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EDITORIAL

Does God Speak Today through Dreams & Visions ?

There are some people who are claiming that God speaks to them in dreams and visions. Such people exist today almost everywhere on earth, and there are several of them in our own country, in almost every state of India. They are publishing papers and are constantly telling people that God has revealed to them this or that message, and they expect people to believe them and do what they say. And, indeed, some do believe whatever they speak, because some people are so gullible that they would believe just anything preached to them in the name of God or religion. Not only that, but they become their followers and call them "Prophets" and "Forerunners of Christ's second coming." Who are these people who claim that God speaks to them in visions and dreams? These are people who are mentally sick. They are highly emotional. They imagine things and tell people that that was what God had told them. They contemplate, view mentally on some things that they personally believe to be the will of God, and might even see those things reappear in their dreams when they sleep, and conclude that God has been revealing those things to them! When they get a little publicity, by telling those

imaginative stories to people, then they do that more because it brings to them fame and honour and a sizable following. The sad thing, however, is that once a man has established a status or image of that kind it is very hard for him to change, even after coming to know the truth. (Mark 10 : 24). The fact of the matter is that such people are ill-informed, they do not know what the Bible says about how God speaks to man today.

God cannot go against His own will. He would not contradict Himself. At Hebrews 1:1,2 we read, "God who at various times and in different ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son..." On the mount of transfiguration Jesus' disciples were shown Moses and Elijah together with Christ, as we read in Matthew 17:1-5, and the disciples there wanted to make three tabernacles, one each for Christ, Moses and Elijah. But suddenly, we are told, a bright cloud overshadowed them and they heard God's voice out of the cloud saying: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased, Hear Him". So God's will for us today is that we should hear His Son. How does Christ, God's Son, speak to us today? Through His New Testament. At 2 John 9,10 we read: "Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God, He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son." And now notice what he says, "If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house, nor greet him." Where do we find the doctrine of Christ? Of course, in the New Testament of Christ. If we are going to abide in the doctrine of Christ, as the Bible commands that we must, then we cannot go beyond those things which are found in the New Testament of Christ. If someone brings to us "this doctrine", that is, things written in the New Testament of the Bible, then we must receive them because they are part of Christ's doctrine. But if someone tells us a story or a message, that he believes he has received from God, then we should not receive it, because it is not a part of the doctrine of Christ, since it is not written in the New Testament of the Bible. The Apostle Paul, who was inspired by the Holy Spirit of God to write several books of the New Testament doctrine of Christ, wrote, in his epistle to the Galatians, "...there are some

who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed." (Galatians 1:7, 8). The Apostle was saying here that the will of God is already revealed, and any man or angel who tries to bring additional or further information would stand accursed before God. If someone tells us things written in the New Testament of Christ, he is not telling us anything new, and we should accept them as the word of God. But if one tells us such things which are not found in the New Testament doctrine of Christ, then we must reject them simply because they are not the doctrine of Christ. It is that simple.

All authority inherently resides in God. (John 1:1-3; Genesis 1:1). After His death and resurrection Christ was given all authority in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18-20). It is therefore Christ whom men are to hear. (Matthew 17:5; Deuteronomy 18:15). Christ in turn had delegated authority to His Apostles. The Apostles endowed by the Holy Spirit with miraculous gift of prophecy have revealed the will of God to man. As Christ was going back to heaven, after accomplishing His work of man's salvation, He told the Apostles, "These things I have spoken to you while being present with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you." Again, to them, He said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." (John 14:25,26 and 16:12,13). Accordingly, when the Apostles were baptized with the Holy Spirit, as we read from Acts 1:5, 8 and 2:1, 4 the Holy Spirit of God helped the disciples to understand the things Christ had taught them while He was with them on earth; He reminded them all things whatever Christ had said, and further guided them into all truth, as the Lord had promised. Thus, filled with the Holy Spirit they wrote each book of the New Testament and gave us the will of God. According to second Peter 1:21, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but Holy men of God spoke as they were

moved by the Holy Spirit." There are sixty-six books in the Bible, thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament. The word "Testament" means "will" or "covenant". Thus, the Old Testament of the Bible was the will of God for people who had lived before Christ had died on the cross. (Deuteronomy 5 : 1-3; Jeremiah 31 : 31-33; Hebrews 8 : 7, 13). The New Testament of the Bible, however, is the new will of God which became effective after the death of Christ on the cross, when God took away His old will and in its place gave the world His New Testament which shall remain in force until the end of the world. (Colossians 2 : 14; Hebrews 9 : 11-17).

Whatsoever, therefore, God wants that man should know and do He has revealed for us already through His book, the Bible, and it is complete. Further, God warns man not to add anything in His will, neither should anything be taken away from it. (Revelation 22 : 18-19). "All Scripture," that is, the Bible, the Holy Spirit said, "is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work." (2 Timothy 3 : 16, 17). Notice, it says that the Scripture that was written by the inspiration of God makes man complete and thoroughly furnishes man to do every good work. Now, if the written word of God makes man complete in all aspects and equips man with every good work, then certainly man does not need any more revelations. (Galatians 1 : 6-9). We must read and study the Bible, God's word, because Christ said, "He who rejects me and does not receive my words, has that which judges him—the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day." (John 12 : 48). At 1 John 4 : 1 we read this warning : "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world." How can we do this ? Simply by reading and studying the Bible, and by comparing all teachings of men with what is already written in the Bible, especially with the New Testament of Christ, which is the will of God for us today.

