

Gospel Truths

Standing
for the
Truth of
the Gospel



Volume I Number 12

December 2010

The Menace of Men's Business Meetings to Oversee the Work # 2

by H. E. Phillips (Deceased)

Majority Rule (Business Meetings)

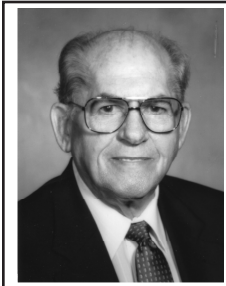
SOME have tried to make the Business Meeting the substitute for the eldership.

If these "Business Meetings" are to become the ruling part of a congregation, what is to hinder this force from changing the worship or making new regulations regarding any part of the work of the church?

If one answers, "The Bible will keep them from doing that," I answer, "The Bible did not keep them from forming an organization of oversight unknown to the Bible; and if they do one thing unknown to the Bible, why will they not go further and do something else?"

No one should legislate where God has

not legislated. Some try to turn the church into a democratic convention, and resort to popular vote and majority rule in the oversight. The majority-rule system of church government is as unscriptural and sinful as any ecclesiastical system taught by Catholics and others of denominational groups.



Problems of the Business Meetings

Usually the *Business Meetings* will involve some of the following departures from the faith:

It will slide into a "majority rule"

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"Love . . . rejoices in the truth" I Corinthians 13:6

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Gospel Truths



**“Love . . . Rejoices in the truth”
I Corinthians 13:6**

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*Standing for
the Truth of
the Gospel*

**Volume I
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Editorial . . .

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The Sermon on the Mount

WHEN John the immerser began his preaching in the wilderness of Judea, his message was, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight’.” (Matthew 3:2-3). Matthew 3:13ff tell us of Jesus being baptized by John.

After the Devil tempted Jesus in the wilderness (Matthew 4), the text says, “From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, ‘Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’.” (Matthew 4:17). Luke says, “The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it” (Luke 16:16).

Jesus Preaches to His Disciples

Let’s look at what is said by Matthew about the Sermon on the Mount, as recorded from Matthew chapter five through chapter seven. In this article I want to begin by studying a number of facts from the text to get an overall view of what Jesus is teaching and to whom He is speaking. Matthew 5:1 “And seeing the multitudes, He went up into a mountain: and when He was set, His disciples came unto Him: ²And He opened His mouth, and taught them, saying . . .”

Six different times in the sermon, Jesus referred to the “kingdom of heaven.” Many have suggested that The Lord was simply explaining the true nature of the Law of Moses. Both the text and context deny this claim. Jesus was teaching HIS DISCIPLES principles of HIS KINGDOM.

“The Kingdom of Heaven”

This statement is made by Jesus six times in the three chapters (five through seven) of Matthew. It is used 26 times in the book of Matthew. Mark, Luke and John use the expression “Kingdom of God” in their writings. That expression is used 52 times in these three gospels. As far as I can determine, both expressions referred to Paul’s statement in Colossians 1:13-14, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: ¹⁴In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” So, Jesus is teaching the principles of how His people, who are a part of His kingdom, will be expected to live.

I have stated the above as a prelude to the statements Jesus made regarding marriage, divorce and marrying another. Some have made the

determination that Jesus was speaking to the Jews and trying to explain the true teaching of the Law of Moses. But, as we have already observed, Christ was teaching the things concerning the kingdom of heaven.

Robert Waters' New Theory

Recently Robert Waters has come up with a new theory on the divorce and remarriage question. His whole theory is based upon his misconception that Jesus is trying to explain the true teaching of Moses' Law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. As we are all aware, if one begins a theory with a false premise, he must define ever word in the text to accommodate his theory. That's what Robert has done.

Also, what explanation needs to be given of Deuteronomy 24:1-4? The instructions are as simple as 1 – 2 – 3. First – A man determines he is going to “put away” his wife. Second, he must place a writing of divorcement in her hand. Third, he can then send her out of the house. Fourth, having been given a writing of divorcement, under Moses' Law she has the right to marry another man. Again, I ask, where is the difficulty found that needs an explanation?

Also, what did Jesus say to the Jews about Moses' Law on divorce and remarriage? “They say unto Him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorcement, and to put her away? ⁸He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so” (Matthew 19:7-8). What was from the beginning? He had already commented on that point in Matthew 19:3-6 “The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? ⁴And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, ⁵And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? ⁶Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.” The only point He made regarding Moses' Law was that it was a contingency law and was given because of the “hardness of their hearts.”

Essential to the Theory

It is essential to Robert's theory that Jesus MUST be explaining the Law of Moses. Otherwise he could not make the argument essential to his theory that Jesus

could not change the Law of Moses. Matthew 5:17 “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.” It appears that brother Waters cannot conceive of Jesus teaching these things in preparation for His Kingdom. That being true in his mind, he must make what Jesus said in 19:9 applicable to the Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

Now, having already shown that the Sermon on the Mount was taught to Christ's disciples, let's turn our attention the Matthew 19:9.

If Jesus was trying to correct or change Moses' Law then perhaps brother Waters would have a point. But, since I am SURE He was not, Robert's point is moot.

First of all, Jesus did not say, Matthew 19:9 “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except he give her a writing of divorcement, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” He said, “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery” (Matthew 19:9).

Next, when Jesus finished speaking in Matthew 19:9, who replied to Him – the Jews or His Disciples? Matthew 19:10 “His disciples said to Him, ‘If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry’.” (NKJV). Now if Jesus was saying it was simply a matter of having to give your wife a writing of divorcement, why would His disciples say, “it is better not to marry.” Would giving a writing of divorcement constitute a reason for not marrying? “But He said to them, All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: ¹²For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it” (Matthew 19:11-12).

Jesus said the saying of the disciples “it is better not to marry” could not be received by all men. There were born eunuchs; eunuchs made of men and men who made themselves eunuchs “for the kingdom of heaven's sake.” Brother Waters should take note of the fact that Jesus was speaking to His disciples regarding things that had to do with “the kingdom of heaven.”

Brother Waters is determined to “saddle” Jesus with Moses' Law. He states in his book that the putting

away for fornication as Jesus said was not “fornication” (sexual immorality) but “an illicit marriage.” But again, this has to be the case for his “theory to fly.” It is also an absolute necessity that Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 19:9 was discussing the Law of Moses. However, if Jesus was discussing the Law of Moses, then He would be talking nonsense.

Many have argued that the “uncleanness” found in the wife in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 was that she was not a virgin when he married her. But, under the Law of Moses we are told that if a woman marries a man and he finds that she is not a virgin, “But if the thing is true, and evidences of virginity are not found for the young woman, ²¹”then they shall bring out the young woman to the door of her father’s house, and the men of her city shall stone her to death with stones, because she has done a disgraceful thing in Israel, to play the harlot in her father’s house. So you shall put away the evil from among you” (Deuteronomy 22:20-21). As you can readily see, Jesus was not talking about the fornicator of the Old Testament. The fornicator of Matthew 5:32 and 19:9 could marry another but would become an adulterous, verse 19:9b. Thus Jesus would have been changing the Law of Moses.

How Can I Be Sure

You may ask, “How can you be sure that Jesus was speaking to His disciples in Matthew 19:9?” If Matthew was the only writer that recorded this encounter with the Jews on this subject, it might only be surmising on my part. However, Mark’s account (Mark 10) gives us a little more information.

You will observe that Mark records the same encounter of the Pharisees coming to Him with the same questions, tempting Him. But notice verses 10-12. Mark 10:10-12 “In the house His disciples also asked Him again about the same matter. ¹¹So He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her. ¹²”And if a woman divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.” Now in view of the fact that in Matthew’s account after he makes His declaration in 19:9, who questions Him concerning what He said? If you said His Disciples, you are correct. So in view of the statement in Mark’s account it is necessarily inferred that Jesus was speaking to His disciples in Matthew’s account also.

Also, it has been stated Jesus’ teaching was an effort to try to explain Deuteronomy 24:1-4. But as

we shall see, the contingency law in Deuteronomy 24 was given by Moses in order to correct a practice that was demoralizing and unrighteous for women. They were being put away (sent out of the house) by their husbands with no means of support nor the ability to marry another. Jesus told the Jews in Matthew 19:8 that it was because of the hardness of their hearts that Moses gave the commandment, “but from the beginning it was not so.”

