

THE BIBLE TEACHER

Pleading for the Restoration of Pure New Testament Christianity

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EDITORIAL

Prove Yourselves

This is being said especially for our readers and friends who believe in the Bible to be the inspired word of God and Jesus Christ the only begotten Son of God, and yet are divided in many different sects and religious bodies. Most people are where they are religiously because their parents have been there. Some are in denominations because they see no difference and believe that one church is as good as another. Yet, others may be in them because they do not know that the Bible speaks of only one church, which Christ Himself had established and which is rightly called after His name.

This is not to say, however, that there are no good people in various denominations. On the contrary, there are many many nice and sincere and honest people in almost all denominational bodies. Yet, this does not make a denomination or a sect right before God. You may be a religious leader or just a member in your church, nevertheless you need to realise the following facts.

While Christ was on earth, He had promised to build His own church. (Matthew 16:18). The Bible teaches that He adds all those who are saved from sin to His church. (Acts 2:47). He is the head of His church (Ephesians 1:22,23). The church is His spiritual body of which He is the only head. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 4:4). According to Romans 16:16, congregations of Christ's church in all different places were known as churches of Christ. All members of Christ's church were known as Christians only, and by no other sectarian name. (Acts 11:26; 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16).

God's book, the Bible, which we all accept as the infallible Holy Spirit inspired word of God, teaches us that denominationalism, sectarianism and division is sinful. Listen to the apostle Paul as he said, "Now I plead with you brethren, by the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." *IS CHRIST DIVIDED?* Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" (1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Then, in 2 John 9, we read this admonition, "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." One cannot abide in the doctrine of Christ and yet be a member of a religious body which Christ never authorised in His New Testament!

Just before His death on the cross Christ had prayed to His Father in heaven, saying; "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, Father, are in me and I in you; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that you sent me." (John 17:20,21). God and the Holy Spirit and Jesus Christ desire today that all His people may be one in Him in His church, as they were in the beginning. Therefore, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Prove yourselves." Said the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 13:5.

Why not change, if we are wrong, and be right in the sight of God? Saul (Paul) did that (Acts 26). Eunuch did the same (Acts 8:26-40). And so did Cornelius. (Acts 10). It is always right to do what God says. It brings joy, happiness and contentment, which no other thing can bring.

The Last Days

J. C. CHOATE

The prophets of God spoke of the last days. Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow into it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of

the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isaiah 2:2,3). Micah makes a similar statement in Micah 4:1,2.

Coming over to the New Testament, as recorded in Acts 2, we have the apostles gathered in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost as the Lord had instructed. (Luke 24:44-49; Acts 1:8). Then the Holy Spirit was poured out on them as promised in John 14:26. As a result they began to speak in the Languages of those present from nations throughout the world. The people are amazed and think perhaps they are drunk, "But Peter standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh..." (Acts 2:14-17).

The Hebrew writer declared, "God, who at sundry times and in diverse manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." (Hebrews 1:1,2). Also, Paul wrote, "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affections, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; from such turn away." (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

Now as we can see from the several verses quoted, the various writers speak of the last days and of the different things that would take place during these days. First of all, we might ask what days are under consideration, when they were to begin, if we are living in those days now, what would take place during those days, and how long they would last.

Please note that the Old Testament writers spoke of the last days as being in the future. Then after the death of Christ, the writers of the New Testament speak of these days as being in existence. You will note that we quoted from Peter on the days of Pentecost, and he quoted from Joel, saying that that which was taking place at that time was that which was spoken by the prophet Joel, and he said that the Lord would pour out his Spirit on all flesh in the last days. Evidently, the last days began with the death of Christ. In other words, there had been other great

periods of time, such as the patriarchal age and the Mosaical or Jewish age, and with the death of Christ, a new age would begin, and that would be the Christian age. This then would be the last great age before the return of Christ, and therefore that means that the last days refer to that period of time from the death of Christ until the Lord's return, which will bring to the end of the Christian age and all things as we know them. That also means that we are living even now in the last days.

Other things would take place during these last days. It would be during this time that the apostles would receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that the gospel would be preached for the first time in fact, that the church would be established, that the Christian age would flourish, that God would speak through his Son, Jesus Christ, that the New Testament would be given to man in written form, that Christ would come again, as well as many other great events.

Paul also warned that in these last days perilous times would come. It would appear from the things listed that would characterize this period of time that man has always had to contend with these sins, but perhaps he had in mind that thing would deteriorate to the point where these acts would be much worse than before. But whatever the state of man during this time, it should be remembered that man is in sin, is lost, and is in need of salvation, and Christ is the one and only saviour. Let us therefore respond to him by faith and obedience so we can be saved and be a part of his family. In this way we can be saved and have the hope of eternal life and spend our lives in an effort to take the gospel to the rest of the world.

