

Contending FOR THE Faith™

FOR THOSE WHO LOVE THE TRUTH AND HATE ERROR

SHOULD ERROR REGARDING THE FIVE ACTS OF WORSHIP DISRUPT FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANS? PART TWO

Bruce Stulting

ERROR REGARDING WORSHIP

We will now consider some of the errors regarding worship. Our study of Cain and Abel proved that worship in and of itself is NOT necessarily acceptable to God. The Bible speaks of two types of worship. There is TRUE worship, as discussed in part one of this article in last month's paper. There is also FALSE worship that is offered in the form of: (1) VAIN WORSHIP, Mat. 15:9—The Pharisees were guilty of this type of false worship; (2) IGNORANT WORSHIP, Acts 17:23—The people of Athens, Greece were guilty of this type of false worship; and (3) WILL WORSHIP, Col. 2:23—Some early Christians were guilty of this type of false worship.

Error Relating To Singing as Worship

In the digression among many in the Lord's church in the 19th Century, the error of mechanical instrumental music can be traced back to 1859 when L. L. Pinkerton brought a melodeon into the worship of the church at Midway, Kentucky. This led to a division in the Lord's church that ultimately resulted in the formation of the Christian church denomination in 1906. The controversy over mechanical instrumental music still plagues the church. Furthermore, there are those

who would compromise worship by humming, clapping, whistling, or imitating the sounds of instruments with their voices. Along with these innovations, there are those who would incorporate special music such as solos and choirs into worship. We are currently witnessing a tremendous erosion of such matters within the body of Christ. The trend appears to be toward a human-centered worship service rather than a God-honoring service.

There are only two types of music—vocal and mechanical instrumental. Vocal music would include singing, humming, whistling, and imitating mechanical instruments of music with the voice. Mechanical instrumental music is self-explanatory. Regarding the type of music God authorizes in worship Paul said, **“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord”** (Eph. 5:19). God specifies “singing” as the kind of music to be used in worshipping Him. Singing is the conveyance of thoughts by means of words set to music. Singing is a form of teaching (Col. 3:16). One can no more be edified by a mere musical noise than he can by the words of a language which he does not understand. Our music must be such as to invoke **“understanding”** on the part of those who are involved (1 Cor. 14:15). This implies words, not just sounds (Jackson). Since **“singing”** is the specific type of music authorized, it would be a sin to substitute a different type of music (2 John 9-11; Gal. 1:6-10).

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Contending FOR THE Faith™

David P. Brown, Editor and Publisher
dpbcftf@gmail.com

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Editorial...

THE SIN OF SILENCE

The high priest then asked Jesus of his disciples, and of his doctrine. Jesus answered him, **I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said** (John 18:19-21).

Our Lord chose this occasion to rebuke Annas for his hypocrisy. Having done so, one of the officers **“struck Jesus with his hand”** (18:22). Jesus immediately challenged the officer with, **“If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?”** (18:23). After this scene Annas sent Jesus to Caiaphas.

Guy N. Woods, in his commentary on John, points out that some people have felt that our Lord’s conduct before Annas was out of harmony with His teaching of **“turning the other cheek”** (Mat. 5:39). In harmonizing the aforementioned events of John 18:19-24 with the teaching of Christ in Matthew 5:38-39, brother Woods gives the following quotation from Martin Luther, **“Christ forbids self defense with the hand, not with the tongue!”**

One of the most cowardly and heinous sins that can be committed is the sin of remaining silent in the presence of sin! Most people, however, speak out when they should be silent and remain silent when they should speak out. To be faithful to God, the aforementioned conduct must be remedied.

Most of the time, when the need to defend the godly actions and teaching of one’s self or others arise, it takes no little courage to stand up and speak out. Great is the example of the prophets of God in their fearless denunciation of the sins of God’s people. The prophet Micah declared: **“But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the Lord, And of judgment, and of might, To declare unto Jacob his transgression, And to Israel his sin”** (Mic. 3:8).

Isaiah, Micah’s contemporary, displayed the same spirit as Micah when he said: **“Cry aloud, spare not, Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, And shew my people their transgression, And the house of Jacob their sins”** (Isa. 58:1).

Suffer they did for the courage of their convictions, but such godly characters the Holy Spirit has selected and recorded for our learning that we might go and do likewise (Heb. 11:32-12:4).