Who am I?

J.C. Choate

In recent years a lot of people have become interested in their family tree, that is, in gathering facts and information on who their forefathers were, and from where they may have come. That is interesting, no doubt, but as for me, I already know a lot about myself. For instance, I know :

I am a son of Adam. God created man and woman and called their name Adam. (Genesis 5 : 1,2). All have descended from them, and that includes me.

I am God's creation. God is still the creator of all things. He does not speak us into existence, but he set in order the law of nature, and through that law I have been created by him. (Genesis 1 : 26-28).

I am a dual being. I am human, but I also have a soul or a spirit, having been created in the image of God. (Genesis 1 : 26, 27; Genesis 2 : 7).

I am a spiritual being. As mentioned, I have a soul and that soul is worth more than all the world. It is eternal in nature. Christ said, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul." (Matthew 16 : 26).

I am a sinner. I was born into this world without sin. I did not inherit Adam's sin or any other person's sin. But on reaching the age of knowing right from wrong then I became accountable to God for my actions, and therefore, I became a sinner. Paul says that all such people have sinned. (Romans 3 : 23). Although I have obeyed God and he has forgiven me of my sins, I am still a human being, not perfect, and therefore I am still a sinner in that sense.

I am a believer in God. I believe that God is and that he created all things. (Genesis 1 : 1). "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." (Psalm 14 : 1). The Hebrew writer said, "But without faith it is impossible to please him : for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11 : 6).

I am a believer in Christ. I believe that he came from God,

is the Son of God, and died on the cross to save man from his sins. (John 3 : 16, 17; Romans 5 : 8). I believe in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, that he reigns now in heaven at the right hand of God, and that one day he will come back to take his people to heaven. (1 Corinthians 15 : 1-4; Acts 2 : 22, 23; John 14 : 1-3). Christ said, "Ye believe in God, believe also in me." (John 14 : 1). He also declared, "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins : for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins." (John 8 : 24).

I am saved. I have obeyed the Lord by hearing his word, by believing in him, repenting of my sins, confessing my faith in Christ, and by being baptized for the remission of my sins. Christ said, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16 : 16). Also read these scriptures : Romans 10 : 17; Hebrews 11 : 6; Acts 17 : 30; Matthew 10 : 32; and Acts 2 : 38.

I am a born again person. Christ said, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3 : 5). I did just that when I obeyed the Lord by believing in him and by obeying the gospel. My obedience to him led me to be buried with the Lord in the waters of baptism and to enter the Lord's kingdom, the church, which is his family. (Romans 6 : 3, 4; Acts 2 : 47).

I am a member of Christ's church. As I stated, on my obedience to the Lord, he saved me and added me to his church. Peter said concerning those that had obeyed the Lord to be saved, "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." (Acts 2 : 47). Another way of putting it, I was baptized into the church. Paul wrote, "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Corinthians 12 : 13). The one body here is the church. (Colossians 1 : 18; Ephesians 1 : 22, 23).

I am in Christ. On being baptized, I entered Christ. Paul said, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Romans 6 : 3). He also said, "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature : old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." (2 Corinthians 5 : 17).

I am a receiver of the gift of the Holy Spirit. I do not have the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit, but still, I have the Holy Spirit. Peter told those that wanted to know what they should do to be saved, "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2 : 38). The Holy Ghost or the Holy Spirit dwells in me in the same way that God and Christ dwell in me. (Ephesians 4 : 6; Colossians 1 : 27).

I am a child of God. Paul wrote, "For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ." (Galatians 3 : 26, 27).

I am a Christian. In following Jesus, and in obeying him, I became a Christian, that is, I wear his name, and I strive to be Christ-like in all that I say and do: Salvation is in that name. (Acts 4 : 12). The disciples at Antioch were call Christians (Acts 11 : 26). Peter says that we are not to be ashamed of that name. (1 Peter 4 : 16).

I am a worshipper of God. Christ said, "God is a Spirit : and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." (John 4 : 24).

I am a worker for the Lord. I strive to serve him, to preach and teach his word, and to spread his cause. Hear the words of Paul, as he said, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the working of the Lord, for as much as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 15 : 58).

I am an example. I try to be aware of others and the impression that I make on them. This can be a means of bringing them to Christ or turning them away. Christ said, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5 : 16).

Yes, I am all of that, and much more. I know who I am, where I came from, why I am here, and where I am going. That is more than most can say. The majority don't know who they are. Many don't even know where they came from, why they are here, or where they are going. Some even think that they came from a lower animal. They don't believe in an eternal God,

and have no concept of the soul. They believe that when they die that they will be like an animal, and that is, that will be the end of life, that there will be no future life for them. How said ! They don't know that they will have to stand before God one day to answer for the deeds they have done in the body, and to spend eternity in a devil's hell. How easy it would be for them to have a rich and full life, and have the hope of eternal life with God, if they would but believe in God and obey his will.

Large numbers of the world have been deceived. They believe that they have been born with sin. Obeying the teachings of man, they become followers of all kinds of religions, join man-made churches, and are known by the names of men. They are lost, even though they believe that they are saved and will go to heaven. Their hope is in themselves and the ones they follow.

My friend, who are you ? If you really want to know then go to the Bible, God's word, and it will tell you. It will also tell you why you are here, what you need to do to be saved, and how you can have a home in heaven. Please do that now while you still have the time and the opportunity. If you will, you will never regret it.