Some take the last days to mean only "a few days" literally left before the Lord's return, but actually the last days have been going on for almost two thousand years and how many more days it will include we have no way of knowing. The Lord could come today or it could be a hundred years from now, or a thousand years, but who knows? Only God knows (Matthew 24:36), but the point is, all of these days left before the Lord's return, whatever their number, are said to be the last days. Again, regardless of the number of days we have left before the Lord's return, they will be few in comparison to eternity. We need, therefore, to prepare for the Lord's return, and with his coming the bringing to an end of these last days. At this point all will be resurrected, the heavens and earth as we know them will be burned up, the judgment will take place, the wicked will be cast into eternal torment, and the righteous will be taken to heaven to live with the Lord forevermore. All we have then are these last days to prepare for eternity. Let us use these days wisely. There will be no second chance.

When People Make Themselves To Be Gods

Betty Burton Choate

During World War II, doctors in Germany began a program to eliminate from their society all those who were not physically "perfect". They built gas chambers to which they brought patients from mental institutions and then watched them die.

Pediatricians submitted defective children for extermination: first, the idiots, the mentally retarded, then the slow learners, and finally even children who were bed-wetters or had misshapen ears.

Homes for the aged were emptied next. People who had outlived their usefulness were simply terminated. From the institutions, doctors went out into the communities and dragged in to their death chambers any who were mentally or physically defective.

The German leadership took up the campaign against imperfection, against races of people within their borders whom they termed inferior, and against all who could be counted a liability — financially, or as physical burdens. The end result was that an entire race of Gypsies

was eliminated, more than 6,000,000 Jews, and probably an equal number of Poles, Russians and central Europeans, were mercilessly slaughtered.

Many films, both documentary and narrative, have been made to inform the world of the atrocities which were committed. These films show the murder, the starvation, the inhumane experiments that were conducted, the dragging of still-living skeletal human bodies to trenches for mass burial, and many other brutalities too terrible to describe. Watching such unspeakable horrors, even on the screen, makes one nauseous and imbeds in the mind pictures of unbearable anguish.

We call this horror "The Holocaust", and it is looked on as one of the darkest blots on the record of human treatment of humans. Even today, doctors, political leaders, and military authorities who were responsible for the murders are being hunted. When one is found, he is tried and convicted as a heinous criminal.

That holocaust is history. It

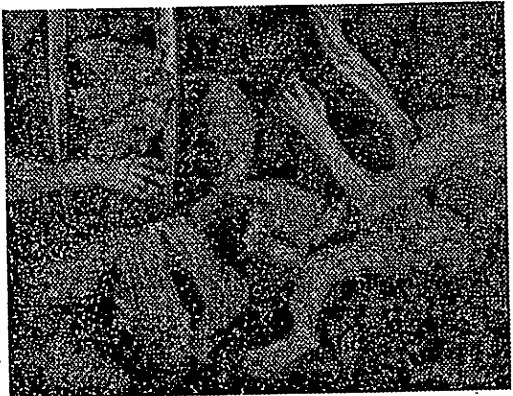
took place fifty years ago. Men have become more civilized since then, and surely if any nation rose up again in such abuse of the human rights of its own citizens, the entire world would respond in anger to crush that nation into the dirt.

But humanity, in its pride of being civilized, and reveling in the advances of modern technology, has brainwashed itself again with the thinking of the Germans. Among us is the reasoning that certain select people deserve to live and work and play and prosper, even if it means the death of other humans.

The methods of extermination today are not the Jewish concentration camps, or the gas chambers, or the burial of still-living humans in mass trenches. Nevertheless, the modern methods have been well-thought-out — again, doctors and scientists have taken the lead — and the deeds are done with the latest in equipment and technology. Consider these methods of execution:

Suction Aspiration:

Using an extremely powerful suction tube with a knife-like edge on the tip, the doctor sucks the body into a container. In the process, the living human is literally pulled apart. Any shreds



Death by suction.

which remain are scraped away with the knife edge and are also sucked into the container so that the whole can be disposed of.

"D & C": No suction is used in this procedure. The human is simply cut into small pieces and then scraped into a container.

Prostaglandin: This is a drug developed for the specific purpose of removing a human



Death by scraping.

from a protected environment, in which he can live, and putting him out where he will surely die — and he does die, either through total neglect on the part of the doctor or through the aid of the doctor.

Saline Poisoning: In this procedure, the human — imprisoned in a small cell — is submerged in a salt solution. He breathes it, he swallows it, he is poisoned internally by it — drowning in it — and his outer flesh is literally burned away by the concentrated salt "bath". After suffering an excruciating death, the body without its protective outer skin is a raw, red mass of tortured flesh.

Hysterotomy: In this method of execution, the human is taken from the atmosphere in which he was designed to live and he is thrown into one which does not supply the elements required for survival. If he does not die immediately, he may be smothered by the doctor who did the surgery of removal.