Would you be a preacher of righteousness? Then you must walk ever so closely with the faithful prophets of old (Rom. 15:4)! As James wrote: **“Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience”** (Jam. 5:10).

Come now to the New Testament and take note of whom God selected to go before His Son that the people might be prepared for the Messiah. In the spirit of the prophet Elijah, John the Baptist did not fear to call the Pharisees and Sadducees what they were—a **“generation of vipers”** damned to a devil’s hell except they repent (Mat. 3:1-12; 11:14).

Of course, the king did not escape the preaching of John. He declared to Herod what few preachers in our adulterous society would dare to whisper in secret, specifically: **“It is not lawful for thee to have her”** (Mat. 14:4). Yes, John lost his head over the fact

that Herod was living in adultery with his brother Philip's wife. But better our heads placed on a charger because we preached the truth than our heads remain on our shoulders and the truth not taught. Would you be a faithful preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? If so, walk closely to John the Baptist!

Under similar circumstances, as when Jesus was on trial, the apostle Paul was brought before the Jewish council. Paul followed the example of our Lord. Peerless, indeed, among the servants of the Christ is this apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 22, 23).

In Rome before Caesar, Paul made his first defense without any child of God standing with him (2 Tim. 4:16). In his own

words, we see the source of his strength: **“Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me”** (4:17). Such had been Paul's strength and stay from the very beginning of his service to Christ (Phi. 1:17; 4:13). Hence, at the end of his life Paul could write: **“I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith”** (2 Tim. 4:7). If you would faithfully proclaim and defend Christ on earth, and closely follow such Biblical examples in the here and now as herein noted, you may be eternally with him in the there and then. Silence is NOT always golden!

—David P. Brown , Editor

(Continued From Page 1)

We are commanded to sing **“psalms”** (Old Testament Psalms set to music), hymns (non-Psalms songs of praise to God), and **“spiritual songs”** which are songs designed for edification of the saints and glorification of God. We are not empowered to incorporate into our worship services nationalistic songs, cultural favorites, or other lyrics of a secular essence (Jackson). Also, since our songs are intended for instruction, we must make sure that our songs are scriptural in their content. Many of our songs are written by members of denominations and contain error. Songs that direct prayer to Jesus, teach error (Col. 3:17). Songs that teach the rapture of the soul are in error. Songs that teach salvation by grace or faith only are in error. Songs teaching that Jesus is coming soon are in error. Many other examples could we given, but these are sufficient to encourage the song leader to choose his songs wisely.

As we mentioned earlier, **“Speaking to yourselves”** demands that all engage in singing at the same time. Wayne Jackson said,

The grammar of the verse indicates that the entire congregation is to participate in the singing. The pronoun *heautois* (“one to another”) is a reciprocal, reflexive term, representing an interchange of action on the part of the singers. Congregational singing is clearly authorized in the New Testament; authority for choirs and solos is conspicuously absent from the divine record (Divine Pattern).

There is no authority for an individual or group to sing while the rest of the assembly sits passively by and listens.

There have been attempts to justify many of the above mentioned innovations by calling them expedients. However, these innovations either change the command to sing or violate the language of the reciprocal pronouns. True expedients such as songbooks, pitch pipe, overhead projector to view songs, public address system, song leader, number of songs, etc., aid the worshiper in carrying out the command to sing. Thus, singing is obligatory and those things listed as true expedients, are optional.

Error Relating To Praying As Worship

It is common among Roman Catholics to pray to “Patron Saints” (deceased Catholics who have been Canonized). However, the Scriptures authorize us to pray only to Deity (Neh. 4:9; Mat. 6:9). We are not authorized to employ mechanical devices as aids to our prayers. Buddhists frequently write their prayers

on slips of paper and insert the petitions into “prayer wheels,” which, spinning, are supposed to propel the requests into the far regions of the universe. Catholics use “rosary beads” to implement their prayers. The prayer beads, blessed by a priest, allow the Catholic practitioner to keep account of some 180 prayers, which constitute the rosary: Paternoster (“Our Father”), Ave Maria (“Hail Mary”), and Gloria. The premise behind such a practice is the assumption that repetitious prayers will secure indulgences—accumulated merit—which will exempt the faithful from the fires of purgatorial punishment. However, Jesus stated:

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him (Mat. 6:7,8).

