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Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

Realized Eschatology Debate

Howard Daniel Denham & Holger Neubauer

September 13-16, 2016

Baymont Inn Conference Center

South Haven, Michigan

7:00 pm each evening

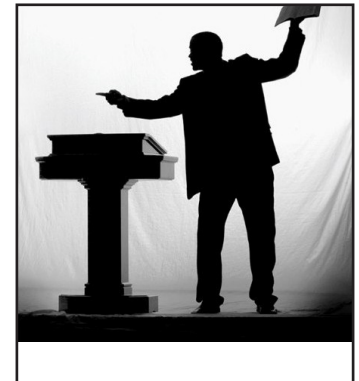
The propositions will be:

Howard Daniel Denham will affirm:

Resolved: **The Scriptures teach that the general resurrection of the dead is yet future and is a bodily resurrection.**

Holger Neubauer will affirm:

Resolved: **The Scriptures teach that the general resurrection is a bodily resurrection and is not still future.**



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Contending FOR THE Faith™

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CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH is published bimonthly. P. O. Box 2357, Spring, Texas 77383-2357 Telephone: (281) 350-5516.

Ira Y. Rice, Jr., Founder
August 3, 1917-October 10, 2001

Editorial...

GOD'S RAINBOW

The devil has always taken what pertains to God and twisted it into something evil and filthy. Thus, Satan's servants have chosen the rainbow to be a symbol of perverted sexual sins that are against nature. Of such perverts the apostle Paul wrote:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Rom. 1:18-32—*New King James Version*).

Nevertheless, the rainbow continues to stand for God's promise to man that He will never again destroy the world with water. To Noah God said:

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh (Gen. 9:13-15).

But, God did not say He would never destroy the world. The apostle Peter wrote to Christians, saying,

Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? (2 Pet. 3:6-12).

Also, the apostle Paul wrote the following comforting words to Christians in Thessalonica:

Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day (2 The. 1:6-10).

All those who choose to live immoral lives and who re-

fuse to obey the Lord in all things pertaining to their salvation from sin, will be punished eternally in a devil's hell. The apostle Paul warned,

Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21—*New King James Version*).

Paul also wrote:

Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 6:9-11—*New King James Version*).

Also, the apostle John recorded,

But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death (Rev. 21:8).

Most people live by the appetites of the flesh. They never think about what happens when this life is over, and they are no longer in this world, or are moved by the appetites of their fleshly bodies; for all such will have ceased to be with man's departure from this present world and, finally, when God destroys it and all things material.

—David P. Brown Editor

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—David P. Brown, Editor

The Roman Catholic Church: From Heaven Or From Men?

David P. Brown

Before writing anything else, I want to emphasize the following point. One of the first things that must be understood about the Catholic Church is this: It is not the apostate church of Christ. Catholicism developed and formed out of the apostate church. It was never the Lord's church in any way, form, or fashion whatsoever. It is human in origin. Therefore, in reality, it is the oldest and longest existing sectarian organization on record.

I say this in the beginning of this article because I have often noted that Protestant denominationalists (and some brethren) refer to the Roman Catholic Church as, "the apostate Roman Catholic Church." The Catholic Church did not come from or fall from anything scriptural. It came from the fermented minds of men who were long separated from the church revealed on the pages of the New Testament. Having made, and emphasized, that important point, I will now begin our study of Roman Catholicism.

In this brief study, I will not attempt to investigate the many facets of the Roman Church. Such would be an impossible task in the limited space. Furthermore, such an exhaustive study is not necessary in order for one to see the falsity of Catholicism. I will, therefore, deal with the fundamental and foundational erroneous tenets of Catholicism. Thereby, I shall have proven that Catholicism is from man and not from God.

SEVEN FOUNDATIONAL CATHOLIC ASSUMPTIONS WITHOUT BIBLICAL SUPPORT

The following seven stones in the foundation of the Catholic Church are mere assumptions without biblical support:

1. The church was built upon the apostle Peter.
2. Jesus gave the apostle Peter the authority of binding and loosing whatever laws he thought advantageous for the times as long as such laws remained within the structure of the basic teachings of the church of Christ.
3. Jesus made Peter the head of the church and the vicar, or chief ambassador, of Christ and ruler of the universe.
4. Peter was made the Prince of the Apostles.
5. The authority of Peter and his successors was universal in spiritual and temporal matters.
6. The authority of Peter and his successors was/is supreme and independent of all earthly authority.
7. Peter's office has been passed down to his successors throughout all ages.

It should be emphasized that if I prove the first four assumptions in the previous list to be erroneous, the points in

the remainder of the list are also false. Moreover, the whole superstructure of Catholicism will collapse with the failure of its foundation. Let us, therefore, begin this study of Catholicism by examining the first four foundation points previously enumerated.

WAS THE CHURCH BUILT UPON PETER?

In their attempt to prove that the church was built upon the apostle Peter, Catholics go to Matthew 16:18, where the apostle records that Jesus stated, "**And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.**" Let us examine this passage. In the Greek language, "Peter" is in the masculine gender (*petros*). *Petros* means a small stone or pebble. Jesus used the feminine gender in the Greek language for "rock" (*petra*) when He said, "**upon this rock I will build my church.**" *Petra* means a ledge or cliff of rock. In the light of the meaning of these two Greek words, translated "rock" in Matthew 16:18, are we to conclude that Jesus built His church on a pebble, or a cliff of rock? Indeed, Jesus built His church on the foundation rock of truth that Peter confessed, namely, that Jesus is, "*the Christ, the Son of the living God,*" the *New English Bible* notwithstanding (Mat. 16:16).

Catholics try to attack the previous "gender argument" by pointing out that Jesus spoke Aramaic and not Greek; that the book of Matthew originally appeared in Aramaic and, unlike Greek, the genders are the same in Aramaic. I point out that it is Catholic tradition—nothing more, nothing less, and nothing else—that says the book of Matthew originally appeared in Aramaic. It is merely a Catholic assertion that such is the case. Where is the proof? Furthermore, if Jesus originally spoke the words of Matthew 16:16 in Aramaic, it was the Holy Spirit Who infallibly guided Matthew to write Matthew 16:18 in Greek. Does anyone doubt that the Holy Spirit knew how to say infallibly in Greek what Jesus said infallibly in Aramaic—and, thus the different tenses?

Please consider the following points regarding the tenses in Matthew 16:18:

1. The oldest Greek manuscripts have the words *petros* and *petra* in this verse.
2. It is against sound rules of Biblical interpretation (hermeneutics) to have Peter being the doorkeeper and at the same time the foundation. At times, Jesus is called the builder, the purchaser, the foundation, etc., of the church. However, inspiration never has Jesus in a single figure occupying more than one position or place at any one time.
3. Where in the New Testament does one find the apostles and evangelists preaching, "Peter" as they planted churches?