God’s Pattern

God’s pattern is all that God has said on any subject. We must get all the information together. Some passages point out one thing while other passages give additional information. For example: Matthew’s account of Jesus’ teaching on the subject of putting away, divorce and marrying another gives us information that Mark and Luke do not give. In Matthew, Jesus’ teaching on the subject provided a rule and the exception to it. Matthew 5:32 “But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.” Matthew 19:9 “And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery.” (underlining for emphasis).


Mark also states some things that Luke does not discuss. (although Matthew does teach the same thing by implication). For example, Mark brings up the same scenario of the Jews testing (tempting) Jesus. Jesus makes the same argument regarding the teaching of Moses and states what God instituted in the beginning. Notice verses 10-12 of Mark 10: “And in the house His disciples asked Him again of the same matter. ¹¹And He saith unto them, ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, and marry another, committeth adultery against her. ¹²And if a woman shall put away her husband, and be married to another, she committeth adultery.’” Again, as in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was teaching these things to His disciples and not to the Pharisees.

By the way, Robert also has the statement “committeth adultery against her” in verse 11 applying to the first wife as other have done. I continue to maintain (as I did when I first heard this argument in the 1970s) that according to the grammar it is the second wife the man married against whom he is committing

adultery. Grammatically, the antecedent of the pronoun (in this case “her”) is always the noun (“another” - the word “woman” being understood) that is closest to the pronoun.

And, by necessary implication, Jesus was teaching these things to His disciples in Matthew. For example, notice that it was not the Pharisees that said, “If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.” Instead, it was His disciples. And when He taught them about men becoming eunuchs, what did He say would be the reason why men would make themselves eunuchs - ‘for the kingdom of heaven’s sake’ (verse 12). Thus it was stated by Mark (and we infer from the implication in Matthew) that Jesus was speaking to His disciples in Matthew 19:9 and Luke 16:18. Instead, then, of Jesus trying to instruct those who were trying to trap Him, He was actually instructing His disciples about things that pertained to the “kingdom of heaven.”

According to Robert There Is No Exception Today

Brother Water’s assessment of the Scriptures, (Matthew’s, Mark’s and Luke’s account of the marriage and divorce question), is that Jesus was trying to correct the practice of the Jews and get them to practice the true teaching of the Law that Moses had given them in Deuteronomy 24:1-4. Now if this is true (it is not) then since the law was taken out of the way and nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14; Galatians 3:24-25), none of the things taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount nor Jesus’ teaching about MDR are applicable today. With all the preponderance of evidence to the contrary, this cannot be true. For, as we have shown from the Scriptures, Jesus was teaching His disciples things that would be included for those “in the kingdom of heaven” (or as in the teachings of Mark and Luke, “in the kingdom of God”). More Next Month 

Bennie Johns is in the business of copying out of print books, debates and sermons and putting them on CDs. He also has some Periodicals on CD including *Torch Magazine*, with various editors. \$19:95

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body, with all its arguing and debating for “my way” conclusions and decisions. It leaves little place for peace and harmony among the saints. The kingdom of Christ is not a democratic body.

As it goes on, it genders party factions that struggle for the control of certain projects and eliminates those who do not contend.

Most *Business Meetings* go on and on and on with very little progress in many instances. In the first place, they sometimes try to do things for which they have no divine authority. They cannot find authority to create a ruling body to do something someone wants to do, and they try to invent some way to use human authority. Once a man is given some authority in something by the “Business Meeting,” (which it cannot scripturally do) he assumes it is his authority and position from then on and no one should suggest that he relinquish it and do something else. Of course, this is not often the case, but it is easy to drift into that problem. Many of the problems arise over who has the divine right to do some things with apparent oversight, and who has the divine right to “appoint” others to do such work. For instance, how shall we test men and women for teachers in Bible classes, and who will do it? How shall we determine the material for class study? Who shall purchase what is needed for the church and classes? Who will plan the financial program of the church? Who will direct the preacher in his work? Who will take the authority to discipline unruly members? If anyone knows any verse in the Bible that authorizes any person other than bishops to oversee this work, please let me know. I have looked a long time for that authority from the Holy Spirit and have not yet found it. Do the Business Meetings have the divine authority to appoint people to these responsibilities and oversee them? **No! Certainly not!** The only oversight and supervision of these responsibilities is in the eldership of the local church.

Business meetings often generate poor attitudes between the older and younger members. The younger men feel excluded and the older men feel rejected. It often generates bad feelings between the more aggressive men and the usually quiet men. It takes a lot of patience for brethren to simply *mutually* agree to a course of work in the absence of overseers, and some do not have it.

As *Business Meetings* continue and various programs

are initiated, it is inevitable that some women will demand that they be included in the general *Business Meetings*. Sometimes they just say they want to sit in the back of the building and listen. Then they want to make “suggestions” and later they want a “vote” because, after all, there is as much authority for women to be in the *Business Meeting* as for the *Business Meeting* itself to “run” the church. The problem is, there is much truth in this.

Sadly, I have known of several “Business Meetings” that resulted in a “division” of the local church. Some few angry brethren pushed for their way about something that was either unscriptural or unwise. Some brethren who did not want to get into such a fuss, left the meeting and only the fighters remained. It was just a matter of time until the whole church divided over something that came about by unscrupulous persons who were very self-willed, ungodly men (and women). All of this takes place because some brethren become wise in the own conceits and depart from the authority of Christ.

Inevitably, *Business Meetings* will inspire the preacher to become *The Leader and Supervisor* of the work and worship of the local church. He will take it and run. The preacher has NO divine right to oversee or direct ANYTHING but his own work of preaching and teaching the word of God. He must “watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist make full proof of thy ministry” (2 Tim. 4:5). Let him do that and no more. “Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee” (I Timothy 4:16). His work involves NO oversight in the local church.

Let me emphasize this by a passage from the Old Testament on the matter of obedience to God. Saul, the first king of Israel, was sent by God against the Amalekites with this instruction: “Now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass” (I Samuel 15:3). That was specific and clear. There was no excuse for misunderstanding. But Saul and the people saved Agag the king, and the best of the sheep, and of the oxen, and of the fatlings, and the lambs, and all that was good. He did not *utterly destroy* them all as God had told him. God sent Samuel to Saul and confronted

him with his sin. He finally admitted his sin, but was rejected from being king over Israel. Samuel made this statement to Saul: “Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to harken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath rejected thee from being king” (I Samuel 15:22-23).

This principle of truth is as binding today as it was in the days of Saul and Samuel. It is better to obey every word of the Lord than to offer all the sacrifices and offerings one has. God wants His people to OBEY HIS WORD without question.

What then can the *Business Meeting* do if it has no divine authority to appoint and supervise? The ONLY righteous function of a *Business Meeting* is to **mutually** consider and agree (without a majority vote) on any course of action, ALWAYS in accord with the word of God in every instance, with no person exercising authority and oversight in the church except qualified elders. This requires a spirit of unity and peace of all brethren without partially and superiority, and with humbleness of heart. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Philippians 2:3). There is NO oversight of a local church in the absence of scripturally qualified elders duly appointed to such work.

Committee Rule

This is a very popular system of church rule. It is based upon two suppositions: 1) A “necessary inference” (How else can we do it?) 2) It is the most successful and approved method in clubs, lodges, schools, etc., hence, it will work well in the church.

The New Testament does not teach that the church may form several organizations called “committees” to do different things in oversight of the local church. The only authority ever delegated by Christ in the church, in the way of oversight, was the eldership. The elders may assign certain work to a person or group of persons, but they cannot delegate the oversight to anyone. One may as well try to get to heaven by not obeying the gospel as to try to get into the oversight without scriptural qualifications.

Imagine the church in Jerusalem, or Antioch, or

“The Older Women Likewise . . . That They Admonish The Younger Women” (Titus 2:2-3)

Satan

by Geneva Brown Smith

The devil is an evil spirit. The word devil comes from the Greek, and means slanderer or false accuser. The ancient Hebrew word for devil was Satan. In the New Testament, Satan is referred to as; devil, adversary, enemy, old serpent, and Beelzebub.