Also, we must recognize that prayer is not to be directed to Jesus, but must be directed through Him to the Father (Col. 3:17).

We understand that prayer is a communication between a child of God and his Heavenly Father (Mat. 6:9). Thus, it is never appropriate to call upon a non-Christian to lead the family of God in prayers in our public assemblies (or in any assembly). Furthermore, we recognize that prayers in assemblies of mixed sexes must be led or directed only by males. Regarding this, Paul said, **“I will therefore that men (*tous andras*—the males) pray every where...”** (1 Tim. 2:8). It is obvious from other passages, that woman can pray anywhere (even in the assembly—1 Cor. 11:5). Thus, we conclude that the apostle Paul only restricts women from leading prayer in a mixed assembly.

Prayer is to be offered in harmony with the revealed will of God (1 John 5:14). Therefore, since the miraculous age has passed (1 Cor. 13:8-13), we must not pray for such things as miraculous healing, wisdom, knowledge, etc. Nor should we pray for someone's salvation independent of his or her obedience of the Gospel (Rom. 10:1,2; Heb 5:8-9). Furthermore, we must not pray from a selfish motive. James said, **“Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts”** (Jam. 4:3).

Error Relating To Teaching As Worship

The content of preaching/teaching must be the Scriptures. Preaching based upon the Scriptures will be **“profitable for**

doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” so that the **“man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works”** (2 Tim. 3:16-17). As in leading prayer, God only authorized males to preach in the public assemblies. Paul writes, **“But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence”** (1 Tim. 2:12). Regarding this verse we note the following:

The negative conjunction *oude* (“nor”) here is explanatory in force, revealing that the apostle is forbidding any teaching, or similar activity, in which a woman exercises authority over a man (Lenski, 563).

Godet notes that Paul “regards speaking in public as an act of authority exercised over the congregation which listens,” and that consequently, “during the present economy, he draws the conclusion that the speaking of the woman in [the] public [assembly] is in contradiction to the position assigned to her by the Divine will expressed in the law” (311).

See the apostle’s similar admonition in 1 Corinthians 14:33-36. The popular notion that Paul’s instruction was based upon cultural considerations, and thus is not applicable today, is totally without justification. His argument regarding woman’s subordinate role is grounded on timeless concepts that are transcultural (1 Cor. 11:2ff; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:13, 14). Moreover, his application of these matters is universal (1 Cor. 11:16; 14:33,34), not local. That which is transcultural and universal is neither local nor temporary. The restrictions are therefore as binding today as they were in the first century.

Men have been ordained of God to lead the worship services. The devout Christian must not be swayed by the fickle whims of a changing society; rather, he must abide by the authority of the eternal Word (Jackson).

The preaching done in our assemblies must be done by faithful men. Far too often, false teachers have been allowed in our pulpits on the conditions that they would not teach their error. However, false teachers must be marked and avoided (Rom. 16:17-18). It is interesting to note that many who would never allow a false teacher to preach at the congregation where they are members, will support a gospel meeting, lectureship, school of preaching, religious journal or other work that uses and/or supports false teachers. John condemns all who would bid god-speed to those who teach error (2 John 9-11).

Finally, the teaching/preaching in our assemblies must be plain spoken and understandable to all present. It is becoming prevalent for brethren to praise men with alleged “scholarship” and then scratch their head all the way home wondering what was preached. Our pews are filled with honest people who desire to know the truth. They deserve someone who will plainly and boldly proclaim the Word of God in a way that is easily understood and applied.

Error Regarding Giving As Worship

Paul commanded:

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come (1 Cor. 16:1-2).

The word *order* is a command and shows that giving is not an option, but an obligation. Despite the fact that giving is an obligation, the true worshiper offers their contribution joyfully without grudging (2 Cor. 9:7). In this connection, we realize that free will giving is the only means of financing the work of the Lord’s church. The Lord’s church is not authorized to operate businesses, conduct bingo parties, hold pay-at-the-door concerts, garage sales, bazaars etc., in order to raise funds.