It would seem that such would be the case if Peter—and not Christ—was the foundation of the church. On the contrary, as they established churches, they preached Christ as the only foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11).

4. If, as the Catholics allege, it was true that the church was built upon Peter the man, they would not be proving that the church rested on any so-called successor or office. However, if they mean that the church was built upon an “office,” then it was not built on “the man” Peter. Of course, neither is true, but this is a good example of Catholic “hocus pocus.”

WAS PETER AUTHORIZED TO DEFINE LAWS FOR JESUS?

In the Catholic attempt to state that Peter, and the popes to follow him, were authorized to “define” our Lord’s laws, they go to Matthew 16:19. In that passage, Jesus said, **“I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”**

All the apostles of Christ had the same authority given to them by Jesus as Peter did (John 20:21-23). Among other things, in order to rightly divide the word of God (2 Tim. 2:15), one must have and examine the totality of what the Bible says on any given subject before reasoning with the information and drawing a conclusion. Matthew 16:19 is only part of what the Bible says on this matter—and the Catholics do not understand it. The teaching done in Matthew 18:18 and John 20:21-23 bears on who and how many of the apostles received authority from Jesus Christ.

The truth of the matter regarding what Matthew 16:19 literally says in the Greek language is as follows: Jesus said, **“and whatever you forbid on earth must be what is already forbidden in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth must be what is already permitted in heaven.”** The Greek terms, “must be whatever is already forbidden” and “what is already permitted” are passive participles. The same is true of the grammar of Matthew 18:18. Thus, the truth of the matter is that Jesus told the apostles they were permitted to bind only what had already been bound in heaven and loose on earth only what had already been loosed in heaven.

The apostles of Christ are the ambassadors of Christ to earth—eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 5:20; Acts 1:8). They, and they alone, possessed plenipotentiary power. This is the authority that one ambassador from one government has in representing his government to another. It means that he alone may speak the official position of his government to another government. An ambassador may not change any part of what his government has previously determined. He may only state it accurately. The same is true of all the apostles—not just Peter—of Jesus Christ in representing the will of the court of heaven to men on earth (John 16:13; Luke 24:29; Acts 2:4; 1 Cor. 2:4; 1 Pet. 1:21). For Paul’s apostle-

ship, see Galatians 1:11-17. Thus, Christians continue today in the apostles’ doctrine (Acts 2:42).

It is interesting to note that in 1870, when Pius IX was “defined” by the Vatican Council to be “infallible,” it was by a majority vote of the cardinals and bishops after many days of heated debate. The Holy Spirit had nothing to do with the decision.

There is no Scripture that supports, 1) Peter being given the authority Rome asserts was given to him or, 2) successors to Peter’s office. Therefore, 3) how could Peter pass down to his successors that which he never had?

DID CHRIST MAKE PETER HEAD OF THE CHURCH?

Catholics cite John 21:15-17 in an attempt to prove their claim that Christ made Peter to be head over all the church. The Scripture reads,

So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith unto him a second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things: thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.

In interpreting this Scripture, three assumptions are made by Catholics: 1) That Jesus was asking Peter if he (Peter) loved Him (Christ) more than the other apostles loved Him (Christ); 2) that Jesus had in mind the “laity” and the “clergy” when He told Peter to, “feed my lambs” and, “Feed my sheep.” According to Catholic doctrine, this was our Lord’s way of telling Peter to take care of the whole church—“laity” and “clergy”; and, 3) that such authority was to be handed down to the popes who succeeded to Peter’s office.

It is important to understand that in the passage under consideration Jesus employed two Greek words for “feed” or “tend.” They are *boske* and *poimaine*. Ordinarily, *boske* is rendered simply “feed.” When used figuratively, it means to “teach.” The idea is the impartation of spiritual food. In the New Testament, *poimaine* is used several times and in most cases translated “feed.” Some versions render *poimaine* into “tend.” Paul told the Ephesian elders to, **“Take heed unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the 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). In this passage the elders are commissioned to the same thing that Peter was told to do. In this regard, Peter later wrote,

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof,

not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind (1 Pet. 5:1-2).

“Feed” is translated from *poimainate*. Peter says it is the responsibility of all elders to do what he was to do. He was their fellow-elder. There is nothing in the Scriptures indicating that Peter thought of himself as the pope and, therefore, head of all the church. It is simply a figment of Catholic imagination.

WAS PETER MADE CHIEF OF ALL THE APOSTLES OF JESUS CHRIST?

The first Scripture to which Catholics appeal to attempt to prove that Peter was made chief of all the apostles is Acts 8:14-15). It reads,

Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost.”

Question: If Peter was “Prince of The Apostles” how was it that the other apostles sent him (Peter) on a special mission? Would not the “Prince of The Apostles” have been doing the “sending” rather than the “going”? Recently, it was the Pope who called the American Cardinals to Rome, not the Cardinals calling the Pope to America.

In Acts 19:15-22, Luke records the meeting of the elders, apostles, and others, as well as the subsequent letter produced by them to be sent to the Gentile brethren concerning the relationship of the Law of Moses to the Gentiles. Peter did not run the whole shebang! Notice that the Scripture reads that, **“it seemed good to the apostles** (not Peter alone—DPB) **and the elders** (not Peter alone—DPB), **with the whole church** (not Peter alone—DPB).” The Roman hierarchy does not operate this way today. In the case of the decision just noticed and the subsequent letter produced, the Scripture reveals that, **“it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things.”** This means that the apostles, elders, and the **“whole church”** were in complete accord with what the Holy Spirit had revealed.

By inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul declared that he was, **“not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles”** (2 Cor. 11:5). How could Paul truthfully make the preceding point if Peter was the “Prince of The Apostles”? Moreover, in Galatians 2:11-14 we have the record of Paul rebuking Peter for his hypocrisy regarding not eating with the Gentile brethren at Antioch of Syria. *Question:* what cardinal, archbishop, or bishop today would dare say or write what Paul did of Peter to the “infallible” “Right Reverend” “Holy Father,” “Prince of The Apostles,” “his eminence” the pope?

Literally, “tradition” is the only thing Catholicism has left to attempt to uphold the supremacy of Peter. However, the meaning of the word *tradition* is that which is handed down. And, if that which is handed down finds no support in

the Scriptures, then it has no weight and must be repudiated and rejected (2 Tim. 2:15; 3:16-17; Jam. 1:25; John 12:48; Heb. 4:12; Eph. 6:17; Luke 8:11). It would be nothing less or more than the tradition of men. Of such men, Jesus said, **“But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”** (Mat. 15:9).

