33; Rom. 14:12).
3. Reward Mankind, both righteous and unrighteous (Rev. 22:12; Matt. 25:34,41,46; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; 2 Cor. 5:10).
4. Destroy The Heavens And The Earth (2 Peter 3:10-11).
5. Death and hades cast into hell (Rev. 20:11-15).
6. Usher The Faithful To Heaven (1 Cor. 15:24-26).
7. Vindicate His saints (2 Thess. 1:10).

BIBLICAL MANNER OF THE SECOND COMING:

1. Public--"every eye shall see Him" (Rev. 1:7).
2. In the clouds (Acts 1:11).
3. In fire (2 Thess. 1:8).
4. Glorious in contrast to His first coming as Saviour (Matt. 16:27; 25:31; Rev. 20:11-15; Acts 17:31).
5. With His angels (Matt. 16:7; 25:31; 2 Thess. 1:7).
6. Unexpected, sudden, unheralded by signs (Mark 13:35-37; Luke 12:40; 2 Peter 3:10).

BIBLICAL TIME OF THE SECOND COMING:

1. Time of His coming is not known (Acts 1:6).
2. Unknown to Christ when on earth (Mark 13:32).
3. He will come "as a thief in the night" (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10).

CONCLUSION

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20)

ENDNOTES

¹For a brief survey of date-setters over the centuries, see Robert G. Clouse, "The Danger of Mistaken Hopes," *Dreams, Visions and Oracles*, Carl E. Armerding and W. Ward Gasque (eds.), (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1977), pp. 27-40.

²Norman Cohen, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), revised and expanded edition, pp. 9,14,21. This is the only book discussing the tradition of revolutionary millenarianism and mystical anarchism as it developed in western Europe between the eleventh and sixteenth centuries. Valuable for its insight into the development of the end-time heresies of these centuries.

³James J. Brookes, *Maranatha or the Lord Cometh* (Saint Louise: Edward Bredell, 1878), p. 364. C. Marvin Pate and Calvin B. Haines, Jr., *Doomsday Delusions* (Downer Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), pp. 19-20).

⁴Cohen, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

⁵Alnor, William N., *Soothsayers Of The Second Advent* (Old Tappen, NJ: Power Books, 1989), pp. 57-59).

⁶An important work along the line of Scofield is William E. Biederwolf, *The Second Coming Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1972) and originally published as *The Millennium Bible*. Two study guides by W. J. Krutza were published to be used with the Baker Book House edition in 1973.

⁷In 1988 this work entered its 100th printing and had sold in excess of 25 million copies in 30 languages (*Moody Monthly*, May

1988, pp. 30-31).

⁸Lindsey is the author of eleven books with a combined world-wide sales of over 35 million copies. His other works of import are: *The World's Final Hour* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970), also published as "*Homo Sapiens*." He edited, with five other writers, *When Is Jesus Coming Again* (Carol Stream, IL: Creation House, 1971). *Satan Is Alive And Well On Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1972). *The 1980's: Countdown To Armageddon* (King of Prussia, PA: Westgate Press, Inc., 1980). *The Promise* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1982). *The Rapture* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1983). *Planet Earth--2000 A.D.* (Palos Verdes, CA: Western Front, Ltd., 1994).

⁹The writings of Gaebelain, Pentecost, Feinberg, Ryrie, Hoyt, Price, Pache, Anderson, Talbot, Lovett, Koch, Sauer, Payne, Tatford, Bullinger, Peters, Schulyer, Walvoord, Bloomfield, et al.

¹⁰Salem Kirban, Tim Lahaye, Elizabeth Claire Prophet, Harold Camping, Edgar C. Whisenant, Charles Taylor, N. W. Hutchings, Constance E. Cumbey, Mary S. Relfe, R. Henry Hall, R. E. Dunlop, C. F. Deal, Chuck Smith, Pat Robertson and the cults of David Koresh, the Order of the Solar Temple of Switzerland and Canada, Aum Supreme Truth of Japan, et al.

¹¹Lindsey's prophetic date setting begins with his claim that "the most important sign in Matthew has to be the restoration of the Jews to the land in the rebirth of Israel" [14 May 1948, WTV] (*The Late Great Planet Earth*, p. 53).

His conclusion is drawn from the Parable of the Fig Tree (Matt. 24:32-34) which is applicable to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and not the establishment of the modern state of Israel. He defines "generation" 40 years in which "all these things could take place" (*op. cit.*, p. 54); i.e., all the prophecies of Christ's return will be fulfilled. The "rapture" could begin in 1988 and Christ's return would be seven years later in 1995. WELL?

Typical of date-setters, Lindsey began to recalculate the second coming. In 1979 in Toronto, Lindsey gained another 19 years by re-explaining the "budding fig tree" to include the re-possession of Old Jerusalem in 1967 (Stanely D. Waters, "Hal Lindsey: Recalculating the Second Coming," *The Christian Century*, 96 [September 12, 1979]:839). By 1994, Lindsey redefines "generation" to mean "somewhere between 40 to 100 years" (*Planet Earth--2000 A.D.*, p. 3). What is his next definition of "generation"?

¹²The Antichrist rises to power immediately after the rapture, coming out of the European Common Market. He will make peace with the state of Israel and permit the rebuilding of the temple.

The Antichrist will then turn on Israel and desolate the temple for the last three and one-half years. Identifying who is the Antichrist of I and II John has produced much speculation.

Historically, there are four basic views of the Antichrist: (1) he is the *personification of evil* and opposition to God, (2) an *institution of evil*, (3) an *evil person* (political as well as religious), and (4) the *dynamic view* which combines the previous three viewpoints. An excellent and thorough biblical discussion of the Antichrist has been written by Goebel Music, "The Man of Sin and the Antichrist," "Premillennialism, True or False?" Wendell Winkler (ed.), *The First Annual "Fort Worth" Lectures*, (Fort Worth: Winkler Publications, 1978), pp. 172-183. For a pre-millennial approach, see Walter K. Price, *The Coming Antichrist* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1974).

¹³Premillennialists are divided as whether the word "sacrifices" are literal or otherwise. George N. H. Peters writes that we ought "not to press the word 'sacrifices' [i.e., whether they are literal or not, WTV] which is associated with the temple" (*The Theocratic Kingdom*, Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1978), III:90).

W. Terry Varner - Terry received his education at Abilene Christian University; Waynesburg College; West Liberty State Teachers College; West Virginia State College; National Christian University; and Alabama Graduate School of Religion. He began preaching in 1961 at Shadyside, OH and has preached for churches in Dunbar, WV and North Canton and Dayton, OH, prior to moving to Marietta in 1978. He is currently in his seventeenth year at Harmar Hill congregation in Marietta, OH.

He has spoken on numerous lectureships throughout the brotherhood and participates in teacher training schools on a regular basis. He has authored four books and writes regularly for *Firm Foundation and Therefore Stand*, of which he is owner and editor. He speaks on a daily radio program in Marietta, which is the oldest continuous radio program of brethren in Ohio.

Terry is married to the former Lillie Garrison and they have four children and five grandchildren.

CHRISTIANITY VS RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN EVOLUTION/ATHEISM

Glenn Hawkins

INTRODUCTION

I count it a signal honor to have been invited to participate on this lectureship. My sincere thanks is extended to the lectureship committee, especially brother Emanuel Daugherty for the invitation to speak at this time. The subject assigned to me is Atheism/Evolution. Without fear of contradiction, I can call these two philosophies or ideas the twin terrors to New Testament Christianity. Let me say at the outset that all atheists are evolutionists, and if you are logically consistent, all evolutionists are atheists, although some have opted for theistic evolution which is contradictory on the very surface of things.

The ranting and ravings of atheist Madalyn Murray O'Hair as well as others in the scientific and philosophical communities who use a more "reasoned" approach, are evidence of the opposition we face. Dr. Thomas Warren debated two well known atheistic philosophers, Dr. A.G. N. Flew, and Dr. Wallace I. Matson. Both debates are in print and should be read by every Christian. I want to examine first, the threat of atheism to Christianity and then the threat of evolution.

ATHEISM

An atheist, according to the word itself, means "not God". Generally speaking, an atheist today, is one who denies the existence of a supreme being. While some atheists might quibble about which god, in the debate with Dr. Thomas Warren, Dr. Wallace Matson affirmed the following proposition: "I know that God (that is, the God of the New Testament who is to punish some individuals eternally in hell) does not exist."

This affirmation shows the first challenge of atheism- denying the existence of the God of the Bible- Jehovah God. If there is no God of the New Testament, or the Old Testament for that matter, then certain consequences must follow: (1) The Bible itself is not the inspired, inerrant, authoritative word of God. It becomes simply the product of man on a par with every other religious work like the Koran. It has no claims on mankind at all. It can be read for whatever insights the men who wrote it had, but is not binding upon all mankind. (2) Jesus Christ is not the Son of God, a divine being who took on human form while on earth. Listen to this statement from a book entitled *THE UNPLEASANT PERSONALITY OF CHRIST*. "Jesus is intolerant, fanatical, revengeful, illogical, superstitious, arrogant, and a thoroughly unpleasant individual. As the only writings that exist and tell us about him are biased in his favor, I would say that he must have been one of the nastiest specimens of humanity who ever walked on the face of the earth. He is extremely vindictive and revengeful. He shows little inclination to put his alleged precept "love your enemy" into action. He makes little attempt to love his enemies, but he wants to torture for all eternity those who disagreed with him. This crazy alleged god says, 'If thy foot offends thee, cut it off, if thy right hand offends thee, cut it off, if thy right eye offends thee, pluck it out..." (3) Christianity is not the one true religion, no better or worse than any other world religion. It certainly is not the only true religion which all people should embrace. (4) There is no ultimate standard of right and wrong. Morality then becomes both subjective and relative. This means that man himself determines what is right and wrong. Since two men may disagree on what is right and wrong, no one could criticize the behavior of another as "right" or "wrong" in an objective sense, because atheism denies an ultimate objective standard of right and wrong. One might say of another's conduct, "I don't like what you are doing", but it could not say, "Your behavior is absolutely

wrong." As the late Jean Paul Saree, the French existential philosopher said, "If there is no God, everything is permitted."

Let it be said at this point that the atheist is in a prison from which he cannot escape. In his debate with Dr. Antony Flew and Dr. Wallace Matson, our Dr. Thomas Warren showed how both men were in prison and could not escape. The atheist must prove and know the following in order to affirm that God does not exist: (1) The externality of matter, (2) life came from non living (rocks and dirt), (3) consciousness came from that which had no consciousness, (4) a conscience came from that which had no conscience, (5) intelligence came from that which had no intelligence, and (6) human beings came from that which was not human. None of these propositions can be proven. Truly David was correct when he wrote, "The fool has said in his heart, There is no God" (Psalm 14:1).

EVOLUTION

What is called, the General Theory of Evolution, according to the textbook, *Life: An Introduction to Biology* is defined as follows: "...all living organisms have evolved from common ancestors in a gradual historical process of change diversification. The theory rejects the notion that all organisms were designed and created at the beginning of time" (Harcourt, Bruce & World. New York. 1957, pp.25,26). This is generally what is called the "molecules-to-man theory of evolution.

This theory is widely accepted and is taught in our schools and colleges as fact. But the truth of the matter is that this theory of evolution has not been proven scientifically as even many prominent scientists now admit. Dr. Robert A. Milliken, Nobel Laureate in physics said, "The pathetic thing is that we have scientists who are trying to prove evolution, which no scientist can ever prove" (Quoted in the *Nashville Banner*, August 7, 1925). Dr. Bert Thompson, in his Creation/Evolution seminars held all over the country had well documented the fact that many scientists have

serious doubts and reservations about the provability of the general theory of evolution. I would refer you to lesson 4-8 in the study course on Christian Evidences published by Apologetics Press of Montgomery, Alabama for further study on this matter.

While the acceptance of the theory of evolution is well known, the fruits of this theory are not so well known. Dr. Bert Thompson quotes one of Darwin's old instructors, Professor Sedgwick on December 24, 1859 (one month after the publication of the Origin of Species) "If Darwinism did what he thought it would do, humanity, in my mind, would suffer a damage that might brutalize it, and sink the human race into a lower grade of degradation than any into which it has taken since its written records tells us of its history." (Sedgwick, quoted in: Darwin: Life and Letters, Volume 11, p.43). Was this assessment correct? Yes!

