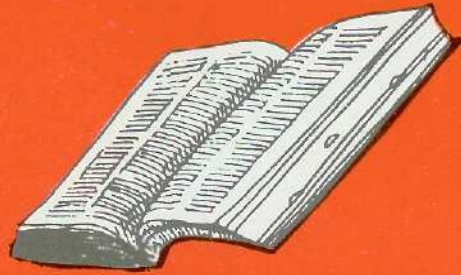


Gospel Truths



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

Volume II Number 1

January 1991



Editorial . . .

J.T. SMITH, EDITOR

P.O. Box 906087 • Tulsa, Oklahoma 74112

Harrell - Spears Exchange



In this issue of *Gospel Truths* we are beginning a series of exchanges between Ed Harrell and Dudley Ross Spears.

In the November 1988 issue of **Christianity Magazine**, of which Magazine brother Harrell is one of the editors, he wrote a defense of brother Homer Hailey entitled "Homer Hailey: False Teacher?" Following that article, and in connection with it, he began a series of fifteen articles in the February 1989 issue of **Christianity Magazine** entitled "The Bounds of Christian Unity."

During the Dallas Meeting in July 1990 brother Harrell approached me about having this exchange. He said that some brethren thought such an exchange would be beneficial, and asked if I would be willing to select someone to review the above mentioned articles and allow him the right to reply. I was happy to do so. Having known brother Dudley Ross Spears for more than thirty years and having the utmost confidence in his integrity, his ability as a Bible student and his sense of fairness, I approached him about doing this work.

He, after some persuasion, consented. I also respect brother Harrell's integrity and believe he will deal with the things said by Dudley with fairness and candor. In connection with this exchange, there are some things that I feel compelled to say.

We would certainly like to be able to reach all those who have read Ed's articles. But because of Christianity Magazine's editorial policy, brother Harrell, in a letter to me, stated that it would be impossible. I even offered to share the expense of the printing and mailing in order to send *Gospel Truths* to all on their mailing list, but to no avail. The editorial policy of Christianity Magazine is such that there can be no personal exchanges in it, and seemingly there is no desire on the part of Ed, having refused the above offer, (I do not know about the other editors) for their readers to hear both sides. As brother Harrell stated in the November 1988 issue of **Christianity Magazine**, page 6, "It has been the settled judgment of the editors of Christianity Magazine that we should concentrate on teaching and exhortation, avoiding personal exchanges."

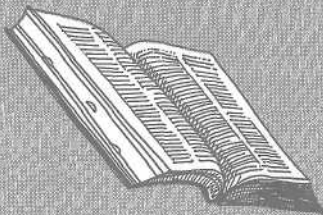
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Let's examine that statement for a moment. Any one of the editors of **Christianity Magazine** can say anything he desires, and according to their editorial policy, no one of the editors is permitted to make a response - as such - to any error that might be taught by any other editor. If this policy is good for **Christianity Magazine**, why wouldn't it be good for every individual Christian and every congregation? If everyone followed this policy, there would not be, yea could not be, any such thing as controversy among brethren. However, though such controversy could not exist, the disagreements would still be there with no way to settle them.

To the dismay of many of us, the trend (no controversy among brethren - let's have all positive teaching) has been in this very direction for a number of years. However, it is in direct violation of everything that is taught in the Scriptures.

For example, "And certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved. Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the apostles and elders, about this question" (Acts 15:1-2). "But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed" (Galatians 2:11). "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life..." (I Timothy 6:12). Obviously there are many other passages that could be cited, but I believe these are enough to sustain the point.

And again, it is beyond my ability to believe that any one of the editors of **Christianity Magazine** would sit in the congregation where he worships and hear another of the editors, or some other person, teach something that he believes would damn one's soul and allow the teaching to go unanswered.

Brother Harrell freely admits that his article about Homer Hailey violates their editorial policy. "Having violated several of our self-imposed editorial rules, I am asking the indulgence of our readers as this article stretches on beyond our one page limit" (**Christianity Magazine**, November 1988, page 6). It is not enough that such policy would be adopted by these brethren, but then brother Harrell "stepped out from behind" their policy and has "his say" about the controversy concerning brother Hailey, and then "stepped back behind" the policy and says, "I have no intention of saying more...than is found in this article" (Ibid, page 6).

Also, I thought it was ironic that the thing that caused brother Harrell to "step from behind" their editorial policy was to make his defense of brother Hailey whom he admitted is teaching error on the divorce and remarriage question. "If brother Hailey should write a summary of his views on this subject, I would regret that he might convert people to a view that I think is wrong" (Ibid, page 9). I believe this tends to show the magnitude of an issue among us that many are not willing to admit exists. This in connection with the fact that recently brother Hailey sent a

Why not use *Gospel Truths* as a medium through which to help others in their study of God's Word? At just \$10.00 a year send it to one of your children - a friend or an enemy. It will do them good. Why not encourage the congregation where you are to purchase a bundle of 25 each month for \$16.00 and receive a free church ad?

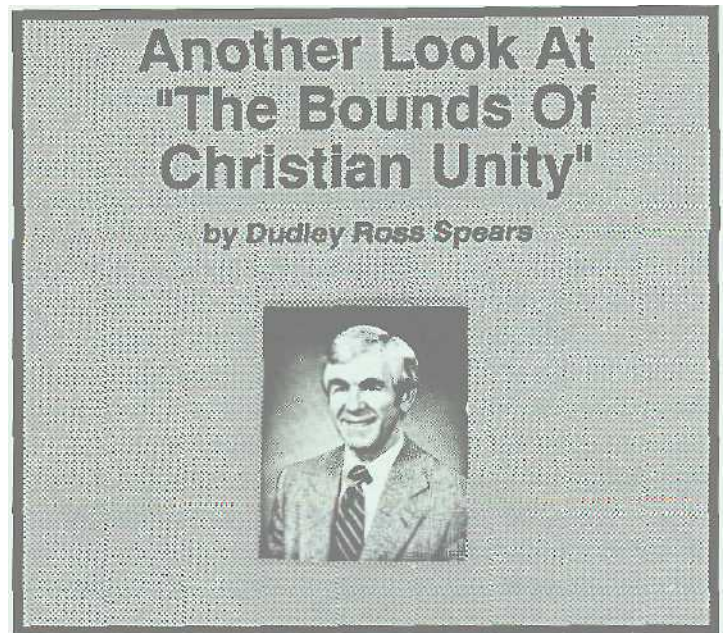
booklet to a number of brethren for review - but not to me - that Olan Hicks and Stanley Paher say he is planning to publish, is interesting indeed. (One of those who received the manuscript was Olan Hicks, a hobbyist of error on the divorce and remarriage question, who highly recommends the booklet when it is printed).

Contrariwise, in the same article brother Harrell says, "On the other hand, an earnest commitment to literal obedience of the Scriptures often breeds controversy. It is our strength that we want to be exactly right. But that desire sentences us to a lifetime of study and debate" (Ibid, page 9). (But not in **Christianity Magazine** - jts).

Why make so much of this point? The very fact that the editors of **Christianity Magazine** were willing to adopt this policy is, as I have already pointed out, indicative of a trend among brethren. Also the statement of such a policy often has "the pendulum effect." By that I mean that many brethren will "swing" even further in that direction, which in my judgment will destroy the Lord's church wherever it is adopted. Thus it appears to me that brother Harrell, being the astute historian he is, would have been able to envision where this would lead and not have added fuel to the fire of a trend already in existence by agreeing to such a policy.

I am in perfect agreement with the fact that there is a great need for much positive teaching in periodicals. However it also appears to me that the policy I have adopted for *Gospel Truths*, or a similar one, is the proper one. The majority of the material is designed to teach alien sinners and edify saints. However I am also able to do what brother Harrell says must be done. ("On the other hand, an earnest commitment to literal obedience of the Scriptures often breeds controversy. It is our strength that we want to be exactly right. But that desire sentences us to a lifetime of study and debate" [Ibid. page 9]). Though Ed recognizes that such exchanges are imperative, he must ask someone else to do them. To that point this exchange testifies.

Nevertheless, I am happy to publish it. I bid you therefore to read it carefully and prayerfully, and others that will follow even as I shall, with a view to determining what is truth - regardless of who has it. **GT**



BOTH brother J.T. Smith, editor of *Gospel Truths*, and Ed Harrell, co-editor of **Christianity Magazine**, have asked for a review of a series of articles authored by brother Harrell. The articles appeared in **Christianity Magazine** and were written under the title, "The Bounds of Christian Unity." Hopefully only good, only closer understanding of each other and of the issue involved, will be the result. Someone once said, "Where there is much desire to learn, there of necessity will be much arguing, much writing, many opinions; for *opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.*" Hopefully the differences expressed in this exchange will bring us to a fuller knowledge of the question of fellowship.

Let the readers be fully aware that brother Harrell is a man of precision with words. He is an accomplished writer, author of several excellent books, and an astute historian. Such a man weighs his words well before committing them to print for public consumption. When his very words are cited, they are the words he thought out very carefully and express precisely what he meant. This is not going to degenerate into a semantic fist fight, nor into some low level hair splitting contest. Brother Harrell taught error on at least two major issues.

The two errors are: (1) a proposition endorsing the right of some Christians to teach on matters of "considerable moral and doctrinal import" (*Christianity Magazine*, May 1989, Page 6) and remain in fellowship, (2) putting moral and doctrinal differences in the same category as the issues Paul dealt with in Romans 14. Brother Harrell said much with which there is absolute accord. What he said on these two points, however, constitute our basic disagreement.

Expository Sermons

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Brother Harrell wrote, "Romans 14 confirms the right of Christians to disagree in matters of faith, but the chapter specifically forbids the violation of one's conscience" (Ibid, July 1989, Page 6).

