

Gospel Truths

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(Front Page Article)

If Brethren Could Change the Bible

by Bobby K. Thompson

The Bible has not been written to be changed. God has not given man this prerogative. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." (Psalm 119:89). God's word is final! "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, if any man shall add unto the these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book." (Revelation 22:18-19). Though some are inclined to limit this truth to the book of Revelation, the same is taught in Galatians 1:6-9, II John 9, and II Corinthians 4:6 (ASV). We need to obey God's word, and never be so presumptuous as to think that we can change it. However, the attitude of some brethren seems to suggest their desire and willingness to change the Bible. They seem to manifest a dislike of any passage that would prohibit man from changing the Bible to suit their life style. Men do not like the condemnation and reproving which comes from the word of God. If they had their way, even some brethren would change it. John spoke of this attitude, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:19-21). If some brethren could change the Bible, **they might teach that:**

Bible study is not important. There are brethren who do not study the Bible. They do not avail themselves of the opportunity of attending the Bible classes, and make no effort to open their Bibles at home to study the contents during the week. They evidently would prefer that nothing be said from the Bible regarding the importance of studying the Bible. They do not desire for their conscience to be disturbed concerning the matter. There is a great deal mentioned in the scriptures concerning the importance of studying God's word. "Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled." (Matthew 5:6). This beatitude refers to the desire to know more of God's word and be filled with the knowledge of it. Paul admonished Timothy to "Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of God." (II Timothy 2:15). The keynote of the admonition involved the word "study". Peter concluded his writings by saying, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever, A-men." (II Peter 3:18). Growth in grace and knowledge is accomplished by study, and brethren, who are determined to be negative toward the subject, had rather not hear about it. Doesn't it stand to reason that they would fall under the category of changing the Bible to omit the importance of Bible study, if they had the opportunity?

Controversy must never occur. Controversy is not a pleasant thing, but sometimes it can not be avoided. The truth is at stake and God's people are called upon to defend the truth against error. Some brethren seem to take the attitude that the Lord will do it all and His people are exempt from being involved in any controversy which might arise. "For there must be also

heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.” (I Corinthians 11:19). The heresies and controversies which developed from them, had a purpose in declaring or making manifest those who were on the Lord’s side and faithful in standing for the truth. The early church was involved in numerous controversies. There were those who were determined to bind circumcision on the Gentiles in order for them to be saved. The greater part of Acts 15 deals with this matter and the discussion which pursued in Jerusalem regarding the subject. When some were desirous of compelling Paul to circumcise Titus, Paul refused, and “gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you.” (Galatians 2:5). The subject of eating of meats offered to idols was often discussed, and was controversial to many in the early church. (I Corinthians 8). Yes, the New Testament church dealt with controversies! Some seem to feel when controversies arise within the churches today that it makes them untrue to the pattern of truth. How can one contend that this is so? We have already noticed that such existed in the first century when the church was certainly identified with God’s pattern of truth. Jude called upon God’s people to contend for the faith! “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.” (Jude 3). Some brethren detest controversy so strongly that if they had written the Bible or if they could change the Bible, they would definitely omit any symbol of it. Whatever may come, we should be thankful that we have the truth to contend for, and always be ready to fight the good fight of faith. Obey the word and never think of changing it.

We need to be obedient to God’s word, and never be so presumptuous as to think that we can change it. Brethren are those who are in Christ and those who should be most unlikely to entertain the thought of changing God’s word. However, the attitude of some brethren seems to suggest sentiment to the contrary. They seem to manifest a dislike of passages which would prohibit them from making the Bible read to their satisfaction. The comments and actions of individuals betray the sentiments of their hearts. Jesus said to some pretenders, “O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” (Matthew 12:34). When brethren speak, it doesn’t take long to determine the intent of their hearts, which many times are not as they should be. The attitude exists which Jeremiah confronted in his day. “Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls, But they said, We will not walk therein.” (Jeremiah 6:16). They have no desire for the old paths, and refuse the admonition to walk therein. This is a sad commentary regarding God’s people! Whatever God gives us to obey is for our good, and we are only fooling ourselves when we feel something could be better. No one can ever improve upon the will of God and it is sheer folly to think that any change in the Bible would be for our eternal benefit. We have previously written that if some brethren could evidently change the Bible, they might teach that Bible study is not important, and controversy must never occur. The basis for saying this is that they do not avail themselves of Bible study, and look upon any controversy which arises as being a thing of horror or departure from the truth itself. With these sentiments, why wouldn’t they change the Bible if the opportunity were granted to them? Why leave something in the Bible, which might disturb their consciences, if they were given the opportunity to remove it? Furthermore, if some brethren could change the Bible, **they might teach that:**

The church’s mission is social and play. Christ came into the world “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). His church is His body, and it is to continue this grand and glorious work! “To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places

might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" (Ephesians 3:10-11). "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (I Timothy 3:15). "Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. A-men." (Ephesians 3:21). These verses do not teach that the mission of the church is social and play. However, some brethren seem mesmerized by such activities and feel that this is how to save the lost. The apostles preached the gospel to people and believed that the gospel was God's power to save. (Romans 1:16). There are some brethren today who must have their church social halls for dining and playing and would incorporate such into the mission of the church. A relative of mine once told me that he felt any practice, as long as it was not lawfully illegal, was scriptural for the church to do in drawing people to Christ. If this is so, why talk about anything ever being scriptural or unscriptural? Why talk about a pattern of truth, or why even talk about what the Bible says? Forget it all! We must remember "the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 15:17). There are those who are intent upon the church appealing to the fleshly man rather than the spiritual man. "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ; Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things," (Philippians 3:18-19). With sentiments of this nature, why wouldn't these brethren change the Bible if they had a chance?

Worldliness should be ignored. "We all sin and there is worldliness in all of us, so leave it alone". This is the sentiment of some brethren, regardless of what the Bible says about the subject. This attitude is so contrary to what is stated in the scriptures! Though the word "worldliness" is not found in the KJV of the scriptures, the phrases, "worldly lust" and "love of the world" are definitely found and condemned. "For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world;" (Titus 2:11-12). "Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James 4:4). "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world, If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." (I John 2:15). Sin in its every form is to be condemned. Gambling, social drinking, immodest apparel and the use of illegal drugs may be fashionable in the world, but they are not associated with living soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. When brethren do not want the truth preached against such immoral conduct, how can one conclude that they would not change the Bible if they were given the opportunity to do so? **Love the obedient factor rather than a change factor!**

