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EDITORIAL

What Constitutes the Church of Christ?

A modern day dictionary defines "church" as a "building for public Christian worship". When the subject of the church is discussed, one thinks of a physical material building in which worship takes place. The word "church", however, is never used in the New Testament of the Bible to convey such meaning. In the Scriptures, the word "church" denotes the body of those people who have yielded to the gospel of Christ and upon their obedience to the form of the gospel the Lord Himself has added them to His Spiritual body, which is His church. The English word "church" is a translation of the Greek word "ekklesia", used in the Bible's New Testament. Ekklesia means "the body of citizens, or the assembly." In Matthew 16:18 we read where Christ had said, "on this rock I will build My church." The rock He was referring to was the confession of His disciple, Peter, that Christ was the Son of the living God. In Acts chapter 2, after the death, the burial and the resurrection of Christ, when His disciples had declared the Gospel of the death and burial and resurrection of Christ for the first time before a great multitude of people. Hearing the gospel of the death of the Son of God for the sins of humanity, the people had cried: "Men and brethren what shall we do?" Those people were convinced that Jesus Christ was the Son of God and that He was crucified by the will and plan of God for their sins. They no longer wanted to live in sin; they wanted salvation from sin and forgiveness of their sins. So they asked: "What shall we do?"

Thereupon, we read, "Then Peter said to them, Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 2:37, 28). What happened then? It says next, "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them." To them, means to the number of the apostles. Here was a body constituted, the apostles and the three thousand souls, who had believed with all their hearts in Christ to be the Son of God and had repented, changed their hearts, and had been baptized, immersed in water for the forgiveness of their sins. And, now, notice the last verse of this book of Acts the second chapter which tells about those baptized and forgiven people that they were, "praising God and having favor with all the people. AND THE LORD ADDED TO THE CHURCH DAILY THOSE WHO WERE BEING SAVED." (Acts 2:47).

No one can ever JOIN the church of Christ, the church about which we read in the Bible. Because the Lord ADDS the saved to His church. He knows who are the saved. He saves those, who, after hearing His saving gospel, believe in Him with ALL heart that He is the Son of God, and who repent or change their mind to no longer walk in sin, and who go down in the water of baptism to have their old man buried and come out of the watery grave of baptism to walk in the new life in Christ (Romans 6:3-6), and thus have been born anew (John 3:3,5). This is exactly the people of Acts chapter two had done in the beginning whom the Lord had added to His church, and the Lord is still doing the same, that is, He is adding daily, those who are being saved, to His church, when they believe in Him with all heart and repent of sins and are baptized for the remission of their sins. Those whom the Lord adds to His church also become the citizens of the kingdom of God. The term "church" and "kingdom of heaven" or the "kingdom of God" are interchanged by Christ in Matthew 16:17-19 where in his conversation with Peter he told him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, (*Greek-Petros, pebble*), and on this rock (*Greek-Petra*) I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Notice, the Lord was going to build His church on the rock and in the same breath He said that he would give the keys of the Kingdom of heaven. Thus implying that the church and the kingdom are one and the same

institution. We might say that church is the earthly form of the kingdom of heaven. Christ taught that unless one is born of the water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (John 3:5). It was the Spirit of God who inspired men to write the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:21), and 1 Corinthians 12:13 says: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body." The body is the church, according to Ephesians 1:22, 23. Thus we enter the church of Christ and the kingdom of heaven in the same way. The saved were added to the church, as we read in Acts 2:47, but at Colossians 1:13 the apostle writes: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

Those who are in the church of Christ Jesus are also in His kingdom. The church of the Bible, the church that Jesus built and to which He adds all the saved, the church of which He is the head (Colossians 1:18), is NOT a denomination. Denominations are manmade. Some man or woman started them. They are named after their founders, or after a doctrine or a day or some methods. All denominations have their own peculiar ways of functioning, worship, membership, and methods of doing things, that is why they are all divided among themselves, although they all claim that they believe in the Bible and in God and in Christ, yet the fact remains that they are different and divided. They all exist in opposition to Christ's prayer of John 17:20, 21, and all of them stand condemned by the standard of the Scriptures, as we read from 1 Corinthians 1:10-13. God knows that there are millions who are worshipping Him, but He is not going to accept the worship of every individual and every church, because Christ lamented, "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men." (Matthew 15:9). He also said, "Every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." He taught that unless one does the will of God, as He has revealed to us in His book, one will not enter the kingdom of God, even though one might claim that he had done many many great things in Christ's name. (Matthew 7:21-23). According to Ephesians 5:23, "Christ is the head of the church; and He is the Saviour of the body." Are you in His Church, the church; which is designed, created, indwelt, and sustained by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself?