Most religions recognize an evil spirit. Early Buddhists called the devil *Mara*. The Moslem devil *Iblis*, was thought to be an angel who rebelled when Adam was created, refusing to bow down to a creature made of earth. Moslems believe *Iblis* became the tempter and enemy of man. In the Middle Ages, the devil was usually represented in art with horns, a tail, and cloven hoofs.

Books

Many books regarding Satan and his devices have been written. In C. S. Lewis' book, *The Screwtape Letters*, the author gives a detailed description of how Satan schemes to deceive and finally control a young Christian. As with any subject, however, the most accurate information regarding Satan comes from the Bible itself.

In II Corinthians 11:14 Satan is said to transform himself into an angel of light. He makes himself look good at times even to Christians. He could not deceive and seduce Christians if he came as portrayed in the Middle Ages. He rationalizes practices that are questionable for the Christian and deceives him into believing evil things are good.

Many Forms

Satan appears to us in many forms. He often comes to women in the form of fashion. (She must wear the latest fashions, of course), so she wears low necklines (or her blouse unbuttoned to make it low). The world (Satan) has told her she must look “sexy”, so she wears tight clothing, because it is the style. She also wears short skirts. It does not matter that the Bible says she is to dress “modestly with shamefacedness and sobriety” (I Timothy 2:9)

Parents

Satan comes to parents in the guise of doing what is best for their children. The child is small, (therefore not immodest now), and must be popular in school, so of course the child wears whatever the other children are wearing, whether shorts, mini-skirts, low cut hip hugging jeans, or plunging neckline tops. These children grow up with no concept of what is immodest, and are left vulnerable to all kinds of sinful practices that result in the loss of their souls. Popularity may be somewhat

desirable, but according to Mark 8:36, what will it profit one if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul?

Christians

Satan comes to Christians in the form of selfishness. They work hard five days a week, and must have recreation on Saturday, so they must rest and sleep in on Sunday. It matters little that God said in Hebrews 10:25, “Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is.”

Teachers

Satan comes to teachers in the form of tolerance. The Bible says, “Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them” (Ephesians 5:11). It isn't extremely difficult to keep away from false teachers, but EXPOSE THEM? How can the teacher afford to do that? He must always be politically correct so as not to offend anyone.

All

Satan comes to all of us in the form of priority. Instead of putting God first, we often just try to fit Him into *OUR* plans. We must have recreation to stay both mentally and physically healthy so we take our vacation trips and leave God out. With our secular careers, we must make a living for our families, (and we could not possibly take a job making less money), so we miss services to go to work. It seems that we do not believe Matthew 6:33 which tells us, “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.” Our children are involved in activities at school, so we allow them to miss services of the church. Don't we realize that we are NOT putting God first? In our giving, we must save for our old age, so we squeeze what God has given us, keeping it for ourselves. “Will a man rob God? (Malachi 3:8).

Conclusion: Jesus said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and all your soul, and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37) Living the Christian life is not a life of convenience. Satan is always ready and waiting to deceive. If he can influence the Christian to compromise his convictions just a little “just this once,” the Christian is in grave danger. Sin is progressive. David in the Old Testament did not intend to commit murder and destroy his family and kingdom when he was watching Bathsheba bathe. The consequences of his “little sin” lived with his family for generations, however. When one begins to rationalize, know this: Satan is concentrating on YOU.



Corinth, or Ephesus, or any place in New Testament days having an official organization of the following committees:

Membership Committee
Devotion Committee
Social Committee
Community Committee
Finance Committee
Recreation Committee
New Member Committee
Janitorial Committee
House and Grounds Committee
Organization Committee
Invitation Committee
Transporting Committee (Transportation)
Visitation Committee
Ushering Committee
Preaching and Teaching Committee
Bulletin Committee
Absentee Committee
Revival Committee (Revival Meetings)
Advertising Committee
Funeral Committee

I have seen in bulletins and reports from congregations every one of the above named committees, so I know that some churches have one to all of these committees operating in a ruling sense.

In the editorial of *The Firm Foundation* of March 6, 1951 brother G. H. P Showalter quotes from a deacon of a congregation who wrote to him: "There seems to be a general movement among the churches in Texas, California, and possibly other states, to supplant God's plan of governing the local churches through their elders and deacons. Committees are appointed for every work of the church. They are supervisory in their nature and leave nothing for the elders and deacons to do in their official capacity. I am a deacon here in one of the congregations, but I am at a loss to find any work left for me to do as a deacon. The list of committees that have been in use in this congregation since about 1945 are: 1) Advertising, 2) Bible School, 3) Charity, 4) Finance and Building, 5) Flowers, 6) Funerals, 7) Grounds, 8) Meals, 9) Songs, 10) Ushers, 11) Missions, 12) Pulpit,

13) Reception-men, 14) Reception-women, 15) Sitting up, 16) Visitation-men, 17) Visitation-women, 18) Committee on Committees . . . "

One of the greatest objections to this system, besides being unscriptural, is that sometimes women are placed on the committees, and are even made chairmen of them, especially so of committees for women. The Lord did not intend that women should be placed in the oversight or supervision of the Lord's work.

Webster defines "Committee" as "a body of persons to whom any business is committed." The ordinary meaning of the word may apply to a group of persons assigned to a certain work by the elders, but this group can assume no authority or oversight because the elders cannot delegate their oversight to others. Nor can such "committees" be formed to substitute for the eldership. Such work as financing, preaching, teaching, etc., needs no "committee" group because it is directly the work of the elders.

Two great objections may be offered against self-styled or majority appointed committees in the church. 1) When a committee is established to do a special work it often eliminates all the other members from that work, and often it is a work that all members should do, such as visiting the sick or helping the poor. If others try to do this work the committee is horribly offended! 2) Committees so appointed for a special work under special circumstances sometimes arrogate to themselves PERMANENT and OFFICIAL authority in the matter, and will insist upon performing that function always.

Since the New Testament nowhere authorizes "committees" to assume authoritative or supervisory positions in the organization of the church, we must not allow it to permeate the scriptural oversight of the church. The New Testament church can and did perform its full mission without "committees," and it can do so now. All such are innovations in the local organization of the church.

Inter-Congregational Rule

In the days of the Restoration several prominent men thought, as Alexander Campbell, that there were some things to be done by the church that were too large for the local church, hence some organization should be formed to carry on this work. One consequence of this idea is the organized Missionary Society of today. This same idea is at work today among many in trying to find

a way to lock hundreds and thousands of congregations together in caring for orphans and in doing mission work at home and abroad.

One of the greatest weaknesses of modern denominationalism is its “top-heavy” organizations. The church of Christ in some places is following the same pattern. We become as weak as they when we set aside the wisdom of God in organization and try to establish similar inter-congregational ties of organization. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty” (I Corinthians 1:27). The world may look upon the simplicity of the local organization as weak, but it is the most powerful in all the world because it is of God. I say again, no man can improve upon the arrangement of God.

Some organizations are smaller than the local church. It is as wrong to have an organization smaller than the local church as to have one larger, including several churches. Some have organized “Sunday School Classes” with their officers and treasuries. Others have “Youth Organizations” of various kinds with full election of officers. These sorts of organized groups within and without the church should not be allowed. It is adding to and substituting for the scriptural organization of the church.

If we want this church to be after the New Testament pattern, we must be careful to do all things according to the pattern delivered to us. We must not go beyond or come short of this pattern. **✠**

Things That Have An Adverse Effect on Our Young People

by Ron Daly

LONG ago the Spirit of God supernaturally guided the Psalmist to write, “How can a young man keep his way pure? By living to Your word. I seek You with all my heart; do not let me stray from Your commands. I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:9-11). It is the will of God that the young maintain a lifestyle that is holy, clean, and upright. If the young will place God’s truth in their heart, and live according to it; they will not set upon a path of defiance, rebellion, and departure from spirituality which will inevitably lead to ruin. Their hearts will be secure.

Some Things That Adversely Affect Young People Are:



Lack of Parental Restraint and Discipline.