Editorial

Sponsoring Church And Unity

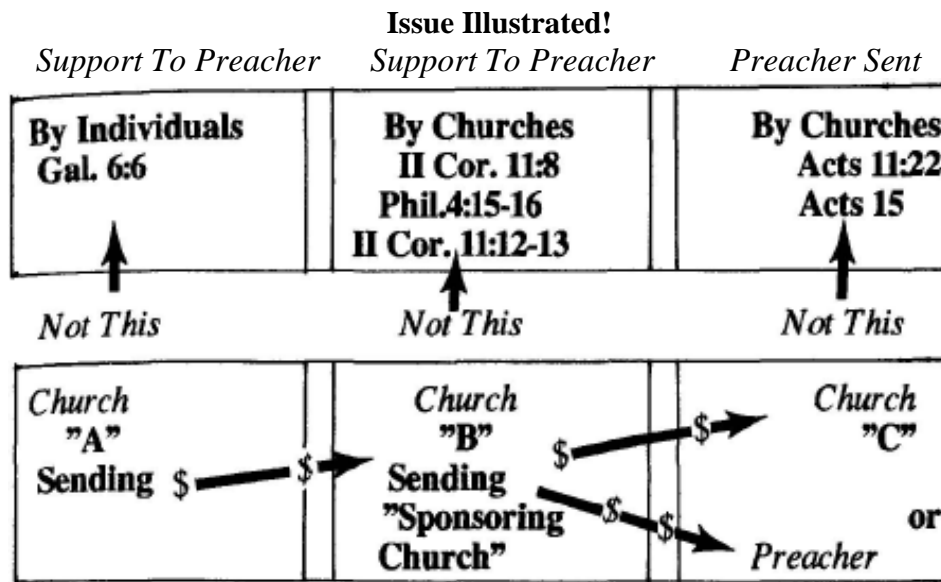
IN order to have unity we must abide by the rules of communication (statement, command, example and necessary implication) in determining what the Bible teaches the denominational



world also applies to those who are members of churches of Christ. In order to please our heavenly Father, all must have authority for all we teach and practice. We are seeking in love to try to call to your attention some things that brethren are practicing. We hope you will careful consider whether or not we have Bible authority for the things we teach and practice In this article I want to examine yet another of these practices.

The *sponsoring church arrangement* is an arrangement where men have brought into existence trying to improve on God's arrangement. Some elders are setting themselves, and the church of which they are the overseers, up as a "sponsoring church," taking on works they are financially unable to support, and begging other churches to send them money with which to carry on this work.

Below is a chart that, as far as I can determine, shows everything that God



authorized the church to do in the New Testament in matters of evangelism. It also depicts what the church is doing today. You will note that there is scriptural authority for the top part of the chart. Do you know of any Scripture that would authorize the "sponsoring church arrangement? If not, we must not do it. Now we can see that God has made each congregation responsible for its own work in congregation sending one dime to another that the gospel might be preached. Below is a chart that shows what *can be established* by the New Testament *in matters of evangelism*.

WHAT HAS GOD ASSIGNED TO THE CHURCH IN EVANGELISM?

*** Local Church Selected Preacher**
*** Local Church Defined Territory of Labor**
*** Local Church Sent Out Preacher**
Acts 11:22-24

*** Local Church Paid Preacher**
Phillippians 4:15-16; II Corinthians 12:13

*** Local Church Sent Directly To Preacher**
II Corinthians 11:8-9

*** Local Church Received Report From Preacher**
Acts 14:26-27

Since God is no respecter of persons (Romans 2:11) God's warnings are the same whether we *go beyond* what He has revealed on the subject of evangelism or some other subject. And God has certainly made it clear how He feels about those who go beyond His Word. "Whosoever goeth onward and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ *hath not God...* (II John 9).

How may we have unity in religion? In order to determine this, let's go back to a number of things that we have taught over the past few months.

In order to have unity, we must all speak the same things regarding what one must do to become a child of God. What does the Bible teach on this subject?

CONDITIONS OF SALVATION
Hear The Word of God - Romans 10:17
Believe Christ Is Saviour - John 8:24
Repent of Every Sin - Acts 17:30-31
Confess Your Faith In Christ - Matthew 10:32
Be Baptized for Remission of Sins - Acts 2:38

But again, we learn from the Scriptures what those early Christians did as they worshipped God. Below is a list of these things along with the passages that authorize them.

OUR WORSHIP TO GOD
Teaching The Apostles' Doctrine (Acts 2:42)
Singing (Ephesians 5:19; Hebrews 2:12)
Giving (I Corinthians 16:1-3)
Praying (Acts 2:42)
Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7)

Now! Are we all speaking the same thing thus far? If so, then we can have unity. As long as we all teach the same thing on these and all other points, then we will have no problem with unity.

Is there anyone who is now reading this article who would disagree with the above outline on the conditions of salvation? If you are, then we can never have unity on this subject, for as you can see, this is what the Scriptures say. We must accept what is said or deny the Bible. And, according to the New Testament, these are the conditions set forth by God, and the only Christians who are in the world today are those who have yielded themselves to obey these commands of Christ. "He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him" (Hebrews 5:9).

If you do not agree with the above diagrams, what instructions do you think I have left out? Or, are there some conditions I have placed in the list that ought not be in it? As I said, if we cannot agree on the conditions of salvation, and what we must do in worshipping God, then there can be no unity. Are you interested in the unity for which Christ prayed in John 17:20? If so, if you think I have misrepresented the Bible in any way in any of the things said in this or past issues of Gospel Truths, you must make it known and give your reasons why if they are to be considered so that we may be united. ☩

The Big Scare

by Carl M. Johnson

DOOMSDAY prophets peddling messages of fear and foreboding never seem to be in short supply in our modern world. Toward the end of 1999 the world braced itself for cataclysmic disasters associated with "Y2K." Doomsayers predicted computers would fail and utilities would be shut down worldwide as we moved from the 1900s into the year 2000, and that a powerless, darkened world would result in chaos and disaster. Phyllis and I were in the audience at the Oklahoma New Year Meeting in Oklahoma City on the night of December 31, 1999. As the midnight hour approached, James Orten stood before the audience of about 1,000 people and quipped, "I don't think our brethren are actually too worried about Y2K, but I've noticed more flashlights in the audience than I've seen since the last major coon hunt." The midnight hour came and went, however, and the transition from 1999 to the year 2000 occurred without incident.

The current big scare being foisted upon us by doomsday prophets has to do with the end of the Maya calendar on December 21, 2012. The Mayas were Indian people of southern Mexico and Central America whose civilization reached its height around A.D. 300-900. They were known for advanced writing, mathematics, and astronomy. Because of their fascination with time

they used these disciplines to construct a highly sophisticated calendar. The calendar tracks time in cycles of 5,126 years and then resets at zero. December 21, 2012 marks the end of a cycle by the Maya's "Long Count" calendar.

There is no record or knowledge that the Mayas believed the end of a calendar cycle would result in the end of the world or even widespread catastrophe. On the contrary, according to Sandra Noble, executive director of the Foundation for the Advancement of Mesoamerican Studies in Crystal River, Florida, the Mayas viewed the completion of a whole cycle as an occasion of great celebration, sort of like our celebration of each New Year (**USA TODAY** 3-27-07). Nevertheless, we are being inundated with books, television programs, and movies warning that December 21, 2012 will bring some kind of "apocalyptic" catastrophe to the entire earth and maybe the end of the earth itself.

Adding to the frenzy is the fact that December 21, 2012 coincides with the annual winter solstice (official beginning of winter). Because of this convergence of dates, journalist Lawrence Joseph forecasts widespread catastrophe in his book **Apocalypse 2012: A Scientific Investigation into Civilization's End**. Joseph says that on the winter solstice in 2012, the sun will be aligned with the center of the Milky Way for the first time "in 26,000 years" (sic). He continues, "This means that whatever energy typically streams to Earth from the center of the Milky Way will indeed be disrupted on 12/21/12 at 11:11 PM Universal Time."