Did Jesus Die For All Men ?

W.A. Holley

The Calvinists says "NO." Their claim is that Jesus made a limited atonement. We quote : "By the decree of God, for the manifestation of his glory, some men and angels are pre-destinated unto ever-lasting life and others foreordained to ever-lasting death. These angels and men, thus predestinated and foreordained, are particularly and unchangeably designed, and their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished (Quoted from The Westminster Confession).

"Those of mankind that are predestinated unto life, before the foundation of the world was laid, according to his eternal and

immutable purpose, and the secret counsel and good pleasure of his will, hath God chosen in Christ unto everlasting glory, out of his mere free grace and love without any foresight of faith, or good works, or perseverance in either of them, or any other thing in the creature as conditions or causes moving him thereto; and all to the praise of his glorious grace. As God hath appointed the elect unto glory, so hath he, by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, foreordained all the means thereunto. Therefore they who are elected being fallen in Adam, are redeemed by Christ, are effectually called unto faith in Christ, by the Spirit working in due season; are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith unto salvation. Neither are any other redeemed by Christ, effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the elect only.

“The rest of mankind God was pleased, according to the unsearchable counsel of his own will, whereby he extendeth or withholdeth mercy, as he pleaseth, for the glory of his sovereign power over his creatures, to pass by, and to ordain them to dishonour and wrath for their sin to the praise of his glorious justice” (Ibid).

From the above quotation, what do we learn ?

(1) That God, before the foundation of the world, determined who should be saved and who should be lost.

(2) That man has no choice of where he will spend eternity.

(3) That man cannot do anything to be saved, and that man cannot do anything to be lost.

(4) If the foregoing statements are true, all efforts of a religious nature are worthless, useless! Preaching and teaching the gospel of Christ is time and effort wasted, if God from eternity has already determined the eternal destiny of the elect and the non-elect. Logically, from the Calvinistic point of view, a man might just as well curse as pray, might as well go to a saloon as to church, so far as his salvation is concerned.—Who can believe it ?

The Bible does teach election, predestination, and foreordination—but it is conditioned ! The elect are those who obey God (Titus 1 : 1; I Peter 1 : 2; 2 : 6; Hebrews 5 : 8-9). As taught in the Bible, God’s predestination and foreordination is of character,

not of individuals. Verily, God has predestinated and foreordained that all who will hear his word, repent of every sin, confess the lovely name of Jesus before men, be baptized in the name of Jesus for remission of sins, and remain faithful unto death, shall be saved eternally (John 6 : 44-45; Luke 13 : 3; Matthew 10 : 32-33; Acts 2 : 36-38; Romans 6 : 3-4; Revelation 2 : 10).

That Jesus died for all is clearly taught in the Bible. According to Acts 17 : 26, God is the Creator of all men. All men have sinned and need salvation (Romans 3 : 9, 23). God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10 : 34-35). God loves all the world (John 3 : 16).

"The Lord is . . . not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (II Peter 3 : 9).

Through Abraham God promised to bless all the families of the earth (Genesis 12 : 1-3). "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying. In thee shall all nations be blessed" (Galatians 3 : 8). Verse 16 shows that God's blessings were to come through Jesus Christ.

That Jesus died for all people is shown in I John 2 : 2, which reads : "And he is the propitiation for our sins : and not for ours only" (those already saved through obedience to the gospel), "but also for the sins of the whole world" (those yet unsaved). The apostle John recognized the world was/is lost and needs to be saved, because "the whole world lieth in wickedness" (I John 5 : 19).

Almighty God desires the salvation of all men, not just a limited few : "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Timothy 2 : 4). For this cause Jesus "tasted death for every man. (Hebrews 2 : 9).

Jesus said, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven : if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (John 6 : 51). God has provided natural bread for all, yet it is a conditional gift (Matthew 6 : 11; II Thessalonians 3 : 10-11); even so, spiritual bread offered by

Jesus Christ is a conditional gift-conditioned upon the Lord's commands of faith, repentance, confession, and baptism (Mark 16 : 16; Luke 13 : 3; Matthew 10 : 32-33; Acts 2 : 38). In no place does the Holy Bible teach that God unconditionally predestinated some to salvation and others to destruction —without regard to human responsibility. Some for whom Christ died can be lost : "For through thy knowledge he that is weak perisheth, the brother for whose sake Christ died" (I Corinthians 8 : 11; cf. Romans 14 : 15, ASV). It is utter folly for one to argue that one cannot fall from grace !!

Jesus has offered salvation to all (John 12 : 47-48). All must be taught the truth of God (John 6 : 44-45; Matthew 28 : 18-20; Mark 16 : 15-16). All are invited to come unto Jesus (Matthew 11 : 28-30; Revelation 22 : 17).

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" said Jesus Christ (John 7 : 17).

What's In A Name ?

Weldon Langfield

The last few years in this writer's estimation, have seen an increase in name-calling among brethren. Faithful gospel preachers are being labeled with phrases and descriptions that may sound fairly innocent but which carry serious implications. Name-calling among God's people is not new. King Ahab long ago called Elijah "thou troubler of Israel" (I Kings 18 : 17). In New Testament times, Paul and Silas were accused of having "turned the world upside down" (Acts 17 : 6).