How can one become a member of Christ's church today? Please read in your New Testament: Acts 2:38, 44, 47; Acts 8:12 & 35-39; Acts 22:16; Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Commands and Examples

J.C. CHOATE

The Bible is filled with the commands of God. There are commands which encourage an individual to do certain things and there are commands that ask man to refrain from doing other things. God, the creator of man and all things, has the authority to issue these commands and man has no alternative but to obey them if he is to have his creator's approval and blessing.

The Bible is also full of examples of man's obedience to God's commands. In one instance God is requiring man to carry out his instructions, and in the next instance there is one demonstration after another of man's obedience. Both command and example are powerful, being a directive and a response to it.

Let us now go to God's word and see how this works. In the great Commission, Christ commanded the apostles to take the gospel into all the world and to preach, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Then when we turn to Acts 2, we find that it is the day of Pentecost. The apostles are gathered there in Jerusalem and they have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit to guide them into all the truth. Large number of Jews have also gathered there from all over the world. It was on this occasion that the Lord chose for the apostles to preach the gospel to man for the first time. So they preach to the people about Christ, of his life, miracles, death, burial, and resurrection, of his return to the Father in Heaven. After hearing this stirring sermon in their own language, and being convinced that Christ was indeed the Son of God, a large number of them said to "Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:37,38). Reading on, it says, "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls." (Acts 2:41).

In addition to this example of obedience to the commands of the gospel, there are ten other cases of conversion in the book of Acts. One of the clearest and simplest is the account of conversion of the man from Ethiopia as found in Acts 8. We have Philip being directed by the Spirit of the Lord to go out into a desert place to meet this man. He does:

so, has an opportunity to preach Christ to him, and then while passing by some water the eunuch enquires as to why he can't be baptized. Philip assures him that he can if he believes with all of his heart that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He said that he believed and they stopped the chariot. Both went down into the water, Philip baptized him, and then both came up out of the water and the eunuch went on his way rejoicing while Philip was caught away to another place.

In all of these cases of conversion there is example after example of the gospel being preached, of people hearing it, believing it, repenting of their sins, confessing Christ as the Son of God, and being baptized or buried in water for the remission of their sins.

Since we are commanded today to obey the same gospel, we see by the examples given that if we do what they did, we, too, can have the forgiveness of our sins and we can be added to the same church they were added to, that being the Lord's church or the church of Christ, with Christ himself being the one who saves us and adds us to his church. (Acts 2:47). Now who would dare to do otherwise and still expect to be saved? Surely no one would want to go contrary to the Lord's commands or to the examples of people who obeyed those commands, if he is serious about being saved and going to heaven.

Then as Christians, God commands his people to meet on the first day of the week to partake of the Lord's Supper and to engage in the other acts of worship. In 1 Corinthians 16:2 Paul specified that their monetary gifts to God were to be made on the first day of the week. In Acts 20:7 we have an example of the disciples coming together for worship. The record says, "And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached to them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight." The breaking of bread in this setting definitely has reference to the Lord's Supper as instituted by Christ in Matthew 26:26-28. To emphasize its importance, note that the record says that the disciples had come together for the purpose of breaking bread. Of course they also engaged in the other acts of worship that are clearly taught in the Bible. These would include prayer (Acts 2:42), a study of God's word (preaching in this case by Paul), singing praises to God (Ephesians 5:19), and giving of their means. (1 Corinthians 16:2). Notice, again, that we have an example here of the disciples coming together on the first day of the week to engage in these acts of worship. This is a powerful statement of example concerning the day in which present day Christians are to assemble for worship.

We could go on and on giving many commands in God's word and

then showing examples of where those commands were carried out. Both command and example equally teach us that we should obey or do as the early Christians did. When we have a command or an approved example, we have the authority and backing of the Lord for following that pattern. We would be wise to obey.

Especially For Women

To Those Who Need Her

BETTY BURTON CHOATE

Because, in a household, women usually perform those tasks that sustain physical life as well as nurture the soul, they are well equipped to extend their helpfulness outside the home, to those who need their care. A very real part of the Christian way is the desire and willingness to do for others.

In Acts 9:36-39, we read this account of a Christian woman of the first century church:

"At Joppa there was a certain disciple named Tabitha, which is translated Dorcas. This woman was full of good works and charitable deeds which she did. But it happened in those days that she became sick and died. When they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room.

"And since Lydda was near Joppa, and the disciples had heard that Peter was there, they sent two men to him, imploring him not to delay in coming to them.

"Then Peter arose and went with them. When he had come, they brought him to the upper room. And all the widows stood by him weeping, showing the tunics and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them . . ."