Joseph and others believe that the end of the Maya calendar points to this rare alignment of the earth, sun, and Milky Way, and is intended to pinpoint the end of the world. Joseph speculates that this cosmic alignment will cause the North and South Poles to flip, resulting in earthquakes, tsunamis, and other catastrophes, and that these catastrophes along with solar flares will destroy us.

Astronomers generally agree, however, that it would have been impossible for the Mayas themselves to have known about the alignment of the stars at the time of the winter solstice in 2012, and there is no record anywhere that indicates the Mayas believed the world would come to an end at that point.

While there may remain some uncertainty about the effects of the events on December 21, 2012, there is one thing that remains absolutely certain. Anytime someone sets a date for the end of the world, the end will not happen on that date. Jesus says, "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only" (Mt. 24:36).

History has demonstrated repeatedly that Jesus' words are true. Time and again fearless forecasters have made predictions that offer a specific date for the second coming of Christ and the end of the world. On each occasion, however, the date comes and goes while leaving the prophecy unfulfilled.

Regardless of what happens in 2012, each of us has an appointment with death (Heb. 9:27). At the current rate there will be over 170 million people who will die between today and December 21, 2012. Any of us could be among that number and our number could come up at any time. Therefore, our primary concern should be about whether we are prepared for death now. At death our opportunity will end, our eternal fate will be sealed, we shall be sentenced at judgment, and those who are condemned will be cast into hell (Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; Mt. 26:46). When Paul forced Felix to contemplate the certainty of these events the wicked governor trembled with fear (Acts 24:24-25). All unprepared people should harbor that same fear, because that is a fear that is well justified (Heb. 10:35).

ME

by Geneva Brown Smith

AN interesting yet sometimes frightening phenomenon of our generation is the prevailing attitude of “I WILL DO WHAT PLEASES ME.”

Many women (and men) of the world live by this philosophy. They do what they please — when they please — with whomever they please with very little thought to the effect on themselves and others.

Some modern teenagers exhibit this attitude by adopting and dressing in the bizarre fashions of their worldly peers. It is evident that they do not care if mother and dad are embarrassed and ashamed, they are more concerned with “DOING WHAT PLEASES ME.”

Christians sometimes fall into this trap. Some have been known to leave local churches where elders frowned on their worldly activities. Instead of searching the Scriptures to determine the correct and safe course, they set out to find a congregation where their worldliness would be tolerated.

This attitude of “DOING WHAT PLEASES ME” is not peculiar to our generation. In Genesis, when God created woman, a rib was taken out of the side of Adam near his heart, and Eve was made. She was created to be a “help meet” (suitable) for Adam. Even in the Garden of Eden — Paradise of God, this same “ME” philosophy reared its ugly head. God had told Adam and Eve they should not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. He said if they did, they would surely die. Satan deceived Eve by telling her that this tree would make her wise. Imagine the pride with which she anticipated the great wisdom she was going to attain. Also the tree was pleasing to the eye. Eve succumbed to her own desire rather than obeying her creator. As a result of Eve’s transgression, Adam was led into sin. Both of them suffered serious consequences because of their sin.



Lot’s wife is another example of the “DOING WHAT PLEASES ME” philosophy. When Lot’s family lived in the morally decadent city of Sodom, God allowed them to leave the city before He destroyed it. He commanded them to go without looking back. Lot’s wife, being very concerned with what (or whom) she was leaving behind turned and looked back. She also suffered the grave consequence of her transgression. God turned her into a pillar of salt.

How can we as modern Christian women relate to these two wives and mothers of antiquity? The answer is so basic and simple that one could not miss it. God has always commanded (and demanded) obedience. Just as He gave instructions to both men and women of the Old Testament, He has given us our own set of laws and rules in the New Testament. Some of the commands were given to both men and women. There are some instructions, however, that were given only to women.

Women were told to be chaste, keepers at home, and obedient to their own husbands. They were told to love their husbands and children. Older women were told to teach younger women. God said that women should dress in modest apparel with shamefacedness and sobriety. He said that women must recognize the principle of headship when He said that the “head of woman is man, the head of man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God.”

It behooves us as modern women to, first of all, study the Bible and learn what instructions have been given to us — first as Christians — then as women. Secondly, we must continually strive to obey the things that God has commanded.

Often, in order to please God, we are called upon to change. This is often very difficult to accomplish. Success, however, is within our grasp, if we are willing to work for it. Instead of always “DOING WHAT PLEASES ME,” each one of us should continually shape his her will until it agrees with God’s will. Do you think this is possible in our time?? I do! Philippians 4:13.

The Twelve Apostates

by Maurice Barnett



“A number of people (including the *New York Times*) wrote about a costly error at Brigham Young University last week that was originally reported by the **Utah Valley Daily Herald**. The error itself was subtle. First, it is important to realize that Brigham Young is a private university owned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (I.e., the Mormon Church or LDS for short). The front of the the *Daily Universe* — the BYU university newspaper — featured a photograph of a group of men who form one of the most important governing bodies in the LDS church with the heading, ‘**Quorum of the Twelve Apostates.**’”



The above photo, along with various reactions from Mormons, has been the source of both humor and chagrin. It has made the rounds of news sources and copies of the original page of the paper are being sold over the net for a hundred dollars or more.

The facts are that in the history of Mormonism there have been several apostate Apostles, as well as other apostate Mormon leaders. Early Apostles were appointed by Joseph Smith with great praise and then later condemned by him. Smith claimed, and Mormons believe, that God directed Smith in word and conduct. Here are Smith’s own words about this—

"The way I know in whom to confide—God tells me in whom I may place confidence." *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, May, 1843, page 392. This is a Mormon publication.

However, in the same volume, page 412, Smith says this—

"Of the Twelve Apostles chosen in Kirtland, and ordained under the hands of Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer and myself, there have been but two but what have lifted their heel against me—namely Brigham Young and Heber C. Kimball."

Keep in mind that Smith said in 1843 that only two of the original twelve had not apostatized. Just without considering any later appointees to the Apostles who also fell away Smith, admittedly, had 10 apostates out of the apostles at the very beginning even though God was supposed to tell him in whom to confide. Let's see some more specific evidence. First, the Apostolic Blessing on John Boynton and Luke Johnson—

"Apostolic blessing on John Boynton:-Thou hast prevailed and thou shalt prevail, and thou shalt declare the Gospel unto many nations. Thou shalt be made mighty before God; and although thou shalt be cast out from the face of men, yet thou shalt have power to prevail. Thou shalt lead the elect triumphantly to the places of refuge; thou shalt be like the brethren who have been blessed before thee. Thou shalt stand in that day of calamity when the wicked shall be consumed, and present unto the Father, spotless, the fruits of thy labor. Thou shalt overcome all the evils that are in the world; thou shalt have wisdom to put to silence all the wisdom of the wise; and thou shalt see the face of thy Redeemer in the flesh. These blessings are pronounced and sealed upon thee. Even so. Amen." *History of the Church*, Vol. 2, page 191.