Dr. Bert Thompson, in his monograph, Can America Survive The Fruits of Atheistic Evolution? Published by Apologetics Press in Montgomery, Alabama, lists the following fruits of atheistic evolution.

1. "Evolution is built upon the 'strong subjugate the weak/survival of the fittest/might makes right' philosophies". A look at the history of such men as Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini and others can show us what can happen when evolution is applied socially and politically. Can any nation, including America, survive when this theory is take to its ultimate end? No! It is as Solomon said, "Righteousness exalted a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (Proverbs 14:34).

2. "Evolution is built upon the assumption that man is only an animal; consequently morals and values are useless and not being incorporated into the system. Richard Leakey, famed paleontologist of our day, puts it this way: "There is no law that declares the human animal to be different as seen in this broad biological perspective, from any other animal. There is no law that declares the human species to be immortal."" Aldous Huxley once said in his

Confessions of an Atheist, "We objected to morality because it interfered with our sexual freedom." Can any nation or country survive very long when morality is totally subjective? If a man is nothing more than a monkey, why should not he act like one? With millions of infants being slaughtered in their mothers' wombs, and with sexually transmitted diseases rampant, and thousands dying from them, we are seeing the fruits of atheists evolution as being all too real.

3. "Evolution, though its advocates do not like to admit it, leads to out and out racism." Adolph Hitler applied the theory of evolution to the social and political arena and was the worst racist of all. Sir Arthur Keith, as quoted by DR. Thompson, said, "The German Fueher...has consciously sought to make the practice of Germany conform to the theory of evolution." He then said, "Christianity makes no distinction of race or of color; it seeks to break down all racial barriers. In this respect the hand of Christianity is against that of Nature, for are not the race of mankind the evolutionary harvest of which Nature has toiled through the long ages to produce?" Can American survive this kind of thinking and practice?

4. "Evolution teaches, as an inherent part of its system that nothing supernatural exists." Notice this statement from Dr. George Gaylord Simpson: "Man stands alone in the universe, a unique product of a long, unconscious, impersonal material process, with unique understanding and potentialities. These he owes to no one but himself, and it is to himself alone that he is responsible. He is not the creature of uncontrollable and undeterminable forces, but is his own master. He can and must decide his own destiny." With God out of the picture, mankind does become his own master, and he is ultimately answerable to himself. Is this the kind of society you want to live in and you want your children to grow up in?

CONCLUSION

Both atheism and evolution are threats to the Christian faith, but both are ideas which cannot be proven true. The Christian as an individual and the church as a whole must continue to confront and expose these twin terrors.

Glenn Hawkins was born October 16, 1943, at Dexter, MO. He is married to the former Hope Shuts of Parkersburg, WV. They have two sons, Ken, 27, and Adam, 18. Glenn received his A.A. in Bible from Ohio Valley College, and his B.A. in Bible from Harding University. He has a M.A. in Philosophies of Religion from Harding Graduate School. He has worked fulltime for the church in 1965-68 at St. Clair, MO; as Education Director, Waverly, TN. Church of Christ; 1973-75, as the Associate Minister, Macon Rd. congregation, Memphis, TN., and as minister for his present congregation, Massilon, OH since 1975.

JESUS THE LIFE

Pete Allinder

Text: John 14:6

Introduction:

1. The word of God has called and still calls man to respond to many very difficult questions. Two such questions are:
 - a. "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).
 - b. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word" (I Kings 18:21)
2. These are very great questions:
 - a. Black or White
 - b. On or Off
 - c. Life or Death
3. John the Baptist plead with the very same sentiment. "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3.36).
4. If I were to ask you, would you say Life or Death?
5. Don't we all want life?
6. Before we answer lets consider some things?

Body:

- I. Physical Life came from Christ.

- A. Christ was with God in the beginning and is our creator
 - 1. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:1-4).
 - 2. This proclaims several very important facts about Christ.
 - a. Christ existed before creation with God.
 - b. Christ is God.
 - c. Christ created all things.
 - d. In him was life both spiritual and physical.
- B. "In The Beginning God Created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1)
 - 1. Part of the Nature of God is revealed to us in (Genesis 1:26).
 - 2. Christ is not only present with God, He is perfectly unified with God in purpose, Christ is also God.
- C. John through the direction of the Holy Spirit introduces his Gospel with the power statement of Christ's deity for I am sure many reasons.
 - 1. One such reason is found at (John 20:31).
 - 2. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).
- D. Christ created us.
 - 1. Christ sacrificed himself on earth for us,
 - 2. He now calls us to eternal life.
 - 3. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by

him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all *things* he might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:16-18).

- a. Christ as the Son of God does have preeminence.
- b. He has established his Church.
- c. He has sole authority over the church.

II. Authority over life belongs to Christ

A. God has given authority to his son.

1. "And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18).

2. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself" (John 5.24-26).

- a. Christ has power over spiritual life.
- b. Christ has power over spiritual death.

B. This authority is exclusively Christ's.

1. The authority has been given by God.
2. This authority has provided us with the gospel.
3. There can be no other authority.

C. There are those who do not full understand this.

1. Many denominational bodies claim authority for tradition "It is clear, therefore, that sacred

tradition, Sacred Scripture, and the teaching authority (magisterium) of the church, in accord with God's most wise design, are so linked and joined together that one cannot stand without the others, and that all together and each in its own way under the action of the one Holy Spirit contribute effectively to the salvation of souls" (Bishop Donald W. Wuerl, Thomas Comerfield Lawler, and Ronald Lawler, O.F.M. Cap., The Catholic Catechism (Huntington, Indiana: Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, 1986) p.242).

2. Jesus Seminar, a convention of approximately fifty religion professors for the purpose of studying Christ. Robert Funk The group's organizer says the group has concluded that no more than 20% of the sayings and deeds of Christ according to the gospels are authentic. "Jesus was perhaps the first stand-up Jewish comic." "He was not political, not problematic and offered no detailed prescriptions for dealing with the issues of the world. starting a new religion, would have been the farthest thing from his mind" (Jeffery L. Sheler, Mike Tharp, and Jordan Seider, "In Search of Jesus," U.S. News & World Report, April 8, 1996: 49-53).

D. What does the Bible say

1. The Jews recognized that Christ had a measure of authority from God. (John 3:2).
2. Christ was a gift of love. (John 3:16).
3. There has been no misunderstanding.
4. " As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:2,3).

E. We must believe in Jesus Christ, if we are to have hope

of eternal life.

1. He is the Son of God.
2. He has all authority.
3. His gospel must be honored in its entirety without addition.
3. Only by this faith (the gospel) do we have hope of eternal life.
4. This faith is dead without obedience James 2.

III. Eternal life has been promised by Christ.

A. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31).

1. It is very important to notice the word "might" Their is something we must do!!
2. We must Learn.
3. We must believe.
4. Then we have life.

B. Christ and his Gospel have always existed

1. Purposed (Ephesians 3:9,10)
2. Promise to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3)
3. Prophesied
4. Prepared John the Baptist, Christ and his disciples.
5. Perfected in the death and resurrection of Christ.
6. Only in the teachings of the gospel do we have hope.
 - a. Salvation or eternal life is a primary purpose of the Bible.
 - b. We need to read it.

C. The gospel is the bread of life.

1. Christ told Satan, "Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).
2. John teaches with the same metaphor

a. "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

b. "Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give unto you: for him hath God the Father sealed" (John 6:27).

c. "For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him, Lord, evermore give us this bread. And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:33-35).

D. Man for centuries has searched for the fountain of youth. (Ponce de Leon)

1. The magical waters do not exist that will keep this earthly body young.

2. The Bible is a true our fountain of youth.

a. You must first have a heart that desires eternal life.

b. Your heart must recognize:

1. Christ's authority.

2. You must accept it all.

3. For by rejecting part you reject it all.

c. You must drink continually.

1. To stay healthy we take our physical meals frequently.

2. The Holy Spirits use of this analogy is not coincidental but with the purpose and wisdom of God.

E. In order to obtain your salvation you must be part of the living body of Christ, the church.

1. There is no other way.
2. However, our confidence as Christians is deceiving if we are not diligent servants.
3. James wrote "faith without works is dead" (James 2:20).
4. We as Christians must eat of the bread of life often and greedily.

F. This fountain of youth or eternal life has not been given without a price.

IV. The cost of life was paid by Christ

A. The cost was the life of Christ.

1. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).
2. This is the Love Christ had for us all

B. "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my *sheep*, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it

down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father" (John 10:11-18).

1. No one else could give this gift.
2. No one else has is to give.
3. No one else was, is, or will be able to offer themselves as a perfect sacrifice.
4. Christ gave of his life so that he could give us eternal life.

C. When we think about eternal life we often smile, It would not surprise me if someone would even cry with the joy of this hope.

1. "when we've been there ten thousand years bright shining as the sun there are no less days to sing Gods praise than when we first begun" (Amazing Grace).

2. We are promised:

- a. no pain,
- b. no sadness,
- c. the presence of God and Christ.

3. We all understand the bliss of heaven a little differently.

- a. What aspect of eternal life thrills you?
- b. King David had his eyes focused on something.
- c. "And he said, While the child was yet alive, I fasted and wept: for I said, Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me, that the child may live? But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (II Samuel 12:22,23).

D. Eternal life is free to man, but it must be embraced,

1. We are to drink from the word, to learn and remind ourselves of the will of God.
2. This continual study increases our faith or belief.
3. Study gives us knowledge and wisdom necessary to

live a godly life of belief.

4. "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal" (John 12:25).

Conclusion:

- 1.) In Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ alone we have life.
- 2.) God has given Christ the authority to offer mankind salvation.
- 3.) Christ has paid the price for our eternal life.
 - a. He gave his life.
 - b. Now he gives us life.
- 4.) Through our daily living as Christ has commanded we accept our salvation.
 - a. Through righteous living, not church membership alone.
 - b. through study and preparation
5. Now lets answer the question do we choose life or death.
6. The question can only be answered with the evidence of our life.

(8,19,96), Lifel.wps

Peter Allinder - Pete is a second year student at **West Virginia School of Preaching**. His birthplace is Pt. Pleasant, WV; and is married to the former Sarah Miller they have three children, John, Rachel and Hannah. He has a B.B.A. Accounting degree from Marshall University.

MILITANT CHRISTIANITY

Winfred Claiborne

"Militant Christianity"--an oxymoron! How can New Testament Christians be militant in view of our Lord's saying, "I am meek and lowly in heart" (Mt. 11:29)? How can one be compassionate and militant at the same time? Mark records that Jesus and his apostles were in constant demand by the multitudes. Jesus knew the pressure the apostles faced and invited them to go into a secluded place for some rest. "And they departed into a desert place by ship privately." The crowds knew who Christ was and kept on following him. "And Jesus, when he came out, saw much people, and was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a Shepard: and he began to them many things" (Mk. 6:31-34). Can a militant be compassionate?

A gospel preacher was asked about his stand on certain moral issues. He responded by saying, "I am not a fighter." Was he arguing that Christians--including gospel preachers--are not engaged in warfare with the forces of evil? Does he believe the devil has ceased his attempts to seduce people and to led them into sin? Is he willing for his fellowmen to believe, to preach and to practice soul-condemning error and not raise his voice against it? Tragically, some of our preachers will fight no one and nothing--except those who fight doctrinal error and moral corruption. They often give the impression of being kind, gentle and loving until their compromising attitudes are exposed. Then they come out scratching and clawing like a wildcat backed in a corner. They will fight the spirituality, honesty and devotion of the militant Christians.

IS MILITARY LANGUAGE SCRIPTURALLY JUSTIFIED?

In recent years, books using military language have appeared in the religious press. Tim LaHaye wrote three books with the word "battle" in each of the books: The Battle for the Mind, The Battle

for the Family, and The Battle for the Public Schools.¹ Our own brethren have also used the language of the military, just as the Bible does. One whole issue of The Spiritual Sword was devoted to the theme, "Soldiers of Christ--Arise."² Thomas B. Warren wrote on "The Church Must Be Militant," also in The Spiritual Sword.³ The 1979 Spiritual Sword Lectureship speakers discussed, God Demands Doctrinal Preaching. One of the chapters in that book, "As Christ's Soldiers--We must Defend the faith," makes extensive use of military metaphors.⁴ Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins edited the book, The Church--The Beautiful Bride of Christ. Brother Warren's chapter in that book is entitled "The Church--The Army of Christ."⁵ G.C. Brewer authored the book, Forty Years on the Firing Line⁶ and James D. Bales wrote 42 Years on the Firing Line.⁷ Can the titles to these lectures and books be harmonized with the mind of Jesus Christ?

