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Pleading for the restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

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Suppose you are offered milk with some water mixed in it, how will you accept it? Surely, you will accept it as milk. But, then, someone offers you pure milk, unmixed, unadulterated, how will you accept that? That too you will accept as milk. But there would be a difference in both milk. You can get them examined, and you will know which is which. Adulteration is possible not only in physical things, but also in spiritual matters.

Many many weary hours could be spent in investigating the numerous denominations, sects, isms and philosophies which are being offered today in the name of Christianity. But the more people search, the more confused they become. They ask, if all are teaching Bible, yet are saying different things, which one is right?

On the other hand, God has given His complete pattern to man for His church in the Bible, including its worship, name, creed, rule of faith, organization, unity and mission. Many through the years have tried to change God's pattern for His church and have consequently produced conflicting religious groups, different from Christ's church. Yet, God's pattern for His church is not difficult to understand. The early Christians evidently had understood it, and that is why they were all together in one church. As they taught God's truth and thereby established congregations of the Lord's church everywhere, they all believed and

taught the same doctrine and were organized in the same way. They were not different from one another and divided, as it is seen today among those who claim to be followers of Christ.

In the eighth chapter of the book of Luke Christ compared the word of God to seed being sown in a field. The Apostles, in the beginning had sown or planted in the hearts of men and women the pure seed of God, which resulted in the harvest of united and undenominational Christians. All were members of the same New Testament Church which Christ had established. (Matthew 16:18; Acts 2:47). Since God has established that every seed must bring forth after its own kind, the same pure word of God which the Apostles preached in the beginning, if preached today, should produce the same harvest of united and undenominational Christians. If not, why not?

The truth of the matter, however, is that many people are asleep to the fact that much seed is being sown in the name of Christianity which is not the pure word of God, but a mixture of human creeds, dogmas and philosophies. Indifferent to the Bible and ignorant of its teachings, some people who are even religiously inclined are unaware that preachers and teachers of the Bible can and often do teach false doctrines. All preachers of denominational churches do preach some Bible, but not all the Bible, and not the Bible only, because if they did they will not be in a denominational church of which the Bible does not speak.

Although for several years, as long as the Apostles were living, after its beginning Christ's church reproduced after its own kind by planting the pure seed of the word of God and by following God's divine pattern for His church. But even during that time God had forewarned, "that in latter times some will depart from the faith . . ." (1 Timothy 4:1). And, "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables." (2 Timothy 4:3,4). Paul, the Apostle, told elders of the church at Ephesus: "Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers to shepherd the church of God which he purchased with His own blood. For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves." (Acts 20:28-30).

History reveals that during the middle ages and later many incidents occurred in which copies of the Scriptures in the common languages of the people were confiscated and burned upon orders from the medieval Roman church. People were not encouraged to possess, and read the Bible, since the church authorities felt that they alone had the right to interpret the Scriptures for the people. This evidently brought spiritual darkness among people. Since common people did not have direct access to the Bible, they began to believe and practice many things which they were told as the Bible doctrine by the church of that time but in fact were the commandments of men. A few examples are: Mass, instead of the Lord's Supper; the use of the Holy Water; celibacy, which forbids marriage to the clergy, extreme unction, transubstantiation, which teaches that the bread and the wine of the Lord's Supper become the literal body and the blood of Christ; purgatory, the place of temporary suffering or expiation; changes in congregational singing in worship services of the church by bringing in special choir groups to sing for the church with accompanying musical instruments; sprinkling instead of immersion for baptism; baptizing babies; celebrations of religious festivals, such as, Christmas, Palm Sunday and Easter; calling church leaders Father, Reverend and by other such terms to exalt men above others. In the beginning such doctrines of human origin were practiced only by the Catholic church, but as protestant denominations, all of which came out of the Catholic church since 1600 A.D., began to multiply, most of them retained many of these teachings and continue to practice them until now. As more and more people were being divided religiously as one denominational group sprang from another, each denomination stressed its own teaching. Each was named either after its founder such as Lutheran; or after a particular doctrine, such as baptism; or after a peculiar method; or after a certain day, such as Pentecost.

Today men find it easy to forget that over nineteen hundred years ago Christ had established His own church as He wanted it. Everything concerning the church of Christ is written in His New Testament of the Bible. We can read about its name, worship, organization, practice, rule of faith, who is the head of it, and how can one become a member of it. The truth is, the church of Jesus Christ existed hundreds of years before Catholic or Protestant churches came into existence.