The Apostolic Blessing on Luke S. Johnson is similar to that of Boynton. These were two of the early Apostles. In the *Elders Journal*, August, 1838, page 56, Joseph Smith says—

"In all this grunting business, he was aided by Leonard Rich who, however was generally so drunk, that he had to support himself, by something, to keep from falling down; but then it was all for conscience sake. Also a pair of young blacklegs, one of them a Massachusetts shoemaker by the name of John F. Boynton, a man notorious for nothing, but ignorance; ill breeding and impudence. And the other by the name of Luke Johnson, whose notoriety consisted, if information be correct, in stealing a barrel of flour from his father, and other acts of a similar kind."

The Apostolic Blessings on Boynton and Johnson were administered in February, 1835 and extreme disenchantment had set in by August of 1838. But, 1838 was the time of the denunciation by Smith. Just *when* in that time frame between 1835 and 1838 did they go bad? It obviously didn't take long. Also notice what Smith says about Johnson's stealing the flour - "if information is correct." If God told Smith in whom to place confidence, why did God not warn him before hand about these two, and why did Smith have to rely on hearsay about what they did?

In 1840, Joseph Smith was welcoming Dr. John C. Bennett to Nauvoo. He was placing the greatest confidence in Bennett. In a letter to Bennett dated August 8, 1840, Smith says—

"It would afford me much pleasure to see you at this place, and from the desire you express in your letter to move to this place, I hope I shall soon have that satisfaction. I have no doubt you would be of great service to this community in practicing your profession, as well as those other abilities of which you are in possession." *History of the Church*, Vol. 4, page 177.

Now, that was in August of 1840. By February, 1841, just a few months, Bennett was the Mayor of Nauvoo and elected Chancellor of the newly formed University of the City of Nauvoo. Also, Bennett was elected to be Major-General of the Nauvoo Legion directly under Smith. In the *History of the Church*, page 480, for December, 1841, the following statement of support for Bennett came from Smith—

"In the next canvass, we shall be influenced by no party consideration, and no Carthaginian coalescence or collusion with our people will be suffered to effect, or operate against General Bennett, or any other of our tried friends...."

But, this love-in was not to last. Just six months after praising Bennett, Smith has to expose him as a fraud. A little inspiration before hand would have been a great benefit. Notice—

"It is a matter of notoriety that the said Dr. John C. Bennett became favorable to the doctrine taught by the Elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and located himself in the city of Nauvoo about the month of August, 1840, and soon after joined the Church. Soon after it was known that he had become a member of said Church, a communication was received at Nauvoo from a person of respectable character and residing in the vicinity where Bennett had lived. This letter cautioned us against him, setting forth that he was a very mean man, and had a wife and two or three children in McConnellsville, Morgan county, Ohio; but knowing that it is no uncommon thing for good men to be evil spoken against, the above letter was kept quiet, but held in reserve." *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, pages 35-36.

Smith then proceeds in the account to lay out the details and expose him. Bennett was indeed a con man with extremely an immoral character. But, this is not all of Smith's failures.

Section 114 of the Doctrine and Covenants is a revelation from God given by Joseph Smith to Apostle David W. Patton. A time was set for him to go on a mission. It was a prophecy from God! But, David W. Patton was killed before he could fulfill the prophecy! See also the *History of the Church*, vol. 3, page 171. This was similar to Lyman Sherman who was "called" to be an Apostle by "revelation" from God but died before he could even be told about it. See *BYU Studies*, Fall, 1978. How could God be trusted on anything? He supposedly could determine what someone would do but fail to know it could never happen nor use His power to make it happen.

And what are we to say about the three witnesses to the Book of Mormon that are printed in every issue of the BOM? David Whitmer and Oliver Cowdrey left them and Martin Harris was so unstable that he drifted in and out. Or, what about the numerous divisions among the Mormons, each group claiming the other to be apostate?

He further said in the August, 1843, *History of the Church*, Vol. 5, page 554—

"I prophesy and bear record this morning that all the combined powers of earth and hell shall not and cannot ever overthrow or overcome this boy, for I have promise from the eternal God."

Yet, one of the most dramatic examples of his boasts of invincibility is the following. Here is what he said in an address just *one month* before his death at the hands of a mob that stormed the Carthage Jail—

"God is in the still small voice. In all these affidavits, indictments, it is all of the devil—all corruption. Come on! ye prosecutors, roll down your laws! for I will come out on the top at last. I have more to boast of than ever any man had. I am the only man that has ever been able to keep a whole church together since the days of Adam. A large majority of the whole have stood by me. Neither Paul, John, Peter, nor Jesus ever did it. I boast that no man ever did such a work as I. The followers of Jesus ran away from Him; but the Latter-day Saints never ran away from me yet. You know my daily walk and conversation. I am in the bosom of a virtuous and good people. How I do love to hear the wolves howl! When they can get rid of me, the devil will also go." *History of the Church*, May, 1844, pages 408-409.

These are just a very few instances of Smith's failures, and those who have followed him have placed their faith in a false prophet, regardless of whether or not they apostatize from Mormonism. ❧

Signposts On The Road To Denominationalism In The Church

by Donald Townsley

1. Fundamental doctrines are laid aside in preaching.
2. Denominational error is no longer condemned.



3. Religious denominations are rarely criticized for what they do or teach.

4. Preaching on “hell fire and damnation” is NOT done.

5. Popular sins of the day are not condemned (i.e. divorce and remarriage for any cause,

dancing, drugs, drinking, gambling, immodest dress, fornication and homosexuality).

6. No preaching on the fundamentals of one faith, one baptism, and one body (Ephesians 4:3–6).

7. Themes, such as “Divine Authority”, are forgotten.

8. The undenominational character of the church is not emphasized.

9. The “social gospel” is not condemned as a great perversion of the Gospel of Christ.

(1) The Gospel of Christ is NOT a dual gospel – social and spiritual.

10. When leadership undertakes to “stand in the middle of the road”, and will not have issues discussed for fear of offending someone.

(1) They do not value the truth, nor do they love the truth.

(2) We must have Bible authority for all that we do (Matthew 28: 18; Colossians 3:17; Ephesians 1:22–23).

(3) The New Testament church has a fixed pattern for all time, and it is our business to hold rigidly to that pattern regardless of the consequences (II Timothy 1:13).

11. When the attitude arises that we are at liberty to do anything not expressly forbidden, the door is open for instrumental music, societies, social gospel, and creeds.

(1) When the Lord authorizes something, all else is excluded.

a. When God commanded Noah to build the ark out of gopher wood (Genesis 6:14), pine wood, and all other kinds of wood were excluded.

b. Singing excludes using an instrument

(Ephesians 5:19).

12. The church faces the danger of inherited membership.

(1) Many are what they are religiously on no other basis than their parents were members of the church before them.

(2) Most denominational people are what they are on this basis.

(3) When “our” children are without convictions, they have no real appreciation for the undenominational nature of the church.

(4) It is these children, and their children, who carry the church into digression.

a. These children no longer want “chapter and verse” preaching.

(5) We should bring up our children in the admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1–4).

a. Israel had a responsibility to teach their children (Deuteronomy 6:6–8).

13. When the church compromises their morals and doctrines to keep from hurting the feelings of men who have money and worldly standing.