The best way to answer that last question is to examine the words the New Testament uses of a Christian's responsibility to uphold righteousness and to oppose evil. The New Testament uses three Greek words which are translated "war": polemeō (English: polemics) means to fight, to make war (Jas. 4:2); strateuō (English: strategy) means to make war--from stratos, an encamped army (2 Cor. 10:3); antistrateuomai, to make war against (Rom. 7:23). The New Testament uses two words which are rendered "solider": stratiōtes (2Tim. 2:3) and sustraitiōtes, fellow-soldier (Phil. 2:25; Phile. 2). Two words in the King James Version are translated "fight": agonizomai, to fight, engage in conflict. Our words "agony" and "agonize" come from this Greek word. Following are two examples from Paul's letters to Timothy. "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto you are called, and have professed a good profession before many witnesses" (1Tim. 6:12). "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith" (2Tim. 4:7); machomai, to fight (Jas. 4:2). Twenty-six times the New Testament used the word nikaō (a verb meaning victory). The work is usually rendered "overcome" in the

King James Version. Only one time is the word translated "victory". "For whatsoever is born of God overcomes (nikaō) the world: and this is the victory (nikē) that overcomes (nikēsasa) the world, even our faith" (1John 5:4). Paul used the word hupernikaō ("more than conquerors"). Other versions render the word "win an overwhelming victory" (Phillips) and "keep on gloriously conquering" (Williams) (Rom. 8:37).

The tassō verbs also have a military connotation. Epitassō means to command, to order. The noun form of the verb (epitage) means commandment. Hupotassō is usually translated "submit" "be subject to" and literally means to rank or to array under. Antitassomai means to array against. For example, James writes: "but he gives grace to the humble" (Jas. 4:6). The New Testament uses the word tēreō, to keep, to preserve, to guard. These Greek words and many others were borrowed from the language of military service because they expressed the ideas Christ and his apostles wanted to use so that we might understand the militancy of our service to God almighty.

If we are to be militant in our pursuit of righteousness, whom are we fighting? We cannot afford to go into battle or to continue in battle without identifying our enemies. Paul warned the Corinthians no to allow Satan to get advantage of them: "for we are not ignorant of his devices" (2Cor. 2:11). By studying the Bible we can know who and what our enemies are, how they operate and how to overcome them. "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against (stenai) the wiles (methodeias: methods of operation) of the devil" (Eph. 6:10-11).

Our enemies are not our own brethren--even unfaithful and mediating brethren. They may be enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:17-19) but we are not to hate them (Rev. 2:6). The Ephesians hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans--which God also hated--but they did not hate the Nicolaitans. The Russians, the Chinese, the Cubans, the Libyans and other people who disagree with us

politically, religiously and morally are not our enemies. Our warfare is not carnal--not against flesh and blood--but against all kinds of wickedness (Eph. 6:12).

Our chief enemy, as the Bible makes very clear, is the devil. In fact, the word "devil" (diabolos) means slanderer, accuser. Jesus said to the Jews: "You are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it" (John 8:44). The apostle Peter warned: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary (antidikos: opponent as in a lawsuit) the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about seeking whom he may devour" (1Pet. 5:8). The word "Satan" (satanas) means the hater, the accuser, adversary. Satan tempts (1Cor. 7:5). He even transforms himself into an angel of light (2Cor. 11:14). Eternal damnation will be the ultimate fate of the devil and those who choose to follow him (Mt. 25:41).

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

Denominationalism. Tragically, some preachers of the gospel are compromising in their attitude toward denominationalism. I ask you: "Can there be any such entity as undenominational Christianity? Did Jesus establish more than one church? If our Lord established just one church, is possible to reproduce it in our generation? If we restore the church Jesus established on the day of Pentecost, would that not be undenominational Christianity? George Eldon Ladd, a professor at Fuller Theological Seminary, affirmed that "the idea of denominations would be abhorrent to Paul. The nearest thing to denominations was the sects in Corinth that Paul heartily condemned" (1Cor. 1:12ff.).⁸ James Montgomery Boice, an internationally respected Evangelical scholar, speaks of the scandal of divided Christendom. "It is dishonoring Christ. Moreover, it is a scandal that hinders the preaching of the gospel. These things ought not to be. In place of divisions Christians should know a unity that is visible and has practical results."⁹

Humanism, Protagoras, the fifth century B.C. Greek philosopher, gave us considerable insight into the meaning of humanism: "Man is the measure of all things". Humanism leaves God out of the picture and elevates man to the status of God. "Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things" (Rom. 1:22-23). According to humanism, man does not exist to glorify God, but to glorify himself. All questions of right and wrong are determined by men's desires, preferences and experiences. There is nothing outside man to give hope, to settle controversies and to decide right and wrong.

Not all humanists support abortion, euthanasia, infanticide, suicide, fetal experimentation and such like--although why they do not would be hard to explain--but the Bible of the American Humanist Association, Humanist Manifestos I & II --unquestionably endorses these great wrongs and many more.

HOW CAN WE WIN THE VICTORY?

We must become like the captain of our salvation, "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5). We must adopt the attitudes which characterized our Savior (John 4). We must get ready to fight and then fight. "Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all to stand. Stand therefore" (Eph. 6:10-14). If we are going to win, we must have strong, faithful and loving gospel preaching. We also must have Christian living (Mt. 5:13-16). And we desperately need first class Christian scholarship.

ARE WE SURE WE CAN WIN?

Jesus encouraged his disciples to be of good cheer. He assured them of ultimate victory--if they remained faithful unto death (Rev. 2:10). "I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Leslie Weatherhead, one of England's most famous preachers, made the following observation: "God will win whether we win or lose.

So in God, if we remain loyal to him, the victory will be ours, even if it looks like defeat and is called defeat and feels like defeat. The Cross felt like defeat to Jesus, and looked like defeat to the world. Yet it was God's greatest victory. Let us, then, prepare for the victory, be worthy of it, and know how to apply it for God's purposes. If God could turn even the Cross to victory, there is no disaster he could not turn to spiritual gain if we believed in him".¹⁰

ENDNOTES

- 1 All of these books by Tim LaHaye were published by Fleming H.Revell Company, 1980, 1982 and 1983, respectively.
- 2 Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins, Editors, The Spiritual Sword, (volume 8, October, 1976, number 1).
- 3 Thomas B. Warren, "The Church Must Be Militant," in The Spiritual Sword, Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins, Editors (volume 2, December 1970, number 2, pp. 1-3).
- 4 Alan E. Highers, "As Christ's Soliders--We Must Defend the Faith", in Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins, God Demands Doctrinal Preaching (Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, 1979), pp.43-47.
- 5 Thomas B. Warren, "The Church--the Army of Christ", in Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins, Editors, The Church--The Beautiful Bride of Christ (Jonesboro,AR: National Christian Press, 1980). Pp. 186-191.
- 6 G.C.Brewer, Forty Years on the Firing Line (Kansas City: Old Paths Book Club, 1948.
- 7 James D.Bales, 42 Years on the Firing Line (Shreveport, LA: n.d.).
- 8 James Boice Montgomery, An Expository Commentary on Philippians (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1974), p. 104.
- 9 Leslie Weatherhead, This Is the Victory (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1941), p. 56.

DENOMINATIONALISM

Denver E. Cooper

When the church began in the first century, there was no such thing as denominational churches. As the apostles and other Christians went about preaching the Word of God, churches of Christ were established throughout the Roman Empire. When apostles and others said they were going to visit the church, it was not necessary to ask, "Which denomination will you be visiting?" "At what denomination will you be preaching?" Wouldn't it have been wonderful to walk into town, make inquiry about the church, without it being necessary to explain every detail of worship and work before finally settling where one might preach or worship? Of course, most churches were loyal to Christ and His Word. A few, as the Galatian churches, drew a rebuke because they were guilty of moving away from the pure word of God.

Hundreds of years after the establishment of the New Testament church, denominations came into being. The Restoration Movement was the birthplace of what we know as Denominationalism today. Hence, it is almost impossible to mention being a church member without being asked, "of what denomination are you a member?" Of course, we are not a member of a denomination, nor is the church a denomination. I would define a denomination as a religious body larger than a local New Testament church, yet smaller than the body of a church of Christ. Ephesians 1:22,23; Col. 1:18; Eph. 4:4 all declare the church and the body of Christ to be the same. The apostle Paul prevented the establishing of denominations in Corinth by preaching the gospel regarding division among God's people. If preaching God's Word prevented denominationalism, sectarians, the party spirit then, why will it not prevent the party spirit today? Even denominational authorities admit one doesn't need to be a member of a denomination to be a Christian. However, the New

Testament requires one to be a member of Christ's church in order to be a Christian, a saved person. Membership in a denomination requires either more or less than required when one follows the Bible.

Some among us today are declaring, "Our background and commitment is to the Church of Christ that was born of the American Restoration Movement. Our goal is to move that group closer to the church of Christ revealed in scripture." (Wineskins, Vol.1, No.1, 5/92 - Pg.6.) Do you feel that you must commit to such a view? I, most emphatically do not subscribe to such a view and believe such is unnecessary. I do believe that all who obey the same gospel, the one declared by the apostles, recorded in the New Testament, are members of the New Testament church, the body of Christ, the family of God, the bride of Christ, and that the church ought to do all within its power to worship and work as it is authorized by direct statement, apostolic example or by inference of the Holy Scriptures. When people hear the gospel, believe it, repent of their sins, confess their faith and are baptized into Christ, the church, if it did not exist, is restored and needs only to continue study of the scriptures, determined to add that which yet needs be restored to complete obedience to Christ.

Sadly, many formed and are constantly forming new ideas which result in new denominations. To some, baptism means sprinkling; "other sheep" means two folds, "free gift means unconditional; spiritual gifts means jabbering; miraculous healing or spiritual illumination without the Bible; taking a wafer only is communion; giving mental assent of ones faith in Christ without obedience is salvation. On and on one could list the personal views of individuals. Such diversity calls for a new denomination, it is claimed. Of course, none seek for a "thus saith the Lord."

Well, preacher, all churches do some good, so what is wrong with having a denomination to suit the views and whims of everybody? Several things are wrong with denominations.

First, denominationalism is wrong because it disregards Jesus' prayer for unity. (John 17:21.) Men thank God for "many churches" where one may "join" according to choice. Hence, the prayer for unity is mocked. Further, while accepting ONE GOD, ONE HOLY SPIRIT, they reject Paul's perfect plan for unity in Eph. 4:1-6.

Second, authority of scriptures is rejected. The Bible claims to be self-sufficient. (2 Tim.3:16,17). Denominations lay by the side of the Bible, "the other testament"; prayer books; confessions of faith; handbooks; Watchtower and catechisms, often claiming each teaches only what is taught by the Bible. If such is true, why have the extra creeds of men? Incidentally, brethren always need be careful of laying along side the Bible their hobbies and pre-conceived views of what the Lord requires of Christians. If what is taught is less than what the Bible teaches, it is too little. If such is more than what the Bible teaches, it is too much. Of course, if it is the same, it is the Bible. Creeds foster division. Division is carnal and a work of the flesh according to Paul in 1Cor. 3:1-4 and Gal. 5:1-9. While reading the scriptures, and perhaps making affirmative claims to believing them, denominations actually reject the plain teachings of Christ and the apostles. Christians must speak the same things doctrinally. (1Cor. 1:10).

Third, denominationalism honors human organizations with human heads. The Pope, Calvin, Knox, Wesley, Russell, Smith, Eddy, McPhearson, and many others became or were made heads of various churches. Christ and Christ alone is THE head of THE church and the ONLY head from the beginning till time shall be no more. (Acts 20:28; Mt. 28:19,20).