According to some psychologists punitive corrective discipline meted out to children does not work. It only teaches them to be violent. God’s Word teaches “He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him” (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 23:13). Foolish people tell us, “If you correct a child with the ‘rod’ you hate the child and are abusing him.” Yet, God says the absolute opposite: if a parent does not use the “rod” when he should he hates his son, and he who disciplines him, he loves him!

Eli occupies an unenviable place in ancient Bible history as a father whose “sons were wicked men, they had no regard for Yahweh,” and whose “sin was very great in Yahweh’s sight.” God said to Samuel about Eli’s house, “I will judge his family forever because of the sin he knew about: his sons made themselves contemptible, and he failed to restrain them” (I Samuel 2:12,17,22-25; 3:12-13).

God had unfailing confidence in Abraham’s ability as a godly father. He said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do? ... I have chosen him, so that he will direct his children and his household after him

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to keep the way of Yahweh by doing what is right and just" (*Genesis 18:16-19*).

The New Testament admonishes, "Fathers, do not exasperate your children: instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (*Ephesians 6:4*). Parents are required by God to teach, encourage, correct, and restrain their children. We who are parents should love our children, but we must not under any circumstances shield them in their wrongs, encourage them in their sins, or protect them from due punishment. We must learn to say *no* to them when we *need* to say it; and, we must *mean* it when we say it. Children who are left to raise themselves will usually raise the roof off the house, throwing mud into the face of parents (*Proverbs 29:15*). Giving heed to divine counsel regarding our children does not produce juvenile delinquency, it serves to prevent such!

Materialism. Some young people want all that the world has to offer, and they want wealth and success fast. Working hard for a living takes too long, so some start stealing. Where is this philosophy learned? Usually from parents who work long hours to make a living, instead of taking time to be with the children, teaching and showing them how to live in a perverse world. Parents do not have to give children everything they want for them to be happy. "A man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions" (*Luke 12:15*). "Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that" (*I Timothy 6:6-10*). Making provisions for what one needs is not materialism. Materialism is the uncontrolled obsession for material gain. Young friends, God does command us to work but not to selfishly hoard wealth, rather it enables us to be in a position to help others who are in need (*Ephesians 4:28*; *I Timothy 5:8*).

Television. This can be a medium for good, but when it is unsupervised it is always disastrous. Whether we like it or not, it is a fact that young people repeat what they hear, and they imitate what they see. The producers of television shows know this, and they are assisting in leading our young people where they want them to go! Most of what is seen on the screen consists of violence, bad language, illicit sex, and godlessness. The Word of the Lord teaches, "above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life. Put away perversity from your mouth; keep corrupt talk far from

your lips" (*Proverbs 4:23-27*). When our children are allowed (and sometimes encouraged) to view nudity, rebellion against civil authority, murder, consumption of intoxicants, and outright mockery of morality and religion they will become tomorrow's social monsters, career criminals, and secular humanists (*Proverbs 23:7*; *Philippians 4:6-9*).


Secular Music. It is astonishing how things that are considered obscene in routine conversation become acceptable when they are set to music and given a rhythm. It has long been recognized that children who have memory problems are often greatly helped when the same information which posed difficulty is set to music. Music has an indelible influence on our lives. God knows this, and He has commanded the singing of "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" in worship (*Colossians 3:16*; *Ephesians 5: 19*). Most of today's secular songs promote adultery, homosexuality, incest, rape, drug abuse, Satanism, suicide, and vulgarity. Young people who are bombarded by a barrage of godless lyrics will seek to play the devil's harp, "two-step" on the world's floor, and ultimately join hell's band. Young friends, "flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart" (*II Timothy 2:22*).

Alcoholism. Teenage alcoholism is on the rise! There are young people who are wasting their impressionable years away with the bottle. Whiskey, wine, and beer are seen as fashionable by young people due to Hollywood's glamour, society's acceptance, and our nation's hypocrisy. I have never understood the consistency of a system that puts the drunk driver into prison due to his heinous crimes, yet will "legally" place the bottle in his hands.

Some young people think they can sneak and drink because "mom and dad will never find out," but before they realize it, they were young alcoholics. It is often the case that parents know more about the behavior of their children than the children think they know. Many parents know from experience what their children have done or will do. Imbibing intoxicants as beverages only serves to alter one's faculties, and create chemical dependency (*Proverbs 20:1*; *23:29-35*; *I Peter 4:1-4*). Young friends, if you do not intend to be filled with the devil, do not drink from his cup.

Other Young People. Many pressures beset young

people. Peer pressure is one of the worst. The reason that peer pressure weigh so heavily upon our youth is, all of us have a desire to be accepted by our peers; none of us like rejection. Young people are very prone to be swayed by their compadres because they need companionship, they need acceptance, they need someone who will listen and advise. If they do not get these at home (at least in their own minds) they will seek them elsewhere! Parents should be the best friend of their children, their frequent companions, and their most loyal and wise advisors. Young friends, please remember not to follow the crowd in doing wrong (Exodus 23:2). And, "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character" (I Corinthians 15:33).

We are grateful for the many young people who love God, the church, the gospel, and who are adhering to the path of righteousness. We are also mindful of those who are walking in the wrong path, who desire not to be forgotten nor forsaken; but taught and admonished to return, receiving help along the way. Any of us could lose our children. None of us are exempt. There was once a narcotics officer whose daughter turned to drugs right under his eyes. He could not or would not see it. We all hope that our children will be upright forever, but there are no guarantees. We do the best we can, we pray often, and tremble in fear as they walk life's lonesome road. 

Smith - Hicks Debate

This debate between J. T. Smith and Olan Hicks focuses on a study of divorce and remarriage. Smith affirms that the Scriptures teach that only persons who have divorced their mates for fornication and those whose mates have died may, with God's approval, marry again. Hicks affirms that the Scriptures teach that all divorced people, including those whose former mates are still living, may, with God's approval, marry again.

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"Get Thee Behind Me Satan"

by James W. Shear

"AN old slave constantly repeated the words, "Get thee behind me Satan." His master chided him with, "Why is Satan always after you and he never bothers me?" The slave could not answer the question until one day when he and his master were hunting ducks, he made a very interesting observation. In all sincerity he told his master that he had the answer to his question. He said: "You see how we are chasing after the ducks that are trying to get away and not after the dead ducks we have already killed? Well, it must be that way with Satan. No need for him to bother with the ones already dead, he is after the ones trying to get away."

The devil tried to capture our Lord by tempting Him in every point in which we are tempted, but our Lord did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). A study of how Christ won his victory over Satan can be of much value to us as we contend with that ole deceiver. If Satan is not after us it may well be that we are already dead ducks.

For this study, we are interested in the three temptations in the order given by Matthew, and also the one repeated by Peter in Matthew 16:23.

The Time of The Temptations

The words then (Matthew 4:1) and immediately (Mark 1:12) give us the time. It was after His baptism, after the Holy Spirit appeared in the form of a dove and after the voice from heaven declared: "This is my beloved Son . in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:13-17). According to Luke (Luke 4:2) the three temptations of our study came after He had been in the wilderness, tempted of the devil for forty days. He had fasted during this time and He hungered. Therefore, the devil found Him when he was physically weak. This helps us understand why he was tempted to turn stone to bread.

The First Temptation

"If thou be the son of God, command this stone that it be made bread" (Matthew 4:21). On the surface, to one who had fasted for forty days, it could have seemed a harmless way to satisfy hunger. However, one who came to do the Father's will and to be guided by "it is written," would not be manipulated by Satan.

It is interesting to note the major role the word "If"

played in this temptation. If is a small word with a big impact. It is powerful. It is a conjunction that joins thoughts and ideas together. We must be careful of the word "If." It can be deceptive. It has no ability to distinguish truth from error or right from wrong. It is anyone's dog who will hunt with it. It proclaims the good (Romans 8:17) as well as the bad. It can begin with a true premise and end with a false conclusion. This is the part "If" played in this temptation. However, we should not blame "If." "If" has no soul and no control over how it is used. The responsibility falls upon those who use it

That Christ is the Son of God is an unconditional truth verified with undeniable Divine evidence. The fact that Satan tempted Him in this way shows He knew Christ to be the Son of God. He will not tempt you or me to turn stone to bread, he knows we can't. He will however tempt us with the "lust of the flesh" in other ways. That is, if we are not already dead ducks.