The wonderful thing is though that we today have the same seed of the word of God which the Apostles had planted, and it is still as powerful to produce the same harvest of the New Testament Christianity

that it produced in the first century. It is possible for all those who truly love Christ to go back behind all denominationalism to Christ and to His church which He had established. This Bible plea does not require that any person bow to the whims of any man or religious group. But the need of the hours is that each individual must willingly lay aside denominational names, creeds and practices which are foreign to the Bible teaching, and with courage and freedom from men's teaching return to God's way as He has revealed for all in His book. Why accept adulterated when you can have the pure?

The Ten Commandments Yesterday And Today

J.C. Choate

For ages the debate has raged as to whether the Ten Commandments are still binding. Those who know their Bible know that the Old Testament ceased to be binding a law when the New Testament law came into force with the death of Christ. The Lord's death blotted out one law and with the shedding of his blood it was the means of dedicating a new one. Read Hebrews 9 and 10. Actually, you couldn't have the new without the removal of the old.

Does that mean that the Old Testament is no longer the word of God and must be rejected? Not at all. Although the Old Testament is no longer binding as a law, it is still the word of God, needs to be read, and contains many principles and lessons for man today. The apostle Paul tells us that the things written in the Old Testament were written for our examples that "we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." (1 Corinthians 10:6). Paul wrote the Romans, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Romans 15:4).

But if the old law is no longer binding, does that mean that the Ten commandments no longer must be kept, and if so, does that mean that man today can commit all of those sins without the Lord's displeasure? It is true that the Ten Commandments are no longer binding as a law,

but let me hasten to say that Jesus and the writers of the New Testament also included all of those commandments for man today, except for the Sabbath Day, and that day has been replaced by the First Day of the Week, as being the day of worship (Acts 20:7), in the law of the Christ as revealed in the pages of the New Testament. But those commandments weren't brought over from the Old Testament law to the law of Christ, but Christ and the New Testament writers included commands like not to kill, not to steal, not to commit adultery, etc., because those are commands that are needed in every moral law. For example, a country may reject its present constitution and write a new one. Many of the principles and freedoms that were in the old constitution may also be found in the new constitution. But the people are no longer governed by the old one but the new one. The principles and guarantees of freedom that appear there are there, not because they were brought from the old one, but because these principles and laws are needed in any constitution that may be drawn up. The constitution of your country may have a number of laws in the constitutions of your neighbor countries, but when you keep the laws of your constitution, that doesn't mean that you are keeping the laws of other governments. Those laws are in various constitutions because of their ever present need.

But let us take a look at the Ten Commandments and then we'll show you side by side how that Christ and the New Testament writers also gave these same commandments.

1. "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3). Paul said there is "One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:6).
2. "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." (Exodus 20:4). John wrote, "Little children, keep yourselves from idols, Amen." (1 John 5:21).
3. "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." (Exodus 20:5). Paul exhorted, "Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not." (Romans 12:14). Christ said, "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because

thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than that cometh of evil." (Matthew 5:33-37).

4. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Exodus 20:8). As mentioned earlier, the day of worship has been changed by the Lord from the Sabbath Day, which is Saturday or the Seventh Day of the Week, to the First Day of the Week, which is Sunday, or the Lord's Day. We read that Paul and a group of Christians in Troas met for worship, and the record says, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." (Acts 20:7).
5. "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." (Exodus 20:12). Paul said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother: which is first commandment with promise; That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:1-3).
6. "Thou shalt not kill." (Exodus 20:13). Christ not only condemned killing but he said, "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." (Matthew 5:22). John declared, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." (1 John 3:15). Then Paul listed murder as a work of the flesh and he said that those who did such could not enter the kingdom of God or the kingdom of heaven. (Galatians 5:19-21).
7. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14). Jesus not only condemned adultery, but he even went to the very heart of the problem, when he said, "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart." (Matthew 5:27,28). Read also what Christ said in Matthew 19:9). Then keep in mind that Paul condemned adultery in 1 Corinthians 6:9,10 and Galatians 5:19-21.
8. "Thou shalt not steal." (Exodus 20:15). There are many passages of scripture in the New Testament that condemns

the sin of stealing, robbing, or being a thief. A good one to remember is the statement made by Paul, when he said, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth." (Ephesians 4:28).

9. "Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour." (Exodus 20:16). In giving instructions to different groups, Paul said to the aged women, "The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things." (Titus 2:3). Concerning elders in the church, we are told "Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses." (1 Timothy 5:19). At the time Christ was being tried, and there were those who wanted to see him crucified, the record says, "Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death." (Matthew 26:59). False witnesses are false accusers. (2 Timothy 3:3).
10. "Thou shalt not covet. . . ." (Exodus 20:17). To covet is to selfishly want that which the other person has. We are told that those who covet cannot enter the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9,10). As one of the qualifications for becoming a bishop or an elder in the church is that he cannot be covetous. (1 Timothy 3:3). Paul wrote Timothy, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." (1 Timothy 6:10).