14. When the church becomes a “catchall”, including in its membership everyone who wishes to be, or can be persuaded to become a part – without checking them out (Acts 9:26–28).

15. When the church does not let Truth have priority.

(1) Truth is more important than friendship (John 8:32; Proverbs 23: 23; II Thessalonians 2:10).

(2) Truth must have priority over family (Matthew 10:34–37).

(3) Truth must have priority over courtesy (II John 9–11).

(4) Truth must have priority over peace, unity, and fellowship.

(5) Peace, unity, and fellowship are results of following and obeying the Truth.

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Why Do I Write About Such Controversial Topics

by Kenneth E. Thomas

FIRST, if I am to write about any Biblical topic, it will always be considered controversial to some people that happens to be the nature of divine truth. Truth is always narrow!(Matthew 7:13-14).



If I write concerning the Godhead three, the atheist and the Jesus only people will be offended and I shall have become controversial by the very nature of the topic. Shall I refrain from writing about the Godhead three so as not to be controversial? (Hebrews 11:6; John 8:21-24; Acts 17:23-31; Ephesians 4:1-6; Romans 1:20. I could use this same logic and apply it to every Biblical topic and as you can surely observe, I would have to refrain from writing on any Biblical topic whatsoever if I am to be non-controversial! But someone will say, “you can write about LOVE and not offend anyone.” Are you sure of what you affirm? While many wonderful characteristics of love are made known in I Corinthians chapter thirteen which should be cultivated by every true Christian, look with me at (Hebrews 12:5-13) which shows what love demands, God’s word it seems to me demands what has come to be known today as “**Tough Love!**” We shall now observe that Biblical love often requires **stern rebuke!**

“4: Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.5: And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him:6: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.7: If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?8: But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.9: Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?10: For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.11: Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.12: Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;13: And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.”

Another reason I often write about controversial topics is because there has arisen due to years of practice what may sadly be called, “*Church of Christ Traditions*” in the hearts of all too many. Brethren, it is just as wrong for New Testament Christians to bind “traditional interpretations” on ourselves and others as it is for the denominations to do so! It was God’s own Old Testament people whom Jesus rebuked for binding human traditions and rejecting the true teachings of Moses in (Matthew 15:1-9)!

“Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, 2: Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread.3: But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?4: For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.5: But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;6: And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. 7: Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,8: This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. 9: But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

There are many what I shall call, “second generation Christians” who are the children of New Testament Christians who at the first when they were youngsters of necessity learned to practice identically what their parents practiced, who today could not give a sensible scripture filled answer as to why we use only vocal music in our worship. They only oppose the use of mechanical instruments of music because we have never used them. The same can be said of why we observe the Lord’s Supper weekly, and do not baptize babies. These same members are hard pressed to give the biblical reasons as to why we conservatives reject the support of human institutions from the local treasury and oppose the “sponsoring eldership concept of so called “church cooperation” and the social gospel concept as church functions, along with a host of other unscriptural functions being put into the local church treasuries. Still we are supposed to be able to always give an answer for the hope that lies within us, (I Peter 3:15) as well as to “contend for the faith once delivered (Jude 3). Likewise we should, **“Prove all things hold faith to that which is good” (I Thessalonians 5:21).**

I do not write in an attempt to be controversial. I am a peace loving man, but none of us should ever be ashamed of the truth nor afraid to controversy for precious souls are often at risk (II Timothy 4:1-8; I Timothy 4:1-4).

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Why Is The Local Church Not Growing? by Dennis L. Reed

“Why are we not growing?” is a question which we often hear being asked by members of the church. And another question of similar nature is asked, “Why do members who move into our area not want to worship with us?” These seem to be logical questions, but the one making the inquiry may already know the answers for these questions. This would make them rhetorical questions and not really intended for an answer. They may be asking because they simply want the matter reviewed or discussed again. Whatever the reason for asking might be, the fact still

remains that the local church is not growing as it should be. You and I are aware that many congregations are getting smaller and smaller, and some of them have even closed their doors and melted into the “mega” type churches of the area.

The first thing which needs to be considered is a definition of terms so that we will know how we are using the term “growing”. Do we mean in numerical growth? Do we want to know why we are not gaining more members? Could we be asking why the members of the congregation are not growing spiritually in knowledge and usefulness to the Lord? Both of these are certainly factors in the growth process, and you can’t really consider one of them without considering the other. They stand or fall together.

If the local church is not growing spiritually, then it is obvious that the work necessary for numerical growth will not be getting done. We do need to mention that some churches are growing in number while clearly going down hill in spiritual growth because those flocking to these local churches “could really care less about what is going on there”. They are simply looking for a larger social group in which to operate and the spiritual aspect is not even an issue. They can also hide in the “big crowds” and not even be missed when they fail to attend. They will hardly ever be asked to participate in any productive work or to even take part in the public worship services. Many of these are churches which do not stand firmly for the Truth, and you and I know that we cannot have fellowship with them in any failure to abide in the doctrine of Christ. Now, as we return to our important consideration of spiritual growth, the scriptures are vividly clear on the subject: “Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. But solid food is for full grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.” (Hebrews 5:11-14). When the local members are not studying and not using the word of God on a daily basis, if they continue to be unable to eat solid food, and if they don’t have their senses exercised to discern good and evil, then this lack of spiritual growth can be devastating to the local work. It is obvious that most of these folks are not teaching the gospel to anyone, because they are not even making use of it for themselves. We are spending an unbelievable amount of time and energy just “pleading” and “begging” many of these members to be faithful to attend the services! And we are continually exhorting them not to “drag in” to services ten, fifteen, or more minutes late. It is just clearly obvious that they have not placed their priority on spiritual matters. Such attitudes will always hinder the growth of the local church. We are finding ourselves listening to a menagerie of excuses given to us on a regular basis, and we are not ignorant of the fact that these brethren are just not really interested in faithful service to the Lord! If they were, they would be among the first to arrive every time that the door was open at the meeting house. When we are pulling and tugging with folks who are just short of being spiritually dead, how can we expect to be reaching many unbelievers with the gospel? Just “who” is taking the message to those who are without God and without hope? And just why would they want to be associated with folks who are obviously unconcerned about spiritual priorities? Not until we get this trend turned around and get the local brethren to truly grow spiritually, will we ever be able to grow in numbers. Let me soberly look at myself! If I have encouraged a person to obey the gospel, will I be satisfied if he or she will be just as lacking in dedication, motivation, and faithfulness as I am? How long do you think that this new Christian will be able to “hang on” with that example before him?

For the Lord's church to grow in numbers, it will be necessary for us to be genuinely busy with our preaching and teaching. Am I teaching a home Bible study or have I asked someone to come into my home to teach a Bible class for those whom I have invited? Am I present for the services of our gospel meeting and have I been busy inviting friends and neighbors to attend? How many people am I inviting to the regular services each week? How many indifferent and careless Christians have I personally visited to exhort and encourage them? Am I willing to accept the fact that the spiritual growth of others and the numerical growth of the local church is greatly dependent upon ME? If the other members are just like me, how much growth will be taking place?