The sixth method currently in use is the latest and most sophisticated in technology. A small incision is made in the back of the neck, at the base of the brain. Through a suction tube, the brain is sucked from the skull of the living human being.

Many of these bodies are sacked up in garbage bags and disposed of as refuse. However, science is learning more and more

about ways to use organs and tissue from the discarded bodies. Certain tissue is useful in skin creams, advertised as able to restore the appearance of youth to aged cells. Other tissue is useful in treating Parkinson's Disease. It has even been found that eggs taken from the ovaries of dead females can be fertilized and embryos can be developed for further research. Actually, the medical and experimental use of these executed human beings is only beginning to be realized, so the market will flourish in years to come.

Since 1973, more than *30,000,000 people have suffered such execution in the United States.* In Japan, where these practices have been legal for 40 years, more than *1,000,000,000 have died helplessly* in the hands of doctors who should have been pledged to give life. These figures are not the exception — they are the typical story throughout the world. Literally bil-



A garbage bag of refuse from society.

lions of people have been mercilessly slaughtered by the most inhumane and criminal means during the past four decades.

Seeing Life From Conception

Until 1965 it was possible to see a human only after he was born. Then technology introduced cameras which can actually photograph the egg and the sperm as they are united to form the first cell. Every change which takes place in the development of the human body during the first nine months of existence has now been photographed. These incredible facts have been documented:

At Conception: With the union of the female egg and the male sperm, life begins. *Every particle* of the adult human is contained in the program of DNA in that *first single cell*—height, hair color, eye color, sex, the design for individual features, and even much of the basic temperament is genetically determined in the formation of that first complete cell!

3 Weeks: The body is beginning to take recognizable shape, with the development of all basic organs, including the brain.

4 Weeks: There is a heart-beat.

8 Weeks: The baby is 1 1/2 inches long, has all its organs, with hands, feet, and limbs. With the means of ultrasound, fingerprints and footprints can be seen.

10 Weeks: The baby is active, and the mother begins to feel its movements. It sucks its thumb, jumps, and can scratch its head.

11 Weeks: At 3 inches long, and 1 ounce in weight, the baby is a complete person. Its heart beats, its brain functions, all its involuntary body systems are in place and functioning. It sleeps, dreams, hears, feels, urinates, and has bowel movements. It is at this age that the baby is in the greatest danger of being exterminated by a combined mother-doctor team.

4 Months: The baby frowns, turns its head, kicks its feet, grasps with its hands.

7 Months: The baby can open its eyes and respond to light. It also responds to sound.

8 Months: The body is fully developed; the number of brain cells is complete. The baby needs only a little more growth in order to safely leave its protected environment and live in the world as an individual human.

9 Months: At this point, the cerebral cortex, the part of the brain associated with thought and consciousness, is fully developed. The baby is ready to be born.

“Pro-choice” is a popular expression, implying that a woman should have the choice of whether a baby growing inside her body is allowed to live there for nine months and be born, or whether she is free to get rid of it. Her reasons

for eliminating the baby may be varied, and they may be entirely her own or she may be influenced by the baby's father or her own family. These are some of the reasons:

◆ She is young and unmarried, and the baby is an unwanted embarrassment which will become a financial and emotional hardship.

◆ She may not want to interrupt her career.

◆ She already has all the children she wants, and she and her husband think this one would be a burden.

◆ She finds through ultrasound that this baby is not the sex she wanted, so she prefers not to let it live. In some countries the dowry system makes girl babies very unpopular. *In times past it was not uncommon for unwanted girls to be poisoned at birth, and this still happens. But ultrasound has made it possible for parents to learn the sex of the baby early in the pregnancy, so millions of little girls are aborted. In India, already there are 20,000,000 more young boys than girls. As the new technology sweeps through the small towns and rural areas, and as people learn that they can so easily get rid of all those burdensome girls, what will be the situation in ten years or twenty years? Where will those millions of men find wives?*

◆ In a small percentage of cases, it is determined that the

baby is defective.

◆ In another small percent, the baby is the result of rape or incest.

Regardless of the reasons, when mothers, doctors, families, and society decide that murder — *as was described in the six methods of abortion* — is the solution to problems or inconveniences, a terrible price of innocent blood will have to be paid.

Throughout God's word, no distinction is made between the baby before birth and after birth. Of John the Baptist, Luke 1:40 says, "...the babe leaped in her womb." Of Jesus, Matthew 1:18 says, "...she was found with child..." David said in Psalm 139:13-16 that God had formed his inward parts, that He had woven him in his mother's womb, that while he was being skillfully wrought God saw his substance which was yet unformed, and that in God's book all of David's members were written when as yet there were none of them! What a vivid description of the embryonic state in the development of a human being!

In Exodus 21:22,23, the law said, "If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no lasting harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him. . . but if any lasting harm follows, then you shall give life for life."