We may never understand the total impact and implication of this seemingly harmless temptation, yet there are some things we can know. We can know:

1. It was a temptation appealing to the "lust of the flesh."
2. Satan set the condition that Christ prove His son-ship by turning stone to bread. God set no such condition.
3. Christ could have rationalized that there was nothing wrong with eating bread to appease His hunger, and therefore nothing wrong with turning stone to bread, but He knew there was much more involved..
4. Temptation is not sin. Christ was tempted but did not sin. 5. Even in His weakened condition, Christ would not be manipulated by Satan's devices and yield to the "lust of the flesh."
6. During these temptations, Christ was quite comfortable with "It is written."
7. "It is written" was too much for Satan.
8. The written word of God is too much for Satan today and we should keep it in our hearts and learn to use it skillfully.
9. Christ would not compromise with Satan. Truth cannot afford to compromise with error.
10. No one, guided by "it is written," will willfully compromise with error. The Devil Used If To Cast

Doubt On God's Word.

God said, "This is my beloved son..." Satan put an "if" there to cast doubt. He knows we must live by the written word of God to have fellowship (I John 1:1-4). Therefore, he will enter our hearts in any way he can to cast doubt on that which is written in God's word.

For instance, God specified vocal music in New Testament worship (Ephesians 5:29; Colossians 3:16). Satan will say, "David played on a harp," implying that if David did, it is scriptural for us to do so in New Testament worship. Many fall for this line of thinking but the devil knows better. He knows this does not authorize mechanical instruments of music in New Testament worship. He knows that David lived under a different law which is not binding on us today (see Colossians 2:14). He knows all of this, but he will cast doubts in our hearts if we allow him; he will use anything he can to turn us from that which is written.

The Second Temptation - Another "If"

"If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down..." (Matthew 4:6). We can glean more of Satan's devices from this temptation.

Satan knows God's word and he knows how to misuse it to capture men by his devices. Here, he wanted Christ to play one Scripture against another and by doing so reject a part of the written word. Christ knew the Scriptures and knew the purpose of Satan's temptation. To be faithful to God we must know the Scriptures. I learned a long time ago that we don't have to know every false doctrine but, to answer every false way, we must know God's word.

A Scripture perverted or taken out of context to prove authority from God is of the devil. God's word harmonizes but never contradicts itself, as Satan would have us believe. For example, Satan misuses John 3:16 to contradict other Scriptures that demand man's obedience. Satan's disciples will deny that baptism has anything to do with our salvation. Satan's message is: "if you believe John 3:16 you can't believe Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; Romans 6:1-6; Galatians 3:26-27 or I Peter 3:21. "The truth of the matter is, if you believe in Him as John 3:16 teaches you will believe all He has said on baptism or any other subject. How can one believe in Him (John 3:16) and deny His word? Truth demands that all these Scriptures harmonize one with the other. Unless they do, there is no such thing as truth.

The Third Temptation; Another “If”

The devil offered Christ the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them “If “He would fall down and worship him. He offered Him the crown without the cross. Christ said, “Get thee behind me Satan, for it is written...”(Luke 4:8). “Then the devil leaveth Him” (Matthew 4:11) “for a season” (Luke 4:13).

Satan used Peter to tempt the Lord again to by-pass the cross (Matthew 16:21-24). Christ rebuked Peter with, “Get thee behind me Satan...” (verse 23). In verse 17, the Lord blessed Peter. What was the difference? In verse 17 Peter was blessed for having revealed that which came from heaven. The rebuke (verse 23) came when Peter “savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.” The only way we can know that which comes from God today is by the written word. We should not depart from the written word.

Christ personified the temptation. We don’t know what form the devil took in the wilderness when he tempted our Lord, but we do know that Peter was the devil’s mouthpiece for this temptation (Matthew 16:21-24). When Christ said, “Get thee behind me Satan...” He was not speaking of Peter, but of the temptation.

We should personify every temptation as Satan himself. This will help us see sin as it really is. It will take our eyes off the one Satan uses to propagate the temptation. If we can do this, we will steer our course by truth without being hindered by certain personalities we happen to like. Our feelings toward men will not enter into our decision; we will be guided by God’s word. Error can come from those we love as well as truth can come from those who count us as enemies. If we love the Lord we will be guided by that which is written.

Christ told Satan to “get.” At the first appearance of Satan, we should tell Satan to “get.” “Get thee behind me Satan.” We have this choice. We can tell him to “get” or we can invite him into our hearts and give him a comfortable seat. If we invite him in, he will stay until lust conceives and brings forth sin. Then sin brings forth death (James 1:14-15). He doesn’t have to bother with us when we become dead ducks but he will use us at his will.

“Get thee behind me Satan.” Satan doesn’t slip up behind us. He is so cunning with his devices, so sure of himself and confident of capturing us, he will attack us from the front. All of the armour God gives us to fight

with is designed to face Satan (see Ephesians 6:10-18). We never turn our backs to Satan. However, we can put temptation personified as Satan himself behind us. We can do this by “It is written.” Don’t let temptation linger, it can cause spiritual death. “Get thee behind me Satan.”

Conclusion

In order to accomplish His mission and please the Father, Christ had to accept the cross before the crown. It was written. Hear His lonely and earnest prayer to have that cup (cross) removed, but remember His submissive and obedient will. He said, “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42).

Just as Christ had to go through the literal death, burial and resurrection (DBR) to receive the crown, we must go through a form of the same to be freed from sin (Romans 6:17-18). The form is identified in verse 3-7. It is in the likeness of His DBR. Satan offers salvation, through the doctrines of men that by-pass this “form of doctrine,” but it is Satan’s way and not the way to salvation. We will be judged by the written word of God. Christ said of the doctrine of men, “In vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matthew 15:9). We can’t eliminate baptism and expect God to forgive our sins (Acts 2:28). The doctrine of faith only rejects baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38) but it is of the devil and not of God.

Satan will persuade many that they will receive a crown without bearing their cross in this life, therefore, many stop at baptism. However, Christ said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24).

Let us make sure that we fight the good fight of faith, finish our course, keep the faith and receive the crown (see II Timothy 4:6-8). We can make our salvation sure by giving all diligence (II Peter 1:5-10). My prayer for you and yours is that you will ever fight the good fight of faith and lay hold on eternal life (I Timothy 6:12).

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The Clamor for Change

by Hoyt Houchen
(Deceased)

In Our Society

WE live in a fast changing world. A super market, restaurant or discount store suddenly appears on the lot that was vacant a few days ago. Bulldozers are hurriedly removing the rubble of dilapidated and torn down buildings so space can be made available for a high rise or a mall.

Modern technology has produced many amazing changes. Our transportation has advanced from the covered wagon to the jet plane — from the crude raft to the luxurious ocean liner. Economic changes have taken place. We experience inflation without dollar plunging in value. For the most part, the movie industry no longer produces family orientated movies, but rather what appeal to the lust of the flesh (illicit passions—that which is filthy and indecent Violence is frequently portrayed in the field of entertainment and by the news media. Filthy and vulgar speech, immodest dress, drug addiction, abortion upon demand and homosexuality are common. The immoral behavior which prevailed in the heathen world of Paul's day is evident in our present time. Our permissive society seeks to abolish what it terms the "old fashioned" an "prudish" views of us who endeavor to live "soberly and righteously and godly in this present world" (Titus 2:1).

Other changes could be illustrated but they are too obvious to mention. Some are beneficial to mankind, while others destroy the soul. Without question, our society continues to be restructured.

In The Church

We have often observed that the Lord's church faces the grave danger of absorbing its environment. The church at Corinth is a case in point, that churches of Christ have problems which result from the worldly environment in which they exist.