We also need to consider the fact that there is often a challenge in getting members who move into our area to be identified with us and become a part of our work. Some will attend our services for a time or two and then began to make excuses such as: the number of the membership is just too small, you don't have adequate classes or activities for my children, there are not enough young families for me to associate with, (honestly, I have never had anyone to say that we don't have enough elderly people), and that we don't have elders or a full time preacher or a host of other excuses. Truthfully, I am persuaded that most of these people "want to be served" rather than to serve. They are looking for a place to be entertained rather than for an opportunity to roll up their sleeves and go to work for the Lord. Rather than looking at where they are needed, they are looking for some place to fulfill their selfish agenda. Honestly, brethren, these folks might just turn out to be more dead weight for others to push or pull along. It is also true that a great many brethren are "infected" with the liberal and digressive concepts of "unity in diversity" and they will stay clear of any church which opposes those errors. There will be very few brethren moving near us who are truly looking for a work that is standing firmly for the Truth on the pressing issues of our time.

Another serious factor hindering the conversion of people is the overall condition of the Lord's church everywhere around us. We see brethren with arrogant and self centered agendas causing ill-will, strife, and division in a great many churches. We are almost splitting and tearing ourselves into shreds and splinters. We have brethren who are literally miserable individuals who seem to have an agenda of "divide and conquer"! And when their agenda doesn't work, then you have another ugly faction calling themselves the Lord's church. When you are teaching the gospel to a hungry soul, it usually becomes inevitable that you must explain the terrible mess that the Lord's church is in. With digression, sinful fellowship, false teaching, and new doctrines and factions arising almost daily in surrounding churches, how successful are we going to be in convincing the folks that this is the one "true church" which Jesus established and where brethren speak the same thing and are of the same mind and judgment? Would we be able to even attempt to convince them that the same gospel Truth is taught everywhere in every church? Surely we can see that such conditions will always be a great contributor to our lack of numerical growth. Our brethren have literally circled the wagons and are shooting in!

So the questions which we started with have proven to be rhetorical after all. We do know why the church is not growing very much numerically and we know the attitudes which contribute to that lack of success in saving lost souls. Probably the most important question of all is, "What can we do about it?" or "What are we willing to do in trying to change this atmosphere of ugliness, unconcern, neglect, and very low spiritual priorities?" Before almighty God, I am well aware that I must answer these things for myself. Will you also be searching for an answer in your life? ❷

The Weightier Matters Of The Law

by James R. Dunigan,

MATTHEW 23:23 “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.”

Jesus lived in the time when the law of Moses (Old Law) was still binding. Many so called religious people were “keeping” the law but in reality they had left that and began to follow the traditions and teachings of man. They were very strict in the things they were doing but it was all an act, a facade as it was, and they were not doing it from the heart. The things they were stressing were actually very trite, little and insignificant items especially in comparison to that which was really important. Jesus therefore condemned their hypocrisy and condemned them for overlooking the weightier matters of the law. In Matthew chapter 23 Jesus goes into some of those weightier matters that they had overlooked in their heartless service to God.

When we consider the Old Law which was in effect at the time, we can ask ourselves this question “*Were some laws more important than others?*”. Could the Jewish people pick and choose the commandments they liked and ignore the rest? However if all of God’s laws were important and binding then they must all be obeyed, seems like a simple enough conclusion. Under the Old Law there were some very basic laws and truths that built a foundation on which



all the other laws God gave the children of Israel hinged. Without complying with these basic precepts and commandments the other laws were of little good. If the children of Israel could not comply with the simple basic laws God gave them then what good was the “weightier matters of the law” to them? Jesus stressed to his disciples, that the first great commandment is to love God and the next one to it was to love your neighbor as yourself! “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?” Jesus said to him, “‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.” (Matthew 22:36-40.) When you read the ten commandments given to Israel on Mount Sinai, you will see that every one of them involves these truths taught by Christ. When you love God and your neighbor you will obey those basic laws! If you cannot obey the basic precepts of God’s law then the weightier matters would be lost too as evidenced by the scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23.

The Pharisees and scribes Jesus was confronting were making a big show of keeping the “letter of the law,” to the point they were giving a tenth of all sorts of things. It was important to tithe under the Old Law because it was commanded. But they had become so wrapped up in the tithing and show of it all, they were overlooking judgment, mercy and faith. In other words they put to the side the second great commandment when they dealt with others. They also pushed to the side the very first command about loving God and in doing so the real motive behind tithing had been lost. They were to tithe because they loved God not because it made them look good in the eyes of others.

In the “religious” world of today and sadly among some of the churches of Christ, the emphasis is placed on some fundamental truths but to the exclusion of others! Great emphasis is placed on faith, mercy and grace only. They talk a lot about love and fellowship. However the love and fellowship they stress are upon themselves and the things they want to do! They go to

great lengths to demonstrate their “religiousness” by building gyms, fellowship halls, providing entertainment and recreation for the congregation. However, they have failed to take the basic truths and principles given to us, to their logical conclusion and therefore cannot have the true effect on the individual it might otherwise have. In other words they are not coming to fellowship with God in spirit and in truth (John 4:24), they have come to play and be entertained, to be seen of men. The people they draw are not coming to know the real God they have only come to know the fun and games the church there provides. The bottom line in our service to God is that faith only, mental acceptance and love without obedience are vain (worthless.) Verses like *Matthew 15:8-10*, *Mark 7:6-8*, *I Corinthians 15:1-3*, *II Corinthians 6:1-3* all teach us that vain worship and service to God is useless and profits us nothing! James 2:24 “*You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only.*” Faith only service is as vain as anything we read about in the Bible and will only bring condemnation to the person involved.

On the other hand we must also make sure that we also don't leave undone the weightier matters of the law. I know as a preacher I must work hard to balance what I preach from the pulpit. Sometimes we may find ourselves stressing baptism, the church and attending the assemblies to the point of excluding other important and needed lessons. This does not mean these matters are less important, quite to the contrary, because they are necessary to one's salvation. But we must make sure that we do not overlook other important truths and principles like love, faith, grace, prayer, purity, honesty, joy, fear and reverence for God and so on.

God wants us to offer Him a service and obedience that is from the heart. II Corinthians 8:12 “For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have. “ He wants us to obey all His teachings from our hearts out of love. Ephesians 6: 6-7 “not with eye service, as men-pleasers, but as bond-servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart, with goodwill doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.” Service to God is a heart-felt service. God wants us to be balanced in our worship and service to Him. Sometimes we need to examine ourselves and take a good look at our service and obedience to God. How does God see our service? We cannot be deceived on our religion and we must make sure we are not hypocritical in our service. ❧

The Art of Self-Justification

by Steven Harper

By chance, someone stumbled across a small booklet the other day, believed to be one of the devil's handbooks. The booklet is titled "Spiritual Battle in the Modern World" and seems to be a virtual how-to on just about every topic known to man regarding his spiritual battle, but it was apparently written for the devil's fellow demons and his minions that gives them instruction as to how to win souls into Hell by planting seeds of doubt, confusion, and outright error without



appearing to do so. One section, in particular, seems to have been used quite often lately, entitled "The Art of Self-Justification." Whoever had this booklet made many notes about his successes and made notes about how to implement these schemes most effectively, and in the interest of knowing how *our* enemy works, I thought we might take a look at some of his tactics. [Note that in the following texts, the ones he calls his 'enemy' is God or Christ.] Let's read through this section, shall we?