SOME QUESTIONS FOR CATHOLICS TO PONDER REGARDING WHERE THEIR DOCTRINES ARE FOUND IN THE BIBLE

1. Where is the claim made that Peter was the ruler of the universe?
2. Where did Peter ever claim any civil government power?
3. Where did Peter ever claim any supremacy to any extent over the other apostles?
4. Where did Peter ever claim to hold “the place of God” on earth? (Pope Leo XIII, *Praeclara Gratulationis Publicae*, The Reunion of Christendom, June 20, 1894).
5. Except as Peter was led by the Holy Spirit, when did Peter ever claim to speak for Jesus?
6. Where is the proof that Peter was ever in the city of Rome?
7. Where does the Bible reveal that Peter established the “papal throne”?
8. Where does the Bible teach that Peter had any successors?

CONCLUSION

In this brief article, we have seen that the Scriptures do not teach that,

1. The church was built upon Peter.
2. Peter was given the authority of binding and loosing whatever laws he thought ought to be changed as long as they remained within the basic structure of the basic teaching of Jesus.
3. Peter was made the head of the church, vicar of Christ, and ruler of the universe.
4. Peter was the prince of the apostles.
5. Peter and his successors’ authority were universal in spiritual and temporal matters.
6. Peter and his successors’ authority was “supreme” and “apart” from civil authority.
7. Peter’s office and authority were passed down to his successors for all time.

As I wrote in the beginning of this article, if one of these seven fundamental stones concerning Peter in Catholicism’s foundation is erroneous, the whole of Catholicism fails and falls to the ground. Everything—the organization of the Catholic Church, her fake miracles, her celebration of Mass, her doctrine of Transubstantiation, her doctrine of Purgatory, her Confessional System, her Seven Sacraments, and on,

and on—is utterly destroyed.

It is my desire that all those who espouse the name of Jesus Christ as their Savior would turn to the Bible and the Bible only, knowing that it is capable of making Christians only—members of the church of which we read in our own New Testaments—the church of Christ (Acts 2:38, 41, 42, 47; Rom. 16:16). Why not be a Christian—nothing more,

nothing less, and nothing else? Why not renounce all sectarian denominationalism and have a “thus saith the Lord” for all you believe and practice (Col. 3:17)? It is the way that is right and cannot be wrong. On the other hand, Catholicism is not from heaven, but from men.

—David P. Brown, Editor

WHAT IS AN “EVANGELICAL CHRISTIAN”?

Lee Moses

Every Presidential election cycle, particularly during the Republican primaries, an expression is heard much more widely than at other times—this expression is “evangelical Christians,” or sometimes simply “evangelicals.” Pundits and prognosticators see this group as a significant constituency toward determining the winner of the Republican primary. Controversy was stirred when Donald Trump identified himself as an evangelical. Some members of the churches of Christ consider themselves evangelical Christians. But what is an evangelical Christian?

The term “evangelical” itself comes from the Greek word for “gospel,” *euangelion*. Very literally then, evangelical means “pertaining to the Gospel.” Obviously, every Christian (in the true sense of the term) is “pertaining to the Gospel.” It is the Gospel that saved him and made him a Christian (1 Cor. 4:15; 15:1-2). It is the Gospel by which he continues to live (John 6:63; Rom. 8:1). It would be redundant to refer to a “pertaining-to-the-Gospel” Christian, since there is actually no other kind. But it would otherwise be accurate to refer to a Christian as an “evangelical Christian” if one were to use its literal meaning. However, the designation evangelical has assumed a different meaning altogether from its literal meaning.

Evangelicalism is a movement that traces its origins to the eighteenth century. It came “from the confluence of Pietism, Presbyterianism, and the vestiges of Puritanism. Evangelicalism picked up the peculiar characteristics from each strain—warmhearted spirituality from the Pietists (for instance), doctrinal precisionism from the Presbyterians, and individualistic introspection from the Puritans.”¹ Also contributing to this was High Church Anglicanism, which brought to Evangelicalism “rigorous spirituality and innovative organization.”² *The Handbook of Denominations* defines evangelical as “a word to denote primary loyalty to the gospel of Christ in contrast to ecclesiastical or rationalistic types of Christianity; spiritual-mindedness and zeal for Christian living as opposed to ritualism.”³

Evangelical churches are Protestant churches that are considered distinct from mainline Protestant churches based on certain beliefs. These beliefs include:

1. The Bible is the highest authority in all matters of doctrine and faith.
2. Jesus Christ’s death on the cross is the only possible source of salvation.
3. It is important to teach non-Christians about Jesus and to encourage them to trust in Jesus.
4. One receives salvation by faith alone (some add repentance).
5. Most (but not all) believe in the doctrine of the rapture, claiming that Christians will be instantaneously sucked up into the air, leaving everyone else to suffer through the Premillennial “tribulation” period.⁴

The Bible shows no disagreement with these first three tenets as stated; neither should anyone else. However, the Bible clearly refutes belief #4, stating, “**Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only**” (Jam. 2:24). Obedience is required for salvation: “**He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him**” (Heb. 5:9). Jesus stated, “**He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved**” (Mark 16:16). Those considered “evangelicals” deny the necessity of obedience generally and the necessity of baptism specifically.

This view expressed in belief #4 pollutes their application of beliefs numbers 1-3 as well. Evangelicals clearly do not hold the Bible as the highest authority in all matters of doctrine and faith. If they did, they would not deny what the Bible clearly and repeatedly teaches about the necessity of baptism to procuring salvation (Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27; 1 Pet. 3:21). One can observe the practices of evangelicals and see that they do not submit to the authority of the Bible, feeling free to add to the worship of the New Testament whatever they see fit.

They also use their view of belief #2 to support their view expressed in #4—since Christ did everything necessary to obtain salvation, they will insist that no one can do anything else to contribute toward his salvation. Their own hypocrisy is seen in that they will demand that one contributes belief (and sometimes repentance) toward his own sal-

vation.

And what evangelicals believe should be taught to non-Christians is that they can be saved—indeed, must be saved—by faith only, a fatal error that poisons those they teach.

Furthermore, the Bible nowhere teaches the doctrine of the rapture.

So while Christians might accept the designation “evangelical” if used literally, Christians must distance themselves from evangelicalism. Evangelicalism is based upon error. And, as mentioned, evangelicalism traces its roots to the eighteenth century. If one is to be a Christian, he will need to trace his religious origin much earlier than the eighteenth century. To be more precise, he will need to trace his religious origins to the church that Christ built in the first century.