One of the long standing principles by which men have tried to "restore" New Testament Christianity is expressed, "In matters of faith unity, in matters of opinion liberty, and in all things charity." Whether you agree with all the implications of that statement or not, brother Harrell has expressed the very opposite relative to *faith*. According to the principle of allowing liberty of opinion, liberty is not allowed in matters of faith. We have no choice when it comes to a matter of faith. When we say, "in matters of faith unity," we should affirm, "*only* in matters of faith unity." When we say, "in matters of opinion, liberty" we should mean, "*only* in matters of opinion is there liberty." That means we are not allowed to differ over matters of faith. Brother Harrell, a man of precise words, is simply wrong.

But to say we have liberty to differ only in matters of opinion is incomplete. We have to determine what, if any, is the difference in faith and opinion. One writer, known for his strict application of Scripture, wrote: "Faith is a firm conviction resting upon clear and satisfactory testimony. Opinion is an impression resting on human judgment, without clear and satisfactory testimony. In religion, faith is a conviction based upon a clear revelation of the Divine will. And we must 'walk by faith.' That is, we are led by faith in God to do what the Word of God clearly requires us to do. Whatever is clearly revealed in the Word of God, is a matter of faith. What is not clearly required therein is (a) matter of opinion." — David Lipscomb, *Christian Unity, How Promoted, How Destroyed, Faith and Opinion*, McQuiddy Printing Company, 1916, page 9. Brother Harrell's use of the term faith in Romans 14 is wrong. It blurs any distinction between faith and opinion and extends the realm of private opinion far beyond the bounds of New Testament usage.

Faith is that which is produced by divine revelation (Romans 10:17). Opinions are strong convictions based on deductions, assumptions, and inferences from passages of Scripture. Those who differ in matters of opinion may remain in brotherhood with one another. Those who differ in matters of faith cannot scripturally remain together at peace in fellowship without either one or the other compromising the truth of God.

Romans 14 uses the word "faith" to mean strong convictions in irrelevant matters held by certain members of the church. Verse one mentions one who is "weak in the faith" obviously meaning weak in convictions relative to unimportant issues such as dietary restrictions and the observance of certain days held to be special. Likewise Paul asked, "Do you have faith?" and concluded, "Have it

to yourself before God" (verse 22). This cannot be anything other than opinion for surely everyone can see that it is impossible to keep our faith in Christ to ourselves. Our faith is to be public and preached; our opinions are to be held privately.

The divisions we experience are neither necessary nor are they approved of God. Brother Harrell erroneously concluded the opposite. He wrote, "Of course, all division is not sinful. Paul acknowledged that certain divisions were necessary: 'For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you' (I Corinthians 11:19). He instructed the Romans, 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offense contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them' (16:17)" (*Christianity Magazine*, May 1989, Page 6). Brother Harrell is wrong; all division is sinful. The reason division occurs within the body of Christ is not that matters of faith are bound as the sole test of fellowship; rather it is the binding or forcing of opinions as tests of fellowship. Division never takes place over what the Bible expressly teaches; it takes place over what the Bible does not expressly teach.

Brother Harrell misused the principles in Romans 14 by lumping differences on marriage, divorce and remarriage with the irrelevant issues discussed in that chapter. He applied the principles of Romans 14 to a position on marriage, divorce, and remarriage, which Harrell says is not correct. He affirmed that many of our disagreements over "moral and doctrinal" issues are covered in Romans 14 and he contends that we should be able to continue working and worshiping together without division. His conclusion is that God allows His people to continue unrestricted in fellowship while preaching and practicing different things in matters of faith. Those Jews who compelled Titus to be circumcised were not tolerated at all by the great apostle Paul (Galatians 2:5). Paul said that the truth of the Gospel could not have continued with the Galatians had he become tolerant toward those Jews who "came in privately to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus." The liberty we have in Christ is to be free from the bondage of human opinion. We are not at liberty to choose which matters of faith are the bonds of Christian unity and fellowship.

Harrell says our disagreements are limited only to what he considers a ban on "doubtful disputations" because they are schismatic, factional dispositions shown in controversy. He conjectures that "doubtful disputations" are those things that preclude "our capacity to work together as Christians." Brother Harrell not only blurs the distinction in faith and opinion, he is far too liberal in his application of the doubtful disputations. But if he recognizes no difference in faith and opinion relative to unity in Christ it is logical that he would include all of our doctrinal

and moral differences in these doubtful disputations. But the doubtful disputations ("decisions of scruples", ASV) of Romans 14 are limited to the issues discussed in the context. In fact, the issues were doubtful simply because they were not of major importance. The issues in Romans 14 were not matters of faith; they were matters of opinion.

The disputations of the passage were cultural issues; they were certainly not moral or doctrinal differences. God settles doctrinal and moral issues for us through revelation making them matters of faith. Since when do we relegate adultery, a moral issue, into the realm of opinion?

These disputed points in Romans 14 were to be hushed, not debated. The New English Bible reads, "without attempting to settle doubtful points." The chapter is addressed to those who are strong in the faith. They are the ones who are to receive the weaker brethren, and when Paul said for the stronger to receive them he demanded that they not discuss these minute and inconsequential matters. Have we forgotten a similar restriction? "But shun profane and vain babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (II Timothy 2:16).

Romans 14 is clearly not dealing with major doctrinal and moral problems. Yet Harrell affirms, "It is obvious that Christians sometimes disagree about scriptural instruction, even in matters of considerable moral and doctrinal import. In spite of these disagreements, we work and worship together, leaving many matters of individual judgment in the hands of God. That behavior, uniformly practiced throughout the history of Christianity is, I believe, the issue addressed in Romans 14" (*Ibid*, May 1989, Page 6). But that is not the issue addressed in Romans 14. If it is, the difference we experience over marriage and divorce is of no significance. We should not even discuss it. We should shun it for it will increase to more ungodliness. And, it really makes no difference at all what one teaches on the issue, for verse 3 affirms that God receives both the weak and the strong in the passage. And if God receives both, then both are right? Romans 14 deals with two groups that differ and both of them are right in what they believe.

Brother Harrell disavows a position on marriage and divorce which argues that those outside of Christ are not subject in any way to what the Bible says about marriage. He said, "If brother Hailey should write a summary of his views on this subject, I would regret that he might convert people to a view that I think is wrong" (*Ibid*, November 1988, page 9). But he condones those who proclaim it as truth. Since we are to do nothing by partiality (I Timothy 5:21), then Ed would have to include all those who teach error on any aspect of divorce and remarriage. Something has changed. In the **Reed Lectures for 1966**,

brother Harrell preached the following. Please read it carefully.

"I am a fanatic of sorts. I am not a dangerous enthusiast. Most members of the Churches of Christ share the American heritage of freedom of religious expression and are fully committed to religious toleration. But I have my zealot side. Any man who believes that he can find literal truth in the Scriptures must also believe that those who do not find the same truth are wrong. What follows is that such people are sinful. The next logical conclusion is that they will go to hell." Harrell admitted later in the speech, "All members of the Churches of Christ do not have such an attitude, but **I do.**" (**Reed Lectures for 1966**, page 35). If brother Harrell still follows the guidelines he preached in this fine lecture, how can he allow continued fellowship with those who, by his own admission, are **wrong** in their teaching on marriage, divorce and remarriage? He said, "those who do not find the same truth are wrong...(bold letters mine for emphasis - DRS) those who are wrong are sinful...they will go to hell." How interesting that Ed is quoted in the above paragraph as saying brother Hailey's teaching is **wrong**.

When we differ over nearly anything, usually we seek to determine the bounds of fellowship before we ever sit down and thrash out whatever it is causing us to differ. But the scriptural procedure is first to investigate the issue in the light of Divine revelation. After a diligent research of the principles in any division is exhausted then the question of continued fellowship is dealt with. We reverse this order.

Does the Lord allow us to believe false teaching? II Thessalonians 2:1-12 teaches that those who believe error are deceived and will be damned if they do not repudiate it. We have no more right to teach error than we do to believe it. We cannot condone that which we cannot preach as truth. It is my sincere prayer that Ed will retract his statements. But this difference will never be settled in the papers that publish this exchange; it must be settled in the hearts of those of you who read with profit and a sincere desire to be right first, in fellowship with God's people second, and consistency should fall in line some where, **GT 2081 Old Scottsville Road, Alvaton, KY 42122**

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Ed Harrell's Response To Dudley Ross Spears

by David Edwin Harrell



I recently told J.T. Smith that I would be happy to respond in *Gospel Truths* to a responsible critique of my series on Christian unity, and I am delighted that he has chosen Dudley Ross Spears to write the review. Dudley is an old friend, a good student, and a respected brother.

Dudley is overly generous in his description of my thoughtfulness as a writer. I aspire to be as accurate as he indicates, but I fear that I, like all writers, sometimes speak ambiguously and without precision. Furthermore, anyone who has written as much as I have has probably changed his mind about a few things. I state these qualifications, however, not to provide an escape route for anything I believe about fellowship.

Dudley has provided a good starting point by listing two points that "constitute our basic disagreement." After reacting to those two points, I shall summarize some of the arguments I made in my article that are not reviewed in Dudley's response.

First, Dudley objects to my admission that I have fellowship with those who teach what I believe to be wrong on matters of "considerable moral and doctrinal import." But my statement is a truism, and it is just as true of Dudley as it is of me. To argue that fellowship is based on agreement on every question of biblical interpretation simply distorts our experience.

Dudley's strategy is to label every disagreement that he is willing to overlook a matter of opinion; all those that he is unwilling to tolerate are matters of faith. We all agree that opinion is sometimes involved in the application of biblical principles -- how long is a modest dress, may we attend PG movies, what is proper dress for church services. But many disagreements grow out of differing interpretations of biblical text.