Sometimes Christian women feel restricted in their service to God. They are taught that according to the Scriptures women are not allowed to take a leadership role in the public assembly. "Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says." (1 Corinthians 14:34) "And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived fell into transgression." (1

Timothy 2:12-14).

But this does not mean that there is no work for Christian women to do. Dorcas was described as a woman full of good works and charitable deeds. When Peter came, the widows who were mourning Dorcas' death were showing him the clothing she had stitched and given to them.

Evidently one of Dorcas' talents was in the making of clothing. As she saw the needs of individual widows in the church, she used her talent to help them.

This is what Jesus meant when He told the parable of the talents, recorded in Matthew 25:14-30. In that parable Jesus taught that each person is blessed with abilities, some more than other. But regardless of what God's children have, we are expected to use those abilities. In turn, God will enable us to add other talents to that we will be capable of doing more and more as we pass through this life.

Some may have training in the medical field, as doctors or nurses. They can use their abilities to help the sick among their brethren, as a Christian service instead of a professional service. Perhaps the mother in a home is sick. Christian sisters can help in preparation of food for family, with household cleaning, washing, caring for the children. Visits can be made to encourage the sick or the elderly. Time may be taken to read the Scriptures to those who are old and cannot see well enough to read for themselves. Activities of work and fellowship for the youth in the church can be planned by Christian women and mothers. The home can be used as a tool of love and hospitality for Christians as well as those who are not part of God's spiritual Family. We, as God's women, have many abilities and opportunities to use those talents to His glory, just as Dorcas did.

Trusting the Promises of God

CLEM THURMAN

When God makes a promise, He keeps it. As we read, "*For he is faithful that promised*" (Heb. 10:23; 11:11). People often make promises they intend to keep, then fail. Some will even make promises they do not intend to keep. But when God promises, "*It is impossible for God to lie*" (Heb. 6:18). The New Testament, given through the Lord Jesus Christ, "*hath been enacted upon better promises . . . the promise of the*

eternal inheritance" (Heb. 8:6; 9:15). It is through the promises of God that we are empowered to live as He wants: "*He hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust*" (2 Pet. 1:4).

The fact that God keeps His promises is basic to the gospel. Yet that very fact misleads many people, because they fail to realize the different kinds of promises which God makes. Some expect that every promise of God will be fulfilled, regardless of what we may do. But this ignores the fact that many of His promises are conditional: that is, there are conditions we must meet in order for the promise to be kept. Let's look at some of the promises of God.

GOD MAKES SOME "UNCONDITIONAL" PROMISES

When man sinned in the garden of Eden, God made a promise of a Savior (Gen. 3:15). This promise was repeated a number of times (Gen. 22:18; Jer. 23:5-6; etc.), and is a good example of an unconditional promise. There was nothing for man to do in order for God to keep that promise. The promises concerning the nation of Israel, and the land of Canaan (Gen. 12:2,7; 15:13-14; 17:8; etc.) is another example of an unconditional promise. We read God's word to Adam, "*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return*" (Gen. 3:19). Death is certain for all of us (Eccle. 9:5; 12:7) and is another of God's promises that is unconditional. "*It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment*" (Heb. 9:27), and the same promise of judgment is found in Eccle. 12:14; this is an unconditional promise.

The unconditional promises of God are not designed to benefit the one to whom the promise is given. For instance, it was to Abraham that the promises of the nation of Israel and the land of Canaan were given; but Abraham never lived to see the fulfillment of the promise. The promise of a Savior was made to "*the serpent*" (Gen. 3:15; Rev. 20:10) and surely was not to benefit him! The unconditional promises are to benefit man in general, and the promises being kept are not dependent upon any one person's actions.

MOST OF GOD'S PROMISES ARE "CONDITIONAL"

God promised Israel that they would possess the land of Canaan, that He would drive out the enemy and give them the land (Ex. 23:20-31). But notice a condition, "*If thou shalt indeed obey his [the angel's]*

voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies" (v. 22). When that generation of Israel did not do as God said, they were rejected and could not enter into the land of Canaan; the next generation of Israel possessed the land, instead (Heb. 3:12-19). God then gives us the warning, "*Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it*" (Heb. 4:1). The promise of the land of Canaan was a conditional promise, and when they did not meet the conditions, they did not receive the promise.

Saul was made king of Israel, according to the will of God. But when Saul rejected the will of God, God rejected him as king (1 Sam. 15:23). This is typical of God's conditional promises; if the conditions are not kept, the promise is not valid. Even that great leader, Moses, found out this truth to his sorrow. Moses was selected to lead Israel out of Egypt and into the land of Canaan. But when he disobeyed God at the rock at Meribah, Moses was not allowed to enter into the land of Canaan (Num. 20:10-13). Most of the promises God gives to us are conditional ones, and we must meet the conditions to receive the blessings of the promises.