So I think you can see from the foregoing, that when we say that we are no longer under the Old Testament law, which includes the Ten Commandments, that does not mean that we are free to indulge in those things that were forbidden in those days. Rather, the law of Christ as recorded in the pages of the New Testament, is even more demanding when it comes to these laws in as much as these acts are not only forbidden, but the thoughts and motives in the heart that produce them are also condemned.

Remember then that we are under the law of Christ, with Christ as our Lord and saviour, which is said to be the perfect law of liberty (James 1:25) with greater hope and better promises. Who would even think about accepting any thing any less?

"Busybodies"

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Sometimes children play a game. They sit in a circle and the leader whispers something to the friend next to her. She turns and whispers what she hears to the next person: The message travels around the circle until it comes back to the leader. Then she stands and states what she whispered originally and what was whispered back to her at the last. There is a big laugh when the group hears how the message changed as it traveled quickly from mouth to mouth.

The game the children play is called "gossip," and it tells us something. When people begin to gossip and to pass messages from one friend to another, the story changes drastically as it travels along. But, unlike the game gossip in real life is no joke and usually it is intended to hurt some one.

The scriptures have something to say about gossip. They speak of some women who "... learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house, and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not" (1 Timothy 5:13).

So the Christian woman cannot afford to be guilty of gossiping. We must watch carefully what passes through our lips. There is a good test we should give before we say anything about anyone:

(1) Is it true? If the "news" is only something I have heard but do not know for a fact to be true, then I should not repeat it.

(2) Is it kind? Even if the news I have heard is true, will I be doing a kindness to the person if I repeat it? If so, if it is good news, a good thing, then I will want to tell everyone. But if it would hurt someone, then I should not be scattering it abroad, even though it may be true.

(3) Is it necessary? Sometimes bad news is true and sometimes it must be told to particular people for their welfare or guidance. Only in such a case would the Christian woman talk of what she knows, and

even then her attitude should be one of regret and sorrow, not of relishing some juicy morsel of gossip.

James 3:2-10 says: "For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body. Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body. Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires. Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell. For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind. But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. With it we bless our God and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of God. Out of same mouth proceeds blessings and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so."

Christian women, keep close guard on your tongues!

Lessons from a Man Possessed

Clem Thurman

This man was possessed by evil spirits, controlled by Satan, and his story is told in Mk. 5:1-20. He lived in the "the tombs" (v. 3), he could not be controlled for he broke all the "fetters and chains" others had used to bind him. He was constantly "crying out and cutting himself with stones" (v. 5). When Jesus came to that region, He cast out the evil spirits which then went into a herd of swine (v. 13). People who knew him were amazed to find the man "in his right mind" (v. 15), for the change was that dramatic.

There is really very little revealed to us in Scripture about evil spirits. They derived their power from Satan, and their power was far beyond that of ordinary men--as with this man, who has such tremendous strength. They also had supernatural knowledge, for the evil spirits knew Jesus to be the Christ even before His apostles did (Lk. 4:41; Acts 16:17). Because the source of the evil spirits was Satan,

there are many similarities between the effect of evil spirits in the lives of people before 1900 years and the effect of sin in the lives of people today. Let us study this man to find similar attitudes and effects in the lives of sinners today.

THIS MAN WAS DANGEROUS TO OTHER PEOPLE

The reason the man dwelt apart was his danger to others. The record says he was "exceeding fierce, so that no man could pass by that way" (Matt. 8:28). People tried to bind him, probably for his own good as much as their protection, but even chains could not hold him. he was a menace to others, dangerous even to those who loved him.

The apostle wrote, "Evil companionships corrupt good morals" (1 Cor. 15:33). The sinner is dangerous to the society in which he lives, and especially to those closest to him. Absalom brought great grief to his own father (2 Sam. 18:33). Judas, "a trusted friend," betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13; 13:6). The sinner today, like the possessed man of the tombs, hurts those closest to him.

Few people realize the influence, for good or bad, that they have over people they love. Jeroboam, king of Israel, was often called "the man who made Israel to sin" because of his departure from God's will into which the people followed. After Jeroboam's death, his son reigned: "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, as his fathers had done: he departed not from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin" (2 Kgs. 15:9). Truly, "like father, like son." The same pattern was followed in the life of Rehoboam, king of Judah, for it was said of his son "And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him" (1 Kgs. 15:3). A sinner today, though a loving husband and father, is likewise influencing his wife and children to "walk in all the sins" for which he sets the pattern! Friend, if you are walking in sin, those you love the most will be most influenced to follow you. The sinner is dangerous to those about him.