END NOTES

¹ Wikipedia, s.v. “Evangelicalism,” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Evangelicalism>.

² Ibid.

³ Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*, 5th edition (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970), p. 231.

⁴ Jamie Dean, “Just As I Am,” *WORLD Magazine*, Apr 2, 2016, 36; Traci Schumacher, “Five Beliefs That Set Evangelicals Apart From Other Christians,” *Newsmax*, Apr 2, 2015, <http://www.newsmax.com/FastFeatures/evangelical-christians-beliefs/2015/04/02/id/636050/>; Bob Smietana, “What Is an Evangelical? Four Questions Offer New Definition,” *Christianity Today*, Nov 19, 2015, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2015/november/what-isevangelical-new-definition-nae-lifewayresearch.html>.

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DEVIATIONS FROM THE TRUTH

Roelf L. Ruffner

A NATION GONE MAD?

The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart: And thou shalt grope at noonday, as the blind gropeth in darkness, and thou shalt not prosper in thy ways: and thou shalt be only oppressed and spoiled evermore, and no man shall save thee (Deu. 28:28-29).

The above citation is from the prophet Moses who warned ancient Israel that if they departed from the Law of Moses their nation would descend into social and political chaos. And they did so many times in their long history (Jude 2:11-23). The kingdom of Northern Israel or Samaria is a perfect example of this. After seceding from David’s kingdom, they embraced idolatry and materialism. Their political system gradually disintegrated into one palace coup and assassination after another. God began to shear off their territory to the Assyrians (2 Kin. 15:29). And in 721 B.C., their kingdom was conquered by the Assyrian Empire and many were taken into captivity (2 Kin. 17:6-23; 18:10-12). The southern kingdom of Judah followed much the same broad way (Mat. 7:13). They did have a few righteous kings, who followed the Law like Hezekiah and Josiah who tried to reform the nation. But Judah gradually became more idolatrous and depraved than their northern cousins. They descended into political anarchy and were conquered by the Neo-Babylonian Empire and taken into seventy years of captivity beginning in 606 B.C. with Jerusalem destroyed in 586 B.C.

My friends, God rules in the affairs of men whether they realize it or not. **“And he changeth the times and the seasons: he removeth kings, and setteth up kings: he giveth wisdom unto the wise, and knowledge to them that know understanding”** (Dan. 2:21). America is not ancient Israel nor has it ever been a “Christian nation,” but it has professed in the past a standard of morality based on the Holy Bible. I am sorry to write that in the last few generations all that has changed. Now much of America is as Godless as any pagan society. Abortion, profanity, same-sex marriage, genderless bathrooms, sexual immorality, drunkenness, drug abuse, licentiousness gone to seed, rampant covetousness, and unscriptural divorce and remarriage are only a few of our nation’s sins.

And like ancient Israel America is, in my opinion, headed toward political chaos. For a generation society as become more polarized and fragmented. Extreme ideologies such as socialism and populism are being accepted by many. This current primary season has descended into provocative rhetoric and personal attacks by candidates. Politically motivated violence has even raised its ugly head for the first time since the 1960s. Many are looking for a “strong leader” to impose order. Are we headed down the path of ancient Israel?

In the election of 1860, our political system began to unravel. Since the 1840s, the debate over chattel slavery has grown louder and louder. In 1855, a guerrilla war broke out

in Kansas and Missouri between pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers. Materialism was rampant in society with a dog-eat-dog mentality, especially in business. Americans drank four times as much as they do now and drunkenness was almost universally accepted. While some people feigned religiosity, they forgot the Golden Rule and love of one's neighbor, especially if that neighbor was black. In the Supreme Court's 1857 Dred Scott decision, it was ruled that a black man (freeman or slave) had no rights in the United States that a white man was bound to respect. Before the election the Democratic Party, which had controlled the Presidency, the Senate, and the Supreme Court for many years, split into two parts (North and South) primarily over slavery. The old Whig Party changed its name and tried to stay neutral. The relatively new Republican Party reluctantly accepted slavery but wanted it contained to the South. After a raucous, hate filled campaign on all sides, Abraham Lincoln won with only 39.9% of the vote (virtually none from the South) yet a plurality of the Electoral College. He traveled secretly to his inauguration in Washington, D.C. in March 1861 under death threats. Most Southern states seceded from the Union in the meantime and the first shots of the Civil War were fired on Ft. Sumter in Charleston, SC harbor on April 12, 1861. Our beloved nation had gone mad.

No political party, ideology, or even a demagogue on a white horse can change the confused moral, spiritual, and ethical cesspool of our nation and its disintegrating politics. **“Thus saith the Lord; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the Lord”** (Jer. 17:5). We must pray on our knees earnestly and daily for our beloved nation and its leaders (2 Tim. 2:1,2). We must reform our own lives to reflect the life of our Savior, getting rid of any “isms” in our way (Tit. 2:11-14). We must concentrate on saving souls, rather than dollars, with the soul cleansing primitive Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37,38; Rom. 1:16). ONLY the Gospel can save our nation from this madness and the judgment of God (2 Cor. 5:10; Acts 17:30,31). Our nation and our culture need restoration to God! Are you a part of God's purpose for Christ's kingdom, the church, in this world or a hindrance to it? **“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men”** (Mat. 5:13).

ANOTHER RING OF AUTHENTICITY

But when they had commanded them to go aside out of the council, they conferred among themselves, Saying, What shall we do to these men? for that indeed a notable miracle hath been done by them is manifest to all them that dwell in Jerusalem; and we cannot deny it. But that it spread no further among the people, let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name (Acts 4: 15-17).

In the Book of Acts Chapters 3 and 4, the physician and

inspired historian Luke records the miraculous occasion in the Temple in Jerusalem of the healing of a forty plus years old crippled man by the apostle Peter and its profound effect upon the thousands of people in the Temple that day. Peter, John, and the Holy Spirit used that miracle to convict the people of their sins and to exhort them to obey the Gospel of Jesus Christ and gain forgiveness of sins. **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord”** (Acts 3:19). Peter and John were promptly arrested by the Temple police and thrown into jail.

The next day, the two apostles appeared before the august body of the Sanhedrin or the Council of the Seventy. It was dominated by the materialist High Priest Caiaphas and his family, of the sect of the Sadducees. The High Priest had been the prime mover behind the Sanhedrin's illegal arrest, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus the Christ months before (John 11:47-53). The apostles preached the Messiahship of Jesus and His resurrection from the dead; which the Sadducees vehemently denied. The High Priest and his family controlled more than eighteen thousand Levitical priests who performed their sacred duties every hour day and night in the Temple (Jackson, 68). In something akin to the modern day Mafia, this family allowed the money changers and animal dealers to operate openly in the Court of the Gentiles, in violation of the Law of Moses, taking a share of the profits. Jesus cleansed the Temple twice during His ministry striking their hypocrisy and greed directly in their pocketbooks (John 2; Mat. 21).