God's judgment was clear: if

the injury caused only premature birth, the matter of suitable punishment was left for the husband to decide. But if the baby died, the punishment for death came under *God's jurisdiction*, and His requirement was *life for life*.

Humans have elevated themselves to become gods. They think that they need only pronounce a thing as acceptable, and it is so. But *murder is inherently wrong*, no matter what name it is called by, and *God Himself will require the payment for innocent blood*.

Crime, hardness, disease, death, guilt, suicide and many other horrors will grow even more rampant as a result of the evil effects of abortion. Even in this life, the bill to be paid is a huge one. But eternity is before us, when those who have taken these millions of lives will stand without defense before the Giver of life and answer to Him.

Can those who had no mercy on the children of their own bodies expect God in His righteousness to have mercy?



Abortionists say this is not a human; that it is not life. What does it look like to you?

Parents, God does not want us to bring into the world more children than we can care for, but neither does He condone the murder of innocent babies as a birth-control method, and as a convenient way to limit population growth.

God has given us minds and consciences. Let us use our minds to plan our families and to love and protect the children we bring into the world. Let us listen to our consciences concerning the sacredness of human life, because God has built into the nature of humans the realization that murder is wrong. Let us hear God and be preservers of life — not destroyers. *

Real Christianity Is Rare

HARVEY PORTER

We have often heard people refer to someone who is an average citizen and well-liked as a "good Christian." The person may know little about Jesus, never study the Bible or pray; but since he is an "all-around guy," he is referred to as a "Christian."

Our standards are far different from the Lord's. And I might add, even in the church the standards are different. We have a mental picture of a "good Christian" too. He is one who is friendly and congenial, worships regularly, comes to classes, gives generously, etc.

Notice what Jesus said about the nature of his followers. It is disturbing. In fact, I think that all of us would have to say that we do not often see this kind of person.

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:27-31, N.I.V.)

In the church we are still working on trying to learn to love our physical family (Husband, wife, children, parents, etc.) Jesus said that this was done even by the unbelievers. One should expect this much. And in the church, we are still working on loving each other, God's family; the one Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another" (John 13:34-35).

Level one is treating our own family with love and kindness and respect. It is expected in all of God's creation; and some who do not know Christ do treat their family right. It is also true that some who are Christians do not do so, even though they know better.

Level two is harder to do. It demands loving and caring for those who have obeyed the same Lord, who seek to serve the same God. It is a fellowship, a body, a family in a spiritual way. Here we find some who are hard to get to know. Some who do not respond as they should. Some who do not love us back, who are unfriendly. How do we respond? Some quit the church because the church is not what it ought to be. Some respond in kind—treat the unfriendly the same, etc. Jesus is disappointed with us. He expects more.

Level three is the hardest of all. It is loving those you do not know

very well and those who have treated you with hatred, meanness, and have even cursed you and hit you. Jesus said we should pray for them, give to them, and turn the other cheek when they strike us. We all know (?) that the Lord did not understand! That is not the way this world works! When someone hurts us, we have the right to hurt him back! Everybody lives that way—even in the home—and in the church! We would call the person a coward who turned the other cheek. People would always walk over us if we did that. Wouldn't they?

Have we missed the heart of Christian living in personal relations? Do we really try to practice "Do to others as you would have them do to you."? We all know that the vast majority of the world and even the church does not obey this simple command. It is not because we do not understand it. It is because it is hard—extremely hard! Jesus did it—and it took him to the cross, but his act saved the whole world!

Let's try it!

"And Be Ye Thankful"

YARBROUGH LEIGH

To the Colossians, the apostle Paul wrote, saying "Put on therefore as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body, and be ye thankful" (Colossians 3:12-15).

As you can see, Paul was admonishing the Colossians brethren to build within themselves such attitudes and dispositions as would bind them together for the Lord in peace and happiness. Notice, particularly, the last four words in the quotation above: "And be ye thankful." Nothing more ennobles and beautifies the spirit of a person than does a thankful heart: a heart that is filled with gratitude to both God and man for the benefits received in life.

Did you ever pause to reflect upon the difference between the thankful heart and the unthankful heart?

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Did you ever pause to reflect upon the difference between the thankful heart and the unthankful heart?

The UNthankful heart is an UNhappy heart. It cannot be otherwise. Can happiness dwell with bitterness? Can inward joy live with

selfishness? Can contentment co-exist with covetousness? To ask these questions is to answer them—and the UNthankful heart possesses all of these characteristics.

The UNthankful heart looks on all of its possessions as being for it, alone. It says, "All this I have by my own labour. It is MINE. Keep your greedy hands and eyes off!" And, because selfishness is always covetousness, the UNthankful heart is always UNSatisfied; therefore, it is always bitter. There are not enough possessions in the world to satisfy the Unthankful soul. Its perpetual cry is: "MORE! MORE! MORE!" Whenever and wherever it seems another in possession of what it wants but does not have, covetousness will consume whatever measure of joy might otherwise have been present. The UNthankful heart will be always complaining, and considering itself deprived of its rightfully joy.