I assert, as a matter of fact, that brethren disagree about issues that are questions of faith to them. The covering question is not a matter of opinion; people on differing sides of that debate are committed to obeying God's instructions in I Corinthians 11. The issue of whether an elder must have more than one child is not a matter of opinion, it turns on what one believes about I Timothy 3:4.

A wide variety of positions involving marriage, divorce, and remarriage are matters of faith. A Christian can only marry a Christian, divorce is not permissible under any circumstances under the law of Christ, the innocent party in a divorce can remarry only if the writing of divorcement is for the cause of fornication, an alien is not subject to Matthew 19, the guilty party in a divorce is free to remarry -- each of these is a statement of faith. All are not equally tolerable to me, and I have tried to outline the basis on which I separate them.

Common sense forces us to acknowledge that we disagree about matters of faith. My articles cited extensive historical evidence indicating that brethren have long done so. If, as Dudley contends, there can be no fellowship where conscientious differences exist, then in each of the matters of faith I noted in my articles he must specify which is the one correct position limiting fellowship. If, as I have argued, such disagreements are a fact of history and life, I must establish the biblical limits of tolerance. That was the point of my series of articles; I shall summarize my guidelines at the close of this article.

Dudley's second objection, and the one that he addresses most extensively, is that Romans 14 relates simply to matters of opinion, not to matters of faith. As I said in my articles, if that position is true, we are still left with the practical necessity of deciding when to fellowship those who interpret biblical passages differently from us.

Briefly, however, I question Dudley's exposition of the passage. He states: "The issues in Romans 14 were not matters of faith; they were matters of opinion." The problem is that Paul calls them matters of "faith." They did not concern "irrelevant matters" to those with "strong convictions;" the Christians in this passage disagreed about what the law of God instructed them to do. Romans 14 tells how to live together with differences of conscience. I shall be happy to address this passage further as space permits.

In fairness, however, I want to try to quickly react to a couple of other issues raised in Dudley's article. Perhaps I was not clear about my use of I Corinthians 11:19, because I doubt that we disagree on this point. Sin is the cause of all division in the body of Christ, but it is certainly not sinful for a Christian to separate himself from that which pollutes the church, either by withdrawing from the unruly or coming out from the midst of evil. In such a

case, I suppose we agree, division serves the useful purposes of making manifest that which is approved.

While I have changed my mind about many things since 1966, I am perfectly willing to stand by Dudley's quotation from my speech before the Disciples of Christ Historical Society. I believe that the scriptures reveal clear truth, that those who disobey that truth are wrong and that they will go to hell. I do not believe that adulterers will go to heaven, nor will rebellious women (those who refuse to wear coverings?), murderous men (those who wage war?), or those who pervert the work of a local church (by hosting social functions such as weddings?). The issue is how certain I am that my biblical interpretation on those topics precludes all others. If total doctrinal agreement is the only basis for fellowship, then a brother who believes that there is no scriptural grounds for divorce would necessarily conclude that Dudley endorses adultery.

Biblical principles must govern our toleration of differences in faith. My articles do not imply that "our disagreements are limited only to ... a ban on 'doubtful disputations.'" I compiled a list of scriptural principles (I would be happy to see it improved) that establish the bounds of Christian unity. Briefly summarized, they are: (1) unity can not exist in an environment of dissension (2) I can not tolerate clear immorality (3) I must be convinced that a brother is acting in faith (that he is, in my opinion, trying to honestly live in conformity with all scriptural teaching) (4) I can tolerate no clear violator of biblical instruction.

In practice, I believe our differences come down to two matters. First, I believe we must not belittle anyone's deeply held biblical conviction by dismissing it as a matter of opinion. Rather, we must acknowledge that at this point in time we have conscientious disagreements. These disagreements may cause us to divide for conscience sake; or they may cause us to say (sometimes with considerable puzzlement) that scriptural clarity has not resulted in our coming to a common understanding.

Second, we apparently disagree about whether any honest brother can hold the view that the alien sinner is not subject to the law of Christ in Matthew 19. That is a judgment that Christians and local churches have been struggling with throughout my lifetime. I appreciate the consistency of the negative answer that J.T. Smith has given on this question for many years. I disagree. On that issue, his and Dudley's bounds of Christian unity may be narrower than mine; on others, I would guess they are broader. My articles did not address this issue, they were intended only to clarify the grounds on which both of us were acting. I would be happy to state my reasons for making that judgment in future articles.

Response To Leo Rogol

by John Welch



appreciate the fact that brother Smith has afforded me the opportunity to respond to the article by brother Rogol.

I have now responded to these charges in two Open Forum Sessions (in Indianapolis and in Beaver Dam, KY) and in two articles published in various places (Faith and Facts) and Anchor.

In those articles I have corrected as mis-statements several of the quotations that brother Rogol is reviewing. I believe that those corrections change the entire intent and purpose of his review.

I have also made this statement, "I state unequivocally, here and now, that I do believe in the deity of Jesus before, during, and after his period of time on earth." (Faith and Facts, Volume 18, number 4, Page 40, see also Anchor and the tape recording of the two open forums).

I have admitted error and stated a clear-cut belief in the deity of Jesus. Brother Rogol may not have known these things, but the editor of this magazine, brother Smith certainly did. Why then did he print this review, except to further embarrass me?

I did notice that brethren have suggested that to argue that Jesus gave up any of the attributes of his deity in order to be a man is tantamount to denying the deity of Jesus.

It is always difficult to know just where an idea came from, but it may have been from brother J. T. Smith. "Before Christ's incarnation, Paul tells us that he was in the 'form of God,' but 'counted not being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped.' Seemingly, the meaning here is that even though Christ possessed equality with the Father (the right to be worshipped by men and angels; being Omniscient, Omnipotent, and Omnipresent), His attitude was one of being willing to lay aside all this and take upon himself the form of a servant and be made in the likeness of a man." (Searching the Scriptures, Volume 18, Number 3, March 1977).

Perhaps, brother Smith will explain how Jesus could be divine and yet lay aside his right to be worshipped and his omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. I am sure that I will agree with him. I don't really believe that brother Smith was trying to deny the deity of Jesus by saying that Jesus laid aside these divine privileges and powers.

I was confused by brother Bill Robinson's recent statement in *Gospel Truths* (Volume I Number 11, Page 9). He said, "There is nothing inherent within the Philippian

passage which suggests Christ gave up anything with regard to his deity when he came to this earth." If I did not know better, I would assume that was in direct contradiction to brother Smith's statement in 1977. Brother Smith, have you changed your understanding of Philippians two? If not, perhaps you could explain to brother Robinson his error.

Let me state again that I am sorry for any difficulty caused by any misstatement on my part. I certainly do believe that Jesus was deity before, during, and after his period on earth. I said that in the article these brethren are reviewing and frankly, I do not know what else to say.

I will be happy to provide a full copy of considerable material on this subject as well as the full text of my explanation (it takes up more space than this magazine will permit me to run). Merely tear off the address label from brother Smith's publication and I will mail this material to you at no cost to you. Send it to **Faith and Facts**, P.O. Box 681275, Indianapolis, Indiana 46268. Thank you for your consideration.

Editor's Response:

First of all, let me assure brother Welch that I had no intentions of trying to embarrass him when I printed brother Rogol's article. His statements in the above article "...I have corrected as mis-statements several of the quotations..." "...I state unequivocally, here and now, that I do believe in the deity of Jesus before, during, and after his period of time on earth" and "I have admitted error and stated a clear-cut belief in the deity of Jesus" were completely unknown to me at the time of the printing of brother Rogol's article. In fact, the only mis-statements that I know of John correcting are in the 2nd paragraph following. But is he admitting error in judgment or is he admitting doctrinal error? Again let me say, the following points are not raised in order to embarrass John. They are raised out of concern for truth.

Also as you will observe in brother Welch's article, he quotes from one of my articles printed in **Searching The Scriptures** in 1977 (read the statement again in brother Welch's article). If anyone thought that what I said about Jesus having "laid aside" these things so He could take upon Him the form of a servant meant that He gave up His Godhood they have not mentioned it, and it has now been 13 years since the article was printed. I have always believed that in nature Jesus was 100% God and 100% man - that He was deity incarnate in the flesh. I said "He laid aside the right to be worshipped by men and angels..." privileges He possessed and demanded when He was equal with the Father. However, the Hebrew writer said "He was made a little lower than the angels..." (Hebrews 2:9). There is no doubt that some did worship Him while He was on earth and He did not rebuke them as Peter did

in Acts 10. Jesus could not deny who He was. Thus I was in no way intending to imply that Christ laid aside His Godhood; only some of the privileges and prerogatives associated with His Godhood. If in that context of my 1977 article I had said that *Jesus was just a man, only a man, a ordinary guy like you and me*, then I am certain that a number of brethren would have accused me of teaching error just like they did John.

John said in a speech at Beaver Dam, Kentucky that what he wrote in **Faith and Facts** in 1987 entitled "The Abdication of Jesus," when lifted out of context "does look bad." Let's look at the statement *in context*. That entire paragraph reads as follows: "The American Standard Version replaces 'humbled himself in this text with 'emptied himself (Speaking of Philippians 2:6-8 - JTS). Jesus, prior to his birth could adequately be described as equal with God. He divested himself of the glory, honor, divinity, godhood and became subject to the Father as a man. Whatever qualities and privileges and powers there might have been were stripped from him. He was a man." Let us observe, however, (as mentioned above) that John did say that in the future he will change "divinity" and "Godhood" to "privileges of divinity" and "rights of Godhood." But in doing that, what has he changed? You will note in the above mentioned statement that brother Welch says that whatever "privileges" and "powers" (or rights) there might have been "were stripped from him." Thus in changing "divinity" to "privileges of divinity" and "Godhood" to "rights of Godhood," again I ask, in reality what has been changed? Is he not still saying that He divested Himself of the glory, honor, divinity and Godhood - that He became subject to the Father as a man, a mere man?