To The Atheist: Of course, we use this term accommodatively, since we

have already convinced him that God does not exist. All atheists are unbelievers [the broader group covered in the next portion], but these are our servants who have been brave enough to speak of their determined unbelief, in spite of our enemies [God and the one named 'Jesus'] but we cannot ever rest on past successes and there is always a chance some God-lover will casually mention something about 'faith' or 'God' and it may cause him to start thinking again, and let us never forget that thinking is our worst enemy [at least thinking about spiritual matters].

But these 'atheists' are easily molded by our subtle words and whispers, so fear not! Our greatest success in the modern world has been in elevating human wisdom to a higher plane than even the wisdom of our great enemy, the Creator, who — we must admit — knows all. We must admit that the Creator's words about these men are spot-on (see **Psalm 14:1**), but we must continually convince them they are actually 'wise.' It's funny, really, that we have found so many willing to believe this, and who will then justify themselves because they have attained to a certain level of human education. It *is* amazing, isn't it, that so many mere mortals think they have such wisdom that they can justify their unbelief based on such flimsy arguments? They will admit man knows very little about the whole of creation, but they persist in deceiving themselves that they are 'wise.' That just makes our work that much easier! I personally find it a point of honor to know the Creator talks about our work within His Book (see **Romans 1:22**).

But, again, do NOT let your guard down! I know it seems like I am being an alarmist, but the last thing we want our servant, the atheist, to do is pick up that book so many call 'the Bible' — even if he *is* trying to prove his unbelief. We cannot take the chance that he will be one of those who have set out to justify their unbelief [before they ever opened the Book] and then discover their arguments had no merit and the Creator's words were, indeed, true. The work has already been done by past 'atheist' servants who have compiled lists of supposed contradictions in that Book; steer him toward that, instead. If he actually reads the Book for himself, we may lose Him to the other side — and you don't even want to KNOW what our Leader will do if you let one slip through your fingers.

To The Unbeliever: Little work has to be done for this individual, really. Most often, he or she has already implemented this excuse for not following the Holy Scriptures, and will often get defensive at the slightest mention of his or her spiritual condition. But we should not become complacent! There are many God-lovers who are keenly interested in their souls [even if they themselves are not] and will speak to them at every opportunity they have, so our work is never done! It is best to never let one's guard down lest one of those God-lovers gets the unbeliever to see their true condition and gets them to start thinking seriously about it. Even the Scriptures give us a means of distracting them from listening to what they have to say (see **Luke 8:14**), so use this whenever you can. After all, there are so many things in this world to distract them from their condition, little work has to be done!

And if one of those God-lovers corners them, just keep whispering in their ear, "Hey! I'm a 'good person' and I'm just trying to do the best I can!" until they start repeating it themselves and using that as their response to the God-lovers; if that doesn't work to your satisfaction, don't forget the old standby response: "Judge not, that ye be not judged!" *That gets them every time!* You can guarantee they are hopelessly [I SO like that word!] self-assured when they start quoting Scripture!

To The Weak Christians: While it may be disappointing to lose a soul to the other side, there is still reason to not lose heart altogether. After all, we have so many tools at our disposal to win them back! In fact, one who is working for the other side is often the easiest to influence

when it comes to self-justification. Many — especially the newly-converted — are easily convinced that their battles are over and, as a result, are not as watchful as the ones who actually reach spiritual maturity.

Since we are trying to win them back, continue whispering in their ears about the wonderful life they left behind and the boring, dreary life they are now living. If the candidate happens to be married, use seductive advertising, immodestly dressed people of the opposite sex, and our great tool of human psychology to convince them they are not 'happy' where they are and point them to others and how 'exciting' it will be and how much 'happier' they will be if they get involved in an affair with someone not their spouse. If they are already headed for divorce [the reason is unimportant], convince them they are justified in seeking a permanent separation because their happiness is the primary concern and the current spouse was not good enough.

Any weak Christian is able to be molded if we can just get them to act first and think later, or act first and seek justification later. Sometimes, we find success when we convince them *before* they sin that 'just once' won't hurt, or the actions in which they seek to participate 'doesn't hurt anyone.' It is truly amazing how easy we can convince even mature Christians that they are 'not so bad' [especially when we remind them old 'brother so-and-so who is SO much worse than they], and to justify themselves in spite of what they know of their Creator.

If your candidate starts thinking about the potential action as 'sin' [such an old-fashioned word], remind them of their past good deeds and how righteous they are, and keep whispering words of encouragement like, 'You deserve this' or 'No one will ever know' or 'God wants me to be happy' and it will not be long before they put away that notion of 'sin' and happily indulge in it. If another God-lover intervenes and tries to prevent them from acting, remind them that they are out of line by sticking their nose in his business and whisper his strongest argument over and over: 'Who does he think *he* is telling me about *my* sins?!?!' Pretty soon, he will not only justify himself, but he will be looking for ways to stop serving our enemy, the Creator, altogether! Once we have him convinced, he will be back with us in no time! ❧

Putting It All Together

by Paul K. Williams

D. R. Dungan's *Hermeneutics* was quoted as an authority as far back as I can remember. I suppose it was written in the late 1800's. The copy I have was published by the Gospel Light Pub. Co., Delight, Arkansas, but there is no date of the original writing.

In his section on "The Inductive Method," Dungan defines it as: "A leading or drawing off a general fact from a number of instances, or summing up the result of observations and experiments." He applies this method to the Bible, indicating that it is the proper way to find what God wants us to do. In order to do this, he writes:

All the facts are reported, and from them the conclusion is to be reached.

The law of analogy—Everything must be found to agree. Harmony is one of the first demands of truth. Two truths are never contradictory.

In talking about gathering all the facts, Dungan uses the instance of when "Jesus appeared to the two disciples as they went into the country, he expounded to them all things found in the law and the prophets concerning himself, (Luke 24). He thus introduced all the facts from that divine source that would bear upon their minds, that they might understand the truth." (page 90) In Acts

15, Peter told how the Lord led him to the house of Cornelius, the Gentile. Then Paul and Barnabas recounted the things which the Lord did by their hands during their preaching to the Gentiles. Finally, James reminded them of the testimony of their prophet, Amos (Amos 9:11-12). “Now, when all these facts were introduced, there was but one conclusion possible for them, which was that the Gentiles were under no such obligations as those Judaizing teachers had affirmed.” “When Moses wished to prepare Israel to go over into the land of Canaan, and inherit it according to the promise of the Lord, he made them three speeches, which constitute nearly the whole book of Deuteronomy. In these speeches he brings before their minds nearly all their history, with all the obligations that rested upon them to keep the commandments of the Lord. He does this, that they may have all the facts in the case before them, that they may be guided thereby.”

“Nothing more respecting the Scripture method need be said, for it is everywhere apparent that when the Lord would conduct an investigation on any subject, He did it by the inductive method. When the devil wished to gain a point, he did it by quoting a text for its sound. When the Jewish rulers condemned the Saviour, they affirmed well but proved nothing.” (p. 91)

What Dungan says about “inference” is interesting and important. *“Inference may be used legitimately in the ascertainment of facts, and also in the conclusions reached from them.—Many do not seem to know what an inference is; they speak of it as if it were a kind of guess, and therefore never to be used either in induction or deduction. The truth is, it is the logical effort to know the facts in the case, and to ascertain the facts from phenomena.”* (page 91) He then gives several examples from the Bible from which we can infer certain facts. What he calls “inference” can also be called “necessary conclusion.”