Yet, if I was a first-time reader of this account, being a student of history, I would ask myself how Luke knew of this conversation by the council held in secrecy. One possibility is that John heard of this from his contacts within the council. Apparently he knew the High Priest (John 18:15 —**“another disciple”**) and perhaps his family. But I think that relationship changed dramatically for John after the establishment of the church of Christ in Acts 2.

A more probable source is found in Acts Chapter 6. In a remarkable statement Luke writes, **“And the word of God multiplied; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith”** (Acts 6:7—emphasis in italics mine.) This **“company”** or **“disorganized throng”** (*Vines*, 115) was so convinced by the evidence concerning the Gospel (the Resurrection, the miracles of Jesus and the apostles, and their irrefutable eyewitness) that they “checked it in” with the High Priest and his syndicate and obeyed the Messiah (John 3:5; Acts 2:37, 38). Those priests probably lost everything formerly precious to them. For me these priests may have been the source of the conversation of the council recorded in Acts 4:15-17.

This revealed record once again rings the bell of authenticity for the inspiration of the Holy Bible. Luke did not write

his book on a lark or rush to finish it without painstakingly checking the facts. It was not a book of gossip as were many historical records of his day. Rather this historian, inspired by the Holy Spirit (2 Pet. 2:20, 21), left us a treasure to be read, understood, and obeyed. For the Holy Bible is not only inspired of God but inerrant.

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed (Luke 1:1-4).

Jackson, Wayne, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Courier Publications: Stockton, CA; 2000, p. 68.

Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Eds.: W. E. Vine, Merrill Unger, William White, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1985.

THE UNCOMMON MEMORIAL MEAL

“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Cor. 11:26).

For almost 2,000 years, Christians have come together to remember their Lord's command and to partake of a memorial meal or the Lord's Supper. **“And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight” (Acts 20:7).**

Over the centuries the Roman church made this meal into a superstitious ritual. The bread became “the host” or “the real presence”—the literal body of Christ. The meal itself became separated from other acts of worship—a sacrament.

In the 19th Century, Christians sought to restore the simplicity, yet the necessity, of observing the Lord's Supper—as authorized of Christ. **“And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: *this do in remembrance of me*” (Luke 22:19—emphasis in italics mine).**

Christians would ride on horseback, in wagons, carriages, and walk on foot for miles around to gather together to remember their Lord and Master's death. Sisters would have baked the unleavened bread. **“The fruit of the vine”** (Luke 22:18) had been made from grapes, carefully preserving the unfermented grape juice or **“the blood of grapes”** (Gen. 49:11). A simple cloth would sometimes cover the table and the emblems to keep the flies away. A brother would often make a short “table talk” to remind the partakers of what they were doing. One brother might “preside over the table” while the other brothers passed out the emblems. There was

no pomp and circumstance, no “mystery,” just simple New Testament Christianity.

Today the weekly Sunday observance of this Christian act of worship distinguishes the Lord's church from most other religious bodies. It is one of the identifying marks of the undenominational church or **“one body”** (Eph. 4:4) we read about in the New Testament.

Does the church you attend observe this memorial meal every Sunday as one of the five acts of worship in the first day of the week worship assembly, or does it only attempt to do it monthly, quarterly, yearly, or on some so-called “holy day?” Does it have a non-Sunday observance? Does it make the Lord's Supper a part of some common meal? If the answer is “yes” to any of these practices, by what authority do they do this? Is it by man-made authority (tradition, manual, church edict, catechism, discipline, etc.) or the authority of the Lord—the New Testament? **“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him” (Col. 3:17). “But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mat. 15:9; John 12:48).**

If the answer is “yes,” please flee from that false church as did Joseph from Potipher's wife! Seek and find the body of Christ on the pages of the New Testament. Learn the gospel, believe, and obey it. Then, as a repentant believer in Christ, you can be immersed in water by the authority of Christ for the remission of your sins (Mark 16:15; Rom. 1:16; 1 Cor. 15:1-4; 10:17; Acts 17:30; Rom. 10:10; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom. 6:3, 4; Col. 2:12; Gal. 3:26, 27, Acts 2:41, 42, 47). Having obeyed the gospel you can serve Him faithfully all your life (Rev. 2:10; 1 Cor. 15:58). Of the early church it is written, **“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and the prayers” (Acts 2:42—*ASV*, 1901—emphasis in italics mine).** If we believe what they believed and do what they did, in the way they did it, and for the reason they did it, we will be saved as they were saved from their sins and be faithful in the Lord's church.

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“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Mat. 10:28).

POLITICS AND RELIGION: LIBERALS WILL BE LIBERALS

Dub McClish

INTRODUCTION

Railroad tracks run parallel to each other, as do numerous other things (e.g., lines on a music staff, window blinds, prison bars, et al.). Such items are not only aligned; they go in the same direction and generally have the same terminus. Parallels exist not only in the area of physical phenomena, but in the realm of ideas well.

The “no holds barred” intensity of the current presidential campaign served to accentuate the deep political (social, cultural, and religious) rift in our nation. Numerous seasoned presidential campaign observers agree that this is one of the most bitterly fought races ever. This highly-charged atmosphere has provoked a few thoughts concerning some ideological parallels. Generally, the national political division breaks along “conservative” and “liberal” lines, often identified as the “right” and the “left,” respectively.

SOME GENERAL PARALLELS

Some general parallels are obvious between the political and religious landscapes. Professed believers in God, the Bible, and the Christ are also divided along the lines of the “right” and “left” dichotomy that is observable in politics. This conservative-liberal division is quite apparent in both the Roman Catholic Church and in Protestant Denominationalism (with pronounced liberal dominance in the latter). So we see these parallel “rails” of politics and religion: both are very much divided along conservative and liberal lines.

Even closer to home, it is no secret that the church of Christ is also *deeply divided* along conservative and liberal lines. (I do not employ the term liberal to be unkind or unfair, but to be accurate. Liberal accurately describes those who take liberties with God’s Word.) What began in a seemingly small way about half a century ago has steadily developed into a cleavage with no foreseeable prospect of repair. The church is moving inexorably toward a repeat—in the not-too-distant-future, I fear—of the tragic complete sundering of the body of Christ that occurred a century ago (some seem never to learn or care about the lessons of history). Not a few believe said division has already occurred. As sad as it is to contemplate, the conservative-liberal tension has already produced internal schism in hundreds of congregations. The number of entire congregations that have moved or are moving leftward is surely in the hundreds—if not more. It is only a matter of time now until the reality of this division is undeniable—even by the most dedicated religious “ostriches.”