But, look at the **thankful** heart! It is a **happy** heart. It is always at **peace** within itself. It is a **contented** heart. It is a **cheerful** heart. It is a **loving** heart. And, if (I said, if,) it be properly instructed in the word of God, it will be an **obedient** heart. It will possess these happy characteristics because it recognizes its debt to both God and fellowman: never feeling self-sufficient, but always acknowledging its dependence upon others. It will demonstrate this awareness by **sharing** rather than by **grasping**; by **rejoicing** rather than by **envy**; by **love** rather than **resentment**; by **giving thanks** rather than by **Complaining**.

Think about it, beloved brethren: Our world is filled with frustrations and fears. If we are UNthankful, we are defeated before we start! But a genuine spirit of thanksgiving can lead us to greater heights of joy. Let us read again the things Paul wrote to the Colossians, follow them, and, in all things, "**be ye thankful!**"

Give Me A Thankful Heart

For all that God in mercy sends—
For health and children, home and friends:
For comforts in the time of need,
For every kindly word and deed,
For happy talks and holy thoughts,
For guidance in our daily walk-
In every thing give thanks.

For the sweet sleep which comes with the night,
For the returning morning light,
For the bright sun that shines on high,
For the stars glittering in the sky—
For these, and everything we see,
O Lord, our hearts we lift to thee:
In everything give thanks!

What Is To Be Preached?

CHRIS V. PHILLIPS

Many in this materialistic world have been doing the great task of preaching. It is a striking contrast with the selfish and godless world. Millions in this world are simply engaged in lucrative businesses which would yield them financial bounties if they spend time in it as much as possible.

Yet, there are some in the same world who toil under the sun to preach religious tenets. It is comforting to see that there are those who care about God. The question however, is what are they preaching.

Not all preach what they should preach. Many preach hollow philosophies and some preach sensual things which would attract a big audience. Thus knowingly or unknowingly many preach their faith!

We ought to preach the word of faith which apostle Paul and his companions preached. Timeless truths of God came down to us through the prophets and they were recorded for us in the Scriptures, which Paul called 'oracles of God' (Rom. 3:2). As it was still imperfect (1 Cor. 13:10), the perfect had to come along through the apostles. The perfect came and were written down for us in the New Testament.

We ought to preach the perfect law of liberty as it is set forth in the New Testament (James 1:25; Rom. 8:2). Apostle Simon Peter advises us today that if any man speaks, he must speak the oracles (very words) of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

Preachers must make sure if what they teach is valid in the light of God's Word. If there are opinions to say they must be said so. To preach with authority is to preach what Christ exactly commanded the apostles to teach (Matt. 28:20).

What are you preaching?

The Testimony Of The Heavens

WAYNE JACKSON

Long ago an inspired Hebrew shepherd wrote: "*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handi-work*" (Psalms 19:1). As one surveys the breath-taking expanse above, several factors suggest a divine Source.

First, the order of the universe argues for an Orderer. When scientists launched a spacecraft from the Earth to the moon in July of 1969, they knew that during the three-day trip the moon would move more than 165,000 miles. In order to reach its exact destination the spaceship had to be aimed far ahead of the moon's course. The mathematical orthodoxy of the heavens made it possible to land on target. The scientists knew precisely where the moon would be three days from the time of their launch. Scripture does not speak loosely when it alludes to the "ordinances" (laws) of the heavens (Jeremiah 31:35).

Second, the vastness of the universe hints of the Power of the first Cause. It has been estimated that our universe is some 20 billion light years across. This would be the distance that light would travel in 20 billion years at the speed of 186,000 miles per second. Of course, this is only an estimate, since no one has actually measured the universe or observed its extremities. What kind of Creator did it take to make such a vast universe? Surely, He is God Almighty (Genesis 17:1).

Third, the mysteries of the universe reveal the great wisdom of the Creator. The more astronomers study outer space, the more they realize how little they know. Theories about the origin of the universe come and go. After centuries of study, man is still no nearer to solving some of the grand mysteries of the universe than when he started. Indeed, as Paul noted, God's ways are past tracing out (Romans 11:33).

Reasons For Believing

ALAN E. HIGHERS

It is important for all of us not only to know what we believe, but why we believe it. Faith is not mere opinion or speculation. It is conviction based upon evidence.