THIS MAN WAS HIS OWN WORST ENEMY

The man with evil spirits also hurt himself: "Always, night and day, in the tombs and in the mountains, he was crying out, and cutting himself with stones" (Mk. 5:5). Even when others tried to control him for his own good, he broke the chains and continued to inflict more injury

upon himself. He was, in a literal sense, his own worst enemy. But the same principle is true with every sinner today.

When Jesus found an infirmed man, He healed him and then warned, "Sin no more, lest a worse thing befall thee" (Jno. 5:5,14). Sin hurts the sinner. The alcoholic hurts himself with every drink he takes. The fornicator, the thief, the liar, the gossip--all these hurt themselves even as they hurt others. Jesus said, "Be not anxious for the morrow" (Matt. 6:34), but the sinner cannot avoid the worry resulting from the condemnation of his own conscience (Rom. 2:15). For thirty pieces of silver, Judas sold himself--and he had not a moment's peace after that terrible act of treachery in betraying Jesus. The Bible reveals many who brought on their own destruction by sinfulness: Saul, Ahab, Haman, Nebuchadnezzar (1 Sam. 15; 2 Kgs. 10; Esth. 7; Dan. 4). Invariably, the sinner hurts himself.

THIS MAN COULD NOT SAVE HIMSELF

This man, possessed by evil spirits, could not free himself. He was "possessed" and was thus under the control of Satan. In his "right mind" this man would not harm himself or others, as was proved later. But he was literally a slave to the devil. If he was ever to be free, someone must set him free. And so it is with us. We cannot free ourselves of the shackles of sin which Satan places upon us.

The prophet wrote, "The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his own steps" (Jer. 10:23). It is stated plainly for us in Rom. 3:23, "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." And Jesus shows the result of sinful life, "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (Jno. 8:24). Satan has the sinner in bondage (Heb. 2:15) just as he had the possessed man under his control (Mk. 5). Even though some claim they are free, while in sin they are "bondservants of corruptions" (2 Pet. 2:19).

Jesus came to set us free: "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. . . If therefore the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (Jno. 8:32,36). He left heaven and came to earth, He lived a perfect life, He died as a sacrifice for us--that we might be free: "Obedient from the heart to that form of teaching. . . and being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness" (Rom. 6:17-18). Christ cared for the man, and set him free from the bondage to evil spirits. Christ cares for us, and He died to set us free from bondage to

sin. No one else can make us free, only Jesus : "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one cometh unto the Father, but by me. . . In none other is there salvation" (Jno. 14:6; Acts 4:12).

THE TESTIMONY OF A NEW LIFE

After Jesus had freed the man in the tombs of the evil spirits, people in the area heard of it. "And they came to Jesus, and beheld him that was possessed with demons sitting, clothed and in his right mind" (Mk. 5:15). It was evident to them that a change had been made. The man was different. He now wanted to follow Jesus (v. 18). Jesus tells us, "If any man come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me" (Matt. 16:24). When a sinner comes to the Lord today, a change in his life is evident: "Buried with him through baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life. . . If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 5:17). When the Jewish leaders looked at the early Christians, "They took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). A new kind of life resulted from being made free.

There is a wonderful trait manifested in this man whom Jesus set free. It is revealed in his desire to be with Jesus, and in the duty which the Lord gave to him; "He besought him that he might be with him. And he suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go to thy house unto thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and how he had mercy on thee" (Mk. 5:18-19). When people were later set free from sin, they realized the same responsibility: "They that were scattered abroad went everywhere preaching the word. . . They ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 8:4; 5:42). When people were set free from sin, they went and told others of the freedom which Christ offers to all. So must it be today: "I believed, therefore did I speak. We also believe, and therefore speak" (2 Cor. 4:13). When one is freed from sin (Rom. 6:1-6; 6:16-18), he must tell others of the salvation which Christ offers to them. Surely, if we are grateful for what the Lord did for us, we will share the good news with others who are still lost. This man of the tombs went to his family and friends to tell them of Christ. So must we.

The man possessed of evil spirits was dangerous to other, hurt himself and could not save himself. The same is true with any under the influence of Satan today. But Jesus came, and He offers freedom to all

who will come to Him (Matt. 11:28; Jno. 8:32-36). Being then "made free from sin" (Rom. 6:18), we must go and tell others the wonderful news of our deliverance. If we really appreciate our freedom, and the Lord who grants it to us, that will be our "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

The Truth is Precious

Johnny Ramsey

A gigantic battle for Truth and Light was fought in the nineteenth century by men who cried, "Back to the Bible, back to Jerusalem, back to New Testament Christianity!" This fervent plea by passed a reformation in Romanism and cried for a restoration of the original in its pristine beauty. These things alone could truly break the shackles of darkness, sin and shame. It is even so today!