The Christian is obligated to contribute every Sunday. A literal translation of 1 Corinthians 16:2 would be: **“upon the first day of every week.”** Therefore, each week that a Christian prospers, so must he/she give to the collection. Those who are paid only monthly or bi-weekly ought to budget their funds so as to be able to participate in this act of devotion each Sunday. This is consistent with what Paul has prescribed. Also, one should not fail to give even though they are, of necessity, absent from the Lord’s Day assembly.

An individual’s prosperity is the primary factor in determining the amount given each Lord’s Day. Therefore, the church does not have authority to dictate the amount which one gives. However, there are principles that can guide one in determining how much to give. Every Christian is to give **“as he may prosper,”** or **“according to his ability”** (Acts 11:29). This is proportional giving. Those who have more should give more (both in amount and percentage). Amazingly, some in the early church gave even beyond their ability (2 Cor. 8:3). Unlike the tithe under the Mosaic Law, the Christian is given no percentage in the New Testament. However, those under a **“better covenant”** (Heb. 7:22) ought to strive to go beyond the standard of the “inferior covenant.” It has been said,

The least God ever stipulated for His people in the support of His work was 10% (cf. Gen. 14:20; 28:22; Num. 18:21-24); the most He has accepted is 100% (Mark 12:41-44). Surely, somewhere between these two examples, the conscientious child of God can find his appropriate level of giving (Jackson).

Error Regarding The Lord’s Supper As Worship

As we have noted previously, Jesus specified the use of unleavened bread and fruit of the vine (grape juice) the elements of His Supper (Mat. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:24-26). When the Mormons substitute water for the fruit of the vine, they do so without Divine authority. The unleavened bread and fruit of the vine are figurative representatives of the Lord’s body and blood. Since the elements do not literally become the body and blood of Christ when blessed by a Priest, the Roman Catholic doctrine of Transubstantiation is false.

Various denominations observe the Lord’s Supper on the first day of the week, monthly, semi-annually, once a year on Easter Sunday, or at some other interval on which they arbitrarily decide. Sometimes preachers reason that infrequent observance of the Lord’s Supper help keep it from becoming mundane or commonplace. I wonder if those same preachers would agree that the preaching done on the Lord’s Day becomes “mundane or commonplace” when done weekly? Sometimes contemporary people remove the observance of the Lord’s Supper from a worship assembly and observe it at other occasions,

such as a wedding.

Acts 20:7 settles the frequency and the occasion God intended for observance of the Lord's Supper. In this verse, we find a record of an approved example of the early church observing the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. No other passage addresses the frequency and/or occasion for observing the Lord's Supper. Thus, we conclude that the frequency and/or occasion for its observance is limited to first day of the week during the worship of the local church.

The observance of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week during the worship assembly corresponds to the other four acts of worship that are characteristic of Lord's Day worship. Preaching also occurs on the occasion of observing the Lord's Supper (Acts 20:7). The collection occurs on the first day of the week, too (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Singing and prayer also occur during assemblies of a local church, including the first day of the week (1 Cor. 14:15). We have authority to: (1) Teach/preach on other days and outside the assembly (Acts 20:20); (2) Sing on other days and outside the assembly (Acts 16:25; Jam. 5:13); Pray on other days and outside the assembly (1 The. 5:17); Give on other days and outside the assembly (Gal. 5:10). However, no such authority exists for observing the Lord's Supper outside the assembly or on any day other than the Lord's Day (first day of the week).

The Lord's Supper is observed to remember Jesus Christ's death (1 Cor. 11:24-25). God never intended for the Lord's Supper to be observed apart from other acts of worship and outside of the assembly of the local church, or on any day other than the first day of the week. Thus, the reason for observing the Lord's Supper does not correspond to other occasions, seasons, or days.

Finally, there are some brethren, who demand that only one cup be used to distribute the fruit of the vine during the Lord's Supper. However, partaking of the elements is an obligatory matter, while the method of distribution is an optional matter. This makes the number of cups a matter of judgment. During the institution of the Lord's Supper, Jesus **"...took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves"** (Luke 22:17). Having divided the fruit of the vine, Jesus then explains the significance of the elements. Here, we have an example of multiple cups being used in the Bible. Therefore, when one tries to bind one cup or a certain number of cups, they go beyond what is written and thereby sin (2 John 9-11).