There are some who presently are clamoring for a change in the church of our Lord. We refer to the local church. The specific changes they propose do not involve such matters of indifference as the time schedule for Bible classes and the order of worship in the assembly. They are promoting unscriptural changes. History is

repeating itself, Premillennialism, institutionalism, the sponsoring church and the social gospel have taken their toll of congregations once regarded as being faithful. The doctrines of Neo-Calvinism, Grace-Fellowship (Unity in Diversity) and other current issues that divide us are heart-breaking to sound, sincere and truth loving brethren who have fought and continue to fight valiantly to keep the Lord's church "holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). The Lord has designed His church as He wants it, and does not want it altered by men's unholy hands.

"Change Agents and Churches of Christ" is the title of a recent book (1994) by William Woodson. I have read it and found it to be interesting and well documented. Woodson exposes some self-styled "Change Agents" (and we may add "self-appointed") who would restructure the church to their liking. Much of this was already known to some of us, but all should be aware of their efforts. Some of their teaching is Calvinistic. They also envision a change of worship in the assembly which will be more appealing. They favor fellowship with those who employ the use of instrumental music in worship. Max Lucado, Rubel Shelly and others are on record as having spoken to and fellowshipped denominational groups in which instrumental music was used.

The sentiment has been expressed by at least one of the young promoters of change that the Bible is not a pattern or a blueprint, but a love letter.

But the Bible declares that there is a pattern and there rules to follow. When the plain passages of scripture which so teach are ignored, the "Change Agents" have no scruples about introducing anything that suits their fancy. Paul exhorted Timothy to "Hold the pattern of sound words" (II Timothy 1:13). The Greek word from which "pattern" is translated is *hupostasis*. Arndt and Gingrich define it: "model, example" (856). Thayer defines it: "an example, pattern" (645). The word "ensample" is from the same Greek word that is found in I Timothy 1:16 and Thayer comments: "the pattern placed before one to be held fast and copied, model" (Ibid.)

Since some of our new promoters do not regard the Bible as a pattern, we should not be surprised to see them attempting to justify a role of leadership for women in the local church such as being elders, deacons, song leaders and presiding at the Lord's Table or passing the emblems. The new "Change-Agents"

seem to think they have a greater insight as to what the Lord has planned for the local church than the rest of us. The issue of public leadership in the local church is not EQUALITY but ROLE. The woman has a very important role to fill in her sphere of submission to the man (Ephesians 5:22,23; I Corinthians 11:3; I Timothy 2:11-13. There are many important ways that she can contribute to the work of the Lord without assuming the role of headship. Many elders, preachers and other men are effectively serving the Lord in the role of leadership because of a godly mother or a godly wife. (See II Timothy 1:5). My godly wife is a faithful companion and a great source of encouragement to me. The role for men and women in the church is God's arrangement. Man did not devise it.

The bottom line for unscriptural promotions is the failure to respect divine-authority. The chief priests and elders questioned the authority of Jesus. Unwilling to acknowledge it, they turned to human reasoning (Matthew 21:23-27). This is what brethren have done in the past, and this is what they are doing now.

Those who suppose they are advocating something original will do well to consider that to our knowledge, there has never been an unscriptural promotion adopted by our brethren that was not first practiced by the denominations. It is well observed that if we want to know what will be introduced to the Lord's church tomorrow, look at what the denominations are doing today! This is not to say that EVERY practice of Catholicism and other religious bodies will be adopted, but what is unscriptural that comes into the church was in use among the denominations first.

Although we agree with the efforts of those who are exposing and opposing the promotions of the present "Change Agents" to restructure the church, we must make another observation. Some of the very ones opposing the actions of the latest "Change Agents" were promoting institutionalism, the sponsoring church (and some, church sponsored recreation and entertainment) a few decades ago. We challenged those brethren to produce the Scripture (book, chapter and verse) that authorizes these promotions which they embraced. They did not produce the scripture that would authorize them then and they do not produce it now. We do rejoice that a few have learned the truth and have changed. But now the institutional brethren are all excited about what the present "Change Agents" are doing to the church. While the aforementioned issues of the past which divided us largely involved the organization and work

of the local church, the present promotions largely involve the church and its worship, unity in diversity, how to establish authority, etc. While the issues are different, the principle in both controversies is the same — a failure to respect divine authority!

The author of Ecclesiastes asked, "Is there a thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been long ago, in the ages which were before us" (1:10). We have had to contend with several so-called "news" which exist both in and out of the church. "Neo-Pentecostalism," "The New Morality," and "The New Age Movement." So, the "news" are nothing "new" to us. Now we have "The New Hermeneutic." It debunks the Bible standard of establishing authority by (1) direct statement or command, (2) approved example and (3) necessary inference or implication. It just means that we have no authority when these three things are discarded. The local church can make its own decisions as to whether it will have instrumental music in its worship, or anything else that it chooses to inject. There is no stopping place; thus, we can expect anything to be taught and practiced.

We are told that we are to focus our attention upon the teaching of Jesus in the four gospels and learn from them only as to how to conduct ourselves as Christians. They relegate the New Testament epistles to a collection of "love letters." But there are several things that these new interpreters among us have either intentionally or inadvertently overlooked. For instance, they fail to see that Jesus did not teach ALL the truth while He was on earth. He promised His apostles that after His ascension (John 14:12) there would be more to follow. He would send them another comforter, helper (Greek Paraclete), the Holy Spirit who would teach them ALL things (John 14:26) and guide them into ALL truth (John 16:13). If we are to depend upon the four gospels only for our behavior and work, where in the four gospels do we have any information about the qualifications and selection of elders in the local church? It is imperative that if we are to learn ALL that Jesus taught, we must study the New Testament — ALL that the Holy Spirit has revealed to the apostles and other inspired men (II Timothy 3:16,17). It is essential that we put into practice what we have learned. Contrary to some assertions that are made, the New Testament epistles do contain rules. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that the things which he wrote "are the commandments of the Lord" (I Corinthians. 14:37). He penned the following to the Galatians: "And as many as shall walk by this rule,

peace be upon them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16). Certainly love abounds in the New Testament epistles, but this is not to say there are no rules and pattern to be followed.

The Hermeneutic Jesus Used

Since we are told to focus upon Jesus and His teaching, the promoters of change among us would do well to see how Jesus established authority. There are several instances, but we consider one, John 13:34,35.

1. DIRECT COMMAND: “A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another.”

2. APPROVED EXAMPLE: “even as I have loved you.”

3. NECESSARY INFERENCE: “By this shall all men know that, (e are my disciples, if ye love one another.

The first two statements are obvious. Then it is also clear by inference that our lives must be examples to the world. Are the “new hermeneutic” brethren willing to learn from Jesus how He established authority? If so, they cannot ignore the epistles (I Corinthians 14:37; Galatians 6:16; II Timothy 3:16,17; II Peter 1:3).

The Word of God is all sufficient in its instruction as to how we are to live, work and worship. No change concerning what God has designed for the church will improve it, but to the contrary, it will destroy its identity and will take its place as just another denomination. Will our posterity recognize and identify the Lord’s church? Or, will it be the tragic condition that existed after Joshua and his generation died a generation “that knew not Jehovah”? (Judges 2:10).

God’s people clamored for a change back in the Old Testament They wanted a king like all the nations (I Samuel 8:6). Their request was displeasing to God and the consequences of their having a king like the other nations proved to be disastrous for Israel. The move for unscriptural changes among us is a beckon to remove “the ancient landmarks” (Proverbs 22:28), and to forsake “the old paths, where is the good way” (Jeremiah 6:16).

May we never be intrigued and led astray by the fanciful imaginations of men, but may we ever be steadfast and loyal only to what is authorized by the Word of God. Let us continue to “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3), rejecting every false doctrine and every false way.

God’s wisdom planned an unchangeable church in a changing world.



The Covering of I Corinthians 11

by Jere E. Frost

IT has been my lot for more than forty years to be involved in much study and many discussions on what is commonly called “The Covering Question.” It is my observation that most of the confusion exists because of unwarranted assumptions. But the pertinent facts on this matter can be easily researched and understood, and many of the common assumptions can thereby be clearly refuted and dismissed. Since simplification is said to be the first step to understanding any subject, my approach will be simple, and we will break the subject into definable parts, as follows:

1. The Custom: There was a custom in Corinth of the woman, when in public, being covered.

2. The Covering: The custom’s covering was a katalupto that completely covered the head.

3. The Prophesying: This was a spiritual gift.

4. “Nature”: Teaching: “Nature” is social propriety, the ways of a society.