Conditional promises of God are to benefit the one to whom the promise is given, and the conditions God specifies must be met by that person for him to be blessed. Too many today blame God for not keeping His promise, when in reality they have not met the conditions which He gave with the promise. All spiritual blessings which are promised in the gospel of Christ are conditional, and unless the conditions are met, we cannot expect the blessings.

THE SPIRITUAL PROMISES OF THE GOSPEL

The promise of a Saviour to come was an unconditional promise (Gen. 3:15; etc.). But when the Savior came, He gave conditions by which each one can be saved: "*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved*" (Mk. 16:16). The apostle Peter told believers later, "*Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins*" (Acts 2:38), Christ died and shed His blood "*for the remission of sins*" (Matt. 26:28; Acts 10:43), and He instructs us to be "*baptized into his death*" (Rom. 6:3) in order to have remission of sins. He gave the conditions for remission.

The apostle writes of God's promises and the blessings He offers us: "*Who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ . . . In whom we have redemption through his blood, the*

forgiveness of our sins. Salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory" (Eph. 1:3, 7; 2 Tim. 2:10). We clearly see the promises: *"all spiritual blessings . . . the forgiveness of our sins . . . salvation."* But each of these promises has the same condition: we must be *"in Christ"* to benefit from it. And how does one come *"into Christ"* to receive the promises? The Scriptures are plain: *"baptized into Christ"* (Rom. 6:3; Gal. 3:27). Only when, through faith and repentance, we are led to be *"baptized into Christ"* are we *"in Christ."* That is the condition the Lord gave us.

Because we are *"in Christ"* God promises us, *"There is no condemnation"* (Rom. 8:1). But He gave some conditions: *"Who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit"* (Rom. 8:4). If we are to remain in fellowship with God, where there is no condemnation, we must *"walk in the light"* (1 Jno. 1:6-7). If we walk in darkness, we can have no fellowship with God (1 Jno. 1:5-6) and His just condemnation is upon us. Paul wrote, *"The wages of sin is death; but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord"* (Rom. 6:23). God's salvation is a free gift, but we still must meet His conditions to receive it: and that means being *"in Christ."*

Jesus promised, *"I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am, there ye may be also"* (Jno. 14:3). Promises of heaven and eternal life with God and all the angels and the redeemed have been the inspiration for hundreds of beautiful gospel songs. And rightly so. Such promises are exciting, comforting, strengthening. But let us even remember that they, too, are conditional promises. *"Let us fear therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it"* (Heb. 4:1). Just as Israel's promise of Canaan was conditional (Heb. 3:12-19), so is our promise of heaven (Heb. 4:1-11). Jesus said, *"Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give unto thee the crown of life . . . He that endureth unto the end, the same shall be saved"* (Rev. 2:10; Matt. 10:22). We must meet the conditions in order to receive the promised blessing.

We need to learn the promises of God so that we can live as He directs (2 Pet. 1:4). We should also learn to trust the promises of God. *"For he is faithful that promised"* (Heb. 10:23). And we must trust Him and His promises enough to meet His conditions.

Have You Become As A Little Child?

DAVID COURINGTON

Perhaps you are familiar with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18 that a man must become as a little child if he is to enter the Kingdom of heaven. The account states, "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." (Matthew 18:1-5). The Lord makes it plain that one must become childlike to enter the kingdom of heaven. But in what way?

First, we know that it does not mean childlike in the sense of being immature. We have a constant need to grow up and act like adults. I Corinthians 16:13 says we are to act like men.

Neither does it mean to be childlike in knowledge. The Hebrews writer chastised them for being like babies and being unskillful in the use of God's word when they ought to have been teaching others (Hebrews 5:12-14).

We usually hear it explained that this means to become humble like a little child. This is true in a sense, but it needs further explanation. It may be confusing to say that one is to be humble like a child because children in many ways do not show humility. Most of them are selfish and self seeking. As they grow up they want the biggest piece of cake and the only piece of candy and if they do not get it, they cry. They often want to be the centre of attention and the "greatest," much like these disciples. This could not be what is meant.

One might get a better idea of what is meant here in considering that Jesus was likely referring to a very small child or infant. The word for child in our text is defined by Strong's as a "childling, i.e., an infant ..." and by Vine as a "little or young child." The word can be used of an infant just born as in John 16:21, "A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is

born into the world." The point Jesus is making is that one must be wholly dependent upon Christ as a baby is on its parents. Without its parents it could not eat, drink, or live. It would die without parental care. When one develops this attitude he is completely dependent on Christ for salvation, recognizing his complete helplessness without him.