Divided Assemblies (Children's Church; Junior Worship; Children's Bible Hour)

What we have in mind by "divided assemblies" is one or more assemblies taking place separately, parallel to and at the same time as the regular worship assembly. We are not referring to the nursery or Bible study classes that do not occur at the same time as the worship assembly, or multiple services necessitated by a lack of adequate seating capacity. We offer the following scriptural objections to "children's church":

1. There is no authority in the Bible for "children's church" (1 Pet. 4:11).

2. The Lord ordained that we meet in one assembly for worship (1 Cor. 11:17-18, 20, 33-34).

3. Children's church is an unauthorized separate assembly, which is a forsaking of the assembly the Lord authorized (Heb. 10:25).

4. No assembly of God's people for worship in the Old Testament or the New Testament separated the children from all others.

5. Parents should not turn over to others the precious time available to them to train their children. The child learns by what he hears, sees, and experiences in the worship assembly (Eph. 6:1-4). The child absorbs valuable lessons from the discipline of public worship.

Some contend that children cannot learn from public preaching. However, we have the Old Testament example where **"all Israel"** was called together to be taught the Law of Moses, including men, women, little ones, and the sojourner (Deu. 31:10-12). **"And that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God"** (v. 13). Notice that the children did not need to be separated to learn (cf. Joel 8:34,35). The assembly called by Joel included the old men, children, **"those that suck the breasts,"** the bridegroom and bride, and all others (Joel 2:15-17).

The Error That "All Of Life Is Worship"

In 1998, the late brother Buster Dobbs wrote an article entitled "Is All Of Life Worship?" in which he presented the following syllogism:

1. All sacrifice offered to God is worship.
2. Christians are to continually offer their bodies as a sacrifice to God.
3. Therefore, there is a sense in which worship is continual... He then followed with the next statements: Such devoted service to God is clearly worship. It involves all that we do. Whether we earn a living for our family, or seeking lawful entertainment and recreation, it is to be done in the name of the Lord. As holy, royal priests we make an offering to the father (sic) through the son (sic) in everything we do... (*Contending for the Faith*, Dec., 1998).

One year prior he states:

The holy kiss is not worship. It is a greeting. Paul says so. It edifies no one. It is not something due a reigning God. It is not clearly taught in the New Testament as worship. It is alright for saints to greet one another with a holy kiss if they desire to do so, but it is not an item of worship (*Firm Foundation*, May, 1997).

Later in the same article he states:

Foot washing is in order when it helps and it benefits our fellow creature but it is not worship because, like the holy kiss, it is directed to humans and not deity (*Firm Foundation*, May, 1997).

Then, in January 1999, in an article entitled "Worship," Dobbs made two statements: (1) "The New Covenant authorizes five specific acts of worship on the prescribed assembly day." and:

When a Christian offers a song of praise to God, whether in assembly or in a private setting, it must be in the prescribed way (without instrumental accompaniment) just as inner chamber prayer must be offered according to Bible instructions (*Firm Foundation*)

Then, one month later, he flip-flops again by stating (2):

The Holy Spirit, through the pen of Paul, defines spiritual service. In view of the mercies of God (John 3:16), he (sic) tells us to offer our bodies a living sacrifice, which is (now, he (sic) is about to tell us what the living sacrifice is...of what it consists...of its nature) which is spiritual service. The living sacrifice is service. Sacrifice connotes worship. The presenting our very souls to God as a sacrifice of worship. That is what it is! Paul said so (*Firm Foundation*, Feb. 1999).

In the space of two years, Dobbs told the reading audience that, “everything we do is not worship, everything we do is worship, everything we do is not worship, and everything we do is worship.” At the time of his writing it was asked, “Will the real Buster Dobbs, please stand up?”

If everything we do is worship, then why is the “holy kiss” and “foot washing” not worship? If everything we do is worship, then why has God “authorized five specific acts of worship on the prescribed assembly day?” If everything we do (that is not sin) is worship, then why did God limit the worship of the assembly to only five acts?