"But," someone asks, "what made the Dark Ages dark? Could such a time return? Is it possible for error to rule and reign again?" Certainly! Spiritual blindness is to be observed in many places of the earth in the modern 20th century. You can live in darkness; so can I. Notice the following factors that produced the Dark Ages.

1. A lack of study in and knowledge of God's word. In 1550 the cardinals advised the Pope to subdue the reading of the Scriptures. Some brethren today are just about as stingy with the Bible, because they seldom read it themselves, or teach it to their children. God once said, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos. 4:6). A dearth of Bible knowledge will bring back the spirit of the Dark Ages.

2. False teachers veiling the Truth will do as much damage today as their counterparts did during the 8th century. Unless we become more vigilant and more outspoken, wolves in sheep clothing will scatter the flock of God (Matt. 7:15). When brethren ask gospel preachers not to expose Catholicism and denominationalism they are begging for a revival for spiritual darkness.

3. Degradation of morals and home life will produce the same situation now that aided the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Unquestionably we face a degenerate picture of fidelity in our homes. The immodesty and vulgarity of today's looseness is appalling to every loyal saint. Few seem capable of blushing, as embarrassment doesn't

come easily anymore. Mothers are told to "love their husbands, love their children, to be discreet, keepers at home" (Titus 2:5). Parents must instill respect for authority, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. . . And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord" (Eph. 6:1-4). Until parents function scripturally as parents, and children act with courtesy and respect for authority, imminent disaster surrounds us.

4. Hypocrisy and Cowardice among those claiming to be God's people can enshroud the way of holiness with many pitfalls leading to Satan's abyss. Evidently, many "Christians" failed to speak out against apostasy. Undoubtedly some professed Christianity until Roman pressure made the way of Christ exceedingly unpopular and dangerous (Rev. 2:10). When we deny the Lord by our lives and allow error to be taught we might as well return to the days of the Inquisition.

5. No real desire to be Bible Christians will assure one of spiritual oblivion in God's sight. It is easy, the devil will see to that, for us to content ourselves with less than all that God commands. It took real insight by the restorers to desire a complete return to apostolic teaching. May we realize there is no substitute, no second best, to the most precious commodity on earth—Truth (Jno. 8:32). Truth alone can erase the darkness of the ages.

Facing the Grim Reality of Hell!

Dillard Thurman

Jehoiakim, (Jer. 36), is not the only arrogant character who has tried to penknife the Word of God! There are many seeking to delete portions of the Bible which are not to their liking! This is true of Bible teaching on everlasting punishment for lost souls in hell. Rather than conforming to God's teaching on obedience and righteousness, it is more fitting to them to make the Bible conform to the sinful pattern of their lives! Many completely ignore, or else reject, the warnings God has given on the subject of eternal punishment. In 1932, a religious convention in Hot Springs, Arkansas, (U.S.A.) approved and passed on vote: "Resolved: There is no hell!" Ofcourse, God's Word read the same after the convention adjourned! Some don't have the courage to accept

the demanding terms of the gospel, lacking faith to meet God's requirements!

It is an established fact that we had far less crime when threat of a noose hung before would be criminals! But the permissiveness of our courts has taken away such fear of punishment, and crime has no deterrent! Lawless men show contempt for law and order. Laws must have penalties for violators, else there is no strength to govern! Justice demands punishment for evil men who defy the law!

It is much easier to preach on love than hate; far better to preach on reward than punishment; and more tolerable to preach on God's mercy than on His vengeance; and heaven rather than hell! But God's servant must "declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:27). Though the scriptures declare, "God is love" (1 Jno. 4:8), there is another passage that tempers this: "For our God is a consuming fire." (Heb. 12:29). Those who prate on and on about the love of God, without reckoning the terrible vengeance of God, have not really known God!

UNIVERSALLY, FOLK HAVE BELIEVED IN HELL!

Only a minority has rejected the idea of divine punishment for evil! In contrast to the reward for righteous conduct, there must be a place of retribution and punishment of evildoers! The reward and punishment must fit the character fashioned in life. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." (Gal. 6:7-8). One adamantly turning from God faces a terrible reckoning: "But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds." (Rom. 2:5-6). That is a side of God that must be faced! as violations of God's natural laws are punished, even so those who violate His spiritual laws must face the penalty of their actions!

JUSTICE AND RIGHT DEMAND PUNISHMENT!