Solomon used the same comparison in 1 Kings 3 when he found out he was to be king. He prayed to God asking for help and said, "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people?" (1 Kings 3:7-9). God rewarded Solomon for the humble attitude and it is this dependent attitude that we must have if we are to please God. We must know that we have nothing and are nothing apart from Jesus Christ.

It is not coincidental that in Luke's account of Jesus saying "Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein" (Luke 18:17), that the verses immediately preceding this give the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. The Pharisee said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." (Luke 18:11-12). Here is a man who sees himself as righteous and needing nothing from God. The publican in turn said, "God be merciful to me a sinner." (Luke 18:13). The next verse says, "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 18:14).

Do you have this dependent, childlike attitude that pleases God?

Always In Grace?

BOB LAUDERDALE

What about falling from grace? We mean by the statement, "falling from grace," just this: that once a person has been saved, and then loses that salvation by sinning against God. Is this possible? Some say no. Or is the reverse true? Can a Christian fall from grace?

The answer to this question must come from the authority of God, the Bible. It is true that there are passages which seem to indicate that this is true. For instance, a favorite passage of those who hold this persuasion, is John 10:29, "My Father, who hath given them unto me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand." But is this assurance that of the impossibility of apostasy? An examination of the context will show that Jesus here is teaching that no one is able to so overcome God as to remove a person from his secure place in the Father's hand. God is able "to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (1 Timothy 1:12). There is indeed security if we only consider God's ability. But the passage does not negate the fact that the ONE IN the Father's hand can himself so sin as to lose his place of security in the Father's hand; he himself can, by his own action, sin and be lost. When a person has been saved by obedience to the gospel, he does not become a robot, having no will of his own, but, even after salvation, remains a free moral agent, subject to the temptations common to man, and to the "fiery darts of the evil one" (Ephesians 6:16), and to give in to these temptations, and not repent, is to lose one's soul.

Think on these verses: "Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity: but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Romans 11:22); or, "I therefore so run, as not uncertainly; so fight I, as not beating the air: but I buffet my body, and bring it under bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" (1 Corinthians 9:26, 27); or "Ye ARE SEVERED FROM Christ, ye who would be justified by the law; YE ARE FALLEN AWAY FROM GRACE" (Galatians 5:4); etc. So many more could be given.

Suffice is to say: The doctrine of "the impossibility of apostasy" is a doctrine of Satan himself. Let us not be tempted and overcome!

The Implications Of Rejecting The Literal Days Of Genesis 1

DAVE MILLER

The assault of humanism upon the American mindset has taken a

dreadful toll on our culture. Its atheistic tentacles have invaded virtually every facet of social life: politics, education, entertainment, industry, and yes, religion. The church of our Lord has not eluded its grasp. Evidences of humanistic influence in the church may be seen in the changing attitudes toward morality, authority, worship, and fellowship.

One prominent manifestation of humanistic influence in the church is the tendency to make concessions to the Theory of Evolution. Some of our Christian college science professors, et. al., have been seduced by pseudo-scientific "proof" that the earth is old, i.e., 4.5 + billion years old. Evolution's survival as a credible viewpoint depends upon an ancient earth. This circumstance has created a climate in the "scientific" community in which those dating methods which support an ancient earth receive preeminence while those which support a young earth are effectively ignored.

Once a Christian accepts the idea of an ancient earth, he is automatically squeezed into abandoning a literal interpretation of the Biblical creation account. He must reject the "days" of Genesis 1 as literal 24 hour days. Historically, in their frantic need to maintain their own credibility as a valid academic discipline, liberal theologians reevaluated their views of Genesis 1 and altered their perceptions in order to accommodate the evolutionary framework. Consequently, the creation account was stylized "myth" and "hymn." How incredibly naive to think that Christians can use the term "myth" to refer to Genesis 1 and there be no connection with liberal theology, evolution, and a devaluated view of the inspiration of Genesis 1!

What are the practical effects of retreating to such a view? Many other members of the Lord's church were faced with the growing threat of an evolution-based view of science at a time when their own convictions about the reliability and inspiration of the Bible were already crystalized. Consequently, they simply do not understand what the fuss is all about. They are convinced that one can believe in evolution and an ancient earth and still hold to firm convictions about the reliability of the Biblical account of creation.

What they fail to realize is that they had already come to accept the Bible viewpoint and so learned to live with the logical incompatibility of the two divergent viewpoints. Their determination to maintain a belief in the inerrancy of Scripture was formed at a time when bold comparisons with the evolutionary framework were not forced upon them in the classroom.