Peter admonished that we should "*be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh us a reason of the hope that is in us with meekness and fear*" (1 Peter 3:15). We should know the reason for our hope. We should be able to "*give an answer*" to others for our faith. As crucial as it is for us to believe in God, in Christ, and in the Bible as God's Word, it is also vital for us to know why we believe and to be able to tell others. The Christian life is based on teaching. Jesus instructed us to preach the Gospel to every creature (Mark 16:15,16). Paul said: "*And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also*" (2 Timothy 2:2). This is the process by which the truth is passed from generation to generation—faithful men, with ability, impart the message to still others. Superficiality is one of the afflictions of our time. Many people express opinions, but few have real convictions based on principles which they can articulate and explain. The need has never been greater for genuine study, reflection, and understanding.

The study of the Word of God is food for the soul. We cannot grow and develop as we should without spiritual nourishment. Jesus said, "*Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness*" (Matthew 5:6). Peter urged us to "*desire the sincere milk of the word*" (1 Peter 2:2). The Hebrew Christians were upbraided because they had not grown in knowledge and still had need "*that one teach you again . . . the first principles of the oracles of God*" (Hebrews 5:12).

"*Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God*" (Romans 10:17). The more we study and learn, the greater our faith will be.

Let us strive to be people of God, followers of Christ, and disciples of the Book of Books.

May We Introduce Ourselves

READING TIME: 10 MINUTES. TEN MINUTES THAT MAY CHANGE YOUR LIFE.

Just Christians

YOU can be just a Christian! Does this sound strange? With over 300 religious bodies in our country, it might appear impossible to be a Christian without being part of a denomination. It is not only possible, but there are actually millions of "Christians only" in this and other nations.

The Churches of Christ

WHO are these people who seek to be only Christians? The congregations of which they are a part are known as "churches of Christ." This term is not used in a sectarian sense, but is intended to denote their desire to belong to Christ's church. The Bible says, "The churches of Christ salute you" (Romans 16:16b). However, it is just as correct to describe the church of which we read in the Bible as "the church of God" (I Corinthians 1:2), "the body of Christ" (I Corinthians 12:27), or "the household of faith" (Galathians 6:10). These and similar Biblical phrases are not proper names, but descriptive expressions which show how the church is related to Christ and God.

Individually Christ's followers are known as "Christians" in the Bible. "The disciples were called Christians first in Antioch" (Acts 11:26). "If a man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (I Peter 4:16). Never does a human name prefix this God given name. Paul was one of the greatest of all Christians, but he did not want disciples to be called "Paulites" or "Paulite Christians." (See I Corinthians 1:10-17).

A Distinctive Plea

Churches of Christ have a distinctive plea. Of course, in many ways we agree with others striving to follow Christ. We *believe* in the divine verbal inspiration of the entire Bible and that it is all-sufficient to guide us in all matters of faith; we *believe* that Jesus Christ is the son of the living God and that his shed blood is powerful to atone for our sins; we *believe* that after death all men will be rewarded or punished in

another life for the way they have lived here. Also, we insist that the moral principles of Jesus Christ are absolute truths to be exemplified in the personal righteousness of the child of God.

The Bible Only

However, we not only believe that the scriptures are inspired, but that the Bible must be our ONLY guide in religious matters. God's Word frequently warns us against changing the divine message (see Galatians 1:6-9). We therefore, have no creed, catechism, discipline, or dogma to present, but accept CHRIST as our only creed and the BIBLE as our only guidebook.

Restoration *not* Reformation

It is obvious to thinking people that the religious world is greatly divided. Many honest, sincere religious people have sought to correct erroneous teaching and practices, to REFORM existing religious bodies. While they are to be applauded for their concern but their efforts have resulted in increased division rather than unity.

Churches of Christ, however, plead for the RESTORATION of apostolic Christianity rather than a 'reforming' of existing religious bodies. Since all can agree that the church of the New Testament was right, we cannot be wrong if we seek to reproduce that church today in every essential part. While many things have changed in the twentieth century, the teachings of Jesus and his inspired apostles have not. TRUTH IS ABSOLUTE AND UNCHANGEABLE! God's Word is Truth (John 17:17) and can save today as surely as it could in the first century A.D. "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32).

Should you visit one of the churches of Christ you will find it worshipping God as did the first New Testament Christians—"in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). This involves partaking of the Lord's Supper, or breaking of bread, upon the first day of every week (Acts 20:7). It also includes acapella singing (Ephesians 5:19), praying (I Thessalonians 5:17), studying God's Will (Acts 20:7) and contributing financially upon the first day of the week (I Corinthians 16:1, 2). Likewise, in every other way churches of Christ endeavor to reproduce New Testament Christianity—in organization, work, daily conduct and teaching.