5. Women Prophesying: They did prophesy, but this did not exempt the prophetess from moral implications associated with the customs.

6. Today: We have neither the custom nor prophesying.

Corinth Had a Custom of Women Wearing a Covering

The evidence of a custom in Corinth concerning women being covered is irrefutable. It bothers me when this fact is denied by those who insist that women are to wear a hat in worship services today. Every man has a right to his own opinion, but no man has a right to be wrong in his facts. That such a custom indeed prevailed, history and scholarship leave no doubt: “In Greek, as well as in Eastern cities, it was customary for women, except those of bad character, to cover their heads in public.” (THE ONE VOLUME BIBLE COMMENTARY, J.R. Dummelow, on I Corinthians 11).

“No respectable woman in an eastern village or city goes out without it, and, if she does, she is in danger of being misjudged.” (HASTINGS’ DICTIONARY OF THE BIBLE)

“In NT times, however, among both Greeks and Romans, reputable women wore a veil in public (Plutarch Quaest. Rom. xiv) and to appear without it was an act of bravado (or worse); Tarsus, St. Paul’s home city, was especially noted for strictness in this regard ... Hence .. Paul’s indignant directions I Corinthians 11:2-16 ... have their basis in the social proprieties of the time. The bearing of these directions, however, on the compulsory use of the hat by modern women in public worship would appear to be very remote.” (ISBE, Volume 5, page 3047)

“A Corinthian woman’s veil would be the peplum, worn over the shoulders in the house, drawn over the face in public. [At Corinth a ‘shorn’ woman would be a harlot.]” (THE PREACHER’S HOMILETIC COMMENTARY, I Corinthians 11).

“I Corinthians 11:10. Respectable women went out with their heads covered and wore veils. Only prostitutes displayed their faces and showed off their hair in order to attract men.... Even when Christians have liberty in the practice of their faith they are not to shock propriety.” (MANNERS AND CUSTOMS OF BIBLE TIMES, Ralph Gower, page 20)

“We must remember the place of the veil in the East. To this day the Eastern women wear the yashmak which is a long veil leaving the forehead and the eyes open but reaching down almost to the feet. In Paul’s time the Eastern veil was even more concealing. It came right over the head with only an opening for the eyes and reached right down to the feet. A respectable eastern woman would never have dreamed of appearing without it.” (Wm. Barclay, DAILY STUDY BIBLE, commentary of I Corinthians 11:2-16)

The reader can see the plain and simple evidence — Corinth had a custom of women wearing a covering in public.

The Custom’s Covering, a Katakalypto, Completely Covered the Head. The word for the woman’s covering in I Corinthians 11 is the Greek word katakalupto (kata, down, and kalupto, cover). It bothers me that some who advocate that a woman must wear a hat, or just something on her head, acknowledge the literal meaning of this word to completely cover and hang down, then shift its meaning to an “adequate” covering, and after some incredible reasoning and mixing of terms conclude that it means “anything” on the head. Unbelievable! It is like a Methodist who goes from

baptism literally meaning immersion, rationalizing it to mean an “adequate” amount of water, and concluding that it means “any” water at all. The facts belie the labored efforts of hat advocates and Methodists to change words’ meanings. The character of the covering is noted in the last three quotes above (kindly reread) and in the following:

“Outside the NT the word means “to veil (oneself).” In the LXX Moses hides the ark behind a curtain (Exod. 26:34), the Seraphim cover their faces (Isa. 6:2) ...” (THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NT, Kittel and Friedrich).

“To cover up (kata, intensive), in the Middle Voice, to cover oneself, is used in I Corinthians 11:6,7 ..” (VINE’S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY)

“.. to cover up ... to veil or cover one’s self: I Co. xi.6.” (THAYER, page 331)

“.. to cover fully ...” (YOUNG)

“In Greek, as well as in Eastern cities, it was customary for women, except those of bad character, to cover their heads in public.” (COMMENTARY, J.R. Dummelow, on I Corinthians 11)

Prophecy was a Spiritual Gift Advocates of the covering as a binding requirement today characteristically distort the meaning of every key fact and word. What they do with the Corinthian custom and katakalupto, they do with prophecy — they change its meaning. Some say prophecy merely means teaching, and others say that it is a synecdoche for the worship of the church. But such is fanciful speculation and imagining that arbitrarily assigns the meaning that is wanted so as to reach the conclusion desired. That prophecy was a spiritual gift, we call the reader’s attention to (1) several passages of Scripture that so identify it, and to (2) lexicons’ and scholarly commentators’ observations about it.

“Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy .” (Romans 12:6)

“For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom ... to another prophecy .. But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit.” (I Corinthians 12:8-11)

“And God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets ... Are all apostles, are all prophets? ...” (I Corinthians 12:28,29) “And though I have the gift of prophecy..” (I Corinthians 13:2)

“... whether there be prophecies, they shall fail ...” (I

Corinthians 13:8)

“Follow after love, and desire spiritual gifts, but rather that ye may prophesy. For he that speaketh in an unknown tongue...” (I Corinthians 14:1,2)

“Wherefore, brethren, covet to prophesy, and forbid not to speak with tongues.” (I Corinthians 14:39)

“And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some ... teachers ..” (Ephesians 4:11)

All these Scriptures declare and clarify the role of the prophet as an inspired spokesman. Though he taught, he is distinguished from the mere teacher just as the apostles, who taught, are more than mere teachers. The apostles and prophets were inspired. Peter declared that when the prophets spoke, the Spirit “which was in them” was signifying, or testifying (I Peter 1:11). The Scriptures call prophesying a spiritual gift, and scholars concur.

“Secondarily, prophets ... a person who, under Divine inspiration, predicts future events ...” (ADAM CLARKE on I Corinthians 12:28)

It may be noted that Clarke wobbles on the point in his discussions, much as Methodist theologians do on baptism. But Clarke can tell you the meaning of the word baptize, and the meaning of the expression, “for the remission of sins,” but he abandons scholarship and the meaning of words when he proceeds with Methodist doctrine, sprinkling etc. This is exactly what he does on “prophet”—but he also gave, as you just read, its actual meaning without his personal theology and beliefs added. Other scholars (such as Vincent), do not back away from their scholarship. They declare prophets inspired and distinguish them from teachers.

“Prophets. Preachers and expounders under the immediate influence of the Spirit, and thus distinguished from teachers. I Corinthians 12:10.” On Hebrews 1:1: “By the prophets ... does not mean in the ... writings ...but rather in the prophets themselves as the vessels of divine inspiration. God speak in them and from them.” (VINCENT’S WORD STUDIES)

“..[T]he prophets made new revelations, and spoke all their prophesyings under the Spirit’s influence.” (JAMIESON, FAUSSET AND BROWN on I Corinthians 12:28)

“There were the prophets. The word prophet does not so much mean a fore-teller as a forthteller... Their message was held to be not the result of thought and

study, but the direct result of the Holy Spirit.” (Wm. Barclay, DAILY STUDY BIBLE, Ephesians 4:11)

“prophecy ...prophecy, i.e. discourse emanating from divine inspiration ...” Prophet: “... one who speaks forth by divine inspiration ... II. In the N.T. 1. one who, moved by the Spirit of God and hence his organ and spokesman, solemnly declares to men what he has received by inspiration ...”(THAYER, page 552)

How “Nature” Teaches “Nature,” in the sense of the purely physical universe, teaches nothing as to appropriate hair. Hair lengths and styles are not the result of women’s hair naturally growing long and men’s hair naturally being unable to grow long, for that simply is not the case. Samson had long hair, and a manlier man never lived. Absalom had long hair, and he was apparently the handsomest man in the kingdom, being without blemish from the crown of his head to the sole of his feet. Nature in the passage is obviously “the way of propriety,” society” or “custom,” as scholars of the Greek language and customs attest:

Nature: “... a natural feeling of decorum ... in respect to national customs in which one is born and brought up ... It was the national custom among both the Hebrews and Greeks, for men to wear the hair short, and women to wear it long.” (A GREEK AND ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT by Edward Robinson, page 771)