The surprising thing about the modern surge of name-calling, however, is that much of it is being done not by those openly opposed to the gospel. Rather, some brethren who pride themselves on their love and tolerance specialize in practice. What are some of the names being cast about ?

"Legalist" is a favourite. The term has been so overworked in the pulpits of some congregations that we have heard "rank-and-file" members using it in casual conversation. Let us not be deceived by its familiarity; to call a man "legalist" is to make a very serious charge. According to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, "legalism" is "the doctrine of salvation by good works." A "legalist", then, believes that one can literally be saved by his own righteous deeds. This philosophy eliminates the need for a savior or for any kind of divine atonement. Because of the rejection of Christ, which is implicit in the doctrine of legalism, the "legalist" is "severed from Christ" and "fallen from grace" (Galatians 5 : 4). To call a man a "legalist", then, is to say that he is outside of God's grace and headed for hell! Biblically, it is to say that he is a false teacher of the worst stripe.

This writer was called a "legalist" by another Christian, who then suggested that while "legalism" had characterized the church since the beginning of the restoration movement, a new age was dawning. This writer then pointed out to that brother that if "legalism" had characterized the brotherhood up till now, his deceased grandmother and virtually all Christians for the past 150 years were doomed to hell. According to Galatians 5:4, "legalists" cannot be saved in their "legalism".

"Negative" is a common label. In areas of expedience, we need to avoid undue "negativism". Growing churches, like businesses, benefit from vision and creativity. But what about the realm of Bible teaching? First, the Bible contains many truths which (from a human standpoint) appear "negative". The sins of the Pharisees (Matthew 23), the fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24) and statements throughout the Old Testament prophets and New Testament epistles are quite "negative". In fact, virtually every book of the New Testament contains numerous "negative" statements.

Secondly, a gospel preacher has no right to call out what he considers 'positive' in the Bible, and present that to the exclusion of what he thinks is 'negative'. Faithful preachers will teach the whole counsel of God" (Acts 20 : 27), and will "reprove; rebuke (and) exhort" (II Timothy 4 : 2). God has a name for those who tell their listener only what they want to hear: "teachers after their own lusts" (II Timothy 4 : 3).

"Concordance preacher" is another pejorative. This writer was taught a valuable truth some years ago : If the whole counsel of God is to be known on any subject, one must, with the aid of an exhaustive concordance, look up every verse in which the subject is dealt with. These verses then must be studied in light of each other. We are now told that in certain quarters this approach leads to the "insidious" practice of "concordance preaching".

Frankly, it is not hard to understand why some want to belittle and discourage the exacting use of a concordance : it exposes many of their misconceptions and errors ! A careful study of the word "works" proves salvation is not by grace alone (Jonn 5 : 36; 9 : 4; James 2 : 21-26). An examination of the word "church" proves there is only one body spoken of in the Bible (Matthew 16 : 18; Acts 8 : 3; et. al.). And a study of the word "fellowship" indicates that in the early church it existed only among obedient believers (II Corinthians 6 : 14; Philippians 2 : 1; I John 1 : 7).

What's in a name ? Sometimes a smoke screen to hide the real truth about the name-caller.

What Did It Cost Me ?

Glenn Colley

All of us deep inside want to be people who help people. For those of us who are Christians, this is particularly important. Galatians 6 : 10 says. "Let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith." In other words, when I help others, I am doing something to please my God. There is however a part of this that deserves our reconsideration.

A little girl came home from Sunday school wanting a can of food to help fill a basket for needy people. As her mother was scanning the pantry shelves, she suggested, "You can take these

cans of sardines that none of us likes". The little girl thought a minute and with disappointment asked, "But doesn't that mean the poor people are helping us?"

Now, there is nothing wrong with giving away things that we no longer want or need. But let us make sure that that is not the total of our benevolence.

David understood this : ". . . Nay: but I will surely buy it of thee at a price, neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God that which doth cost me nothing" (II Samuel 24 : 24).

The Divine Purpose of the Gospel

Fred Dillon

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ : for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 1 : 16).

In man's everyday quest to better himself, to help society, to eliminate poverty, and to cure our social problems, many people in society and some in the Lord's church have seemingly forgotten that the gospel of the kingdom is primarily designed to save the souls of mankind.

The bride of Christ, the church, has the same mission that Christ announced when He came to earth. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19 : 10). The fifteenth chapter of Luke gives us three parables of our Lord : the lost coin, the lost sheep, and the lost man, to demonstrate to us the principle of bringing lost souls to Christ and what it means to heaven itself.

Yet, many seem to think the gospel is just a social cure for all, that it will do away with all prejudice, eliminate hunger and poverty, bring world peace in our time, and break down all social and racial barriers.

It is true, that if followed perfectly by every one, the world's ills would be done away. Surely it would eliminate prejudice because God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10 : 34-35). Certainly, it would help in eliminating poverty, because we would all "esteem other better than ourselves" (Philippians 2 : 3), and peace would prevail since men filled with the gospel of peace would not covet or hate. However, all of these, important as they are to man, are just by-products of the gospel.

The mission of Christ was not to solve all of our social ills. The Saviour warned in Matthew 10:34; "I came not to send peace, but a sword, I am come to set a man at variance against his father and the daughter against her mother."

He let the men of His day know, "Ye have the poor always with you, but Me ye have not always" (Matthew 25 : 11). Jesus surely helped the poor. He was filled with compassion for the hungry and needy. But the meat and drink the Savior offered wasn't steak and gravy. "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me and to finish his work" (John 4 : 34).