How To Be Just A Christian

In few areas is man in such disagreement as in answering the Bible question, "What must I do to be saved?" (Acts 16:30). As in all matters of religion we must go to the Scriptures for the answer. The Bible teaches that Christ shed His blood for our sins (Matthew 26:28), and that without it we cannot be saved (Hebrews 9:22). But what does Jesus require of us if we are to appropriate that sacrifice? Those who crucified Christ were told to "know assuredly" or BELIEVE that Jesus is "both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Those who believed this to be true asked for further information and they were told, "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 Spirit" (Acts 2:38). Also, to be a fit candidate for scriptural baptism one must CONFESS his faith in Jesus as God's Son (Matthew 10:32; Romans 10:10). A comparison of the accounts of conversion in the book of Acts teaches that men must believe Jesus to be the Son of God and confess that faith, repent of their sins and be baptized for the forgiveness of all past sins. Those who do these things the Lord adds to His body, the church (Acts 2:47). They are then "in Christ" (Galatians 3:27) wherein are ALL spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3).

The early disciples were CHRISTIANS ONLY. Although we live more than 1900 years later, we too can be CHRISTIANS ONLY if we will follow the BIBLE ONLY. We invite *you* to earnestly consider this plea.

A warm welcome awaits you at all services of the church of Christ. We welcome the opportunity to discuss the Bible with you or to provide you with a FREE Home Bible Study course.

What Does God Require Of Me?

DAVID THURMAN

Recent headlines from around the world have captured the attention of America. In one place a man claiming to represent God encourages acts of terrorism against Egypt. Declaring Egypt to be in violation of Allah's will, this cleric insists on active efforts to overthrow

the government. In another place a man claiming to be a prophet or even the Son of God Himself has battled the authorities of the U.S. government. This battle killed at least four and has left much doubt and confusion over the role of religion.

For many people these events lead to the simple conclusion that all religion is corrupt. For others, it leads to confusion as they wonder which religion to follow and which God to obey. For others, the uncertainty makes them ask, "What does God want from me?" This is a legitimate and important question. With all the confusion, the headlines and notoriety, what does God require of me?

Micah lived in a society similar to ours. Many were religious, but their religion was empty. They worshiped, but they didn't live very well. There were many calls to worship many different gods. There were conflicting messages about the one true God. But Micah found an answer to, "What does God require of me?" *"With what shall I come to the Lord and bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, with yearling calves? Does the Lord take delight in thousands of rams, in ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my first-born for my rebellious acts. The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good: and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"* (Micah 6:6-8).

Look Beyond the Claims

The people of Micah's time could claim to be religious. They went to the temple, they offered the right sacrifices. Some even offered sacrifices to several different gods. They sang the right religious songs, they made the correct religious moves. By all outward appearances they looked religious. If questioned, they would point to their religious activities and call themselves the children of God.

But Micah challenges us to look beyond the claims, to go beneath the surface. What does God require? Much more than the appearance of religion. Micah tells us that God wants more than rivers of oil offered in sacrifice. He wants much more than yearling calves or thousands of rams. God is not so interested in the show of religion as He is interested in the heart of the religious. To act religious, to talk religious is not the same as pleasing God. Seeing people go through the motions, even extravagant motions as Micah describes, does not make them right in God's eyes. If we are to discover what God requires of us we must go deeper than the claims of the religious.

Do Justice

Micah tells us three things God wants from us. The first is that we learn to "*do justice*". This means that we are to learn to do what is right, especially toward other people. Justice is the idea of being loyal to what is just, to what is right. Regardless of what the world, the community or even the boss might say, God requires us to do what is right.

This changes the standard for judging who is religious. Religion may not be how many great sacrifices we have made for God. It may not be how well we can quote the Bible. It may not be how well we can persuade others to follow us. Being religious is simply: Do we do what is right? When confronted with evil, with injustice, with corruption, do we do what is right? When tempted to slander, to backbite, to gossip, do we do what is right? When offered the chance to cheat, to lie, to be dishonest, do we do what is right? When we see others abused, mistreated or hated, do we do what is right? Often many people hide behind their religious activities and call themselves religious. But God would ask us, "Do what is right!"

This simplifies the confusion. When we hear someone claiming to represent God, but that someone steals our money, that is not justice. When one claims to speak for God and then endorses violence, then there is no justice. When one claims to know God personally but kills and violates the basic laws of God by acts of violence toward people, then there is no justice. When people fail in doing right, when they claim to have the right to do evil for God's sake, then they cannot represent the God of the Bible.

Love Kindness

Micah's second requirement is the other side of the same coin of doing right. We are to "*love kindness*." Above all of our priorities must come the willingness to be gentle and kind with others. In our dealings with people we must first and foremost be governed by a gentleness that demands that we treat those people with the love of God. This removes from our hearts any racial or national bigotries. It forces us to treat every person with dignity and kindness, even those who are unworthy of such treatment.