In looking over several pages of statements that have been made on this subject by brother Welch, it is my studied judgment that he is equivocating on the word "deity." In fact it appears to me that John is saying that the eternal nature of His Spirit was all that Christ retained when He was incarnate in the flesh. If this is incorrect, I am sure that brother Welch will correct me.

Christ became flesh at His birth; as a baby, He was God in human flesh. He did not cease to be God; He was no less God than before; but now He had His beginning as man. He was not now God minus some elements of His deity, but God plus all that He had made His own by taking manhood to Himself. He who made man had now become man.

This person, Jesus Christ, as both God and man, defies full comprehension. It is impossible to fully analyze Him and know all one might like to know. And when one finishes the most intense scrutiny of His life, there are untold questions left unanswered. To the question posed above, there is no way one can provide a suitable and

sufficient answer to everyone. The knowledge and power of Jesus as a baby, a boy, or a man is baffling primarily because of the inability of finite minds to comprehend infinity.

The Real Reason

As John pointed out in the introduction to the lesson he presented in Louisville, Kentucky at the Shively congregation, the real reason for taking this position is not so much a concern for the humanity of Christ as it is in trying to prove the hobby of the **Faith and Facts** writers regarding whether or not man has to sin. In order to show that man can live without sin in this life, John makes Christ just a man, only a man, an ordinary guy like you and me to try prove that man can live without sinning. Nice try John, but it didn't work. Instead, look what kind of a mess you have yourself in with brethren believing you are teaching heresy.

As most of our readers know I have said very little about brother Welch's hobby. Some have asked why? Because I think it is nonsensical. As I pointed out in a previous article, in more than 6,000 years there has never been one responsible person (except Jesus) who has lived without sin. If the **Faith and Facts** crowd (which is fast becoming a sect) could prove that a man could live a lifetime without sin as Jesus did, look what they would prove. They would prove:

1. He would have no need for Christ, for he would not be lost and Christ came to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).

2. He would have no need to repent for he would have no sin for which he could repent. Yet Paul said God commands *all men* everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

3. If he neither sinned by omission or commission he would never need the grace of God but would merit salvation. His salvation would not be of grace but of debt (Romans 4:4).

4. As far as that person is concerned, Christ's blood was shed in vain. Christ said his blood was shed for the remission of sins (Matthew 26:28) and yet he would not, yea could not, benefit from Christ's shed blood for he has no sin for which he needs remission.

5. In this same connection (# 4) the only need he would have for baptism would be to fulfill all righteousness. Brother Welch said in one of his speeches that Christ living a perfect life was proof that He was The Son of God. I suppose then that if another lived a perfect life it would also prove that He too was The Son of God - making two Sons. Nonsensical to the "inth" degree.

Instead of this nonsense, what we need to be doing is pointing out the reality of sin - showing people from the Scriptures that by the grace of God even when they do sin God has provided a plan whereby they can be saved. However unless they repent of their sins and are obedient

to the commands of God they are going to hell. Even if John was right about the man not having to sin, what a terrible thing to do to say of Christ "Whatever qualities and privileges and powers there might have been were stripped from him" to try to prove his point.

Brethren, don't you think it is time you gave up this vain and repetitious wrangling over such nonsense? Look where it has led you - to actually deny the Godhood of Jesus while He was here on earth. It is my prayer that you will do so.

Correction

In brother Leo Rogol's article, "**The Abdication of Jesus: A Reply**," **Gospel Truths**, November 1990, a phrase was inadvertently left out that significantly changed the meaning of a sentence. Brother Rogol was made to say, "None but the high priest could enter heaven itself..." whereas he actually said "None but the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies in the **tabernacle**. Christ our high priest entered the Holy of Holies, **heaven** itself." Apologies to brother Rogol.

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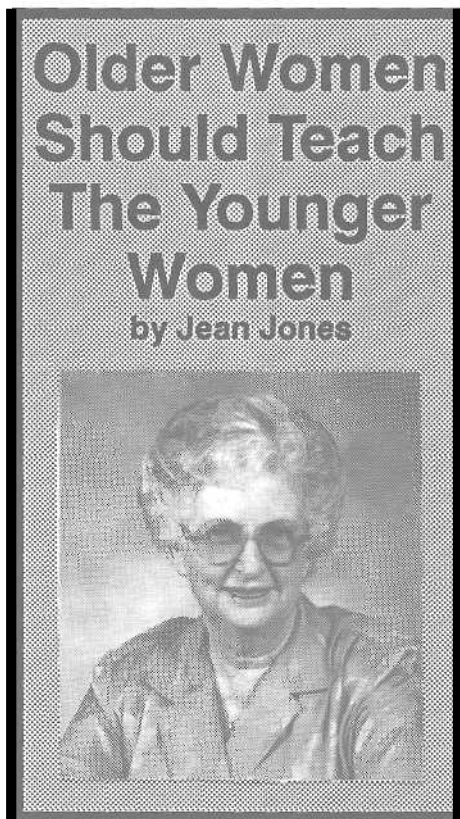


OLDER Women Should Teach Younger Women To Be Chaste.

In Titus 2:5 older women are commanded to teach the younger women to be "chaste." "{To be} discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed." By this we mean "pure, virtuous, decent, modest" (World Book Dictionary), "pure from carnality, modest" (Vines). Certainly this is not something that is exclusive for women because Paul instructed the young preacher Timothy, "keep thyself pure." (I Timothy 5:22) I don't know of a period in my life time that chastity needs to be taught any more than now. We are bombarded from every side to practice immorality. Sometimes we feel that just the young are enticed to such sins, but it affects us all. Let us look at some of the things included in being "chaste."

1. MODESTY. Listen to Paul's instructions in (I Timothy 2:9). "In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array;

But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works." Someone has said, "dress like a clown and you feel like a clown." Our dress should be that which is tasteful. There is no virtue in negligence of our clothes, but they should not be as though the world were a paradise because in reality the world is full of human want. Clothes and jewelry are not to be used in the way of gratifying personal vanity or in the way of ostentation by drawing attention to the wearer. Neither should we vie with one another in the use of them. So, let us set our hearts on that which is far



more valuable, a "meek and quiet spirit."

2. SEXUAL PURITY. The Old Testament law was very explicit, "Thou shall not commit adultery." (Exodus 20:14) In Ephesians 5:3 Paul warns the Christian, "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;" When he names the "works of the flesh" he begins with, "adultery, fornication, uncleanness." (Galatians 5:19-21) In (Hebrews 13:4) we read, "Marriage {is} honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge." Ultimately these works of the flesh will bring God's judgment on those who practice them. In my study of the Scriptures I am convinced that "sexual impurity" includes lesbianism, homosexuality, incest, adultery and fornication.

Lesbianism is described in (Romans 1:26), "even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature."

Homosexuality is condemned in (Romans 1:27), "and likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves the recompense of their error which was suitable."

Incest was forbidden in (Leviticus 18:6-17). This is so prevalent in our society today. How a mother or father can commit this sin against their child is more than I can comprehend. I suppose it could be the result of one of the sins recorded in (Romans 1:31), "without natural affection."

Adultery is the unlawful intercourse with the spouse of another. (Leviticus 20:10.

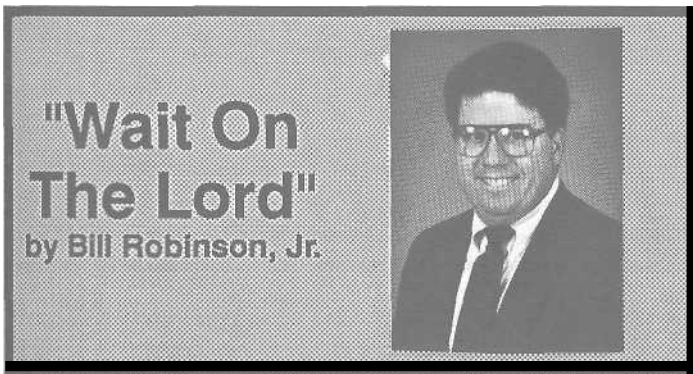
Fornication is illicit sexual intercourse. Sometimes the word is used in a general sense to include adultery but in many places, as in (Galatians 5:19-21) it is distinguished from it. They are both equally condemned in God's Word.

What Can We Do About It?

What are we going to do about this matter of being chaste? Are we going to let the world dictate to us what we will do about modesty or sexual purity? God who made man and woman knows better what will bring ultimate happiness than does any psychologist or psychiatrist. I am afraid a majority are marching to the wrong drummer. Here are some things we can do.

1. Hide the Word of God in your heart (Psalms 119:11) "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee." Learn where the pitfalls in life are and use the Word of God to avoid them.

Continued Bottom Next Page



A few we have known (and thankful that the numbers are few), believe that prayer is only a mere spiritual exercise and that God does not really answer prayer. We are neither inclined nor disposed to deal with their mistaken concept in this article. Rather, it is our desire to encourage folks to be patient in prayer waiting on the Lord.

I remember as a young boy hearing men close their prayer in public worship by saying "as we further wait before Thee." Perhaps our instant microwave generation has made us less sensitive to this much needed discipline of waiting on the Lord. I confess readily that I do not know *how* Divine providence works but with the same breath, I count myself blessed for believing it does.