But times are different. Those of us whose adolescent years have

transpired since World War II have been forced to bring into bold relief and stark contrast two clearly opposing viewpoints: creation and evolution. Our irreligious science teachers caused us to face the fact that there is no common ground between the two views. The only reason for accepting the idea of an ancient earth is to accommodate an evolutionary position.

The younger generation is at least genuine and honest enough to see and embrace the logical implications of the ancient earth viewpoint. Consequently, they have adjusted their perceptions of the integrity of the Biblical text. They recognize that since Genesis 1 may be interpreted rather loosely, so may the rest of the Bible and, for that matter, the whole of their parents' religion. Generated by a secular, humanistic society and perpetuated by careless parents, the children have come to adopt a relativistic view of Christianity. Alarmed, even panic-stricken, parents look on with wonderment at how their children can so easily throw overboard such ironclad certainties as God's laws governing marriage, New Testament worship, and the plan of salvation. They are apparently blind to the fact that they, themselves, in league with humanistic philosophy, have sown the wind that yielded the whirlwind!

The solution? It may be too late to save many of our generation in whom a modern mindset has been deeply embedded. However, the only road to recovery and the only hope for future generations is a return to complete trust in the written documents of the Bible. Let's stop tampering with the text in order to accommodate every fast-talking "authority" that comes along urging us to "get with it." Let's take God at His word. Let's measure everything by the standard of the plain teaching of the Bible. Let's dethrone the god of secular education which has become our measuring stick and absolute authority. Let's re-enthroned the God of Heaven in our lives and take seriously His ability to communicate His view of reality to us in simple, straightforward, easy-to-understand language. If we fail to do so, we should not be surprised if our children have enough sense to see it and live accordingly.

Faithful

CECIL MAY, JR.

In English, "faithful" suggests "full of faith." In common usage it

often denotes continuation in faith through a period of time. The word translated "faithful" (pistos; "faith" is pistis) means "trustworthy" or "dependable" but also carries in some contexts the idea of "continuing to be a believer." The book of Revelation speaks often of faithfulness.

Jesus is faithful. In the beginning of the Revelation he identifies himself to John as "the faithful witness" (1:5), and to the church at laodicea as "the faithful and true witness" (3:14). Rome was rich and powerful, its empire spread world-wide, but Jesus had promised that his people will overcome; and Jesus is faithful. Christians cannot always see a present victory. Some are delivered from death, but some are "tried," "have tribulation," and some, like "faithful witness" Antipas, die for their faith (2:10, 13). Jesus says, even so, they shall overcome and shall "eat of the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God" (2:7); and Jesus is faithful. John saw heaven opening, and a conquering Judge in blood-drenched clothing fighting to protect and avenge his people. He saw a white horse he said, "and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, . . . and his name is called the Word of God" (19:11-13).

His words are faithful. "These sayings are faithful and true" (Revelation 22:6). They could only be faithful by being true. That which is not true is not trustworthy or dependable. There is an inseparable connection between any man and his word. Jesus' word is faithful because he is faithful. An errant Bible could not be the word of the Lord. A faithful Lord cannot give an unfaithful word. Therefore, his warnings must be heeded; his promises can be relied on. "And he that sat on the throne said, . . . Write, for these words are true and faithful" (21:5).

His people are faithful. . . . "He is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen and faithful" (17:14). We are not "with him," if we are not "faithful." His faithfulness calls us to faithfulness. He suffered; he was rejected; he was falsely accused and reviled; he was put to death; but he was faithful. So we, too, are to be faithful, whatever comes to pass, even in the face of death. Because he is faithful, we are assured that our faithfulness will not be in vain.

The "faithful and true witness," whose "words are true and faithful," has promised us, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (2:10).

"Plodding Wins The Race"

DAVID WADE

As a child I was amused with Aesop's Fables. My favorite story was "The Hare and the Tortoise." You may remember the boast the hare made that he could out run any creature in the forest. He had raced many times and had never been beaten.

While gathered before an audience in the wild, he again boasted and challenged all the animals to a race. After none of the faster animals had accepted his offer, to his surprise, the tortoise said quietly, "I accept your challenge." Immediately the hare began to ridicule and make fun of the tortoise. "Keep your boasting till you've beaten," responded the tortoise.

The course was agreed upon and soon the race was underway. The hare was so fast that he was soon out of sight. And to show his contempt for the tortoise he lay down to take a short nap. The tortoise didn't stop for anything, but just kept plodding on and on.

When the hare awoke from his nap, he saw the tortoise was almost to the finish line. He arose and made a desperate attempt to save the race, but to no avail. Then said the tortoise to the hare, "Plodding wins the race."

In the Christian race, it matters not how fast you can run, but that you stay in the race until you've won. We are urged to ". . . lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Paul reminds us that in the Christian race, we can all win the prize if we stay in the race. "Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified" (1 Corinthians 9:24-27).