Enforcement of any law is predicated upon attached penalties for disobedience! The law breaker must pay for his violation, or the law fails! "Knowing this, that the law is not made for the righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for unholy

and profane" (1 Tim. 1:9). Laws are not to curtail the righteous, but must check the evildoer! Society suffers irreparable harm when the penalty prescribed by law is not speedily meted out! The rampant increase of violent crime in our world springs from the idea that capital punishment will never be meted out! What is the strength of the law if no punishment is given those who violate it? But with a just and righteous God, there is justice attached to punishment! "Sin is a transgression of the law." (1 Jno. 3:4). "The wages of sin is death" (Rom. 6:23). "The soul that sinneth, it shall die." (Ezek. 18:4, 20). Any skeptic who questions these passages has only to look to the end of every soul since Adam who sinned against God's natural laws, and who died as a consequence! You have only to translate this into the spiritual realm, and you get God's message!

THE BIBLE SPEAKS PLAINLY OF HELL!

The Bible is honey-combed with the theme of God's wrath against iniquity, and His vengeance on the wicked! Hell is presented in the same literal and factual language that speaks of heaven! Dwight L. Moody affirmed that five and one-half times as much is said about divine punishment and retribution in God's word as is said about divine favor and reward! Jesus spoke often of the place of eternal punishment reserved for the wicked. Yet He was the epitome of love, care and consideration! You can't accept the reality of heaven without also accepting the reality of hell—a place of torment forever! "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God." (Psa. 9:17). You have been sufficiently warned!

HELL WILL BE EVERLASTING: ETERNAL!

Hell will last for the same duration that heaven will endure! Jesus spoke of this, saying: "Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. . . And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Mt 25:41, 46). John the Revelator speaks of the destiny of those who worship the devil: "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: they have no rest day nor night" (Rev. 20:10). There is no end to the torment and anguish the lost shall suffer! Jesus, in speaking to the punishment of the wicked, said three times—"Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mk. 9:44, 46, 48). Those who refuse the salvation God

offers will find no relief from that pain and anguish!

HELL WILL BE UTTER DARKNESS!

The blackness of hell will be in superlative degree! Jesus said that apostates "shall be cast into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 12:8). The estate of the lost is separation from God, which means they have no light! "This is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." (1 Jno. 1:5). Lost souls are banished from God and His light. Jesus taught this in speaking of the man without the proper garment in Mt. 23:13--"Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "A darkness that may be felt" (Exo. 10:21), cannot compare to the superlative degree of this "outer darkness" that will last forever! Jude refers to the punishment of reprobates "to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever." (Jude 13). Just imagine a starless night with no light, and no hope of a sunrise!

HELL HAS UNQUENCHABLE FIRE!

The stark terror and horror of hell is presented in the warnings from our Lord: "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mk. 9:43-44). For the greater emphasis, Jesus repeated this same warning regarding the foot and eye! (Vs. 45-48). Speaking of the end of the world, Jesus said: "The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth." (Mt. 13:41-42). Jesus accurately described hell's anguish in the story of the rich man and Lazarus, where the rich man cried out in hell, "For I am tormented in this flame!" (Lk. 16:23). The terrible and awful destiny of lost souls moan piteously in the words of Rev. 14:11--"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night." Those tragic words, "Depart from me," dooms the lost forever from the presence of God! "Where their worm dieth not" pictures the violent squirming, threshing action seeking escape, but finding none! The anguish never ends, and there is not surcease of suffering!

HELL FLOODED WITH MEMORIES

A deluge of memories will descend on those in hell! As the rich man thought of his lost brothers (Lk. 16:18-31), so the anguished souls in hell will have a flood of memories of every sinful act, every dastardly deed, every filthy word, and every wasted opportunity for good! The lost souls will writhe under the guilt of former sins. They will know no joy and happiness forever, but suffer with the knowledge that the punishment is just! There will be memories of opportunities for joy and happiness, but in a place where they can never be known again! Along with such memories, there will also be the knowledge that the influence left behind has caused loved one to also be lost (see Lk. 16:19-31). After squandering God's blessings, they would gladly give 10,000 worlds like this for just one more chance--but it cannot be! Memories of former blessings only accentuate the horrible punishment of hell!

THE NEIGHBOURS IN HELL

Hell will be populated with the very worst of neighbours and associates! The lost souls will have as their companions for eternity the filth of earth's society, the offscouring of the world, the moral degenerates and outcasts, and the lawless reprobates! Those who have pointed to "those hypocrites in the church" will have them in abundance there! "But the fearful, and the unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." (Rev. 21:8). They will spend, not time, but eternity with such associates! Don't expect congenial, loving neighbours in hell!

THE ONLY BRIGHT SIDE OF HELL!

Yes, even with such a horrible picture presented, there is a bright side to this matter. We do not have to go there! Any one who goes there does so over the protest of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit! The forces of heaven have united to save us from that terrible catastrophe! "God so loved the world" that He sent His Son, and that Son died, and the Spirit revealed the terms of salvation--all to the end that man would not be lost! Moreover, the only word coming from the realm of lost souls shows that we are not wanted there! (See Lk. 16:27-28). Why should we go to a place where we are not invited? Jesus suffered that we might have

eternal salvation through our obedience to Him (Heb. 5:8-9). You are unwanted and uninvited to hell! You don't have to go!