In the Old Testament "wait on the Lord" is a favorite expression of many of the writers, especially in the Psalms. We are assured that those who wait on the Lord are not put to shame (Psalms 25:3; Isaiah 49:23). Also, those who wait on the Lord must be strong and courageous, possessing a heart of integrity and uprightness (Psalms 27:14; 25:21).

We find the encouragements to wait on the only true God are given during periods of great national turmoil as well as in times of deep personal crisis (Jeremiah 14:14; Psalms 37:7,9,34). We are reminded that God will deliver those who wait on Him and that we should not take matters in our own hands in dealing with evil (Proverbs 2:22).

Those who wait on Jehovah learn to hope in His Word because He is the God of great expectations (Psalms 130:5; 62:5). Our confidence in waiting on Jehovah is confirmed because He is the provider of His entire animate world who waits on Him (Psalms 104 especially verse 27; see also Psalms 145:15). It is only by waiting on Jehovah that we see His real beneficence toward His people, "For from of old men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen a God besides thee, *who worketh for Him and waiteth for Him:* (Isaiah 64:4).

We often place Amos' and Micah's powerful appeal to get the people to repent of their sins side by side because they are so powerfully and poetically expressed. "But let justice roll down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream" (Amos 5:24). "He had showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Micah 6:8). However, we have a similar poetic and powerful appeal from Hosea with an obvious addition, "Therefore turn thou to thy God: keep kindness and justice, and *wait for thy God continually*" (Hosea 12:6). Hosea's point is that they would neither be able to keep kindness and justice nor wait on God without first turning to God with a penitent attitude toward sin and an absolute trust in Him. The same is true today. We cannot learn the value of this needed discipline of waiting on the Lord without turning to God in that spirit of poverty and mourning (see Matthew 5:3-4) expressing our total dependence on Him by submitting to His Will. Only with God at the center of who we are is it possible to wait for Him.

Any who has tried to live as a Christian has at times been brought low by the unjust and unkind treatment suffered at the hands of others and/or by the seeming unreasonable force of temptation to retaliate or succumb to some weakness. There is neither solace in such circumstances nor is there any creaturely help that can adequately supply the strength to overcome apart from

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2. Yield not to temptation. "But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed." (James 1:14) What we must remember is that we can win the victory. "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God {is} faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to es-

cape, that ye may be able to bear {it}." (I Corinthians 10:13) Remember, even though we have sinned, God's glorious plan can take off the filthy rags of unchastity. As Christians when we make such mistakes let us quickly confess it, repent and pray God for forgiveness. (I John 1:9) If you are not a Christian you must hear the Word of God (Romans 10:17), you must believe it

(Mark 11:15-16), you must repent (Acts 17:30), you must confess Christ as God's Son (Acts 8:35-38), and you must be baptized "for the remission of sin" (Acts 2:38). All these terrible sins mentioned in this article can be forgiven and you can be washed, sanctified and justified "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God" (I Corinthians 6:9-11).
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God. It is at this point that "waiting on God" is most difficult but we must hold on to our faith and not allow our heart to "kick the traces," saying with David, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And Why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God; For I shall yet praise Him, Who is the help of my countenance, and my God" (Psalms 42:11).

Though God may defer and delay His answer in our circumstances and like David we may even cry out, "How long, O Jehovah? wilt thou forget me for ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? How long shall I take counsel in my soul, Having sorrow in my heart all the day? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?" (Psalms 13:1-2). We should not take that as a sign of waning faith or that God disapproves of such pleading. To the contrary, Jesus teaches that God would have us "cry unto him day and night" (Luke 18:7). We will eventually learn through our persistence and steadfastness as did David who declared, "I waited patiently for Jehovah; And He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay; And set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God..." (Psalms 40:1-3).

Waiting on God is not a one, two, three step process. It is cultivated and nourished with each passing day as we are tested in the crucibles of life. Like the book of Job, which deals with the question of how to deal with suffering, the answer is found not in a word, or a single verse, or even a particular act or event in Job's life. Rather, the answer is found against the background of Job's entire life from beginning to end. It is cultivated by each disappointment and harsh reality of life that he meets by faith until he is finally blessed by God in the end for his integrity and courage in waiting on God. Our blessing may not come until the morning of our departure from this world but nonetheless God will be there to greet us and then all will have been worth the wait.

We are urged to wait on God because He has waited on us. Shall we grow weary and give up on God because He does not rush us an answer as soon as we call on Him? How long did God wait for us to obey the gospel? Shall we then be impatient with Him if He does not respond immediately to our calls? Let us keep in mind the Lord's promise, "...they that wait for Jehovah shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; they shall walk, and not faint" (Isaiah 40:31). Who better to remind us of the value of waiting on the Lord than the exiled prisoner and prophet Jeremiah? "Jehovah is good unto them that wait for Him, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should hope and quietly wait for the salvation of Jehovah" (Lamentations 3:25-26).

Entertain Me

by Bill Feist



OME time back I read an article from a "successful" writer of a popular television sitcom. As he expressed his views of successful writing, he used the illustration that in writing for television it is necessary to plan minute by minute. The idea that to originate a twenty minute plot for a show was not enough. To keep the audience watching it was necessary to plan minute by minute the action and dialogue. One of the points that he was making centered on the effect this has on the "average" viewer. We become so accustomed to being entertained in this careful manner that we are "bored" when life or other mediums of entertainment fail to measure up.

It appears to me that one of the areas where this type of mentality is declaring itself more and more is in our worship assemblies. We gather together to worship God and we say, "Here I am preacher, motivate me; entertain me!" How sad it is that some leave the assemblies of the saints declaring that they "got nothing out of the service." Part of this thinking may be due to our perception of worship as a "spectator" activity. These attend in much the same way as they attend a sporting event. They do not believe that they are personally involved. They have come to receive something. If the song service, the Bible study, or the sermon happens to be a little "dull" or if the teacher happens to be a little less than interesting in his delivery; these are easily bored and leave with the "I got nothing out of the worship" attitude. On the other hand, the popular approach to the successful television series, of planning minute by minute the action and dialogue, may have hampered our ability to concentrate on matters a little less familiar to us than they ought to be, like Bible truth. How sad that those with the "I got nothing out of the worship service" viewpoint have forgotten that worship is an external act motivated by an internal reverence. When we gather for worship it is not what we receive, but what we give to God that matters.

There is nothing wrong with entertainment in its own right. We all need to be motivated. The Word of God will provide all the motivation we need, if we will allow it. We need to remember, a message may have much appeal to an audience and a speaker; it may be very entertaining and emotional; it may produce some desired response and still not be the gospel of Jesus Christ. The "entertain me" attitude generally involves the following philoso-

phies: (1) The "proof text" is reviled and Scripture is not cited; (2) We cease to desire or expect Scripture to be cited and the Bible is looked upon as either not asking the right questions or answering question that no one today is asking; (3) It causes us to rely more and more upon the material emotional, or even the sensational than upon book, chapter, and verse; and (4) Truth becomes attached to something other than the Lord. How different this attitude is from the one described in I Corinthians 2:1-5), "And I brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God... And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the spirit and of power: that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." Let us never forget that the Lord's church will never be any stronger than the member's knowledge of the Word of God. This is one of the reasons that God has always placed a high premium on preaching. The greatest enemy Satan has is the powerful, provocative and pungent teaching of the Scriptures.

One of the most distinctive aspects of the teaching done in churches of Christ has been our Bible-centeredness. The determination to "speak where the Bible speaks and be silent where it is silent" is biblical (I Peter 4:11). Teaching that is pleasing to God must be elevated to "is it true to the Book of God?" rather than weighing it on the scales of contemporary thought or entertainment value. The desire to lead those in error to the text of the Word of God has caused Christians to be known as a people of the Book. Since God's desire for man is that he long for and pursue the Will of the Lord, we fail God when we appeal to anything other than a "thus saith the Lord."

While some may turn a deaf ear to the faithful proclamation of the gospel, we must remember what gospel preaching will do: (1) The gospel preached, believed and obeyed will put one into Christ where he is saved from sin (Galatians 3:26-27; Acts 2:38); (2) The gospel will expose error (Acts 20:29-30) and (3) Such teaching fulfills the Will of God for gospel teachers (II Timothy 4:1-2). Gospel teaching is still the answer to the needs of our world. The wisdom of men and the wisdom of God are locked in mortal combat, not only in the religious world, but even in the church of the Lord. The world by its wisdom knows not God. Man, devoid of the wisdom of God, neither knows his true standing before God nor what to do about it, if he ever learns. Thanks be to God, who in His wisdom, provided the answer for man in the gospel. Is not all of this simply an encapsulation of Paul's statement in I Corinthians 1:21: "For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe?"

Brethren, if we do not demand that the gospel be taught; what will the church be like in just a few short years? The crying need of our day is for men who know the Scriptures, who cite the Scriptures and who want the Scriptures taught.

The Bible clearly teaches that the Word of God must be the true basis of all exhortations (see Acts 20:32; II Timothy 2:1; Ephesians 6:10). To be built up we must have the proper foundation. God's word provides this foundation. Such a foundation originates from the source of all strength God supplies. Teaching that is heard, understood and applied will build us up, but this is only true as we allow this Bible instruction to dwell in us abundantly. This is why Christians must insist upon Bible preaching as well as be supportive of those teachers who are committed to such.

I am afraid that our "successful writer" of television sitcoms has hit upon one of the major problems of our world, even infiltrating the church. Such planning by television writers has crippled our ability to think. Such shows entertain us and may, at times, evoke an emotional response in us, but they do not necessarily communicate to us anything of substance. When our preaching begins to accommodate a society bred by television, it is bound to fail before God. God insists that we "preach the Word" (II Timothy 4:2); "speak thou the things which become sound doctrine:" (Titus 2:1) or "These things speak, exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Titus 2:15).