The late brother Dobbs failed to understand, the items of worship are obligatory matters. When Jesus stated, “**God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth**” (John 4:24), He placed three obligations upon the worshiper. Man is obligated to: (1) Worship the correct object—God; (2) Maintain the correct attitude—Love, reverence, etc.; and (3) Use the correct method—truth. Our basic proposition states, “The New Testament authorizes only singing, praying, teaching, giving, and partaking of the Lord’s Supper as acceptable acts of worship.” We have previously proven this proposition. Thus, the worshiper is limited to these five acts of devotion. Those who believe as the late brother Dobbs, et al., taught violate the obligatory teaching of the Scriptures by saying that all life is worship. Cain learned this lesson the hard way and his worship was rejected.

ERROR REGARDING THE FIVE ACTS OF WORSHIP DOES INDEED DISRUPT FELLOWSHIP BETWEEN CHRISTIANS

The Bible is divided into three specific dispensations: (1) The Patriarchal; (2) The Mosaic; and (3) The Christian. At the beginning of each of these dispensations, God has given an example of those who practice error in worship. In the Patriarchal Dispensation, we have the example of Cain’s faithless sacrifice that was rejected by God (Gen. 4:1-7). In the Mosaic Dispensation, Nadab and Abihu burnt incense on “**strange fire**” and “**And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD**” (Lev. 10:1-2). And in the Christian dispensation, Ananias and Sapphira corrupted the collection of the saints by lying to the Apostles and thus, God, regarding the amount given and were put to death for their sins (Acts 5:1-11). God has given us the examples to show that He

takes worship seriously and His condemnation awaits all who would worship in error.

When Cain, Nadab, Abihu, Ananias, and Sapphira corrupted authorized worship, they sinned. As sinners, they lost their fellowship with God (1 John 1:6). When fellowship with God was broken, fellowship with those faithful to God was also broken (1 John 1:4-6). Since Christians are to “**...have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,**” it would be sinful to extend fellowship to those who practice error regarding the five acts of worship. John stated, “**Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son**” (2 John 9). In doing so, he sets forth two categories of people: (1) Those that have not God and (2) Those that have both the Father and the Son. John further states, “**If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds**” (2 John 10-11). Therefore, it is sinful for those who have the Father and the Son to fellowship those who have not God. To do so, would mean giving up the Father and the Son and entering the category of those who have not God.

This principle holds true when we are considering error in the Lord’s Day worship or in any assembly where the preaching, praying, or singing are engaged in. Such assemblies would include gospel meetings, lectureships, wedding, funerals and such like. If a false teacher were scheduled to speak at any of these venues, it would be sinful for faithful brethren to participate for any purpose other than to expose the error. The very nature of their participation would of necessity show their disapproval of the error and reproof of the same. We recognize that debates and open forums are venues in which one may participate without sin, since the purpose is to expose and correct those in error.

CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that the New Testament authorizes only five acts of worship. When these authorized acts are compromised with sin, division occurs in the Body of Christ. The apostle Paul stated:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:1-3).

Therefore, we humbly encourage all to forsake all error, especially error regarding the five acts of worship, so that we might enjoy the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Jesus prayed for unity among believers (John 17:20,21) and Paul condemned division (1 Cor. 1:10). If there is division in the Body of Christ over the five acts or worship, you can be part of the problem or part of the solution. We must, therefore, strive for unity, but not at the expense of the Truth. We must be set for the defense of the Gospel and be willing to contend earnestly for the faith (Phil. 1:17; Jude 3).

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted (Gal. 6:1). Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins (Jam. 5:19-20).

Those who practice error in worship must repent and be restored before fellowship is possible. It is my heart's desire and prayer that God continue to bless your study of the five authorized acts of worship.

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ENDNOTES

1. The following points are from my class on Ascertaining Bible Authority taught by Roy C. Deaver at The Southwest School of Bible Studies, Austin, Texas.

—375 Hickory Hill Dr.
Oakhurst, TX 77359



NURTURE 2022—DISORDERING AND DAMNING YOUR INNER BEING

Roelf L. Ruffner

The apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit penned these inspired words of warning almost 2,000 years ago:

Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ (Col. 2:8–NKJV).

Since this verse was written, false teachers and their deluded followers have deceived many souls by using this process of false philosophy, "**vain deceit**" (*KJV*) and worldliness all wrapped up with a religious bow. They mask their insidious doings with pseudo-piety invoking the names of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit when needed.