Everything divine means and human efforts can do to keep you from hell has been done! Surely God has done His part; Christ has done His part; and the Holy Spirit has done His part! From inspired apostles who delivered the gospel of our salvation, to the gospel preachers who have spoken the message, and to the feeble efforts of the one who entreats you by this printed page, all have sought your salvation from sin and its curse! But if you reject the entreaty of heaven, if you refuse the message of salvation, if you leap over the praying forms of them that love you as you persist in a life of sin, whom can you blame in a vast eternity of suffering than yourself?" "And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." (1 Thes. 1:7-9). Friend, won't you reconsider where you want to spend the vastness of eternity?

Why Do Bad Things Happen To Good People?

Bob Prichard

One can seldom read a newspaper, or hear a newscast, without being confronted with tragedy. This has led some to question the existence of God. They ask, "If God really is all powerful, and all loving, why does he allow so much pain and suffering in this world?" The world has NO answer to the problem of suffering. Christianity offers an answer.

Genesis 1:27 tells us that God created man in his own image. Being made in the image of God, man has the free will to choose between right and wrong. Adam chose, and all men since Adam have chosen, to sin. This choice has brought the consequences of sin to mankind. Much of the suffering we see today is a direct result of man's sin. The innocent often suffer because others have used their free will to sin. Sin is here because of man, not because of God.

Much of man's suffering can also be attributed to the presence of the enemy, Satan. In the parable of the wheat and the tares, Jesus explained the ruining of the field by the sowing of tares, saying: "an enemy hath done this" (Matthew 13:28). The book of Job demonstrates Satan's ruthlessness in his persecution of men, including righteous men, such as Job.

God hates sin. The Bible is filled with demonstrations of God's judgment on those who sin. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying to the Holy Spirit concerning their gifts to the church (Acts 5). God again and again called Israel to repentance, although Israel often refused to hear. Some of the suffering in the world today may be allowed by God as punishment.

God is a God of love. Man's real problem is not suffering, but sin. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). We cannot rightly say that God has done nothing about the problem; because he has done something in sending Christ.

Often, there is value in suffering. Paul asked the Lord three times to remove his "thorn in the flesh." The Lord's answer was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (II Corinthians 12:9). Paul wrote, "Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts" (Romans 3:3-5). The key in suffering, is whether it makes us BITTER? or BETTER?

It must always be remembered, in facing suffering, that God himself is the Great Sufferer, who gave his Son to die for wicked men. He feels our pain and suffering. In these things we cannot understand, we must trust him because of the things we do understand.

Come As You Are To Be Made Better

Cecil May, Jr.

A now-deceased preacher, who was as much noted for his

cantankerousness and orneriness as for his soundness, preached a sermon with the basic emphasis that God will not accept us in our sin; we must turn from our sins to be received by him. The song leader for the occasion had chosen the invitation song with out knowing the exact topic and direction of the sermon. At its conclusion he arose to lead "Just As I Am!" He had no sooner gotten the first four words of the song out of his mouth when the preacher grabbed him by the shoulders, shook him with some degree of violence, and said something like, "You idiot, you've ruined my sermon! You've ruined my sermon!"

It is true that the song leader had not made the best choice to follow that particular sermon. It should also be noted, however, that any sermon ruined by a reminder that we have nothing to offer God for our past sins except the blood of his Son who died for us was not a gospel sermon to start with.

At the opposite end of the same pole, an article by Lloyd John Ogilvie, a well known Presbyterian preacher and writer, is making the rounds in church bulletins. The article is entitled, "A Friend Who Won't Go Away." It defines a friend as "one who knows all about you and won't go away." The article applies that definition of friend to Jesus and ends up saying of him, "There's one person whom I can trust. His friendship is so profound that there is nothing that can make him go away!"

I applaud the sentiment that ascribes to Jesus the highest qualities of truest friendship. I recognize the need to have, both in Christ and in other friends, a sense of acceptance that causes us to know boldly, though we have faults they know about, we can still be their friends. It is a bit too much to say, however, "There is nothing that can make him go away."

There, is indeed, nothing that can separate us from his love (Romans 8:35-39). There is nothing that would cause him to desire any thing other than our salvation through the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). There is nothing that can make him want us to perish rather than come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). While we were yet sinners, weak and ungodly, God gave his Son; and Christ gave his life on our behalf (Romans 5:6-8). His love is unconditional.