So many in our religious society and some in the church are so caught up in social progress that they have forgotten the main thrust of the kingdom. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6 : 33). Jesus came to seek and to save the lost, and the Scriptures so emphasize.

"For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2 : 11).

"And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1 : 21).

The gospel is not just a message to help you keep your marriage together, to help you raise your children, to make better neighbors, even though it can accomplish all three. The gospel is to save souls through the blood of God's only begotten Son! "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth..." (I Peter 1 : 22-23). God is not going to judge just on whether or not my marriage is right though it must be! Not just on whether

my children are properly reared; or whether or not I have given to the poor or donated my blood to the Red Cross, or taken a stand against the evils of alcohol and drugs. Rather, "What will be the end of them that obey not the gospel?" (II Thessalonians 1 : 7-9).

Through the gospel I have promise of remission of sins (Acts 2 : 38); eternal life (I John 5 : 11); salvation (II Timothy 2 : 10); redemption and forgiveness of sins (Colossians 1 : 13-14); and "all spiritual blessings in heavenly places" (Ephesians 1 : 3). None of these avail through any social program or campaign.

Yes, the gospel of Christ can surely lift us up and make us to be better people. It can make us "new creatures" (II Corinthians 5 : 17); we become servants of righteousness and enjoy the riches of His grace, love, and mercy.

Why did Christ die? So we would solve all of our social problems? So we could have "excellence in education?" So we could enjoy all the advantages of life here on this sphere? Peter answers for us in I Peter 4 : 17-18, "For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it first begin at us, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?"

The gospel, then, must be preached because it is man's only hope.

The gospel, must be believed because it is the power of God to save souls.

The gospel must be obeyed because it brings us into Christ—into His death, burial and resurrection (Romans 6 : 3-6), and the gospel must be lived, not to solve all the world's problems, but to bring us into the exceeding great and precious promises of God!

How do you view the gospel today? Is it just a way to cure the social and economic problems of the land? To do away with the drug culture? To eliminate juvenile delinquency? No, not so! It is God's power to save your eternal soul!

What will we do with the gospel? How shall we treat the Lord of glory? He suffered, bled, and died to save our immortal souls. This was His purpose while He lived on earth, on the Cross.

of Calvary, and it remains His desire as He reigns at God's right hand with all power and authority ! (Matthew 28 : 18).

The Old Paths

Homer Putnam Reeves

"Thus saith Jehovah, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way; and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls..." (Jeremiah 6 : 16).

STRANGE ANOMALY

Man is a progressive creature. The horse and buggy days are past. The blue back speller is out of date. No progressive farmer would resort to primitive methods for sowing, cultivating and harvesting crops.

The doctor, the lawyer, the merchant, the teacher, the scientist are all forward looking. They are wiser in their generation than were their fathers.

It seems foolish to advise that men should follow in "old paths," when there are so many new ways. Why did Jeremiah offer such counsel? Why did he urge Israel to walk in "old paths?"

GOD'S PATHS

The old paths are God's paths. And the paths which God marks for our feet are perfect.

The way of Jehovah is unexcelled. It is the good way. The law of Jehovah is entirely consummate.

Every law which God has established was perfect for its purpose.

PROGRESSIVE REVELATION

The entire revelation from heaven was not made at one time. It appears that God revealed Himself to man as man

developed progressively. God spoke to Cain; God called Abraham; in a burning bush, God appeared to Moses; in a sound of gentle stillness, God appeared to Elijah.

Finally, God spoke to the entire world through His Son, Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1 : 1-2).

It must be emphasized that the revelation was faultless : it was perfect for its purpose, even if given progressively, and limited to a certain people or for a certain time.

JEREMIAH'S OLD PATHS

The old paths referred to by Jeremiah were the ways prescribed by the Jewish law. This law was given to Moses from the summit of Mt. Sinai and was designed to lead the Jews to Christ. It was literally a schoolmaster—a pedagogue—to lead Israel to the Greatest Teacher (Galatians 3:24).

This law was perfect for its purpose. When its purpose had been accomplished, the law was repealed. Christ abrogated the "bond written in ordinances," and nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2 : 14).

It is clear that the "old paths" referred to by Jeremiah are no longer desirable, inasmuch as the Jewish legal system is defunct.

OLD PATHS OF CHRISTENDOM

The message of Jeremiah with regard to the ancient way of Israel is very appropriate for Christians as it relates to the old paths of Christendom. Professed Christians should ever be encouraged to walk in the ancient paths. That is, they should strive constantly to follow the primitive patterns of apostolic Christianity.

The church today should seek to be the holy church of Jesus Christ, primitive and and apostolic. Digression from the apostolic pattern has produced churchanity with its conflicting creeds and multiple discordant notes.

The realm of Christendom stands indicated in that the advocates of Christ's way have not made an earnest contention

for the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3).

OLD PATH'S NAME

In the apostolic day, the disciples were called **CHRISTIANS** (Acts 11 : 26). That name is sufficiently broad to include every single follower of Jesus Christ. It will not exclude one faithful saint.

All followers of Christ can and should wear that name alone. That name accords with the "old paths," i.e. the apostolic way. (Acts 4 : 12).

CHURCH ADMINISTRATION

Looking back down the corridors of time for some nineteen centuries, it becomes apparent that Christ alone, is head over His church (Ephesians 1 : 22-23; Colossians 1 : 18). He is sole head over His church.