Christians must demand Bible preaching if the dilemma of some modern preaching is to be changed. Preacher, your greatest challenge may be how you can reach people who may be unwilling or even unable to listen carefully to well-prepared expositions of God's Word without stooping to superficiality. May God grant us the courage and the wisdom to teach His Will to a generation that may not even know how to listen.

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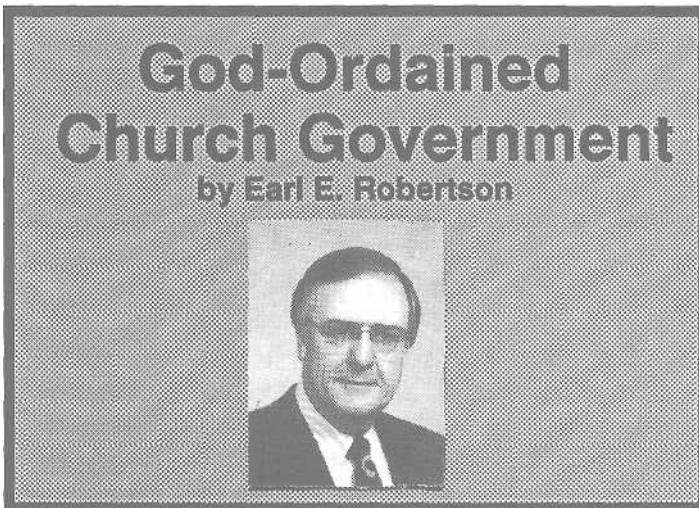
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DO congregations of the Lord's people have government? If no, then there is no regulation, and chaos and anarchy are the order. If yes, what form is it, and from what source does it come? Churches of Christ are just that: "of Christ (Romans 16:16). They are of Christ by redemption; they are blood bought; the blood of Christ purchased the church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 5:25,26; I Peter 1:18,19). Some in Corinth claimed they were "of Christ" (I Corinthians 1:12). The use of the genitive *kristou* adds emphasis to the ownership of this relationship. Christians belong to Christ because He was crucified for all (I Corinthians 1:13; Hebrews 2:9), and, these now in Christ had been baptized into the name of Christ. This action on the part of Christ and each individual makes one a Christian, produces salvation for the sinner, makes that one belong to Christ. Christians, in a given locality, assembling to worship God as in Corinth (I Corinthians 11:20), constitute a local church (I Corinthians 1:2). This is the body of Christ in that place. It has a multiple number of members, but it is one body (I Corinthians 12:20). It is an organism and has many functions; it's every action must be under the authority of its head (Ephesians 1:22-23). The head received all authority in heaven and earth, and no Bible believer disputes it (Matthew 28:18; I Peter 3:22).

Without reasonable question we must conclude that the New Testament, being the revealed will of Jesus Christ, dedicated with His blood, shows that local churches did have elders to "tend the flock of God" and "take the oversight" of it (I Peter 5:2). God's divinely appointed organization, on a congregational basis, gives regulation; anarchy and confusion obtains in the absence of divine order. God knew what churches would need as pertaining to government, and gave them elders (Acts 14:23). There is no *real* substitute for God's way, and yet churches all over the country are self-satisfied in existing year after year without any real effort to develop organi-

zationally after the due order. God's will in this matter is not taken seriously by a number of congregations. Why do Bible believers pursue such a course?

Elders Are Holy Spirit Made

Paul said to the elders of the church in Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28). Elders are Holy Spirit made as are Christians. The Holy Spirit revealed the qualifications for elders, and He also revealed the conditions on which the justification of man takes place. The qualification for elders is given in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1. Each man who becomes an elder must possess these qualifications. They suit one to do *what God wants!* Brethren, this is a lesson we must learn and respect. To demand more or accept less is perversion and unbelief. Elders are not miraculously made, but become such by voluntarily accepting the divinely stated conditions. Christians do not become such by miracles, but by "obeying the doctrine" preached by the apostles (Romans 6:17,18; I Peter 1:22-23).

God Wants Elders In Every Church

What one congregation needs in government so do all others. The right for self-rule (autonomy) of each church is a basic blessing God has given. Luke's account in tracing the evangelistic activities of the apostles shows that they ordained elders in every church (Acts 14:23). Each congregation, following the words of Christ, are alike. They are alike in identifying characteristics; they are alike in mission (they have the same work to do); they worship in offering the same sacrifices. All must walk by the same rule (Galatians 6:16). Elders in one church could not and cannot oversee any thing of another congregation. Rights and responsibilities of elders pertain only to the flock which they are among (I Peter 5:1,2). The New Testament offers no guidance or duties to diocesan bishops. Independency and equality of churches of Christ argues for the identical government in each.

God wants elders to "take heed to the flock" (Acts 20:28). They are to hold their mind on the flock. What care and concern for God's sheep! Without such conviction, one should not think of becoming a shepherd to His sheep. The action elders engage is seen in the verbals "feed" and "shepherd" the sheep. Elders *oversee* the flock. They are called overseers *episkopous* (Acts 20:28), and are observed under apostolic doctrine "exercising oversight" *episkopountes* thereof (I Peter 5:2). This demands that some are being overseen; they voluntarily submit to the exercise of this oversight. God's Word teaches that elders "take care of the church" (I Timothy 3:5). When elders show their mind is on the church they will take care

of it. The church needs to understand this is their responsibility, and work accordingly. Elders lead or rule churches, and the flock submits (Hebrews 13:17; I Timothy 5:17). A comparative illustration is seen in the case of Paul speaking against the high priest. When learning his identity he apologized, saying, "I knew not brethren, *that he was* the high priest: for it is written, Thou shalt not speak evil of the ruler of thy people" (Acts 12:1-5); Exodus 22:28). Also, elders *watch* for souls, and must give an account to God for this stewardship (Hebrews 13:17). They must be a good example (I Peter 5:3); they are to admonish us (I Thessalonians 5:12) and support the weak (Acts 20:35); and, they are to stop the mouths of vain talkers and deceivers in protecting the sheep of His flock (Titus 1:9-11). In all of this work, elders should exercise utmost care that they do not become "lords over God's heritage" (I Peter 5:3).

The Church Must Honor Godly Elders

Too often elders are held without esteem in the church. Some weak and disgruntled, or unthoughtful member will mouth something against good elders. This ought not to be. Paul wrote Timothy saying, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in word and doctrine" (I Timothy 5:17). "Let" is not permissive, it is imperative. Cf. Matthew 5:16; Ephesians 4:28. We can show such honor by accepting spiritual food (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2), by obeying and submitting (Hebrews 13:17; I Timothy 3:5). We can so honor them as Paul instructed, "and we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake, and be at peace among yourselves" (I Thessalonians 5:12,13). Members getting along among themselves, treating each other as they would want to be treated, goes a long way in doing what this passage says. Furthermore, we are to receive no accusation against them, but before two or three witnesses (I Timothy 5:19). Respecting this Bible doctrine will eliminate the gossiping and vain telephoning often characteristic of evil members of the body. The young and old sustain obligations in this matter, and they are not to be taken lightly! Rebellion against God's order is dangerous and sinful, and the career of such an one ends in hell. Cf. I Samuel 15. God's order of government must be respected. Churches should take great delight in, and be thankful for elders that rule well. Christians should pray for their elders, and yield to their leadership. Anything less than this is rebellion and disobedience to God. Cf. I Samuel 8:5; 12:1,12-19. The issue is far more serious than many think. Elders rule is God's order in a congregation; majority rule and democratic votes are the ways of man. Which will you choose?

514 South Green Street, Glasgow, KY 42141 **GT**

Hand Clapping In Worship

by Grover Stevens



Have been asked by several if hand-clapping in our worship services is right. I understand that some churches of Christ in Lubbock engage in this practice. Hand-clapping in our worship services is justified and defended as "authorized" or "scriptural" on the same grounds as "song books, church buildings, paid preachers, kitchens in church buildings, rest rooms, water fountains, etc.;" and also directly by the Scriptures. Psalms 47:1 and II Kings 11:12 are specifically given as "authority" for it.

I note first of all that these Scriptures are from the Old Testament or "old covenant" which has been "fulfilled," "done away" and "taken out of the way and nailed to the cross" (Matthew 5:17; Romans 7:4; Galatians 2:18-19; II Corinthians 3:6-14; Colossians 2:14-17). Under the "old covenant" they had animal sacrifice, mechanical instruments of music, incense, plural wives, etc. Are these also "authorized"? It makes one wonder how much the preachers and elders of these churches know about the Bible and the true and living God whom we worship. The Lord Jesus explained to the Samaritan woman, "...You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship...But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." (John 4:22-24).

Also, I would say that *if* we have Scripture (*specific* authority) for hand-clapping in our worship *then* there is no need for *general* authority such as for church buildings, song books, etc., but we will look at both.

Psalms 47:1 reads, "O *Clap your hands*, all ye people; *shout* unto God with the voice of triumph...with the *sound of a trumpet*" (Psalms 47:1,5). *If* this passage of Scripture authorizes "hand-clapping" in our worship services, then it also authorizes "*shouting*," and "*sounding of trumpets*." Why would these not "also be a way for the worshipper to

participate in the service," as is contended for the hand-clapping? Will the preachers and elders and members of these churches accept that? And if not, why not? That which proves too much, proves nothing! As the Apostle Paul says concerning the law in Galatians 5:3, If the "law" (Old Testament) is authority for one thing then we become "debtors to do the whole law."