Fourth, denominationalism divides homes. Parents and children often are unnecessarily torn in their desires to please each other. Hence, each chooses a church that will not cause the other to feel too badly or each will choose to be non-religious.

Fifth, denominationalism disregards all teaching found in the

Bible figures declaring the oneness of God's church. All New Testament terms signify ONENESS:

1. "My church", (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 3:10; Col. 1:24.)
2. "Church of God" (1Cor. 1:2; 1Tim. 3:15)
3. "The body of Christ." (1Cor. 12:27; Eph. 4:12.)
4. "The church of Christ." (Mt. 16:18; Rom. 16:16.)

This oneness gives no place for "brand" names or "kinds" of Christians. When one declares himself a Christian, it is enough. In New Testament times any person who heard the gospel and obeyed it was a member of the church. (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1Pet. 4:16.) On Pentecost, according to Acts 2, Jews who responded to the gospel call were added to the church, not by some man, but by God. (Acts 2:47.) They did not "join", nor were they "voted" into church by men.

The confession made by Peter in Matthew 16:16 is the only confession of faith of the undenominational, universal church of Christ. The eunuch made it, (Acts 8:37); and Cornelius made it, (Acts 16:31). All who want to be saved must make it.

Sixth, denominationalism seeks to worship God as it pleases the majority. According to Jesus, our worship must be "in spirit and in truth". (John 4:24). Man has no authority to do more or less. Obeying the doctrine of Christ provides fellowship with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, and all other Christians (1John 1:7,8; 2John 9,10).

Two basic elements are necessary for us to maintain undenominational Christianity, namely, love and truth. Love alone is inadequate for error may enter and error is unstable. Not truth alone; for hatred may enter and hatred is divisive. When we love one another with a "true heart fervently: and when we cling to the truth with all our might, oneness with God, Christ, the Holy Spirit and with each other will be a blessed unity.

Denver E. Cooper was born in Cairo, WV, April 2, 1923, reared in Parkersburg and graduated from Parkersburg High School in 1941. He was baptized in 1937 by bro. Charlie Taylor who encouraged him to attend Freed-Hardeman College which he entered in August 1942 and preached his first full-length sermon in September 1941. He married Florence E. Smith of Sistersville, WV in March 1945 and they celebrated 50 years together March 1995. To this union was born 8 children and they adopted on daughter. His located work include Ironton, OH; Harrisville, WV; Chester, WV; Philippi, WV; West ST., Weirton, WV; Toronto, OH; Ravenswood, WV; Dewey Ave., ST. Marys, WV; Weirton Heights, Weirton, WV; Timberville, VA and Hillview Terrace Moundsville, WV (present). He has been a Bible instructor in **West Virginia School of Preaching** beginning in 1994.

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

Winford Claiborne

The American people have been bombarded in the past twenty years with words like psychic phenomena, reincarnation, astrology, mental telepathy, extraterrestrials, Unidentified Flying Objects (UFOs), mediums, Out-of-body experiences (OBEs) and Near Death experiences (NDEs). We may not be quite so familiar with concepts, such as, levitation, Akashic records, channeling (or trance channeling), automatic writing or painting, crystallography, telekinesis, auras, apports, scrying and psychokinesis. While there are people who accept some of the above as belonging in the category of truth, such as, OBEs and NDEs, they may not necessarily identify themselves as New Agers. Most of those committed to the New Age Movement accept all of the above and much more, but it would not be fair nor correct to affirm that they all do.

Have you ever wondered if many of those in the New Age movement have become so disillusioned with sectarianism and denominationalism that they are searching for some alternative form of spirituality? Human beings seem almost instinctively to worship something or someone. Since much of modern religion has strayed so far from the teaching of the Bible--both doctrinally and morally--there seems to be little, if any, resemblance between the religion of the Bible and what one sees in various churches. Even bishops in various American churches have ceased believing in Christ as the Son of the God, in the Bible as the word of God and in the moral values Jesus and his apostles taught. No wonder New Age and cultic groups are growing at an unprecedented rate in the United States and worldwide.

DEFINITIONS

Since there are so many facets of the New Age movement, it is almost impossible to give a precise, comprehensive definition of the phenomenon. Russell Chandler's book, Understanding the New Age, admits that "for all its faddishness...the New Age is hard to

define; its boundaries are fuzzy. It's a shifting kaleidoscope of 'beliefs, fads and rituals,' as Time magazine duly noted in its December 7, 1987, cover story, 'New Age Harmonies'...New Age is a hybrid mix of spiritual, social and political forces, and it encompasses sociology, theology, the physical sciences, medicine, sports, and science fiction."1 Elliot Miller characterizes the New Age movement as very large, "loosely structured network of organizations and individuals bound together by common values (based on mysticism and monism--the world view that 'all is one') and a common vision (a coming 'new age' of peace and mass enlightenment, the 'Age of Aquarius'".2 Bob Larson, a highly respected cult expert, says "the New Age movement can be defines as syncretistic networking of individuals and organizations dedicated to the mystical interpretation of reality and the pursuance of occult practices to enhance spirituality". 3

Caryl Matrisciana provides the following "Recipe for a New Age".

2 cups of hope (carefully sift out all fear)

2 cups of altered consciousness (Yoga, drugs, or meditation to taste)

3 tablespoons of self-awareness, self-improvement, and self-esteem (be sure to melt away anything negative)

1 heaping teaspoon of peace

1 large dollop of love

1 generous pinch each of humanism, Eastern mysticism and occultism

1 handful of holism

1 scoop of mystical experience.

"Mix thoroughly together. Bake in a warm, friendly environment.

Garnish generously with positive thoughts and good vibrations".4

The late Dr. Walter Martin, one of the leading cult experts in the world, says that Nels F.S. Ferre, an extremely liberal theologian, "correctly predicted the influx of Eastern and Indian

philosophy and theology that characterized that decade, and concluded that the imported ideas would be a major challenge to historic Christianity". He also makes mention that C.S.Lewis saw the battle lines being drawn between Hinduism and Christianity.⁵

THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT IS NOT NEW

The New Age movement has some features which are new, or at least, novel in the United States. For example, it has attracted millions of new adherents to the religious scene. Most people seem to want to be religious in some sense, but they do not want to follow the restrictions which are recorded in the Bible. They have embraced the New Age movement because there are few prohibitions. Since most of the leaders in the movement reject all absolutes, the New Agers can do whatever they please with no official sanctions and no compunction of conscience. They are like the people of ancient Rome: "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient (or proper)" (Rom. 1:28).

The leaders in the New Age movement are not such as one would expect to lead a new "spiritual" movement. The movers and shakers in the movement range all the way from Shirley MacLaine, a notoriously immoral reprobate, to Arthur Ford and Edgar Cayce--both of whom had connections with the Restoration movement. Arthur Ford preached for years among the Disciples of Christ and Cayce taught Bible classes in a Christian church. The leaders come from all branches of science, religion, the entertainment industry and academia. A great number of college and university professors are deeply involved in the occult.

The ideas and ideals of the New Age movement are often presented in new ways and not always in unattractive ways and by unattractive people. Millions of Americans were greatly impressed by Shirley MacLaine's made-for-television series, "Out on a Limb". That is also the name of one of her books--a book which is exciting, appealing and well written. Thousands of books, magazine articles, video and audio tapes, movies--the "Star Trek" series,

"Close Encounters of the Third Kind"--are being used effectively to tell the story of the coming of the Age of Aquarius.

The growth of the movement has many new twists. It has reached into some of the most influential academic and religious institutions in the world. Some American college presses are spewing out New Age books by the thousands. Preachers of liberal denominations, such as, John Shelby Spong of the American Episcopal Church and Leslie Weatherhead of the United Methodist Church, have sought to integrate the New Age movement into New Testament Christianity of what they call Christianity. At the end of his life, Bishop James Pike had completely committed himself to the occult, as is oblivious from his book, The Other Side.⁶

But the New Age movement is really old age paganism. It is the some old paganism which dominated Babylon, Egypt, Tibet, India, Rome, China and Japan. The outward appearance may be new, but underneath it is the same heathenism and superstition which adversely affected everyone of those nations. The truth of the matter is: There have men and women in every age and in every nation who have appealed to the occult. Even Israel was often guilty of seeking information and inspiration through witches, mediums, necromancers, astrologers and such like. F.LaGard Smith denies that the movement is progressive, as many of its adherents claim, He insists that the movement is "best characterized as mass societal regression".⁷

GOD'S THOUGHTS ON THE NEW AGE MOVEMENT

When the Israelites were preparing to leave Egypt and enter the land of Canaan, God gave them specific instructions which were designed to prevent their following false gods and to make them useful, happy and healthy. These instructions run into dozens of pages in the Bible, but our immediate concern relates to the occult practices which were rampant among the Palestinian people. The best known passage dealing with pagan practices similar to those within the New Age movement is Deuteronomy 18:9-22.⁸

The Israelites were required to maintain strict separation

from the heathen nations surrounding Israel. "When you are come into the land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not learn to do after the abominations of those nations" (Dt. 18:9). Some of the restrictions God places on his people may seem intolerant and inappropriate to modern men who insist that all religions are basically the same. But God knew the Jews' penchant for turning away from his law to serve idols. After all, the nation of Israel had made a golden calf and worshipped it not many years before their delivery from "that great and terrible wilderness" and their entrance into Canaan. God wanted his people to be as far removed from heathen beliefs and conduct as possible.

One of the pagan rituals which God forbade is technically called "februation". "There shall not be found among you anyone who makes his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or who uses divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch" (Dt. 18:10). "Passing through the fire" referred to heathen ceremonies in which girls and boys were offered as sacrifice to pagan gods. The NIV reads: "You must not worship the Lord your God in their way, because in worshipping their gods, they do all kinds of detestable things the Lord hates. They even burn their sons and daughters in the fire as sacrifices to their gods" (Dt. 12:31). Apparently, the purpose for offering children as sacrifices to the gods was to appease the gods or to influence their attitudes toward the people. In any case, God's children were warned not to engage in such abominable activities.

The Moabite king offered his son to the heathen gods whom he was trying to influence in his favor. "And when the king of Moab saw that the battle was too sore for him, he took with him seven hundred men that drew swords, to break through even unto the king of Edom: but they could not. Then he took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall. And there was great indignation against Israel: and they departed from him, and returned to their own land" (2Kings 3:26-27). Even the Israelites were sometimes guilty of

offering their children in sacrifice to Molech or Moloch (Jer. 32:35).

"Divination" involves using various means--supposedly supernatural--to discover the course of human events. Water witching, reading tea leaves, peering into a crystal ball or into a mirror (called "scrying"), palm reading, etc. are men's vain attempts to discern or to control the future. There is no scientific or scriptural justification for any of these, although you will probably get into some heated discussions over water witching. But all of these are forbidden because they are occult activities. All forms of the occult are displeasing to God. They can also lead to unspeakable acts of violence. Gary Provost's book, The True Story of Satanic Cult Killings in Matamoros, Mexico,⁹ records some of the most gruesome killings you can imagine. The group in Mexico were associated with the Santeria religion--a mixture of Roman Catholicism and the occultic practices of Haiti.

Some versions render the Hebrew "practices soothsaying" or "sorcery" instead of "an observer of times". The Greek word for "sorcery" or "witchcraft" is pharmakeia (Gal. 5:20; Rev. 9:21; 18:23) and probably referred to the use of drugs to induce trances and to get in touch with the supernatural. Tragically, there are New Age adherents today who use LSD, TCP and other drugs for the same purposes. They try to get in touch with their higher selves or with some deity. The late Timothy O'Leary was a Harvard professor of psychology who used drugs for occultic purposes. Some of the druggies actually became gurus in the drug culture and changed their names to Indian names--Guru Dev, for example was once a Harvard professor also.

The expression, "An enchanter", means one who interprets omens" (NIV). This would include studying the entrails of various animals to learn about the future or interpreting heavenly signs for the same purpose. Witches in Bible times were men and women who practiced all kinds of magical arts. The Bible could not be

more explicit in its condemnation of witchcraft. And yet, the United State and England have many covens (small groups) of witches. Africa, Haiti and other foreign countries have imported witchcraft to the United States and to other nations. Opra Winfrey had a voodoo "doctor" on her television program several years ago.