His acceptance, however, is NOT unconditional: We must come to the knowledge of the truth to be saved (John 8:32). We must repent in order not to perish (Luke 13:3). We must be faithful to receive the crown of life (Revelation 2:10). If we die in our sins, where he is we cannot come (John 8:21-24). It is sheer Calvinistic theology to make our

acceptance with Christ unconditional; it is NOT, however, good Biblical theology.

John 3:16 And The Refutation of Major Denominational Dogmas

Harold Bigham

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16). This verse is perhaps one of the most-frequently used passages in the Bible. Many would refer to it as the "Little Bible." However, this passage of scripture is perhaps the most misused passage by denominational preachers who espouse their particular doctrines and tenets. Let us study John 3:16 and refute some of the major denominational dogmas of our day.

1. **"FOR GOD."** This denies the false doctrine of atheism. Atheism denies the existence of Jehovah God, and denies the inspiration of the Bible. It seeks to undermine and destroy the faith of man in God. If God be marked out of John 3:16, there would be no great love of God, no Saviour to save, and no redemption available for mankind. Perhaps the atheist should ponder Psalm 14:1, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." John 3:16 begins with the statement "For God." The Bible begins with "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). Either it begins there, or there is no beginning! The book of Genesis is not a "myth" but is the commentary of God concerning how the Godhead created the heaven and the earth.

2. **"SO LOVED THE WORLD."** This denies the doctrine of Deism. This false teaching admits that God created the world, and set it in force; but God then left mankind to make his own way and destiny throughout the world. John 3:16 affirms not only that there is a God, but that God cares, and is concerned about mankind! God was concerned so much that he sent his only begotten Son to walk among mere men.

3. **"THAT HE GAVE."** This denies Premillennialism. John 3:16 states that God sent his Son into the world to die. God sent him that he

might give himself! He did not send Christ to build or to set up an earthly kingdom. Christ came to the earth to die, and to purchase his church with his own blood (Acts 20:28; Daniel 7:13, 14).

4. **"HIS ONLY BEGOTTEN SON."** This denies Modernism. Modernism denies the deity, virgin birth, miracles, and the resurrection of Christ. Modernism also denies the inspiration of Holy Writ!!!

But John 3:16 states that God gave his "only begotten Son." "Only begotten" means one of a kind, or unique, Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God! (Hebrews 1:1-8).

5. **"THAT WHOSOEVER."** This denies Calvinism. Calvinism says that God unconditionally and unchangeably predestined the future of every man before time began on earth without any conditions placed upon man; therefore only a certain number specifically numbered and named will be saved. The word "whosoever" shows that man has a choice, because he was created a free moral agent (Genesis 1:27). Man therefore always has the freedom to choose right or wrong, good or evil, obedience or disobedience. Adam and Eve in the Garden depict the free moral agency of man! (Genesis 3:16). Furthermore, Christ was tempted by the Devil in the wilderness, which underlines the freedom to choose good or evil! (Matthew 4:1-10).

6. **"BELIEVETH."** This denies the teaching of Universalism. Universalism teaches that everyone is going to heaven. None is lost! The word "believeth" definitely shows that salvation is conditional. It means the person who "keeps on believing." Of course, this verse does not teach the false doctrine of "Faith only." "Believeth" covers the whole process of obedience. When one hears the gospel, believes in Christ, repents of his sins, confesses the name of the Christ, and is buried in baptism, then he possesses the obedient faith that saves (Hebrews 5:8-9). Matthew 7:13-14 definitely teaches that not ALL (Emphasis mine H.B.) will be saved!

7. **"IN HIM."** This denies Sectarianism. Sectarianism states that "you can attend the church of your choice." The Bible teaches that one must be a member of the church of Christ to be saved (Acts 4:12; Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 4:4). Paul condemned division, in 1 Corinthians 1:10. The words "in him" teach that salvation is found only in him! (Galatians 3:26, 27).

8. "SHOULD NOT PERISH BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE," This denies the false teaching of Materialism. Materialists state when a man dies, that is all over. It is finished. "Perish" doesn't mean annihilate, but it means ruin and destruction in a sense of eternal punishment that will be received by the disobedient ones (Matthew 25). "Eternal life" shows that it is not the end of man when physical death occurs (Luke 16:16-31).

This verse also denies the doctrine of the impossibility of apostasy. This damnable doctrine teaches that once a person is saved, he can do nothing to fall from the saved state. Denominational preachers will insert the word "shall" into this passage. But, alas, my Friend, "does" "should" mean "shall"??? The smothering fire of hell is pronounced upon those who would pervert the word of God! (Galatians 1:6-9). The person who would insert one word for another to change its meaning is deceptive (Genesis 3).

John 3:16 is a great passage of Scripture! Let us always give heed to the great lessons contained therein.

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