Furthermore, *if* this Scripture teaches hand-clapping in worship, *then* it is not a matter of choice, we should all do as it says, "Clap your hands," "shout unto God," and "sound a trumpet." When the Scriptures tell us, "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:19), we understand that all Christians are instructed to do what this says when we assemble for worship. Why is this not also true of Psalm 47:1??

II Kings 11:12 reads, "And he brought forth the king's son, and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony; and they made him king, and anointed him; *and they clapped their hands*, and said, God save the king." This too is in the Old Testament and all that has been said about that applies here also. Furthermore, *if* this passage of Scripture authorizes "hand-clapping" in our worship services, *then* it also authorizes inauguration services for rulers and the other fan-fare that goes along with such political affairs in our worship service. It is my understanding of the nature and meaning of hand-clapping that *this* (inaugurations and other such social, secular, recreational and political affairs) is the type of gatherings where such is proper, *but not* in the *worship of God*.

What about scriptural authority for "church buildings, paid preachers, song books, etc.?" In order for a thing to be authorized by "general authority" it *must* be *inherent* in the command and therefore *subordinate* to something that is commanded or authorized. Thus, a church building is authorized under the command to assemble (I Corinthians 11:18,20; Hebrews 10:25). The command to assemble of necessity includes *a meeting place* for that "coming together" (I Corinthians 11:18). That place may be a place that is rented or owned or donated for that purpose. So the "church building" (meeting place) is authorized under the command to assemble; as is also the rest rooms, drinking fountain, lights, seats, etc. Song books are authorized under the command to sing. There is *no* authority either specific or generic for "*kitchens in church buildings*!" The church is commanded to: (1) Preach the gospel, (2) teach them to observe..., (3) to "make distribution to those among them that are in need (Acts 4:34-35; Acts 6:1-6), and (4) assemble for worship or teaching. *Kitchens* and *banquet halls in church buildings* are *not* inherent in, nor subordinate to, *any* of these commands! And are contrary to the plain teaching of the Scriptures, "What! Do you not have houses to eat and

drink in? Or do you despise the church of God... and if any man is hungry, let him eat at home, that you come not together unto condemnation" (I Corinthians 11:22,34). Paid preachers are authorized in I Corinthians 9:14 (see verses 3-14); I Timothy 5:18; I Corinthians 11:8, etc.

Those who object to hand clapping in worship to God are accused of "*making laws* where the Bible does not make laws." It was the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Here a thing so simple and unobtrusive as "washing hands" in a religious act which the "elders" of the Jews had authorized but *God had not*, is the object of *Christ's* condemnation. Read Matthew 15:1-14 and Mark 7:2-9). Is *this law* of God or of man?! Was Christ being a "legalist"? In His great Sermon on the Mount, our Lord and Savior said, "Not everyone that says unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day (judgment day), Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied *in Thy name?* and *in Thy name* have cast out devils? and *in Thy name* done *many wonderful works?* And then will I declare unto them, *I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity*"; in other words, "Your works were *iniquity*" that is, lawlessness, without law, or without commandment. Notice that they did these works "in Thy name," but Jesus said they were "iniquity" — without command, without authority. Again I say, it was the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that made this law. See also: II John 9-11; Colossians 2:18-23, notice particularly verses 20-22; I Corinthians 6:17. Also, when the Lord says we are *not* to *add to* or *take from* the *Word of God*, this includes the idea that we are *not* to *teach* or *practice* anything in religion for which we have *no* authority from the Word of God. That is *adding to* the Word of God, the same as leaving off some teaching or practice that is *in* the Word of God is *taking from* the Word of God.

Folks are warned to, "not become *legalistic*" about these things. Since this word (legalist, legalistic) cannot be found anywhere in the Bible, I do not know just what is meant by it. It has always been my understanding that when a person or thing is "*legal*" that he is "observing, obeying, keeping, living within the law, and that when a person or thing is *not legal*, he is *illegal*, and is *disobeying* the law and is therefore a criminal. Christ is our King and our "*Lawgiver*" (Romans 8:2), and it is my understanding that all who would be His disciples should *obey Him* (Hebrews 5:9; Romans 16:25-26). Our Lord Jesus Christ said, "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?" Is *this* being a legalist? Are those who *oppose* being a "legalist" encouraging people to disregard God's commands on the grounds that if they insist on keeping God's commands they would then be "legal-

ists"? Are they telling us that to keep from being a "legalist" we should do whatever is right in our own eyes?? The Scriptures tell us that *"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven" He will "take vengeance on them that obey not the gospel (law) of our Lord Jesus Christ"* If obeying the *Word of Christ* is being a *legalist*, then I pray that God will help me to a legalist! If that is not the meaning of being a legalist, will someone please teach me what the Bible says about this!!

Also in justification of hand-clapping it is asserted, "No one asks questions about "where do you get the authority to *sleep in church*?" Does anyone think that this "is also a way for the worshipper to participate in the service"? Is this also justified on the same authority as church buildings, paid preachers, rest rooms, and drinking fountains?? No, dear friends, neither the *hand-clapping in church*, nor the *sleeping in church* can be done with any scriptural authority; both are done *without God's approval*.

I read in the New Testament that when a brother leads us in prayer that it is appropriate to say "amen" (I Corinthians 14:16), but I have never read where anyone did or was encouraged to clap their hands. I do not read where the brethren clapped their hands when the 3000 were baptized on the day of Pentecost, or when Paul, the great persecutor of the church, was baptized, or anybody else. The Scriptures teach us to express our joy, cheer, gladness, praise, in "speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:18-19; Colossians 3:16-17; James 5:13), hence we are to *express our emotions in teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts* to the Lord, *not* in hand-clapping, shouting or sounding trumpets. Rather, the Word of God teaches us that "when the whole church be come together into one place" that "All things should be done unto edifying," and that "all things should be done decently and orderly" (I Corinthians 14:23,26,40), and there is no indication that Paul thought that such solemnity and holiness was any indication of "rigormortis"!

It is our heart's desire and prayer to God, and we urge every faithful Christian to join us in praying, for these brethren that they will study these things in the light of God's Holy Scriptures with an open mind and a view to the judgment day in which we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ and be judged in righteousness by those things that are written in the Sacred Scriptures.

P. O. Box 2915, Lubbock, TX 79408 **GT**

Study Your Bible Daily!

An Ancient Lesson For Modern Use

by Olen Holderby



THE historian, Eusebius, lived in the latter part of the third and early part of the fourth century. When the Nicaean Council met in 325 A.D., Eusebius was said to have had an active part in its proceedings. In his history Eusebius quotes from the writings of Dionysius concerning those who were followers of Nepos. I first give the quotation, after which a few points shall be noticed.

"But they produce a certain work of Nepos, upon which they lay great stress, as if he advanced things that are irrefutable, when he asserts that there will be an earthly reign of Christ. In many other respects I accord with and greatly love Nepos, both on account of his faith and industry and his great study in the Scriptures; as also for his great attention to psalmody, by which many are still delighted. I greatly reverence the man also, for the manner in which he had departed this life. But the truth is to be loved and honored before all. It is just, indeed, that we should applaud and approve whatever is said aright, but it is also a duty to examine and correct whatever may not appear to be written with sufficient soundness..."

Of a later discussion, Dionysius wrote: "Nor did we attempt to evade objections, but endeavored as far as possible to keep to our subject, and to confirm these (earlier conviction, OH). Nor ashamed if reason prevailed, to change opinions, and to acknowledge the truth; but rather received with a good conscience and sincerity, and with single hearts, before God, whatever was established by the proofs and doctrines of the Holy Scriptures. At length Coracio, who was the founder and leader of this doctrine, in the hearing of all the brethren present, confessed and avowed to us, that he would no longer adhere to it, nor discuss it, that he would neither mention nor

teach it, as he had been fully convinced by the opposite arguments. The other brethren present rejoiced also at this conference, and at the conciliatory spirit and unanimity exhibited by all."

The above quotations are very revealing, revealing of human conduct in search of truth, revealing of attitudes of disputants in a discussion, and revealing of what an honest investigation can do. Let us take a closer look at some of the interesting points of these quotations.

1. The "earthly reign of Christ" has been troubling the church longer than some may think and, it should be noted that when it did appear, it was not treated as an innocent opinion. It was treated as deadly error, some thing that should be exposed. This is exactly the way that all error should be treated. When Paul stated God's intended purity of the church (Ephesians 5:25-27), he left no room for error; and he who permits it has betrayed a sacred trust. As Dionysius put it, "It is also a duty to examine and correct whatever may not appear to be written with sufficient soundness."

2. Dionysius apparently loved and respected Nepos very much. In addition to his ability in the Scriptures, Nepos had other talents -- he delighted many with his psalmody. He was a talented man, one whose ability could have been worth much to the church. His popularity or influence did not change the fact that "truth is to be loved and honored before all." He would applaud all that Nepos said that was right; but, with the same vigor he would oppose the error which Nepos taught.

3. He sought out the followers of this error and engaged them in discussion. He demonstrated a love for their souls and for truth. He felt this to be his solemn duty.

4. In their discussions no one tried to evade objections (arguments, OH). They apparently did not believe in one-sided discussions, but allowed all to be heard. They did not backbite, falsely accuse, or hide their convictions. All appeared willing for what they believed to be put to the acid test of public discussion. The ones participating were not ashamed to say, "I am wrong;" rather, they confessed it before all. They had not merely made a mistake in judgment; they had sinned, and they acknowledged the same. There was no effort made to white-wash the man's error; and, in the end honor prevailed. It took a lot of courage and a great deal of faith in God's word to do all this. Many do not have either today; their chief way of discussing is when their opponent is absent, and they dare not face him under fair circumstances.