If we would recognize the old paths of Christendom, we will understand that the government of Christ's church reposes solely in Jesus Christ. He is Supreme Magistrate. He is sole Potentate and Ruler. Viewing it from the standpoint of primary authority, the church is an absolute monarchy.

On the other hand, the church is completely decentralized. That is, every congregation is free and autonomous. Each congregation is a segment of the universal church and is governed by elders who have delegated authority from Jesus Christ. (Acts 20 : 28).

OLD PATH'S DOCTRINE

Man does not need a new doctrine for a new age. Man needs to apply the old doctrine. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching (doctrine)" (II Timothy 3 : 16).

A glance at the "old paths" reveals that in the apostolic day, the gospel was proclaimed by faithful men (Romans 1 : 16). The testimony of the gospel produced faith in the hearts of men (Romans 10 : 17). They were constrained to repent, that is, determine to live righteously (Acts 17 : 30). With faith in their hearts and with penitential souls, they demanded baptism in order to procure remission of sins (Acts 2 : 38; 22 : 16).

Faith changed man's heart then (Acts 15 : 19). It does so now. Repentance changed the individual's manner of life then (Matthew 21 : 29). It does now. Baptism changed man's state then and it changes man's state now (Galatians 3 : 27).

Thus, those disciples had obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine which freed them from sin and which made them servants of righteousness (Romans 6 : 17-18).

OLD PATH'S WORSHIP

In worship, Christians, as of old, sang the praises of God (Ephesians 5 : 19). They commemorated the Lord's death in the regular observances of the Lord's supper (Acts 20 : 7).

In proportion to their prosperity, each individual Christian made a personal gift, as he had purposed in his heart (I Corinthians 16 : 2).

Scriptural meditation and prayer loomed large in the devotional service of the apostolic church (Acts 2 : 42).

BASIS FOR UNITY

The world would be a saner place and people would be happier if professed Christians would unite. But, they can achieve unity only as they are able to secure a common platform for unity.

That platform, we submit, is the "old paths". The "old paths" are well defined in the living oracles, the Last Will and Testament of our Lord. By repudiating every human creed and adhering solely to the word of Christ, man can accomplish the unity of the faith.

Thus, the Master's prayer will be answered (John 17 : 20-21). Men will behold the pristine beauty of the primitive Christian way. God speed the day.

Things that Differ

Franklin Camp

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve

the things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and the glory of God" (Philippians 1 : 9-10).

Paul's prayer for the church at Philippi is filled with instruction for any Christian or congregation.

The principles of the prayer applied to life bring praise and glory to God. This should be the aim of every Christian and congregation. What are some of the things that are necessary to glorifying God? A fundamental truth given in the prayer is the ability to distinguish between things that differ. If one approves things excellent one must have the right kind of character. Character and attitude are important in interpreting Scripture. Intellectual attainment is of little value in learning truth without the proper moral attitude that must accompany learning. The scribes and Pharisees were trained in the schools of their day, but without the right attitude, they failed to see Deity when He walked before their eyes. They were a total failure in understanding God because of a wrong attitude. This is the very point made in John 7 : 17. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself." The A.S.V. has "willeth to do His will." This denotes attitude. There must be the desire to know the will of God without regard to what it may be.

LOVE AND SENTIMENTALISM

Some confuse sentiment and love. Paul prays that the Philippians may abound in love but he separates it from sentiment. He wanted them to abound in love, that is, overflow, and this would influence their understanding. The heart that lacks love will not understand the truth. Love of self will blind one to understanding the Bible. Love of God and love of truth go together. Christ said He was truth, John 14.6. How can one love Christ and not love truth?

"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause shall God send them

delusion, that they should believe a lie : That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2 : 10-12). One may see in the passage the determination to follow one's own way and satan's use of the desire of pleasing self to deceive. Here is proof that one cannot love God without loving truth. The starting point of learning truth is saying and meaning. "Thy will be done, not mine."

One may see that love is not mere sentiment. Real love must be knowledgeable. Paul wanted the love of the Philippian to increase in knowledge. Proper judgment cannot be exercised without knowledge. That is the reason that love must be controlled by knowledge in order to make the proper judgment. The margin says "sense". The A.S.V. translates it "discernment." Ellicott makes the following comment on it: "The word 'perception' properly applies to the senses, and seems here to signify the insight which recognizes a truth as the eye recognizes an object. In the same sense (Hebrews 5 : 14) Holy Scriptures speak of those who 'by use have THEIR SENSES exercised to discern good and evil.' in fact, the perception here spoken of differs from knowledge in dealing not with general principles, but with concrete examples and questions."

Love must be directed by knowledge. Judgment or discernment is based on love that one knows the Book. Decisions are not to be made on sentiment. One can approve the things that are excellent only as they are tested by the Bible. Some of the judgments that are being made today are based on sentiment and not the truth. Unity is needed. It is required in the Scripture. (I Corinthians 1 : 10; Ephesians 4 : 1-6; John 17 : 20, 21). The desire for unity must not ignore the scriptural basis for it. It seems that some are willing to run past Jerusalem to Rome to offer fellowship to those who reject the authority of the Scripture.