The Lord also prohibited the Israelites from having any dealings with charmers, consulter with familiar spirits, wizards and necromancers. "Charmers" supposedly could "cast spells" (NIV). One version translates the Hebrew "cast magic spells". It is not easy to distinguish this word from sorcery. Drugs may also have been used to cast spells. "A consulter with familiar spirits" could be rendered "medium". In our day, the "channeler" would probably be a better translation. In earlier days, this person was called a "spiritist" or a "spiritualist". Shirley MacLaine has given great prominence to spiritualism by her promotion of channelers. A wizard in modern speech usually refers to a male witch, but the Old Testament may not have used it in that way. The word "necromancer" comes from the Greek nekros which means "dead". The word refers to one who attempts to consult the dead to learn about life beyond the grave. The witch of Endor is an example of a necromancer (1Sam. 28:7ff.).

If the Israelites were forbidden to consult heathen sources of information and inspiration, where could they turn when they needed help and consolation? All the pagan sources were called "an abomination unto the Lord" (Dt.18:12). The Jews were told if they followed the heathen rituals and ceremonies God would not drive the heathen out of the land. "You shall be perfect with the Lord your God. For these nations, which you shall possess hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for you, the Lord your God has not suffered you so to do" (Dt. 18:13-14). God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses who would reveal to them God's message in God's words. If the Jews failed to listen to that prophet, they would be cut off from among the people (Dt. 18:15-22). Why should anyone--either in ancient times or in modern--

listen to pagan witches, wizards and such like when they have the very words of God almighty? God is unquestionably troubled with millions of Americans who are involved in New Age heathenism.

ARTHUR FORD AND THE NEW AGE

There are dozens and dozens of New Age gurus whose writings are nationally and even internationally known, but I shall briefly review a book by Arthur Ford to get an overview of the beliefs of many within the New Age movement. I examine Arthur Ford's book, The Life Beyond, 10 for two reasons. As I mentioned before, Arthur Ford had connections with the American Restoration Movement. Even today--twenty-five years after his death--he supposedly is being channeled by Ruth Montgomery--a respected American Journalist turned New Age.

Arthur Ford was born at Titusville, Florida, in 1896 and died in 1971. He was educated at Transylvania University at Lexington, Kentucky. He was a member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and preached for the Disciples for several years.¹¹ Ford was co-founder of Spiritual Frontiers Fellowship, a nationwide fellowship for exploring psychical and mystical aspects of life.¹² Ford shares with Edgar Cayne the distinction of being two of the most influential American mediums of the twentieth century.

Arthur Ford--like Barbara Mandrell--was New Age before New Age was cool.¹³ He lists a number of questions he was often asked at his lectures. What kind of body will we have at the resurrection? "Can we remember all things that happened during our earth life?, etc".¹⁴ The Bible does not provide the answers to these puzzling questions, but Arthur Ford's special insights enabled him--so he claimed--to provide answers. "There are definite answers to all these questions".¹⁵

Arthur Ford met and was profoundly influenced by various mystics and gurus. He gives credit to Paramahansa Yogananda as "of the great influences in broadening and deepening his understanding between Eastern and Western religious concepts".¹⁶ According to Ford, Paramahansa Yogananda, whom he calls "the great swami", "had

clear ideas about the nature of the world beyond based on visionary revelations he regarded as utterly dependable".¹⁷ Ford's association with the Indian swami jolted him "out of the rather narrow rural Christianity of his boyhood. One had to meet Yogananda to realize at once that he was in the presence of a great man--a man of profound learning, unassailable integrity, absolute courage, and endless compassion. Yet this tremendous personality had developed outside the Judeo-Christian tradition".¹⁸ Yogananda did not doubt the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but he questioned its uniqueness. He thought all human beings were capable of replicating our Lord's reassembling the molecular structures of the body.¹⁹

After the lectures Ford gave on different aspects of the New Age movement, he would then have a "message period". According to Ford's book, he provided information during these periods which could not have possibly been prearranged and could not possibly have originated with anyone except the now-discarnate person who claimed to be the sender.²⁰ Ford's control was an entity called "Fletcher". "A discarnate personality called a control" is "a kind of psychic master of ceremonies who takes over the medium's vocal apparatus and takes charge of proceedings during trance seances while the medium himself is entranced".²¹ It may surprise many Americans that Ford gave public lectures to a packed auditorium at New York's famous Riverside Church.²²

Ford insisted that the New Testament, if properly interpreted, is a record of "psychic phenomena, of a kind which still takes place today, occurring around a group of unusual mediums--one of whom was supremely inspired, Telepathy, clairvoyance, apports, telekinesis, and nonmedicinal healing continue today as they did in the times of Francis of Assisi, Jesus of Nazareth, Joseph and Moses".²³ In short, Arthur Ford accepted most of the superstitious views of the leading lights in the New Age movement, in spite of the fact that he was supposed to be a gospel preacher.

FORD'S VIEWS OF HELL

Very few of the leaders in the New Age movement believe in the existence of hell. During Ford's public lectures, he seldom missed an opportunity to excoriate preachers--both ancient and modern--for their beliefs about hell. He thought it was particularly objectionable to scare children by horrendous stories of the suffering in hell. Oddly enough, he asserted that Jesus "gave little authority to that kind of hell", that is, "as a place of torment and punishment for sin". He affirms that "Dives, presumably, had as much chance as anybody else of making spiritual progress once he rid himself of the false notions that had been holding him back".²⁴ He referred to preachers who teach what the Bible says about hell "peanut-minded, sour-souled bigots and power drivers". Ford asks, "Who wants to believe in a afterlife if it's something unpleasant".²⁵ I am not aware that what one wants to believe has anything to do with truth. If heaven and hell exist--as the Bible clearly teaches--it does not make any difference what one wants to believe. The ultimate question is: What does the Bible teach?

FORD'S VIEWS ON EVOLUTION

Virtually all New Age people believe in evolution--not just the evolution of the world and its current occupants--but evolution of the soul as well. We keep evolving after this earthly life ends. Arthur Ford endorsed the recapitulation theory which most evolutionists have abandoned.²⁶ "The evolutionary spearhead has left the realm of the purely physical and entered the area of the psychosocial, where evolutionary changes are going forward at an accelerating rate".²⁷ Adherents of the New Age movement believe man advances his own evolutionary development as he participates in certain activities, such as, Yoga, Transcendental Meditation, trance medium activities, etc. Eventually we will evolve to the highest state possible and then we will merge with God and cease to exist as individuals.

FORD'S VIEWS ON DEATH

Ford quotes lama Anagarika Govinda as saying, "Nobody can talk about death with authority who has not died, and since nobody has ever returned from death, how can anybody know what happens after it?"²⁸

Govinda was wrong on two counts. We can "talk about death with authority" when we accept what God has revealed in his word about death. The Bible tells us that all human beings die and after that the judgement (Heb. 9:27). Govinda either did not know of our Lord's resurrection or he did not believe it. After Christ was raised from the dead, he came back to show men that all are going to be raised from the dead and have been reincarnated many times.²⁹

Shirley MacLaine, like the faithful Hindu she is, pretends that death is an illusion, "Perhaps there is no such thing as death".³⁰ Shirley's mother had many serious physical problems and Shirley said to her: "Well, Mom, you know that you'll never die, even when you go. If you feel that they (the spirit guides, W.C.) are real, then they're real".³¹ Arthur Ford shared Shirley's beliefs about the unreality of death. Ford quotes "the revelations of Fredric Myers": "He wanted to remove from the human mind once and for all any fear of death with the assurance that there is no death, only alternations in the mode of consciousness".³² Arthur Ford quotes the words of John Haynes Holmes who said, "The evidence for survival is in".³³ The truth of the matter is: The evidence for survival has been in for at least two thousand years.

FORD'S OTHER OCCULTIC BELIEFS

Space will not allow further discussion of Arthur Ford's other New Age beliefs. But he accepts clairvoyance, mental telepathy, contact with the dead (necromancy), monism, mediums (Jesus was a great medium), crystallography, telekinesis, the illusory nature of the world, automatic writing, reincarnation, the existence of the Akashic records, auras, OBEs, apports, astrology and the eventual emergence of a new and universal religion.

CONCLUSION

One of the keys to being a faithful gospel preacher is declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:26-27). We cannot neglect any New Testament teaching without endangering our soul-condemning beliefs and practices of the New Age movement when at least sixty million Americans and billions of people worldwide accept some of the tenets of this false religion? We must try every spirit to ascertain whether or not they come from God (1John 4:1).

ENDNOTES

- 1 Russell Chandler, Understanding the New Age (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1988), p. 17.
- 2 Elliot Miller, A Crash Course on the New Age Movement (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), p. 15.
- 3 Bob Larson, Straight Answers on the New Age (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1989), p. xi.
- 4 Caryl Matrisciana, Gods of the New Age (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1985), p. 15.
- 5 Walter R. Martin, The New Age Cult (Minneapolis: Bethanh House Publishers, 1989), p. 13.
- 6 James Pike, The Other Side (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1968).
- 7 F. LaGard Smith, Out on a Broken Limb (Eugene, OR: Harvest House Publishers, 1986), p. 184.
- 8 This written section of the lecture on Deuteronomy 18 will have to be very short, but the oral lecture will examine the occult in greater depth.
- 9 Gary Provost, The True Story of Satanic Cult Killings in Matamoros, Mexico (New York: Pocket Books, 1989).
- 10 Arthur Ford as told to Jerome Ellison, The Life Beyond (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1971).
- 11 Ibid., pp.8-9.
- 12 Ibid., dust cover

- 13 Barbara Mandrell's song, " I Was Country Before Country Was Cool".
- 14 Arthur Ford, The Life Beyond, p. 3.
- 15 Ibid.
- 16 Ibid., p. 12.
- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Ibid., p. 59.
- 19 Ibid., p. 149.
- 20 Ibid., pp. 12-13.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 14-15.
- 22 Ibid., p. 22.
- 23 Ibid., p. 25.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 61-61.
- 25 Ibid., p. 154.
- 26 Ibid., p. 32.
- 27 Ibid., p. 33.
- 28 Ibid., p. 53.
- 29 Ibid.
- 30 Shirley MacLaine, Out on a Limb (New York: Bantam Books, 1983), p. 9.
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- 32 Arthur Ford, The Life Beyond, p. 109.
- 33 Ibid., p. 56.

AUTHORITY IN RELIGION
MATTHEW 8:9

Steve Stevens

INTRODUCTION:

1. I am grateful to be part of this WVSOP lectureship for 1996. I commend the selection of the theme for study this week. It is needed very much in our time.
2. The subject for this hour is at the center of every religious battle being fought whether in or out of our fellowship.

I. Authority Defined

- A. According to Webster's New World Dictionary, 2nd College Edition, World Publishing Co.. 1970, p.94 "authority" is the "power or right to give commands, enforce obedience, take action, or make final decisions."
 1. It comes from the Latin *auctoritas* > *auctor* meaning author.
 2. Author is defined (ibid. P.93) as "one who makes or originates something; creator; originator.
 3. The suffix 'ity' means (ibid. P.750) "state, character, condition or an instance of any of these.
- B. Authority involves the state of originating or creating, the character of an originator or creator, and the condition of originating and creating, and the power or right to be involved in this process.
- C. Religion in its broadest sense refers (ibid. P.1200) to any system of belief or conduct. These fall into two categories.

1. Natural religions which depend on natural revelations manifest to all men (Romans 1:19-22). The chief characteristics of these religions are that they (1) come from human origins, and (2) they lack authority or do not claim any authority.
 2. Revealed religions which have a special direct revelation from divine authority revealing who the authority is and what must be done to please him.
- D. A perfect religion requires a perfect authority to produce it! Perfect wisdom, goodness, power, love, righteousness, justice, holiness, i.e ad infinitum. There is only one divine, infinite Being capable of authoring such a religion--the one, the only true and living God!
- E. Brethren and friends the divisions and differences in the realm of religion and our own fellowship are fostered by a misunderstanding and a misconception of God. God is not the **common denominator** in religions, but He is the **Creator and Originator** of religion.
- F. God is not the Lord because we or the angels or the universe elected him to be. He was God before anything was created, He is God now while we live, and He will remain God even after every human living now is dead.