The church at Corinth had its share of problems. Among them, they refused to examine self and partake of the Lord's supper in a worthy manner (I Corinthians 11:27-28). "For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (I Corinthians 11:30). Paul's message to the Romans was, "Knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Romans 13:11-12).

Could it be that many Christians, like the hare, have fallen asleep in the midst of the race? They are not faithful in attendance, giving, evangelism, or to any other aspect of the Lord's work. They are only faithful to their "sleep."

How desperately we need to follow the admonition. "Awake you who sleep, Arise from the dead. And Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:14).

One alert tortoise is worth more to the race than a thousand sleeping hares! Let's be awake and alert, ready to use our opportunities. There is much work to be done that will bring glory to His name.

Dealing With Differences

— DON DEFFENBAUGH

One area needing constant attention is our dealing with one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. In almost every congregation in the land there are differences among brethren brought on by one reason or another. Differences among brethren are not something new (Acts 15:36-41) but they must be dealt with correctly if we are to maintain "the unity of spirit in the bond of peace." These differences among us arise from a variety of causes and it will be our purpose here to observe a few of the causes.

We have been divided by doctrinal differences. Because of this there are those who feel that doctrine should no longer be emphasized. One person recently wrote, "I wonder why we can't see the damage done by a constant emphasis on 'rightness' and 'wrongness'." The

Bible, however, shows that the time would come when there would be those who would not endure sound doctrine. (II Timothy 4:3). We are to teach sound doctrine. (II Timothy 4:3; Titus 1:9; Titus 2:1; II John 9-11; Galatians 1:6-9). Sound doctrine may be described as that teaching which has Christ as its author and supporter. (II John 9-11). Human opinion is nothing more than human judgment based upon speculation and cannot be taught as sound doctrine. In matters of faith there must be unity, in matters of opinion liberty, and in all things there must be charity. When doctrinal differences arise the Bible teaches us how to deal with them (II John 9-11; II Timothy 2:16-18).

We have also been divided by difference of opinion. If people are doing any thinking for themselves there are going to be differences of opinion. (Acts 15) Many of these differences of opinion can be accommodated. We must be committed to unity in matters of faith and liberty in matters of opinion. These differences must not make us mortal enemies!

When differences of opinion are handled correctly they can be constructive. In the case of Paul and Barnabas (Acts 15) there were two trips which resulted instead of one. However, it is also possible for differences of opinion to be destructive. This is always the case when one must have his way at any cost. How destructive it is for one to bind his judgment upon another! No man or group of men have a right to bind purely human opinion (that is opinion held without Scriptural authority established by command, example, or inference) on others. This is exactly the way denominationalism started. Probably more harm has been done to the Lord's cause in this area than in any other. Brethren, don't get caught in the business of binding human opinion on others!

As in all areas of human relations there is a problem with a lack of communications in the church and differences arise because of it. Elders often take for granted that the church knows. Preachers take for granted that the church knows and all the while the church lies in darkness. If you want others to know, tell them! Sometimes we fail to express ourselves clearly. There is nothing that will take the place of plain simple language that ALL can understand. Big, fancy, 12-cylinder words have their place, but it is not in the pulpit. Brother Rue Porter often said, "Put your lesson where the calves can get it and the cows will get it too." Preconceived notions, prejudice, etc. on the part of the hearer or reader, often keeps us from communicating. I don't know the number of times people have thought they heard something I did NOT say. There is never a time when it is right to lie or cover up. Politicians

think they have a right to do it, but the Christian always tells the truth. Elders get into trouble when they lie and cover up. It is true that we don't have to tell everything we know, some things are better left unsaid, but it is never right to deliberately mislead others.

When differences of doctrine arise the Bible teaches us how to handle them. (II John 9-11). Differences of opinions should never divide brethren because in them there must be liberty. When differences arise from failure to communicate, the spirit of Christ must prevail. In such cases the teaching of Matthew 18:15-17 apply. "Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity" (Psalm 133:1).

Some Reflections About The Love Of God

JACKIE STEARSMAN

Proper thinking must precede proper action. Proper thinking relative to religious issues must be in harmony with what is authorized by the Bible.

Today in religious circles, one of the most misunderstood and abused subjects is love. On the lips of individuals the term may portray the loftiest or the lowest of ideas and any facet in between. Men may depict their actions as love but lust would be the correct term.

Some speak of the love of God but the Bible does not support their allegation.

We hear and read such expressions as: "God loves all men the same." Because you are not a Christian does not mean that God does not love you." "God may condemn you to hell but he still loves you." "The only difference between the sinner and the saint is that the sinner is forgiven."