UGLINESS AND SOUNDNESS

I do not suppose that any one would admit to being ugly, but that does not mean that such is not the case, Paul told Timothy, "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast

heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (II Timothy 1 : 13). Again in 1 Timothy 1 : 10, Paul warns of things contrary to sound doctrine. Sound doctrine is healthy teaching. But, one cannot present healthful teaching with an ugly attitude. Using harsh and caustic words is not proof of one's soundness in the faith. In fact, it's the opposite.

Sound doctrine includes Christian courtesy. "Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous : Not rendering evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing" (1 Peter 3 : 8). Pleading for unity does not allow for ugliness in doing so. One must be able to discuss differences with compassion, courtesy, pity and love. The purpose of discussing differences is to save souls, not just win an argument.

Recently some in discussing differences with others said they were "stupid." If this is not a violation of Matthew 5 : 22, it is surely getting close to it. "But I say unto you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment : and that whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council : but whosoever shall say, Thou, fool, shall be in danger of hell fire". If one has the truth, it is not necessary to use words showing contempt for another. It is contrary to the Scripture and denotes a self righteous attitude.

Peter says one is not to "Render evil for evil, or railing for railing." I remember brother Nicholas trying to help some brethren heal the division in a congregation. One man and his wife kept calling some other brethren liars. After repeated appeals to get them to cease from such harsh and un-Christian language, brother Nichols said, "Do you realize what you are doing? You are guilty of railing and the Bible condemns such".

When one resorts to railings or speaking with contempt of another, it shows a flaw in one's character or else the weakness of one's position. A good example of this is found in John 9. Christ had healed the blind man. The Pharisees were questioning the blind man about his healing. The man had his sight so the Pharisees were on the spot. They could not deny the miracle. They

first tried to get around the problem by accusing Christ of violating the sabbath. But, then, they were confronted with the problem of a sinner performing a miracle. They intimidated the man's parents, but they could not shake the blind man's testimony. They kept pressing him and he said, "I have told you already, and ye did not hear : wherefore would ye hear it again ? Will ye also be His disciples" (John 9 : 27). That was more than they could take. They had no answer and the man who was healed refused to bridge in his testimony. What could they do ? "Then they reviled him, and said, Thou art His disciple, but we are Moses' disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses : as for this fellow, we know not from whence he is" (John 9 : 28-29). The word "reviled" is the same word found in I Peter 2 : 23. When Christ was reviled, He reviled not again. Christ had the truth. One does not need ugly words to uphold truth. The truth will stand on its own. Abusive language does not prove that one is sound in the faith. Let us teach the truth but not drive people away with ugly words.

False Accusations Against Jesus

Clem Thurman

During His ministry on earth, there were times when thousands followed after Jesus to hear His teaching and observe the signs He did. During this same time, many accusations were made against him. He was accused of "*eating with publicans and sinners*" (Matt. 9 : 11), of being from the wrong city (Jno. 1 : 46), of being guilty of blasphemy (Matt. 26 : 65), of being a servant of Satan (Matt. 12 : 24), of choosing "*ignorant and unlearned men*" to be His apostles (Acts 4 : 13), of being a threat to Caesar (Jno. 19 : 12), and many other things. Some of the accusations may seem frivolous to us, but they were deadly serious to those who made them.

Jesus lived such a life that it was later said of Him, "*He was*

tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4 : 15). The Father said of Him, "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am much pleased*" (Matt. 17 : 5). Even those who put him to death were constrained to say, "*Truly, this man was the Son of God*" (Matt. 27 : 54). In spite of His perfect life, He was constantly being accused of all manner of things. If He, living a perfect life was so accused, how can we expect to escape false accusation as we strive to live for Him? The truth is, in every generation, false accusations have been made against those seeking to serve the Lord. It is not different with us in this generation.

Jesus warned, "*If ye were of the world, the world would love its own; but ye are not of the world : therefore the world hateth you*" (Jno. 15 : 19). People of the world, who refuse to live as Jesus directs, can hardly be expected to approve those who do! Too often we are overly concerned with what the world thinks, and strive to gain approval of the world. But Jesus said, "*Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you*" (Lk. 6 : 26). Such approval comes at too high a price! The apostle Paul wrote later, "*If I yet pleased men, I would not be the servant of Christ*" (Gal. 1 : 10). False accusations will be made, in every generation, in every land. Such are being made today, against the Christ and His church.

"You Teach People to Violate the Law"

Because most people in the first century considered Christianity as a new religion among the Jews (Acts 25 : 19; 28 : 22), the early church had to be extremely careful about the laws and the customs of both the Jews and Gentiles. Usually, though, when they preached the gospel of Christ, opposition quickly arose. When Paul preached in Philippi, the charge was made. "*These men teach customs which are not lawful for us to receive, being Romans*" (Acts 16 : 21). The charge was false, for Paul was a Roman citizen (v. 37), and there was nothing in the gospel of Christ that would cause one to rebel against established law. Yet in the next city where Paul preached, the same is made again : "*They that have turned the world upside down have come hither, also*" (Acts 17 : 6). In both Philippi and Thessalonica, because the community leaders could not refute the apostle's teaching, they levelled false accusations against them in order to stir up the people against them.

Some make the accusation today that "the Church of Christ does not believe you have to obey the law." Friend, that is just not true! The Lord said, "*Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's; and to God the things that are God's*" (Matt. 22 : 21). There is no reason for a conflict between obeying Christ and obeying the law of the land, unless man makes laws that would prevent our obeying Christ (Acts 5 : 29). Jesus obeyed the Roman law, and He taught His disciples to obey, also. That included paying taxes, even to the corrupt Roman government (Matt. 22 : 21).