II. Authority Issues Examined.

- A. There are two classes of authority when considering source of authority.
1. Primary authority. Inherent authority--being the source of all authority in a given realm.

2. Delegated authority. Authority vested in another.
 3. As an example, take our form of government. The primary authority rests with the people and the delegated authority is given to our representatives (SS at least in theory).
 4. In the realm of religion God is the primary source of authority.
- B. There are two types of authority when considering those governed by authority.
1. Internal authority (subjective) refers to what happens within an individual such as feelings, emotions, and subjective experiences.
 2. External authority (objective) refers to those things outside of the individual.
- C. Sources of internal authority commonly claimed by men.
1. Conscience.
 - a. Human conscience is not a perfect guide because it allows errors to be made.
 - (1) It can be hardened. 1 Tim. 4:2
 - (2) It may be defiled. Titus 1:15
 - (3) It may be misdirected. (Saul of Tarsus)
 - b. The human conscience merely approves or disapproves what it has been educated to believe. (If you do not believe that reflect on the education emphasis on developing tolerance for all kinds of immoral relationships--same sex marriages).
 - c. The conscience is merely the authority of the law it knows. If its knowledge of the law is imperfect or the law itself is imperfect then one's conscience can allow one to believe error.

2. Feelings, emotions, and subjective experiences.
 - a. No one can argue about what another person's feelings, emotions, or subjective experiences are all about. No two people in this universe have exactly the same feelings, emotions, or subjective experiences.
 - b. The only ones you can know about for certain are yours, and therefore, each one is subject to your individual judgment.
 - c. The only common ground in this area is the fact that these sensations are subject to human judgment--imperfect judgment which makes errors.
 - d. When every man does that which is right in his own eyes only anarchy can result.
3. Direct (miraculous) revelation by the Holy Spirit.
 - a. Some have claimed in the past that God revealed things to them.
 - (1) Joseph Smith claimed such revelations and founded the Mormon Church.
 - (2) William Miller and Ellen G. White claimed divine revelations and established the Seventh Day Adventists.
 - (3) Mary Baker Eddy claimed to receive a special revelation and the religion of Christian Science was born.
 - (4) Do you not find it amazing that the same God and Holy Spirit keep revealing such diverse and contradictory doctrines to men?
 - b. God does not author chaos, confusion, and contradictions. (1 Cor. 14:33)

- (1) Men Do!!!
- (2) Men must also respect and tolerate their human founded religions equally in order for all of them to be recognized and continue to exist. (Is it any wonder that the watch words of present day religions are 'pluralism' and 'ecumenicalism'?)

c. God is no respecter of persons! (Acts 10:34) He reveals all needed revelation through the same source to all men everywhere. (Heb. 1:1,2; Acts 17:30,31)

D. Sources of external authority appealed to by men today.

1. Church Councils. This is democracy in action in religion. Everyone gets a vote in what we are going to believe and practice, and if we want to change what we believe and practice then it is up to us. The problem is that God did not create a religious democracy, but He established a religious monarchy with His Son as the King of kings.

a. Many religious bodies invest religious authority in church councils, synods, conferences, or associations.

b. My personal observations reveal a great deal of change in the doctrine and practices of several of these bodies. Some seem more motivated by cultural and societal pressures rather than a desire to adhere to God's word.

- (1) Women ordained as priests and preachers.
- (2) Acceptance of blacks into their fellowship.
- (3) Acceptance of same sex marriages.

- c. God's will in these matters has not changed since He revealed and inspired His Word through the Holy Spirit to the apostles and prophets of the first century. (1 Pet. 1:22-25)
- 2. Creeds. These are human written opinions about what the Word of God says.
 - a. If they contain more than the Word of God, then they contain too much.
 - b. If they contain less than the Word of God, then they contain not enough.
 - c. If they contain exactly the same teaching as the Word of God, then they are totally unnecessary because we already have the Word of God.

III. Authority Issued By God.

- A. We have rejected all religions based on natural revelation alone, and all forms of external and internal human authority in religion. Since the only perfect authority for a perfect religion can be and is God, then we ask two important questions.
 - 1. Has God revealed Himself and His will to man?
 - 2. Has He ever delegated His authority to any one else?
- B. The answer is 'yes' to both questions. God has revealed His will to man throughout ages past and present, and usually He does so by agents of His choosing (as opposed to Him acting directly).
 - 1. In the patriarchal age from Adam to Moses He exercised His authority through the fathers of the families.
 - 2. In the Mosaic Age from the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai to the resurrection of Jesus He exercised His

authority through Moses, his successors, the judges, the kings, and the prophets.

- C. In the Christian Age (our present and the last era) the Father has revealed Himself through His only begotten Son (Mat. 11:27) and has delegated all authority to the Son (Mat. 28:18-20; John 5:27; Heb. 1:1,2; Mat. 17:5). That authority will remain with Jesus until all enemies are subdued and placed under His feet and He returns it to the Father. (1 Cor. 15:24-28)
1. Jesus delegated authority to the Holy Spirit who revealed and inspired the speaking and writing of the Word of God in the first century. (John 14:16,17,25,26; 15:26,27; 16:7-13; Acts 1:8)
 - a. The Holy Spirit revealed God's Word to and guided the apostles into all truth.
 - b. The Holy Spirit revealed God's Word not only to the apostles, but also to the first century prophets. (Eph. 3:5; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 2 Pet. 1:21)
 - c. These men **spoke** (1 Cor. 2:6-13), not of their own private interpretation ("origination"; mine SS) (2 Pet. 1:20), and they **wrote** (Eph. 3:1-5) as the Holy Spirit directed them.
 2. No other Gospel has been authorized to be preached save the one already preached. No angelic authority or human authority can preach anything but what is delivered by these men in the New Testament without incurring the anathema of God. (Gal. 1:6-9)

CONCLUSIONS:

1. The only perfect source for a perfect religion is God. Thus, He is the **primary authority** (originator; creator) in religion.
2. Jesus is now the **mediate source of authority** in religion having received his delegated authority directly from God.
3. The written Word of God, as given by the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, as they were guided by the Holy Spirit is the **permanent source for authority** in religion today.
4. All three are in perfect agreement as they emanate from one Perfect source and will produce unity in religion as it should be.
5. It is commonly heard in our religious world today that we are all trying to get to the same place and partake of the same blessings, however we are just going by our own different ways.

Think about this! Hebrews 11:6 states: "But 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." The object here is to please God and gain the reward He offers. The action required is faith--believing that God is, and 'diligently seeking' in order that we might obtain that reward. How is faith produced? Romans 10:17 teaches it comes by "hearing" and "hearing by the Word of God." How can we be sure our seeking will lead us to God? John 14:6 makes it clear that there is only one Way through which we can access God.

6. If we desire the spiritual blessings of God in this life, and the eternal blessings of Heaven to come, then God, His Son, and His Word must be our authority in religion.

NOTE: I would like to give credit to C.C. Crawford from whose sermon "Authority in Religion"; and Z.T. Sweeney from whose sermon "The Source of Authority in Christianity" much of the subject matter in this lecture is adapted.

Steve Stevens is a native of West Virginia. He preached his first gospel sermon at the age of nine in Daybrook, WV. He began teaching a mid-week Bible class regularly at the age of eleven at the Dewey Avenue Church of Christ in St. Marys, WV. He was baptized by his father, Earl Stevens, on January 22, 1967, at the age of twelve. At age fifteen he was preaching on a regular basis with the congregations at Sancho, Long Valley, New Freeport, and Pine Grove (Hebron, WV). He was able to keep these appointments because his mother drove him until he was old enough to drive himself. He has worked with the Lord's church in WV, OH, PA, and Kentucky. He is presently located with the Church of Christ in Hundred, WV and is in his sixteenth year there. He is married to the former Karen Barnhart of New Freeport, PA and God has blessed them with five children -- Rebecca, Melissa, Jonathan, Stephanie, and Victoria.

CHRISTIANITY, THE ONE TRUE RELIGION

Dean Miller

A study of "Christianity vs. Religions and Philosophies of Men", the theme of this lectureship, can certainly be justified. The diversity of religions (all of which stem from various human philosophies and produce more human philosophies) is enough to bewilder the best of minds. Volumes have been written about world religions (e.g., Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Islam). Cultic religions are periodically in the headline news (e.g., Jehovah Witness, Mormonism, the New Age Movement, Christian Science, the Occult, Scientology, Astrology). Protestant denominations flood the religious landscape (e.g., Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Nazarene).

Is it any wonder that many people just beginning their search for God would be confused? That confusion can lead to frustration. The frustration can lead to giving up on religion altogether. Is it any wonder that some Christians might be drawn away from the one true religion with all the alternatives so readily available? The theme of this lectureship needs to be addressed. It is an important subject!

The religions of the world flourish in our country. The American political doctrine of religious liberty combined with our tolerance (pluralism) create a "capacity to give a home to nearly every religion in the world" (World Religions in America, Jacob Neuser, ed., p.2). The fact is that "nearly every religion in the world is practiced by some Americans" (p.3).

Americans are not only a religious people. We are a people of many religions. Most of the religions of the world are practiced in America. About 60 percent of the American people are Protestants (among them, 19 percent are Baptists, 8 percent Methodists, 5 percent Lutherans, and the other 28 percent divided among many groups). Another 26 percent are Roman Catholics. About 2.5 percent are Jews, most of whom practice

Judaism. Somewhat less than 1 percent practice Hinduism, and about the same number practice Buddhism. Only 7.5 percent of the American people profess no religion at all. (World Religions in America, p.2)

Add to this set of circumstances the fact that many see little to no difference between the validity of religions. Huston Smith, in The World Religions, quotes Arnold Toynbee who declared, "There is no one alive today who knows enough to say with confidence whether one religion has been greater than all the others. The all-knowing God has revealed in the Bible all that is needed for spiritual direction (2 Tim. 3:16,17; 2 Pet. 1:3). His revealed word is truth (Jhn. 17:17) and man can know it (Jhn. 8:32) if he is willing to "give all diligence...handling aright the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Scripture clearly reveals Christianity is the one true religion. Nowhere is that more evident than in the Acts of the Apostles. This divine book of religious history repeatedly refers to Christianity by a distinguishing phrase: "*the Way*" (9:2; 19:9,23; 24:22).

The first time this phrase appears is in the record of the conversion of Saul of Tarsus (9:1-19). Prior to his conversion, he is pictured as a persecutor seeking authorization from the high priest to continue his campaign against Christians who had fled to Damascus. The plan was "if he found any that were of "*the Way*", whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (v.2; emphasis mine, DM). Christianity is being depicted as *the one true religion*. Later, when defending his conversion on the temple stairs the apostle Paul admitted, "I persecuted *this Way* unto death, binding and delivering both men and women" (22:4; emphasis mine, DM).

Another time this phrase appears is in the report of Paul's missionary work in Ephesus. His bold proclamation for a period of months in the synagogue led to "some hardened and disobedient, speaking evil of *the Way* before the multitude" (v. 9); emphasis mine, DM). This public slandering of "*the Way*" caused Paul to remove himself and the disciples from the synagogue to the school of

Tyrannus. Before his departure from the city, "there arose no small stir concerning the Way" (v.23). The gospel threatened the cult of the great goddess, Diana (vv. 24-27). Ephesus was "filled with confusion" (v. 29). Why? Christianity, *the one true religion*, was moving into the city!

The distinguishing phrase appears again in the record of Paul's appearance before the Roman governor Felix (24: 1-27). The apostle offers his defense (vv. 10-21). He readily confessed "that after *the Way* they call a sect, so serve I the God of our fathers ..." (V. 14); emphasis mine, DM). At the conclusion of his defense, Felix is described as one "having more knowledge concerning *the Way*" (v. 22). This was not the governor's first acquaintance with Christianity. Residing in Ceasarea, he would have undoubtedly heard of the conversion of one of the city's most prominent citizens, Cornelius (10:1-48). Surely he would have heard about another influential Christian family in the city, Philip, the evangelist, who had four daughters who prophesied (21:8,9). Paul's defense increased what knowledge Felix already had of "*the Way.*"

Christianity is *the one true religion*. Jesus did not leave heaven to bring just another religion into the world. He came to bring the one and only religion that is divinely authorized. There is only one way. That way is Christianity, the religion revealed in the pages of the New Testament. An invitation song rightly reminds us, "There's no one to save you but Jesus, There's no other way but His way." Amen!