Those who have read any of my writings or who have

heard me preach for any length of time are aware of my unashamed conservative perspective. Liberals fail who seek to slander me by throwing this label my way. To me, conservative is neither pejorative nor demeaning; it is complimentary. For my part, the true meaning of this term has only positive connotations. I do not claim to speak for them, but I believe there are still many faithful saints whose only interest in religion is mine—to simply *conserve* or *preserve* that “once-for-all-delivered” faith (Jude 3) for which the Lord died. Conservatives are the real restorers. We seek no more and no less than the unadulterated doctrine and practice of the New Testament.

The proclivity of liberals to categorize all who object to their schemes as “antis” stems from the misconception that conservatives like to “make laws.” Notwithstanding this frequent accusation, I am not the least bit interested in making any new laws for God (If I have ever done so, it was not because of, but in spite of, any such intent). This charge accurately describes genuine “anti-ism,” not genuine conservatism. (By *genuine anti-ism* I refer to the practice of making personal scruples about such things as church support of children’s homes, church co-operation, eating in the church building, the time of meeting, or even the color of the carpet, grounds of fellowship. All other things being equal, such scruples [whether held by congregations or by individuals] are of no consequence to a genuine conservative—as long as they remain just that—personal scruples.)

When one objectively considers the correct definition of conservative, he will realize that personal-scruple-enforcing “anti” brethren are no more conservative than liberals and that liberals are as much in the law-making business as are extreme “antis.” Liberals just make their laws *broad*, whereas said “antis” make theirs *narrow*, than God’s law—but both are law-makers. The implication of the foregoing remarks is clear: *Liberalism* and *anti-ism* are both extremes; conservatism occupies the happy middle ground of Truth. If I did not believe this, I would seek other ground.

Liberal innovators drove the wedge that eventually split the church a century ago. They began it all by introducing the missionary society and the [mechanical] instrument of music a half century earlier. Until then, the church was marching as a solid, united phalanx and making great gains for the Truth on every hand. Ironically, those conservative brethren (whose only aim was the restoration of primitive Christianity) who resisted the innovators and their innovations were shown the door and blamed for the

division.

Like their earlier counterparts, today's liberals, with their host of innovations—all symptomatic of their rejection of the authority of Scripture—are completely culpable for the division now occurring in the church. The list of strange practices and doctrines they have imposed—and are imposing—on the Lord's people is as long as my arm (and I have long arms). The only sense in which those who endeavor to preserve the ancient landmarks are guilty of the current division is that we have dared expose and oppose the nefarious machinations of the liberals. Many of us plan to continue doing so.

SOME SPECIFIC PARALLELS

With the foregoing as background, let us now consider a more specific set of parallels—the one that exists between liberals/leftists in politics (including the major news media) and their liberal/leftist counterparts in the church (including the “news media” operated by brethren). These two groups of liberals run on parallel “rails”—they just circulate in different spheres of activity. Liberals in the church mirror the nature, attitudes, and tactics demonstrated by politicians and media principals on the left (especially in the recent and current) presidential campaigns. Consider the following:

Liberals do not like to be called “liberals”

A politician may spend twenty years amassing the most liberal voting record in the US Senate. Yet, when his opponent emphasizes this, correctly labeling him a “liberal,” the liberal (and the “establishment” media) will shame the exposé for daring to call him what he is. In politics, liberals know that they rarely win unless they can somehow disguise their liberalism, so they try to hide under such terms as moderate, progressive, or centrist.

Liberals in the church object to this term also, and for the same reason. Preachers, professors, and editors who no lon-

ger love the Truth and who seek to turn the church into a denomination (which they already believe it to be), do not like to be identified for what they are—liberals. They know that faithful brethren will not tolerate their shenanigans if convinced of their liberalism. They thus prefer moderate, progressive, and centrist, just as politicians do.

Liberals are elitists

Liberal politicians are generally arrogant and puffed up with their own importance. They believe they are better, smarter, and wiser than “ordinary” people. They exhibit a “nose-in-the-air” condescension toward their constituents that smacks of an ancient landlord's attitude toward his serfs. The “common people” would hardly know how to tie their shoes or chew gum without their patronizing advice and oversight.

Liberals in the church are eaten up with arrogance and elitism. This is especially so if they have earned a PhD, and even more so if they occupy a professorship in one of the universities founded by brethren. Many of them have been off to Harvard, Princeton, or some other school full of infidel theologians, and have come back enlightened. They have escaped the shackles of simple faith in the Bible as God's verbally and plenary inspired Word. Reminiscent of the Gnostics of old, they know it all—even more than God has revealed. Job's mordant response to Zophar nails them: “**No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you**” (Job 12:2).

We pitiful souls who have only been studying and preaching the simple Truth for forty, fifty, sixty, or more years are just ignoramuses. We are not linguists or theologians, and they are. My, my, such Neanderthals as we still believe that *faithful* churches of Christ today are the one church of the New Testament in our time, that one must be in it to be saved, and that the only way one can enter it is by obeying Jesus' plan of salvation, culminating in baptism unto remission of sins (Acts 2:37–47).

Liberals profess themselves to be supremely tolerant. In

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their campaign speeches, liberal candidates typically boast of their tolerance for all viewpoints, lifestyles, behaviors, and attitudes. Their practice, however, reveals that their “tolerance” definitely has limits. It comes to an abrupt halt when one dares question and/or expose the fallacies and/or evils of such things as abortion and homosexual behavior. [We can add to the list the so-called transvestites and transgenders.—*Editor*] Verily, liberals are among the most intolerant people on earth—if in doubt just resist them or their policies. [Some of us who have resisted, exposed, and renounced their errors have experienced their kind of love and tolerance, and we have pointed out the same to the church for years—“*You have not be loved until you have been loved by a liberal.*”—*Editor*]

So it is with liberals in the church. They are so sweet and profoundly tolerant that they would not dare offend anyone by preaching on the errors of denominationalism, the sin of using instrumental music in worship, or the necessity of baptism for remission of sins. They would not think of saying or doing anything that might cause some sinner to get the idea he is lost. They see no problem with “social drinking,” near-nakedness in public, adulterous marriages, or buying a lottery ticket—they are so tolerant, you see.