“The word nature denotes evidently that sense of propriety which all men have, and which is expressed in any prevailing .. custom.... It is doing that which almost universal custom has said appropriately belongs to the female sex.” (BARNES NOTES on I Corinthians 11:14)

The Fact of Prophesying Did Not Change the Implications of Customs We have established two salient facts that should be kept in mind as to what apparently produced the need for this portion of Scripture. First, there was the custom of women in public wearing a katakalupto in Corinth. Second, there were women who prophesied, women who were thus moved by the Holy Spirit to speak. It does not matter whether this was in an assembly or not. Philip had four daughters who not only could but who did prophesy (Acts 21:8). Custom dictated the same decorum and manner from them as from other women, and called for it on the street corner, in the marketplace, or in the assembly — any and every public place. Arguments about the place are irrelevant

to the issue of the covering, for the custom applied in all public places. The point is that not even spiritual activity, which would otherwise favorably reflect to the woman's credit and reputation, would justify ignoring the social mores and customs that were so closely identified with morality and character. As Barnes said:

“There can be little doubt that they had consulted him in their letter (chap. vii. 1) about the proper manner in which a woman ought to demean herself if she was called upon, under the influence of divine inspiration, to utter any thing in public. The question seems to have been, whether, since she was inspired, it was proper for her to retain the marks of her inferiority of rank, and remain covered; or whether the fact of her inspiration did not release her from that obligation...” (Albert Barnes, BARNES' NOTES on I Corinthians 11:2)

In Corinth, as already noted, the absence of a covering in public was generally viewed as insubordination or harlotry. Hat-advocates emphasize a place (a church assembly). The Scriptures do not. The custom was for all the women to be covered in all public places. Only the insubordinate and harlots did otherwise. Yet only the woman praying or prophesying is addressed. Why is that? Obviously, because the Christian women were not otherwise causing a reproach by being uncovered, the only exception being some who may have thought their inspiration and spiritual activity would release them from the need for the covering. Perhaps they thought a covering was demeaning and inappropriate for one who was prophesying. Whatever the reason, they and they alone were the objects of the admonition to be covered. Inquire as to the who, when, where and what of the passage. Hat-advocates do not (cannot) answer the who, when etc. in Bible terms. Their position requires and depends upon assumptions to the contrary. Consider:

WHO is the object of the admonition? The woman who prayed or prophesied. It is apparent that there was no problem with other women. No other woman than one praying or prophesying is mentioned.

WHEN was she admonished to wear it? When she prayed or prophesied, suggesting that at other times there was no problem even with these women.

WHERE was the covering needed in the text? Anywhere! All the women wore it in public. The prophetess was not exempted anywhere just because she prayed or prophesied. Covering-advocates sharply contradict themselves at this juncture. All of them that I

have ever spoken with deny that a woman ever prayed or prophesied in a worship service. If they are correct, how then can they say this represents conduct in a worship service? They themselves deny it ever occurred in one! How can they make a behavior that never occurred in a worship service, in their own view and argument, a synecdoche for a worship service?

WHAT was the covering, and what was to be covered? The covering was a *katakalypto* — a complete covering. The head, including the face (it being part of the head) was to be covered ala the custom in Corinth.

“We Have No Such Custom” The Greeks, and Corinth (it being a Greek city), had this custom. The only custom in the entire context is a covering. “We have no such custom” therefore references the covering, not contentiousness, for being contentious is not a custom but is forbidden as a sin. He is therefore giving instructions as to how the believers, those women who prayed and prophesied, were to act in view of the customs where they lived. Paul said “we” have no such custom, and also that the “churches” had no such custom. So his admonition does not rest on some apostolic or church law. This is nothing strange, nor is it unusual or unique in Scripture. For example:

Footwashing was the customary manner of hospitality.

One had to respect the custom to show proper hospitality. Footwashing was required! (John 13:14; I Timothy 5:10). The principle pertaining to graciousness, humility and hospitality still remains to this day, but the custom of footwashing is not part of our culture and the hat-binders do not try to bind that custom even though it is mentioned more often than the covering, and is commanded. Why do they pick the one and not the other? Can you imagine the argument if I Timothy 5:10 had said, “if she have worn a hat in worship” instead of “if she have washed the saints feet”?

The holy kiss was commanded five times! (Romans 16:16; I Corinthians 16:20; II Corinthians 13:12; I Thessalonians 5:26; I Peter 5:14) It is illogical to try to bind the covering custom and not bind the holy kiss custom. Principles do not change. Customs do. We need to give a proper, courteous greeting to one another. Women need to appear virtuous. But we shake hands for the former, and women do not need a covering for the latter, in our culture. No brother known to me tries to bind this custom as they do the covering of I Corinthians 11. But the one is as binding as the other!

Paul plainly said the church had “no such custom.” Think about that. Repeat it five times. My hat brethren do not read it that way. They read it to say, “we have no other custom” than that, but that is not what it says! “We have no such custom”! It means exactly what it says - this custom did not issue from the apostles or from the church. To emphasize the intrinsic meaning of the subject sentence, let us restate it but change the negatives. Reverse the point 180 degrees and you will notice that then, and only then, it reads the way hat-advocates believe it:

“But if any man seem to be contentious, we DO have such a custom, as ALSO DO the churches of God.” (I Corinthians 11:16, Hatters’ Translation) “Hat” brethren are contentious FOR the covering because they believe the apostles and churches DO have such a custom and requirement. But Paul says the exact opposite! This passage reproves whoever is contentious in the matter, and the reason is “for (because)” neither “we” nor “the churches of God” have such a custom. Corinth did! But the apostles did not! But he urged the Corinthians to respect propriety. We should do that equally with the covering, footwashing, holy kissing, and anointing with oil. If it is the custom, “nature” teaches you to conform and not to produce an unnecessary reproach.

Conclusion

If whosoever may chance to read this will respect the simple definition and Scriptural use of words, he will see that this was a matter relevant at a specific time and place. As William Barclay, England’s celebrated scholar of the Greek language and customs said:

“It must always be remembered that this whole situation arose in Corinth.... It would be quite wrong to make this passage of universal application; it was intensely relevant to the Church of Corinth but it has nothing to do with whether or not women should wear hats in Church at the present day.”

We have none of the essentials for making this passage a binding commandment today. It is as passe’ as footwashing and holy kisses. We have no such customs. No one in our culture wears a katakalupto. We have no prophets. We have no prophetesses. We have no women praying and prophesying. But principles are ageless, and we should now, as they were urged then, respect the propriety of our social courtesies and customs, and not disregard them to the detriment of the gospel. Which Church Is Right?

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Writings From Yesteryear

Which Church Is Right?

Suppose that some eligible bachelor should announce that tonight he is getting married and tomorrow he is going to start looking for a woman to be his wife; and that, furthermore, it will make no difference which woman he chooses, since one is as good as another. You would either laugh at his joke or would think that somebody ought to call the men with the net and put him away. Yet, that sort of reasoning is right up to date in religion. You are “saved” and then pick out the church you want to join, and one is as good as another.

Everyone understands that when you are “married” you have a wife, right then and there, and don’t need to look any further. The ceremony that marries a man to a woman makes that woman his wife. Whatever it takes to get married, that’s the very thing it takes to get a wife. It is impossible to be married and not have a wife—if you are a man, of course. And one is not married to just any woman; he is married to one woman, his wife. Just so, it is impossible to be saved and not be in the church; because the same thing that saves one put him into the church. Whatever it takes to save a person, that’s what it takes to put him into the church. And he is not a member of just any church, he is a member of the Lord’s church.

The church is the family of God, I Timothy 3:14-15.”... the house (household-family) of God which is the church of the living God.” And, “For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and on earth is named” (Ephesians 3:14). Paul is here writing to the Ephesian church, and the theme of the Ephesian letter is the church — Christ and the church. The church is the family of God. When one is born of God, born again, he is born into the family of God, of course. Therefore when one is born again—saved—he is by that very act a member of the family of God, the church. You can’t be saved and be out of the church anymore than you can be married and not have a wife.

by Luther Blackmon, taken from *The Gospel Guardian*, July 8, 1965