5. Truth triumphed. There was joy over those who had forsaken error, a soul had been saved. This will always be the case when honest investigations are had; and, there is a willingness to accept truth. However, as long as honor is laughed at, so long as men ignore the

Scriptures, so long as pride governs the heart, just that long the church shall be plagued with error and with the men who teach it.

Of course, more may be said about these quotations and the men involved; but, perhaps enough has been said. Rarely do we find the "liberals" willing to practice the honor herein suggested; this, I take, to be a well-known fact. However, I do not especially have the liberals in mind. The excuses made for and the toleration of both error and immorality in the "conservative" cause is my main concern.

It is a sad day when all that it takes for a church to be considered "sound" is for it to oppose the Herald of Truth and orphan homes financed by local churches. That church may be filled with rebellious members from other congregations, it may be sponsoring unscriptural activities or arrangements, it may be knowingly tolerating those who are living in adultery; yet, it is considered "sound" because it opposes the two errors mentioned above. This attitude prevails in many places.

Another attitude that is darkening the character of the church in many places is the attitude of "time." This attitude has it that when one sins, all he has to do is wait a while and all of it will be forgotten. When attention is called to the condition of such a person, the usual reply is, "That was a long time ago," as if time eradicated the sin.

These are not attitudes that are seldom found; but, I hear people express these attitudes nearly every place I go, and it is not limited to new converts. Those who are interested in the purity of New Testament Christianity should be aware of these trends. Further, we should vow that such shall not go unchallenged. We need unity among God's people; but that unity must be based upon the uncompromised purity of God's Word. While we fight the old errors of "liberalism," let us not forget to "police" our own ranks. There are some good lessons to be learned from history; and, if there ever was a time that we need the attitudes expressed in the quotations in this article, *it is now!*

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Romans 14

by Franklin Camp

A Word About Brother Camp's Article

by James Shear

Though Franklin Camp differs with us on the institutional issue, and we realize that fellowship cannot exist between us where there is division, it is interesting to note that he is fighting some of the same battles against liberalism that we must fight among those of us who claim to be anti liberal. The battle over Romans 14 rages on both sides of the fence.

The following article, though written for Vigil, is printed by permission of Franklin Camp. Read it and see that it deals a death blow to those who would justify any false doctrine by claiming to see no difference in "faith" as it is used in Romans 14 and "the faith" of Jude 3.

ROMANS 14 is a chapter used by many in attempts to justify things for which there is no authority. It is used as a "catch-all" chapter. I read recently where the fourth verse was used to justify divorce on the grounds of unkindness or a lack of love. But it has also been used to justify mechanical instruments in worship.

The chapter must be understood in the context of the book. Paul, guided by the Spirit, wrote Romans to show that "his gospel" (2:16; 16:25), which offered salvation to Jew and Gentile on the same basis, was in harmony with the Old Testament. This is a vital point in understanding Romans.

The system of faith enabled God to be righteous while forgiving sinners. The thought in "from faith unto faith" (1:17) is from the faith of the Old Testament into the faith of the gospel. The faith of the Old Testament pointed to the faith of the New. The faith of the Old Testament was incomplete without the New (3:25). I think it would be correct to say, "out of faith (that is the Old Testament faith), into faith, (the faith of the gospel)." The Old Testament faith could not save (Hebrews 10:1-4) apart from Christ and the gospel (Hebrews 9:15,16).

Next Paul showed that both Jew and Gentile are guilty (3:19). Since all are guilty, all stand in need of grace.

Christ is the ground or basis that enables God to extend grace and still be just (3:22-26). The grace which saves is appropriated by faith and baptism (chapters 5 and 6). After showing the law could not save (3:20), and that the problem was not with the law, but man's inability to keep the law. Paul proved in chapter 8 that this was God's plan from the beginning (8:29-30).

Chapters 9 through 11 reveal how national, or fleshly Israel, misunderstood the law. They were not saved because they did not seek righteousness by faith (9:31-33). While national Israel did not obtain the righteousness which it sought, the remnant, or election, did obtain it (11:5-7).

Chapter 12 teaches how the gospel of grace transforms attitudes so that both Jew and Gentile can live in unity and peace (12:5). Since the church is not a theocracy, it was necessary for Paul to discuss civil governments (13:1-7). The law of faith requires obedience, but it must be obedience motivated by love (13:8-10). The transformed life of chapter 12 must avoid the world of darkness and put on the armour of light, making no provision for the flesh (13:11-14). This brings us to chapter 14.

Christians come from different backgrounds. There are strong and weak Christians. The gospel for all men must be practical. It requires unity. "That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6). How do people with different backgrounds live in unity? Chapter 14 gives some principles that promote the unity set forth in chapter 12. Tolerance is essential to unity. But are there limits in toleration? What is to be tolerated? Are we to tolerate anything for the sake of unity? These are important questions. The chapter sets forth some principles that will enable one to distinguish between things to be tolerated and things which are not included.

The weak man is instructed to let his conscience be his guide. "And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin" (Romans 14:23). The weak man must not do that which violates his conscience. This principle calls for his conscience to be his guide in the matters under consideration. But a question is in order. Is his conscience to be his guide in all things? We know this is not true. "O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps" (Jeremiah 10:23). Since one cannot let his conscience be his guide in all things, there must be limitations on the principle in Romans 14. One cannot engage in a practice just because his conscience would allow it. If one's conscience approved of sprinkling for baptism would that make it right? No, because it conflicts with other passages. The principle of following conscience in Romans 14 must be applied in ways which do not contradict other Scriptures. There are limitations

in the chapter that must be respected. It does not open the door for one to do something just because his conscience tells him it is right. Conscience as a guide must be limited to the kind of things under consideration in the chapter.

"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it to the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks" (Romans 14:5-6). Let's consider these verses.

First, look at the phrase, "one man esteemeth one day above another." The word "esteem" means to judge or decide between. It is translated "let judge" in verse 3. He distinguishes between days. Second, he regards the day unto the Lord. The word "regard" means to think or have an opinion. The margin of the **King James Version** has "observeth." The **Revised Standard Version** translates it "observes." Evidently this was a man with a Jewish background. The law is a major consideration in Romans. This would indicate that the days were related to living under the law. "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" (Romans 15:8). This is a part of the discussion in chapter 14.

If the days were related to the law (and the context shows this to be the case), suppose the day he esteemed above others was the Sabbath. The Sabbath was a day of rest. The word means "rest." Would it be scriptural for him to observe the Lord's supper on the Sabbath instead of the Lord's day since he is doing it in regard to the Lord? "He observes the day in honor of the Lord" (RSV). If his conscience approved, would it be acceptable to the Lord? The answer is no. The reason it would not be acceptable is because it would violate other Scriptures which limit the Lord's Supper to the Lord's day (Acts 20:7; I Corinthians 11:20-34; 16:2).

Let us consider another possibility. Suppose the weak man's conscience, in esteeming the day unto the Lord, decided it would help to take the Lord's Supper on the Sabbath and on the first day of the week. Would this be acceptable? No, but why is it not scriptural? It violates Scriptures which limit it to every first day of the week. Some one may say that no one would do such. The question then is, "Why not?" Of course the answer is that he knows other Scriptures which would forbid it. But this illustrates the principle of Romans 14. The things allowed are of such a nature that they are not wrong in themselves, nor do they conflict with any other Scripture.

Let us consider the man whose conscience esteems every day alike. Since his conscience tells him every day

is alike, he decides he does not need to worship on the first day of the week. If the first day (Sunday) is like Monday, and he does not assemble for worship on Monday, why assemble on Sunday? I know of no one who would defend this practice. But why not defend it? The man says it does not violate his conscience. This shows the things under consideration in Romans 14 are things which do not conflict with other teaching of the Scripture.

Now let us apply these principles to mechanical instruments of music. Some claim that Romans 14 permits their use because they can do it with a good conscience. This raises the question, "Does it conflict with other passages?" Instrumental music conflicts with Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16. Thus instrumental music is not in the category of the things under consideration in Romans 14.

One final thought needs to be considered. The things Paul discussed in Romans 14 were individual matters. The man must have his faith to himself (14:22). Mechanical instruments of music are used in the assemblies. Letting conscience be the guide in matters of faith opens the door for every innovation under the sun. The rule of Romans 14 is, "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind" (Romans 14:5). Unless the things of Romans 14 are limited, what is excluded if a man is persuaded it is right? The days and meats were neither right nor wrong in themselves. In such matters, right or wrong depended on the individual's conscience. **GT**

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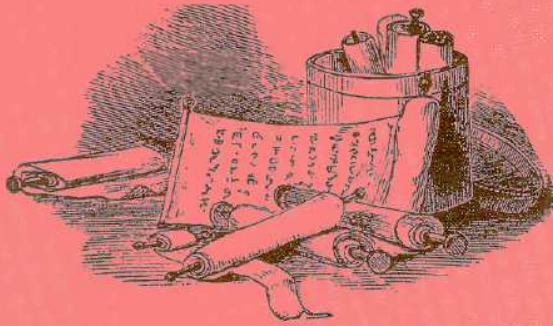
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Writings From Yesteryear

Human Creeds

ALL human creeds are unreliable and untrustworthy. The way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps. There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. Always in every human creed there is provision for amendment and change. They are constantly being amended. New situations arise; new conditions prevail; and human creeds must be revised and made over in an effort to meet the new problems.

But God's Word, in contrast, is able to foresee and provide for every need the church will ever have until the end of time. His is a "creed" that will neither need nor countenance amendments. No man can add to, or take from, or in any way improve upon the Word of God. It can neither be modified nor altered at all. It is final. Given by the Holy Spirit, set forth for all time by the men who spoke under His direction, the Word of God is the final court of appeal in every matter of Christian faith and doctrine. Men dare not go beyond it.

by Roy E. Cogdill, taken from
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