Dean Miller is married to Ruth Ann Miller, wife of 24 years. They have three daughters, Michelle, and Melissa, of Freed-Hardeman University, and Deanna, at home. Dean attended Freed-Hardeman University, A.A., 3rd Year Certificate in Bible, B.A. in Bible. He has taken some graduate school classes with Alabama School of Religion(Southern Christian University). He has preached with the Hartville Church of Christ, Hartville, OH since 1981 (during this time also served in various capacities with Stark County Christian Academy and Northeastern Ohio Christian Youth Camp). Prior to Hartville, he worked with the church in Barnesville, Springfield, and Minerva, OH.

RELEVANCE OF THE CROSS

Skip Andrews

INTRODUCTION

- A. When the last events of the life of Christ took place, the story of the cross burst into a world where nearly everything was somehow opposed to it.
- B. That story is a real one, the One Who died there is the only way to God, all of the forms of opposition to the cross still exist, and the people of God must tell the story to every person on earth--NOW.
- C. Text: I Corinthians 1:1-31.
- D. The story of the cross (and everything it includes) is the ONLY relevant story as far as preparation for eternity is concerned.
- E. The purpose of this study is threefold: To establish the relevance of the cross, summarize early and current forms of opposition to it, and apply the lesson so as to move God's only people to a lifetime of faithful action.
- F. We need to be fair with all people, to know the Bible, and to take up our cross daily.
- G. Key words: We will stress the words "cross" and "crucify." Please note how these words are used in the verses given in this lesson.
- H. Now let us open our minds and hearts to hear this story once again.

DISCUSSION

- I. THE RELEVANCE OF THE CROSS: BIBLICAL PROOF.
 - A. In prophecy.
 - 1. Deuteronomy 21:23 (see Acts 5:30; Galatians 3:13).
 - 2. Psalm 22 (see the crucifixion stories).
 - 3. Isaiah 53.

B. In preparation (Jesus spoke of His coming death numerous times. This is a partial list. Only occasionally did He actually speak of the *method* of His death).

1. John 2:19-22.
2. Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:21,22.
3. Matthew 17:22,23; Mark 9:31,32; Luke 9:43-45.
4. Matthew 20:17-19; Mark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34.
5. John 12:32,33 (see John 3:14,15; 8:28).
6. Matthew 26:2.

C. In reality (Note how often the words "cross" and "crucify" are used in the actual story. Out of 79 uses in the New Testament, 55 are in the first four books).

1. Matthew 27:22,23,26,31,32,35,38,40,42; 28:5.
2. Mark 15:13,14,15,20,21,24,25,27,30,32; 16:6.
3. Luke 23:21(2),23,26,33; 24:7, 20.
4. John 19:6(3),10,15(2),16,17,18,19,20,23,25,31,41.
5. Acts 2:23 (this is a different Greek word;

prospaygnumi).

6. Philippians 2:8.
7. Revelation 11:8.

D. Its relevance (as seen by the writers of the New Testament and taught to the early church. I have summarized the relevance of the cross under five headings).

1. The teaching of Jesus about OUR cross. It is not to be a burden or source of grief, but it is a challenge, a work, a mission, an object lesson, a story to tell, a commitment to follow Him as He followed God, etc. (See Matthew 10:38; 16:24; Mark 8:34; 10:21; Luke 9:23; 14:27).
2. The position Jesus occupies of power and authority as a result of the cross makes it relevant (see Acts 2:36; 4:10; I Corinthians 1:13).
3. The message we have as a result of the cross makes

- it relevant (see I Corinthians 1:17,18,23; 2:2,8).
4. The power of the cross makes it relevant.
 - a. It has power to create one body (Ephesians 2:16).
 - b. It has power due to the blood that was shed there (Colossians 1:20).
 - c. It stands between dispensations (Colossians 2:14).
 5. The applications for me make it relevant.
 - a. The whole story of the cross shows His humiliation, "weakness" and victory for Himself and us (II Corinthians 13:4).
 - b. The concept of the cross is involved in the Bible doctrine of baptism (Romans 6:6).
 - c. The concept of the cross helps me to see myself and how I can live to honor Him (Galatians 2:20).
 - d. The cross is the object of my glorying now (Galatians 6:14).
 - e. To be His involves crucifixion of my flesh (Galatians 5:24).
 - f. But there is an ever present danger (Hebrews 6:6).
 - g. His endurance of the cross shows me how to obtain joy (Hebrews 12:2).

II. EARLY REJECTIONS AND ATTACKS.

- A. By His Own followers: In the passages cited earlier, Jesus told His disciples about His upcoming death. Among their responses were fear, unbelief, denial, and a lack of desire to hear about it. It is no wonder that when the cross came into view, they would not stand by Him. They refused to prepare themselves.
- B. By His enemies.
 1. The preaching of Christ crucified was a

stumblingblock to the Jews, and foolishness to the Gentiles (I Corinthians 1:23; note examples in Acts).

2. Other "enemies of the cross" are described as people "whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things" (Philippians 3:18,19).

C. Enemies against the church (to be an enemy of the church is to be an enemy of Christ, and to be an enemy of Christ is to be an enemy of the church).

1. Some had "bewitched" the Galatians away from the crucified Christ (Galatians 3:1).

2. The offense of the cross causes Christians to suffer (Galatians 5:11).

3. Compromising the message of the cross is one way to avoid persecution (Galatians 6:12).

III. TODAY'S OPPOSITION TO THE CROSS (FROM THE RELIGIONS AND PHILOSOPHIES OF MEN).

A. Today, we have a world full of religions and philosophies that are against the story of the cross. We will note a few of them under this heading by comparing at least one main feature of each to the cross, thus showing the utter worthlessness of any other "gospel"! Probably the main feature of any movement is the desire on the part of human beings to arrive at some "blessed" condition, which Jesus taught can only be done through what "I say unto you" (see the Sermon on the Mount).

B. Some key points from some religions and philosophies of men.

1. Hinduism: The state of blessedness can be attained through one of three ways--the way of works, the way of knowledge, or the way of devotion. The goal is to escape what appears to be an endless cycle of birth, death, and rebirth. But there is nothing

like the cross in Hinduism, because there is no One True God against Whom people sin.

2. Jainism (about three million followers). The founder was Mahavira (599 B.C.) who died not believing in a supreme being, but who was later deified by his followers. The key to "salvation" in this faction of Hinduism is self-denial. But again, there is no need for a cross, because victory is attained only by keeping the rules.
3. Buddhism. This is another faction of Hinduism, dating from about 500 B.C. The founder was Siddhartha Gautama, again one who was deified later by his disciples ("The Buddha"). The goal in Buddhism is "nirvana," a very difficult concept for them to define. They think of it as a kind of existence that "is inconceivable in the ordinary terms of the world" (Donald K. Swearer). To them, there is no personal god, only natural law. There are many branches in Buddhism, but no dependance upon anything like a cross or a Person who redeems from sin.
4. Confucianism. This man also lived about five centuries before Christ. His beliefs were a reaction to a highly corrupt society; and he, too, was deified by his followers. The main point of this system has to do with ethics: how to get along with others. Many do not even consider it to be a religion. Thus, again, there is no cross, no savior, and no need to please God. No matter how good the ethics are, the system is in opposition to all the passages we have used in this study.
5. Taoism (pronounced "dowism"). Founded by Lao-Tzu at the time of the spreading of the views of Confucius. His little book, The Tao Te King (The

Way and Its Power) became the foundation of this religion. It has taken different directions, but a major feature of it that has appealed to some in our country is "wu wei" ("creative quietude")--"get the foundations of the self in tune with Tao and let behavior flow spontaneously" (Huston Smith, p.204). This has led to a "tune out, drop out" mentality (McDowell and Stewart, p.347). Once again, there is no place for anything like the Biblical story of the cross and our obligation to respond to it in this system.

6. Shintoism. This is the national religion of Japan. The main emphasis of it is connected with their belief that their land was created first and that the people are descendants of the gods. "This national idealism, the love of their country, is basically why Shinto has been limited to Japan" (McDowell and Stewart, p.349). There are many deities, which are worshipped mainly at local shrines. This religion is in direct opposition to the "preaching of the cross" in that it fosters pride and respect of persons rather than humble obedience.
7. Judaism. This religion is clearly opposed to the cross, as numerous New Testament passages prove. The main point of Judaism today still seems to be their view of themselves as God's special people, a view that is tragically adopted by many denominations. But the church is the Israel of God today as a result of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary (Galatians 6:16).
8. Islam. This has been called the world's fastest growing religion (Robert Morey). "In the United States there are presently more Muslims than

Methodists" (Geisler and Saleeb, p. 9). Their whole system is summed up in this statement: "There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is Allah's Apostle." The main thrust of this religion is to force seventh century Arab culture on its adherents. Its growth and power today demands our learning about it and standing against it with the story of God's true Apostle, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 3:1).

9. New Age. "'The New Age Movement' is an extremely large, loosely structured network of organizations and individuals bound together by common values (based in mysticism and monism--the world view that 'all is one') and a common vision (a coming 'new age' of peace and mass enlightenment, the 'Age of Aquarius')." (Miller, p. 15). Two basic elements of this movement are a "spiritualized doctrine of evolution" and the view that there is no "ultimate answer." As the movement grows, clear beliefs will emerge. But the idea that we need someone to die for us is unnecessary, since "all that is, is God"; therefore mankind is also divine.

IV. APPLICATIONS.

- A. The world is lost without the cross. A careful examination of *all other options* leaves the human race without God and without hope (Ephesians 2).
- B. No religion except the way brought by Jesus Christ has *anything* to offer man in his sin--and man *is* in sin (Genesis 8:21; Romans 3:9-23).
- C. No one on earth is going to do the work of taking up the cross and telling the story of the cross except Christians--you and me--who are willing to tell it without compromise and without fear of any consequence that might follow.

- D. We must not ever let any issue that is not an issue in the eyes of God keep us from preaching Christ and Him crucified. Something like forty-five to fifty million people die every year outside of Christ!
- E. Billions of people are in these religions. The smallest of them may outnumber us, but the Lord God Omnipotent reigns (Revelation 19:6)!

CONCLUSION

- A. The cross of Christ, when viewed in the light of all relevant facts--
 - 1. Shows itself to be the only way from here to heaven.
 - 2. Exposes ALL others to be totally useless, vain, and futile in helping anyone in any way on the journey to eternity.
 - 3. Reveals to us the reality and power of the love of the Godhead for all people from Adam and Eve until the second coming.
 - 4. Becomes, as so many have said, "The greatest story ever told"--and, the only story worth telling.
- B. Thus, the Christian life is the only life worth living. It is time for the world to give the Bible a chance. And it is time for us to tell the world (and not just keep telling one another that which we already know!).

Skip Andrews
3249 Highway 120
Duluth, GA 30136
770 497-0240

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Skip Andrews-Skip was born in Detroit, Michigan in 1950. He was baptized at Roseville, Michigan in 1964. A graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching and Alabama Christian School of Religion. He has made four trips to India for mission work and also served 20 years as a staff member at the West Virginia Christian Youth Camp. His located work has been at Bateshill, OH; Libson, OH; Verona, MS; Bethesda, OH; Elkins, WV; Duluth, GA. He is married to Helen Ruth (Burch) from Middlebourne, WV; and they have two children.

JESUS, THE GREAT I AM

Paul Hoover

- A. Who is Jesus?
- B. Even among those who profess Christianity the answer to this question is not as well defined as you may believe.
- C. In the Lord's Church people understand that Jesus is the Christ; the Son of God; the master and the Saviour of mankind.
 - 1. Most people in the Lord's Church do not have a problem understanding the titles that apply to our Lord.
 - 2. Many people do have a problem understanding how those titles effect our relationship with Him.
- D. We sing the song, "What a friend we have in Jesus."
 - 1. Perhaps the greatest relationship that we can have with people outside of our immediate family is that of friendship.
 - 2. However, there are certain freedoms that come with friendship.
 - a. With a friend we have the right to heed there words or to disregard them depending on our own view.
 - b. With a friend we have the right to disagree.
 - c. With a friend we have the right to argue.
 - 3. While Jesus is a friend that is the very least of what he is to us.
- E. We must be impressed with the fullness of who Jesus is and then seek to relate to Him in a correct manner.