Mercy and kindness were the qualities that set Jesus apart from the "religious people" of His day. While the Pharisees were so careful and precise in their rituals, Jesus went out of His way to touch people, the very people who were unworthy of His love. So we see Jesus

forgiving a woman taken in the act of adultery (John 8). We see Jesus honoring a rebellious young man who squandered his father's money, honoring him because he came home (Luke 15). We see Jesus eating with Zaccheus, a noted and despised tax collector (Luke 19). Jesus treated people with a dignity and honor which grew out of His love for them. Because He loved them, He treated them with gentleness and kindness. Jesus even treated His enemies in this way. He ate with Pharisees (Luke 7). He held discussions with them. And even when on trial for His life he refused to be cruel to them (Luke 22 & 23) or allow acts of violence to protect Himself. It was this quality of mercy that made Jesus so different from the religious people of His time.

The confusion which arises from conflicting religious voices can be clarified by watching the way those religious people treat others, especially their enemies. Followers of Jesus Christ should be known for "*forgiving those who trespass against you*" and "*praying for those who persecute you*" and for "*loving your enemies.*" It is just this sort of gentleness, even toward those opposed to God, that sets apart those who follow the Lord.

If a man, or a movement, calls for hate-filled actions it cannot represent God. If it inflames hatred and bitterness, if it encourages violence and pain it cannot be of God. These attitudes are foreign to the call of God. What does God require? Not hatred, not violence, not ill will toward others. He does ask that we be gentle and forgiving, even toward those who mistreat us.

Walk Humbly With God

The final ingredient in God's requirement is that we learn to walk humbly with the Lord. Humility flies in the face of religious "know-it-alls" who think they can speak for God. In fact, none of us can speak for God, except as we speak as God has directed. Humility compels us to speak God's message, not our own version of what we think God says. Yet, many religious people claim to have special insight into God's mind. They think they can stand in God's place and say what God wants said. The only true standard is God's message, revealed in the scripture. "*Though we or an angel from heaven preach a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed*" (Gal. 1:8). Paul was emphatic in declaring that no man can speak for God. We can only speak as God has revealed.

More than this, walking humbly with God is to admit we need to learn. Humility forces us to accept that even when we speak God's

words that we (the speakers) must change in response to those words. Walking humbly with God forces us to act as God would command, not as we would want.

Walking humbly with God settles so many issues that can plague believers. Should I be baptized? "*Repent, and be baptized every one of you for the remission of sins*" (Acts 2:38). When we humble ourselves before God the answer to baptism is simple. Instead of argument, we humbly submit and obey. Should I worship God regularly? "*not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more, as you see the day drawing near*" (Heb. 10:25). a humble walk with God answers the question of church attendance. Should I give of my means to support the church? "*On the first day of every week let each one of you lay by in store as God has prospered you*" (I Cor. 16:2). Giving is simplified, if we will be humble before God.

Look for the Genuine Article

With so many conflicting voices calling you to serve God in a particular way, look carefully for the genuine article. God's requirements are simple, although they can be very hard. Being just with others is not always easy. Being fair to those who mistreat us does not come easy, but it is what God requires. Learning to love others and treat them with mercy and kindness is not natural for most of us. Learning to love and pray for enemies goes against all that our world stands for. Yet, that is what God requires. Being humble before God and doing all things in His way is not so easy either. Being baptized, giving money, attending regularly and so many others things take effort, energy and sacrifice. Yet a humble walk with God demands such sacrifice. Serving the one God is not so complicated, but it can be hard. As you hear the many voices, look beyond the surface of religious activity and search for justice, mercy and humility. Then, you will be listening to the requirements of God.

Jesus Christ The Son Of God

BASIL OVERTON

Some have said Jesus Christ was a good man but not the Son of

God. Why do they say He was a good man? Because of what the New Testament says about Him. The same New Testament says Jesus said repeatedly that He came down from heaven and that He was God's Son. If He was not what He said He was, He was not even a good man, because a good man does not tell things about himself that are not true.

Christians are God's children because they are people who have been begotten of God by His Word (James 1:18). But, Jesus is the only Son God has who was begotten as He was begotten. He was begotten of God when His virgin mother Mary miraculously conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost.

Jesus Christ is God's Son and the Savior of all people. He died on a Roman cross for the sins of all people. Three days later God, His Father, raised Him from the dead for our justification (Romans 4:24; Luke 24:46,47; I Corinthians 15:1-3).

The fact that Jesus died for all does not mean all will be saved. Only those who trust in Jesus Christ will be saved. Trusting in Him means believing the wonderful good news, or Gospel, about this wonderful Son of God, and it means repenting of your sins, confessing your faith in Him, and being buried and raised in water baptism in order to have forgiveness of your sins through the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. (Read John 8:21-24; Romans 10:8-10; 6:3,4; Colossians 2:12.)

Jesus said he that believes the good news about Him and is baptized shall be saved (Mark (16:15,16). Peter told believers in Christ, "*Repent and be baptized everyone 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 Lord adds those who do this to His church (Acts 2:41,47). If you need assistance in doing this, please contact the church of Christ nearest you.