The apostle Paul wrote to Christians, "*Let every soul be in subjection to the higher powers : for there is no power but of God: and the powers that be are ordained of God. Therefore he that resisteth the power, withstandeth the ordinance of God*" (Rom. 13 : 1-2). To resist the law is to resist the will of God! Peter simplified it slightly, "*Be subject to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake*" (I Pet. 2 : 13). The Child of God, because he is Christian, sets the examples for all society by obeying the laws of the land.

"You Don't Believe The Old Testament"

One of the most serious charges the Jews made against Jesus was His failure to "*keep the traditions of the fathers*" (Matt. 15 : 2). At least to the Jews that was a serious charge. When Paul preached in Ephesus, the Jews made accusation, "*This fellow persuadest men to worship contrary to the law*" (Acts 18 : 13). Gallio, the Roman proconsul, refused to "hear" the case because it dealt only with the Jewish law. We often hear the charge today, "You don't believe the Old Testament". It was a false charge 1900 years ago, it is false today.

When Jesus was tempted (Matt. 4 : 1-11), He answered every temptation with a Scripture—Old Testament Scripture. Paul wrote later, "*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God*" (2 Tim. 3 : 16). That includes Old Testament writing, too. Those Scriptures are just as true as they ever were. The lessons found there are valuable for us as we strive to live for Christ now: "*Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures, might have hope*" (Rom. 15 : 4). Yes, we believe the Old

Testament is true, that it is from God. But the real question should be, "Do you believe that the commands of the Old Testament apply to Christians today?"

Many pick out a commandment, or practice, in the Old Testament and say, "You folk don't believe in doing that". Quite often they are right! Shall we build an ark (Gen. 6), offer a son as a sacrifice (Gen. 22), have 1,000 wives (1 Kgs. 11 : 3), marry an adulteress (Hosea 1 : 2)? Now, I don't know anyone who believes that all of these are commanded for us today. But then which of the commandments of the Old Testament are for us? Read Heb. 9 : 15 and 10 : 9-10, "*For this cause He [Christ] is the mediator of the new testament.....He taketh away the first, that he might establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all*". It is plainly stated that Jesus removed the first (old) testament in order that the New Testament would be in force.

The apostle Paul wrote of the effect of the death of Christ, "*Having blotted out the bond written in Ordinances ..He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to his cross*" (Col 2 : 14). When Christ died, the Old Testament, as a governing body of law, also died (Heb. 8 : 8-13; Eph. 2 : 14-16). We live today under "*the law of liberty*" (Jas 1 : 25) which is the gospel of Christ, the New Testament (Heb. 9 : 15-17). For any who try to go back to the Old Testament for rule or authority, we would simply point out what God said 1900 years ago : "*Ye are severed from Christ, ye are fallen away from grace*" (Gal. 5 : 4).

"You Won't Fellowship Other Groups"

Peter and John were arrested for preaching in the name of Jesus Christ (Acts 3). Brought before the Jewish leaders, they boldly preached what they certainly knew would make them very unpopular with those leaders : "*In none other is there salvation, neither is there any other name under heaven, given among men, wherein we must be saved*" (Acts 4 : 12). Imagine that—the very idea of such a narrow, dogmatic doctrine! The idea that "their way" was the "only way" would not be tolerated by other religious leaders. The apostles preached it, not because it would make them popular, but because it was true. It still is. The Gentiles reacted much as did the Jews. Paul preached Jesus

Christ in Athens, and got the opportunity to preach to the religious leaders of the city. His message began, "*Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are very religious*" (Acts 17 : 22). But then he went on to show that their religion was wrong (Acts 17 : 16, 22, 30-32). He was more concerned with truth than in trying to get along with people in other religious groups.

Many question today, "Why don't those in the Church of Christ join with other denominations in various works and worship?" The answer to that is two-fold. First, the church of Christ is not a denomination; it never has been. Jesus built it (Matt. 16 : 18), bought it (Acts 20 : 28), it is His bride (Eph. 5 : 22-32). His body (Col. 1 : 18) and He is the Savior of it (Acts 2 : 47; Eph. 5:23). Second, the first-century Christians were told very clearly what to do when confronted with the problem of dealing with people of "other faiths." Paul gave the admonition. "*Be not unequally yoked with unbelievers : for what fellowship have righteousness and iniquity? or what communion hath light with darkness and what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what portion hath a believer with an unbeliever ? and what agreement hath a temple of God with idols ?... Wherefore, Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord*" (2 Cor. 6 : 14-17). Notice carefully the five questions asked in this passage. Each one contrasts the "*one faith*" (Eph. 4 : 5) with a different faith. How we shall deal with those in a different faith is clearly stated, "*Come ye out...*"

Christ refused to conform to the pattern of what other religious leaders wanted, so those leaders made various accusations against Him to discredit and condemn Him. Peter, Paul and the other apostles preached Christ as the only Savior, and false and prejudicial charges were made against them. When people today seek to do the will of the Lord, in His church, wearing His name, following His teaching, and rejecting all human creeds and denominations, there are similar accusations made against them. Let us have the courage of Joshua, who boldly said "*We will serve the Lord*" (Josh. 24 : 15), regardless of what any one else may think. It is the only course to follow, if we would please Him who died on the cross for us.