Discussion

I. The Testimony Of The Father

- A. We should be impressed with the importance of understanding our relationship with the Son when

we realize that every time God the Father chose to speak with a physical voice in the New Testament it was to recognize and clarify the role of the Son.

- B. The Father testified with a physical voice to the fact that Jesus was indeed His Son. *(Mat 3:16-17)*
- C. The Apostles did not understand all that Jesus was.
- D. God took action in order to clarify that point. *(Mat 17:1-5)*
 - 1. It is clear that God the Father wanted no mistake as to who Jesus was.
 - 2. It is also clear that God did not want the authority of Jesus to be confused with the limited authority of those who had gone before.

II. The Testimony Of The Son

- A. Jesus knew that it was imperative that mankind understand who He was.
- B. After all, if men do not recognize He who would be their savior, they would be unable to receive that salvation.
- C. Jesus contrast the worlds view of who He was with the believers understanding. *(Mat. 16:13-14)*
 - 1. It is interesting that the Lord asked this question first. "Who do men say that I am."
 - 2. Perhaps in order to stand firm in our recognition of Jesus as the Christ we should understand from the beginning that we must place ourselves in opposition to the world.
 - 3. After answering this question it is, perhaps, fresh in the minds of the apostles that the world at large is wrong in their idea of who

Jesus is.

- D. Jesus immediately follows up the first question with a second more personal question. (*Mat 16:15-17*)
 - 1. After Peter makes the confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus inforces the point that He made in the beginning.
 - 2. Since men of the world were in error as to the identify of Jesus, Peter could not have received this understanding from the world.
 - 3. Peter could understand the identify of Jesus because He was now looking for spiritual truths rather than worldly chaos.
- E. Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. How else does He describe Himself.
 - 1. Jesus is the living bread.
 - 2. As with the Israelites in the wilderness, this bread is essential to life itself.
 - 3. This bread differs from manna in that whoever eats of it will never die. (*John 6:48-51*)
- F. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God and the bread of life.
- G. Jesus is the light. (*John 8:12*)
 - 1. Without Jesus we are unable to see that straight and narrow path that leads to eternal life.
 - 2. Just as ships at sea are guided home by the light house we are guided to heaven by the glorious light of our Lord.
- H. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the bread of life and the light of the world.
- I. Jesus is the only avenue to the Father. (*John*

14:6)

1. On one end of the spectrum is God the Father.
2. On the other end is man.
3. What does it take to bridge the gap between these two?
 - a. First of all there must exist a way for that gap to be crossed.
 - b. The true avenue of reconciliation must exist.
 - c. There must exist a way for a created being with limited life expectancy to be able to gain eternal life.
 - d. There must be a way for sinful man to approach the father.
 - e. All of these things exist only in Jesus.
 - f. Without Jesus there would simply be no hope.
- J. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the bread of life, the light of the world, He is the way, the truth and the life.
- K. Jesus is the resurrected one. (*John 11:25*)
 1. Jesus conquered death for all time.
 2. Because He is the resurrected one we can enjoy life eternal. (*Rom 6:9-11*)
- L. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the bread of life, the light of the world, He is the way, the truth, the life and the resurrection.

III. The Testimony Of Man

- A. Peter recognized Jesus as the Christ.
 1. Peter lived with Jesus on a daily basis.
 2. He saw Jesus not just during the sermons that were preached and the miracles that were wrought, but pretty much 24hrs. a day.

3. Peter saw Him under stress, he heard the private things that Jesus may have said.
 4. Peters conclusion of all that he saw and heard was that this man Jesus was without question the Son of God.
- B. Nicodemus recognized the power of Jesus and the source of it. (*John 3:1-2*)
 - C. As a newborn babe the Holy Ghost reveled to man who this child was and man gave testimony. (*Luke 2:25-32*)
 - D. At the moment of his death man recognized who he was. (*Mark 15:37-39*)
 - E. When Thomas was sure, he gave the proper recognition to the risen Lord. (*John 20:26-28*)

Conclusion

1. God the Father said that Jesus is:
 - A. His Son.
 - B. The only one to whom men must listen.
2. Jesus said of himself:
 - A. "I am the Son of God."
 - B. "I am the bread of life."
 - C. "I am the light of the world."
 - D. "I am the way, the truth and the life."
 - E. "I am the resurrection."
3. Men said of him:
 - A. A man come from God.
 - B. The Christ the Son of the living God.
 - C. The salvation of man.
 - D. My Lord and my God.
4. Certainly our Lord is all of these things.
5. And yet today many of His own people take their

relationship with Him to lightly.

- A. Do we have the right to heed his words or disregard them depending on what we think?
 - B. Do we have the right to disagree with his Word and argue against it when it is not what we want to hear?
6. We must always remember who our Lord is and obey Him as we should.

(Mat 28:18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

Paul Hoover is a second year student at the **West Virginia School of Preaching**. He was born in Morton, MS. He attended Ohio Valley College and is married to the former Lease Hart; they have two children.

JESUS THE HOPE OF THE WORLD

Winford Claiborne

The topic assigned to me involves at least two implications: The world needs hope and Jesus alone is that hope. How can there be any doubt about the world' need for hope? Divorce has become a national scandal; troubled families number in the millions. Children are growing into manhood and womanhood without having had direction and support from their parents or from anyone else. Millions of our young people are drug addicts, notoriously sexually immoral and in trouble with the law. Teenage pregnancies number more than one million per year with as many as four hundred thousand abortions among our children and young people. Family violence has become a national disgrace. Thousands of children are being stolen from their homes and sold into child pornography rings or used for making "snuff films".

Confusion in the religious world has surely reached an all time high. There are reports almost daily of a new sect or denominations arising somewhere in the United State. I read recently that there are 22,000 denominations in this nation alone. The old line denominations have long ago abandoned belief in the inerrancy of the scriptures, in the deity of Jesus Christ, in the miracles of the Bible, in our Lord's second coming and in most other fundamentals of the faith. Conservatives and Evangelicals are "falling in with the fleeting fashions of the world". One Baptist Church in Fayetteville, Tennessee, has bowed to the world's demands for a "contemporary worship service". Like many other denominational groups, the First Baptist Church in Fayetteville seems to be going in the direction of entertainment. Tragically, there are churches of Christ which are making the same mistake. Dave Miller's new book, Piloting the Strait: A Guidebook for Assessing Change in Churches of Christ and William Woodson's, Change Agents and Churches of Christ: A Study in Contemporary Problems with Change Agents Among Churches of Christ, are essential

reading if one cares about the future of the Lord's church.¹

With all the Eastern religions and the philosophies based on them, the thousands of cults worldwide and the secular philosophies which pervade most societies, why must Jesus be the hope of the world? What is there about Jesus Christ and his way of life which require us to forsake all other world views and turn to him? Are there not many ways to God, as adherents of the New Age movement insist? Is Jesus really the way, the truth and the life, as he taught so plainly and emphatically in John 14:6? There are four reasons why we must choose Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior and no other. We must follow him as the hope of the world because of who he is, for what he has done for us, for what he is currently doing and for what he will do. When our lesson has been completed, it should be easy to understand why Peter said to the Jews in Jerusalem: "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). No person can come to the Father except through Jesus Christ (John 14:6). Jesus called himself "the door". It is through him and only through him we enter into life eternal (John 10:9).

WHO JESUS IS

But who is Jesus? Oh, we all know of his birth in Bethlehem to the virgin Mary. We also know of his Jewish heritage, of his growing to maturity in Nazareth--a village that almost certainly would not have been remembered by many people except that Jesus lived there. We know practically nothing about his first thirty years of life. We assume that he was reared as a typical Jewish boy, but our only glimpse at his early years involved his sitting in the temple at age twelve listening to teachers of the law and asking them penetrating questions (Lk. 2:46). He began his personal ministry around the age of 30. For three short years, he taught his disciples and great multitudes, performed miracles and did other wondrous works to glorify his Father in heaven (John 8:29). Eventually he was arrested by Jewish authorities, given a

mock trial in Jerusalem, unfairly and illegally convicted and sentenced to die by crucifixion. The sentence was speedily carried out, but something most unusual occurred on the third day after his death: he arose from the dead! After his resurrection, he tarried a short time with his disciples and then ascended to the Father (Acts 1:9-11).

The simple recitation of these biblical facts makes us understand that we are not dealing with an ordinary mortal. As vital as these truths about Jesus Christ are however, they do not tell us all we need to know about him. We must know more about the person who split time into two eras--B. C. (before Christ) and anno domini (the year of our Lord). God through his inspired word has provided us with all the information we must have to believe in Christ and to obey his gospel. "And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through his name" (John 20:30-31).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. No, he is not the Son of God in the same sense that you and I are or can become the sons of God. He is THE Son of God--the Son in a unique way, a way that no one else has ever been or could be the Son of God. When our Lord was being tried before the Jewish authorities, the high priest asked him, "Are you going to answer nothing? What is it which these witness against you?" But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, "I am: and you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:60-62). The high priest became angry, tore his clothes and said, "What need we any further witnesses? You have heard blasphemy: What do you think? And they all condemned him to be guilty of death" (Mk. 14:63-64).

Were the Jewish rulers right in their condemnation of Jesus of Nazareth? Was he guilty of blasphemy? Years ago, Henry Van Dyke

suggested there are only three answers to these questions: Either Jesus was a liar or a lunatic or the Lord. Even atheists, agnostics, secular humanists and other unbelievers are reluctant to call Jesus a liar or a lunatic. If he were a liar or a lunatic, the world desperately needs a generous sprinkling of both. Can you imagine a world where people always treated others as they would be treated? Where men and women thought first of pleasing God, then of pleasing others for their own good and finally of pleasing self? What would our world be like if we always went about doing good, as Jesus did?

Since Jesus could not have been a liar or a lunatic, that leaves only one possibility: He was and is the Lord. And that is precisely what the scriptures affirm about him. Paul taught the necessity of confessing Jesus as Lord to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11). "If you shall confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, and shall believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you shall be saved" (Rom. 10:9). Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet" (John 13:13-14).

WHAT HE DID FOR US

Jesus is the hope of the world because of what he did for us. He came down from heaven to show human beings the Father (John 1:18; 14:7-9). He also came to earth to bring salvation to lost men and women. Jesus said to Zaccheus, "This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Lk. 19:9-10). The angel told Joseph about the coming birth of the Messiah: "You shall call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins" Mt. 1:21). Let me be specific as to what this entails.

By Christ's death on the cross, he paid the price for our eternal redemption. "Even as the Son of man came not to be

ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mt. 20:28). The word translated "ransom" (lutron) means a price paid for the release of a slave. We were slaves to sin, but the death of Christ released us from that servitude and made us free in Christ. "What? Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Paul expressed the same truth in these words: "For he has made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

WHAT HE IS NOW DOING FOR US

We know what Christ did for us in coming to earth, being incarnated, dying for our sins and being raised for our justification. But what is he doing now? "He who searches the hearts knows what is in the mind of the Spirit, because he makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. Who is he who; condemns? It is Christ who died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom. 8:27, 34). The tense of the verb "makes intercession" is present active indicative and means that Christ continually makes intercession for his children. The Hebrew writer emphasized the same truth. "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing he ever lives to make intercession for us" (Heb. 7:25). We have one who stands before the throne of God and pleads our case before our heavenly Father.

WHAT CHRIST WILL DO FOR US

I have already read to you from Acts 4:12 that there is ;no other way for men to be saved except through Jesus Christ. We know that no one else can take us to heaven when this life is over. Will he indeed take his faithful followers to be with him in his

Father's house? "Let not your hearts be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there you may be also" (John 14:1-3). The same apostle gave us this assurance: "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knows us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1-3).

CONCLUSION

Those who are lost must turn to Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. "He who believes and is baptized shall be saved; he who does not believe shall be condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Those who are committed to our Lord must be faithful unto death to receive the crown of life (Rev. 2:10).

ENDNOTES

Dave Miller, Piloting the Strait (Bedford, TX: Dave Miller, 1996).

William Woodson, Change Agents and Churches of Christ (Athens, AL: School of Biblical Emphasis 1994).