Or are they? Actually, they are only tolerant of almost everything and anyone, *except* sound doctrine and those who preach and defend it. They have an extremely low tolerance threshold for any teaching that counters their agenda. For decades such places as Pepperdine U, ACU, LCU, Lipscomb U, and the Tulsa Workshop have not tendered invitations to conservative preachers to speak. Liberal churches years ago

closed their pulpits to any but liberal preachers. I suppose it is because liberals are so exceedingly tolerant that they do not extend these invitations. “But conservative congregations do not invite liberals into their pulpits, either,” someone observes. The difference is that we do not pretend or profess to be super-tolerant of all views. We make it known plainly that we are consciously intolerant of and will not provide a platform for false teachers, as the Scriptures obligate us to be and do (Rom. 16:17–18; 2 Tim. 4:2–4; 2 John 10–11; et al.).

Liberals are experts at applying a double standard

Liberal politicians demonstrate this practice in various ways (including their professed tolerance, discussed above):

First, political liberals project themselves as great champions of the First Amendment of our Constitution, part of which guarantees free speech. They are all for free speech as long as they and their media sycophants are viciously lying about their conservative opponents. However, they suddenly care not so much for free speech when opponents come forward with the truth about their dangerous policies, major character flaws, and inconsistencies. By threat and intimidation they seek to silence conservative voices in the media. By long serving as the unpaid voice of liberals the “major” news media have outrageously abused the very free speech right under which they operate. Amazingly, they do such in the name of “objectivity,” while denying their glaring bias. They are pleased to mitigate, slant, and/or even withhold significant conservative facts and voices from the public.

Liberals in the church are not interested in freedom of expression. The closing of most of the university lecture-

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ships and liberal big church pulpits to all but their kind (all the while professing tolerance) is a case in point. *The Christian Chronicle* bills itself as “An international newspaper for members of churches of Christ.” It boasts of its “balance” and “objectivity,” yet its pages are filled with promotion—paid and unpaid—of the most liberal institutions, projects, and men among us. Its editors misname “liberals” as “progressives” and refer to those seeking to conserve New Testament teaching and practice as “traditionalists” (Oct. 2004:30). Where were “balance” and “objectivity” when its editor described conservatives as those who exclude all but those who “worship as the church did in the early decades of the last century” (July 2004:30)? Contrariwise, we charge them with rejecting the plan of salvation and the pattern for the church of the **first** century.

Second, as mentioned earlier, political liberals object to those who correctly label them liberals. Labeling, they say, is unfair and prejudicial. Yet, in another application of the double standard, they are the biggest labelers around. They refer to political conservatives as “the radical right,” “the vast right-wing conspiracy,” “the religious right,” and similar terms with a curled lip and an unbatted eye.

So it is with liberals in the church. As mentioned above, they do not want to be called what they are—liberals. They self-righteously and indignantly decry the awful practice of labeling. I have even heard some conservative brethren mistakenly join the voices of liberals in this respect, declaring, “The New Testament does not contain the words, conservative or liberal, so we should not use them.” No, not explicitly, but it does so *implicitly* in every passage that warns of apostasy and enjoins faithful adherence to the Gospel, which passages permeate the inspired volume (as even neophyte Bible students should know). Nonetheless, liberals have

proved themselves very prolific, adept, and imaginative in labeling their opponents (e.g., “legalists,” “five-steppers,” “brotherhood watchdogs,” “witch-hunters,” “keepers of orthodoxy,” “Pharisees,” “traditionalists,” “commandment keepers,” “new antis,” et al.) It is not that liberals do not like labeling; they just do not like to be on the receiving end of labels that truly characterize them.

CONCLUSION

The truth of the matter is that liberals will be liberals, wherever one finds them. If political liberals should someday gain control of all branches of our government and if they watered-down our constitution and the God-given rights and freedoms it guarantees, we could still live as God’s people and be saved at last. Of course, we would likely be under severe opposition and duress (political liberals have generally demonstrated that they think believing in God is a joke, the Bible is a fairy tale, and alley cats and barnyard animals are proper role models for “morals”—with my apologies to the animals in some cases).

However, liberals in the church will cause souls to be lost. They have no more respect for the inspired constitution of the kingdom of Heaven than political liberals have for the US constitution. They have an amazing ability to ignore Paul’s mandate: “**And whatever ye do, in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord, giving thanks to God the Father through him**” (Col. 3:17). They preach a diluted message that is destroying the church everywhere men implement it. Their message robs men of the plan of salvation from sin, and ultimately, therefore, of Heaven itself. Liberalism is simply another word for apostasy and heresy. Paul described those who thus walk as “**holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof,**” and enjoined: “**from these also turn away**” (2 Tim. 3:5). [*NOTE: I wrote*

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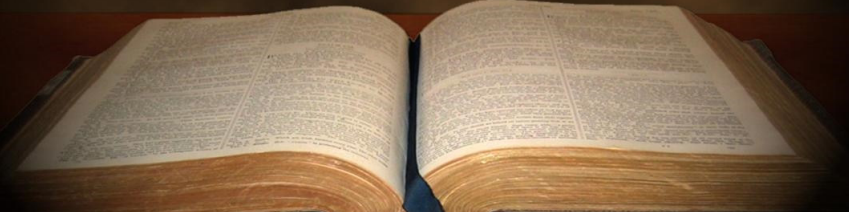
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the foregoing MS while editor of *THE GOSPEL JOURNAL*. It appeared in a slightly different form as my “Editorial Perspective” in the November 2004 issue of said publication, of which I was editor (revised/updated 2/17/16). DM]—{I have taken some editorial liberties with the article by chang-

ing a few words and adding an editorial comment here and there to reflect the present state of affairs in politics and the Lord’s church.—*Editor*}

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Denton, TX 76209



ADDENDUM TO THE PREVIOUS ARTICLE

As brother McClish in the preceding article emphasized, liberalism is often associated with a political party but for many years now it has also greatly troubled the Lord’s church. Today liberalism is a very strong influence on the thinking (such as it is) of church members (not a few elders and preachers) regarding fellowship between and among themselves.

Further, liberals are church members whose wills are not restrained by what the New Testament authorizes. For whatever reason, they desire to go beyond the things that are written in God’s Word (1 Cor. 4:6, *ASV*–1901). In liberalism, people’s individual choices are always right for them. It does not matter if the Bible instructs them in a different way, they determine what is true for themselves. Thus, what is correct to them is determined by their own feelings, concepts, and estimation.