From what some are saying and writing it is clear that many do not understand what the Bible teaches relative to God's love for us.

Misrepresentation will not help us understand our responsibility towards that love.

"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).

"Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life" (Jude 21).

"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:9-10).

"Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof. Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own device. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil" (Prov. 1:24-33).

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man." (James 1:13).

OBSERVATIONS AND AFFIRMATIONS

These truth follow from the array of passages cited. (1) God loves all men, even those who are opposing His dominion over them. (2) Given the teaching of the Bible relative to the nature of God, we know that God is absolutely holy and can not in any way be promoting evil. (3) Evil is foreign to His nature, and he must oppose it or cease to be holy. (4) Man must make the proper response to the love of God. (5) When man refuses to make the proper response to the love of God man forfeits the fullness of God's benevolence. (6) Man must make more than a token response to what his Maker requires of him—he must continue in the love of God. (7) Those who teach that the love of God is different from doing what God requires of him as revealed in the Bible

has not understood God's love (I John 5:3; 2:3-6). (8) Man may refuse to obey his Maker and find himself in a state where God's benevolence is not available to him.

CONCLUSION

When we understand the love of God for man we know that he loves all. When we understand the love of God for mān we know that His character (holiness) will not permit him to ignore man's rebellion forever.

Men misrepresent when they emphasize one attribute (love) to the neglect or abuse of other attributes (holy wrath).

When we understand man we know that God has given him directive in His Word and that man must comply with these duties if he is to be a recipient of the fullness of God's benevolent love.

All things do not work together for good to all men (Romans 8:28).

The same Bible that says "God so loved the world" (John 3:16) also says that we must "keep ourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21).

Does not your Bible say that Jesus teaches "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love" (John 15:10)?

Did not John write, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

Hypocrite

BUD WHITE

There is a world of information in many of the words of the Bible. Anytime one word is translated into another language there is a certain amount of meaning that is hidden or lost. Hypocrite is such a word.

Our English word hypocrite is translated from the word "hupokrites" and appears twenty times in the Greek text. Prior to the age of Christianity, the word did not have a negative ethical ring. The word would have to be read in context to determine if it was to be read positively, negatively or neutrally. But under the Christian usage it

developed an almost totally negative tone.

The word means, "a pretender, dissembler, a play actor" (Arndt and Gingrich Lexicon p. 853). In the classical period it carried the idea of an interpreter, or expounder. It is compounded from the words, "upo" which means, under and "krites" which means a judge. Hence we have "to judge under" or as the actor who "plays under the mask."

Jesus used this word extensively in his earthly ministry to denote those who were out of harmony with God's will, yet pretended to be righteous. In Matthew 6:2, 5 Jesus warned the multitude in the Sermon on the Mount not to be like the hypocritical Pharisees who displayed their pomp and pageantry in the streets to be glorified by men. They delighted in the glory of men to the neglect of giving God the glory. The hypocrisy that Jesus had reference to was the jarring contradiction between what people said and what people did.

Hypocrisy is sin, a sin of deception. It is the failure to do God's will under the pious guise of outward conduct. It can present itself in many different ways or forms. The Scriptures say hypocrisy can be presented in the form of teachers. In 1 Timothy 4:1-2 Paul said, "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrine of devils; speaking lies in 'hypocrisy' having their conscience seared with a hot iron." There shall be times when men shall arise teaching false doctrines and condemning the souls of men and it shall all be done under the guise of truth. We need not go outside our own generation to see the truthfulness of this statement.

In Matthew 23:13-29, Jesus denounced the Scribes and Pharisees by calling them hypocrites. Seven times he attributed this title to them. They were binding heavy burdens on the people, which they themselves refused to lift. It was all done in the name of religion.

Hypocrisy carries the idea of deception and deception is satanic and ungodly. One who pretends to do the will of God and yet is out of harmony with his Word is a deceiver. However, he is the only one being deceived. Let us remove the mask of hypocrisy and proclaim the truth of Jesus Christ and bring our lives into direct harmony with his teaching.

"That's Not My Job"

Author Unknown

This is a story about four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody. There was an important job to be done and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did it. Somebody got angry about that, because it was everybody's job. Everybody thought Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have.

We Show Our Love

KENNETH MCCLAIN

WHEN . . . we are sensitive to the needs of others and look for ways to help.

WHEN . . . we become aware of man's suffering and strive to comfort him in his sorrow.

WHEN . . . we withhold judgment until sufficient facts are in and strive to understand one another.

WHEN . . . we forgive those who have injured us and forget about the matter.

WHEN . . . we refuse to speak words that will discourage others and speak words of encouragement.

WHEN . . . we give to others and expect nothing in return.