What he says about using examples is important. *“Religious truth may be gathered from approved precedent.—We learn from the authorized conduct of the children of God. If we can first be assured that what is done is approved, we can know certainly what we are at liberty to do under similar circumstances. Indeed, if the conduct has been directed by men under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we learn from the example what we ought to do. . . . Now, if the will of God has undergone no change since the New Covenant was completed, what was His will then is His will yet. And if those men did that will, and we do the same now, we will be accomplishing His pleasure.”*

Then he asks, “How shall we determine what is an approved precedent?” He gives two things we must do to find the approved precedent.

1. Those actions performed by the apostles or other disciples in their day, which have a divine approval, or, if done by an apostle, nothing has been said by inspiration in opposition thereto.

2. Customs of the Church under the eye and sanction of apostles. For if, in an unguarded moment, an apostle should turn aside, he would not continue in that condition. And if it could be possible for one apostle to continue to err in his public character, it would not be so with all of them. A general custom is established in harmony with that which is allowed, taught, approved by the many. If we shall find the whole church engaged in a common custom in religious service, no matter how we come to that intelligence, if we can certainly know that such was the custom everywhere among the disciples in the days of the apostles, such practice will show certainly what was the will of God.” (page 97)

The things quoted here are the ways that we establish truth, or authority, in our everyday lives. What Dungan says can be seen to be “common sense.” He is right. We need to put it all

together. Then we need to draw conclusions from the facts, and not conclude something which is contrary to any other principles or facts in the Bible. When we do this, we can be sure we have found what will be pleasing to God. ❧

Influenced?

by T. Sean Sullivan

WE are susceptible to worldly influence. We are warned in the Scriptures of this possibility: I Corinthians 15:33, “Evil company corrupts good habits”. Romans 12:1-2, “Be not conformed to this world”. I John 2:15-17, “Do not love the world or the things in the world.” The only direction that worldly influence can take you is away from God (James 4:4). With God we have the hope of all His promises (Ephesians 1:3-10)”every spiritual blessing in the Heavenly places.

Worldly influence is effective and dangerous because it gets us with powerful arguments like: “This is what intelligent people believe”. “Our “time” is the most enlightened.” “There is truth in numbers.” How many have been wooed by these worldly arguments into thinking differently than what the Bible says? These influences are strong and we must guard ourselves from being deceived by them (Colossians 2:8). Let’s expose these arguments and prepare ourselves to stand against them.

Worldly Argument: “It is what intelligent people think”

First, educating one’s self is a good thing” it is certainly not condemned by the Scriptures: God’s word has been revealed to man by the written word which itself necessitates understanding how to read and therefore education (James 1:17-25).

The Apostle Paul’s education was shown as an attribute to his life (Acts 22:3). Cornelius was said to be a devout man, devout meaning: learned (Acts 10:2). Luke the writer of both the Book of Acts and the Gospel of Luke was a Doctor (Colossians 4:14). The problem is when our education brings us to a disagreement with God’s will. Paul, through inspiration, declares, “The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God” (I Corinthians 1:25; 3:18-21a). Remember the ancient proverb: Proverbs 14:12 “There is a way that seems right unto a man; it is the way of death.” The words of the prophet stand today: Jeremiah 10:23 “It is not in man who walks to direct his own steps.” One of many influences is Evolution: Evolution: We have been taught all sorts of theories and ideas concerning our origin, our beginning. For at least 100 years the education system has embraced the teachings of Charles Darwin and others who say that we are here through the processes of macroevolution. Christians have stood up against these teachings for just as long, but on the other hand many have tried to establish a common ground.

For the sake of our pride, many not wanting to be seen as ignorant have devised a plan of God-started-evolution known as Theistic Evolution. Whereas by a process started by God this chain of millions of years of evolution was started. Some who would call themselves our brethren have attempted to reinterpret the Bible to fit this idea of Theistic Evolution by reading many thousands of years into each day of the Genesis 1.

Darwin’s Theories and the ideas of Theistic Evolution can be lumped together in the same pile LIES! God’s word declares our “Cause” “in the beginning God” (Genesis 1:1). God’s word declares the timing of this creation six 24 hour days (Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31).

Worldly Argument: “Our time is the most enlightened”

Our culture is very advanced from a perspective of technology. We have made incredible advances in medicine. We understand a lot of things more now than at any other time in our history. However if we refuse God and claim to be enlightened and freed from the bonds of archaic ideas of religion we are suddenly in the dark (I Corinthians 1:20-31). There is nothing wrong with being “smart” or using the advances of our knowledge to our own advantage, it is when our present day culture influences us to a disagreement with God’s will. We are not to be like the world (Romans 12:1-2).

We are to be different having a changed mind. We are to be on a different road (Matthew 7:13-14).

One of many influences from our culture: Modern Acceptance of Sin. We as a culture have conditioned our minds to follow the trends of famous Hollywood people. We need to realize that the world is trending on a downward slope. Things such as “alternative lifestyles”: What a lie to promote this sin as “just another choice” God declares it as a soul condemning sin (I Corinthians 6:9-10). God says that it is not natural (Romans 1: 26-27). Don’t honor this sin with its new title: it is not to be promoted as an “alternative” it needs to be exposed for the sin that it is.

Another modern tolerance is temporary marriages. Our culture has witnessed and participated in a total abuse of the marriage relationship. Too many are accepting that marriages are a trial run. God says marriage is one man and one woman for life (Matthew 19:4-6). It is supposed to be a life-long commitment (Romans 7:1-2). The only out is death of one partner. Or the infidelity of one partner (Matthew 19:9).

Worldly Argument: “Truth is found in numbers”

This is perhaps not as much of a voiced argument as the others, but in this world we are influenced toward numbers as the bigger the better. Case in point: How many “*dollaraires*” *have you seen on the news? Today the “Billionaires” are the attention-getters.*

To the world more is better. Have our minds been influenced by this mind set. The Lord’s church is less than one percent of the population of this country. Other groups are growing dramatically faster and many more members, are they right, are their doctrines truth, are we being influenced by them? The brethren in Galatia were draw away from the Lord by such (Galatians 1:6). Also, in Colossae, the brethren were warned that they could be cheated (Colossians 2:1-9). How often do we find ourselves believing the teachings of other doctrines: There are those who believe there is more than one way of salvation. God declares “one way” (John 14:6). We are true disciples only if we abide in His word (John 8:31). We are okay only when we live according to the one doctrine of Christ (II John 9). Anything else taught or followed will lead to condemnation (Galatians 1:6-8).

Conclusion: There are influences surrounding each one of us. We need to understand that God’s word is the unquestionable truth. No discovery of man will shake it. No will of man can overtake it. No other plan can help you make it. The Bible is point of fact and absolutely worthy of our trust. When God says “it happened” it did. When God says “it will happen” it will. God, who is never wrong, desires that you would be saved. Are you ready to do God’s will?