There have always been liberals in the church that say sin is not that destructive. Thus, they teach that the doctrine of Christ, the only avenue for saving truth to reach mankind, is not as important as love. Fundamentally, they define “love” to be a syrupy, sick, sentimentalism rather than that which always lead one to obey God as He reveals His will to mankind in the Bible in general and the New Testament in particular (Col. 3:17; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17; Heb. 4:12; Luke 8:11; Jam. 1:25; John 8: 31, 32; 17:17; 12:48; 15:10; 1 John 5:2, 3). Remember the admonition of the apostle John found in 2 John 6-11. Thus, liberalism opens one up to loosing people from what God in His Word binds on them.

Most readers of this paper know that one is not required to go as far from rejecting the restrictions of God’s Word as have Rubel Shelly, Max Lucado, Abilene Christian University (ACU), Lipscomb University, etc., regarding the doctrine of Christ before one can be correctly labored a liberal. For anyone in the church to loose oneself or others from a New Testament obligation is to make oneself guilty of the sin of liberalism. Let us consider the following to see the proof of the foregoing affirmation.

The apostle Paul taught in Romans 15:4 that Old Testament accounts are to teach Christians about living as the Lord would have them live under the authority of Jesus in His church. Thus, we turn to the account of Nadab and Abihu found in Leviticus chapter ten to realize that it takes only

one sin (in this case one liberal act) to condemn the sinner.

Just what sin against God did Nadab and Abihu commit? They used a fire “**which He had not commanded them**” (Lev. 10:1). From man’s perspective, what the two brothers did may seem as nothing, but to God it revealed their lack of faith in Him. They did not take God at His Word (Rom. 10:17; 2 Cor. 5:7; Heb. 11:6). Thus, God killed them for loosing where He had not loosed. We must not be guilty of the same kind of sin. We must not add to or take away from God’s instructions (Deu. 4:2; Rev. 22:18,19).

The foregoing being the case, there are liberals over much and their are liberals over a little when it comes to the doctrine of Christ. *What is spiritually destroying many brethren today is not being liberal in many areas of one’s life, such as ACU, etc., but being liberal in a few or only one area of living the Christian life.* Such brethren have not denied that the New Testament is a divine pattern, or advocated that the church is a denomination, or that the use of mechanical instruments of music in worship is acceptable to God, or that the Lord’s Supper can be observed on other days than the first day of every week in the worship assembly of the saints, or that women may be preachers, etc. In fact, many of them continue to teach what faithful brethren have always taught. But it is in their lack of consistent application of those truths that has permitted Satan to devour them. They have arbitrarily decided that if a brother or sister is mostly sound in life and doctrine but just a little bit unsound, rather than break fellowship with them, they continue in fellowship with them. The view with some seems to be this—*if we point out their sin(s) whatever it is, telling them they are wrong, then we can continue to fellowship them.*

We have seen this error practised by preachers, elders, preacher training schools, the churches that sponsor them, certain papers, and lectureships. It comes down to the fact that many brethren are content with accepting liberalism on the level of Nadab and Abihu, but not on the level of Jereboam, the son of Nebat or Ahab. The Lord willing, we will deal more with this kind of liberalism in another issue of *CFTF*.

—David P. Brown, Editor

DIRECTORY OF CHURCHES

-Colorado-

Denver—Piedmont Church of Christ, 1602 S. Parker Rd. Ste. 109, Denver, CO 80231, Sunday: 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. www.piedmontcoc.net, Lester Kamp, evangelist. (720) 989-8155.

-England-

Cambridgeshire—Cambridge City Church of Christ, meeting at The Manor Community College, Arbury Rd., Cambridge, CB4 2JF. Sun., Bible Study--10:30 a.m., Worship-- 11:30 a.m.; Tue. Bible Study--7:30 p.m. www.CambridgeCityCoC.org.uk. Keith Sisman, Gospel Preacher. Contacts: Keith Sisman [By phone inside USA (281) 475-8247; Inside the U.K.: Cambridge (England): 01223-911243]; Alternative Cambridge contacts: Joan Moulton - 01223-210101; Postal/ mailing Address - PO BOX 1, Ramsey Huntingdon, PE26 2YZ United Kingdom

-Florida-

Ocoee—Ocoee Church of Christ, 2 East Magnolia Street, Ocoee, FL 34761. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m. Wed. 7:00 p.m. David Hartbarger, Evangelist, (407) 656-2516.

Pensacola—Bellview Church of Christ, 4850 Sauffley Field Road, Pensacola, FL 32526, Sun. 9:00 a.m., 10:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m. Michael Hatcher, evangelist, (850) 455-7595.

-Montana-

Helena—Mountain View Church of Christ, 1400 Joslyn Street, Helena, Mt. 59601, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00 p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m., Matt Bidmead (406) 461-9199.

-Oklahoma-

Elk City—Northeast Church of Christ, 616 N. Locust Ave., Mailing address P.O. Box 267, Elk City, OK 73648-0267, Sunday: 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 5:00 p.m. Wed., 7:00 p.m. Jerry and Nathan Brewer, evangelists. The church building is one block east of North Van Buren, on East Avenue C in Elk City, Oklahoma. FaceBook : www.facebook.com/nechurchofchristecok. Phone: (580) 225-4395

Porum—Church of Christ, 8 miles South of I-40 at Hwy 2, Warner exit. Sun. 10 a.m., 11 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. Allen Lawson, evangelist, email: allenlawson@earth-comm.com.

-South Carolina-

Belvedere (Greater Augusta, Georgia Area)—Church of Christ, 535 Clearwater Road, Belvedere, SC 29841, www.belvederechurchofchrist.org; e-mail belvecoc@gmail.com, (8-3) 442-6388, Sun.: 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 6:00p.m., Wed. 7:00 p.m.,

Texas-

Denton area—Northpoint Church of Christ, 4224 N. I-35 (Greenway Plaza, just north of Cracker Barrel). Mailing address: 4224 N. I-35, Denton, TX 76207. E-mail: northpointcoc@hotmail.com. Website: www.northpointcoc.com. Sunday: 9:30, 10:30, 1:00; Wednesday 7:00. Contact: Dub McClish: (940) 387-1429; dubmcclish@gmail.com.

Houston area—Spring Church of Christ, 1327 Spring Cypress, P.O. Box 39, Spring, TX 77383, (281) 353-2707. Sun. 9:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m., Wed. 7:30 p.m., David P. Brown, evangelist. Home of the Spring *Contending for the Faith* Lectures, and the internet school, Truth Bible Institute. www.churchesofchrist.com.

Huntsville—1380 Fish Hatchery Rd. Huntsville, TX 77320. Sun. 9 a. m., 10 a.m., 6 p.m., Wed. 7 p.m. (936) 438-8202.