A case in point is the shenanigans of an educational institution once "affiliated" with the Lord's church, Lipscomb University (LU) and its Institute for Christian Spirituality (ICS). In May of 2022, ICS is to throw away its masks and social distancing requirements and present "Nurture 2022" in person with the theme of "Discipleship, Spiritual Formation and Healing our Inner Being." Continuing to reach into realms of transgression and wackiness they found speakers "from three schools of prayer ministry" to teach everyone about "prayer and the healing of our inner being" for \$75 a head.

NEUROTHEOLOGIAN?

Dr. (and "Reverend"—*RLR*) Jim Wilder is a Clinical Psychologist and Neurotheologian at Life Model Works, author, international speaker who develops ways to apply brain science and Christian practices that help all those who encounter

the church to be drawn to and transformed into the character of Christ.

Did you get all that religious word salad? My research revealed that neurotheology examines the brain scans of individuals while they are meditating/praying. This includes monks, nuns, Sikhs, and Buddhists. Using this "data" they seek to help others "overcome trauma under the guidance of Christ's Spirit." I do not know Dr. Wilder and I imagine he is kind to small children and animals, but this sounds weird. Poor Dr. Luke only had the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in writing two books of the New Testament!

It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write to you an orderly account, most excellent Theophilus, that you may know the certainty of those things in which you were instructed (Luke 1:3-4).

How do "neurotheologians" know that their methods can cause one to be healed in their "inner being" by prayer? How do they know God hears these prayers? "**One who turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination**" (Pro.28:9). Their only measure left is one's feelings! Someone has an emotional catharsis and says they are healed. The standard for confirmation is not obedience to God's Word, the Bible, but one's emotions. I imagine they do try to weave Bible passages into this fabric of false doctrine. "**Speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do**

also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Pet. 3:16).

PRAYER LEADER?

Jennifer Barnet is the second speaker at “Nurture 2022.” She is Executive Director of Freedom Prayer and is “passionate about training church Freedom Prayer ministries and partnership with organizations to equip the body of Christ in freedom.” Further research reveals she is the wife of Dr. Cory Barnett, an “elder” at the apostate Ethos Church which meets at the Cannery Ballroom in Nashville, TN. Ethos began a few years ago and was under the oversight of the Harpeth Hills church of Christ eldership for a while. Its “friendly,” informal worship services consist of preaching, weekly observance of the Lord’s Supper (their recipe for the communion bread includes brown sugar and honey), the use of mechanical instruments of music, and singing groups. This is a virtual cornucopia of unauthorized, vain worship of God (John 4:24; Col. 3:16-17; Mat. 15:9). They have three campuses with nineteen on staff, including three female “kid’s pastors” and various male “pastors.” They sound mighty denominational with both elder and pastor positions distinct from each other.

In their statement of beliefs is the following under the heading of “Salvation:”

By placing our faith in God’s great work through Jesus Christ, we are saved from our past, set free in the present, and given hope for the future. As a response to God’s love towards us in Jesus, we respond in obedience to Him through baptism.

This reads like salvation comes before baptism for them. But the Christian’s standard of faith, the Holy Bible, reads, **“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned”** (Mark 16:16). Baptism is linked together in the Bible with belief and salvation. They make it into a spiritual stepchild.

There is also an antitype which now saves us—baptism

(not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 3:21).

Mrs. Barnet considers her work of teaching/preaching as a “ministry.” As such she exercises dominion over mixed gender groups. Where is the authority for this in the Bible? **“And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence”** (1 Tim. 2:12). Apparently, LU and ICS have no problems with this.

THE IMMANUEL APPROACH

Dr. Karl Lehman, author of *Outsmarting Yourself and The Immanuel Approach* and the third speaker at “Nurture 2022,” “is a board-certified psychiatrist with thirty-five years and more than forty thousand hours of clinical experience.” He and Dr. Wilder are both involved in Life Model Works and concentrate on “emotional healing.” One can only imagine the damage they will do the naive attendees who imbibe from their poisoned wells. Psychology and Psychiatry both have some value in treating mental illness. But when men try to put the gospel on the same spiritual plain as these two disciplines, big problems arise. **“Be astonished, O heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be very desolate,” says the Lord. “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water”** (Jer. 2:12-13).

END NOTES

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—2500 Moore Court
Columbia, TN 38401