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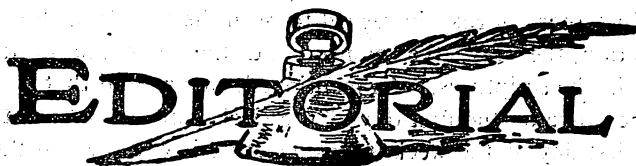
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Observing Days

The Apostle Paul wrote these words to his Galatian brethren: "Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain." (Galatians 4:10,11). When looking into the context, one discovers that the writer is dealing with people who had come out of Judaism, or that of following the law of Moses, to follow Christ. Being the early days of Christianity then some were uncertain of themselves. They were having second thoughts about the law. They were tempted to go back to that of observing days, and months, and times, and years. Under the law there was the Sabbath and many feast days and festivals that they celebrated at different times of the year. Paul wanted to know that after they had been freed from all of that in leaving it behind, in obeying God and becoming Christians, why would they turn again to the weak and beggarly elements and desire again to be in bondage? (Galatians 4:9). He therefore said that he was afraid of them lest he had laboured in vain to convert them to Christ. He goes on to say, "Christ is become of no effect unto you whosoever of you are justified by the

law; ye are fallen from grace." (Galatians 5:4).

We know for a fact that Christ was born into the world. Many prophecies were given concerning his coming and then we read in Matthew 1 and other portions of scripture of their fulfillment. Secular history recognizes his birth. In spite of this, there is no fixed date given in the scriptures as to the exact date of his birth. We likewise know that Christ died on the cross and that it took place before the Sabbath day and the scriptures definitely tell us that he came forth from the grave on the first day of the week. (Matthew 28:1-10). But again, no specific date is given for all of this. In other words, in regard to both the Lord's birth and his resurrection, the day, the month, and the year are noticeably missing in the scriptures. As mentioned, we are told that he arose from the grave on the first day of the week, but we are not told which first day of the week it was, whether it was the first Sunday of the month, the second Sunday, or one of the others. But the question is, why were those dates not recorded? Surely something that important would not have been overlooked or forgotten. Therefore, we must conclude that there was a reason for it, that the Lord intentionally did not give the date for either one of these earth shaking events. But again, why wouldn't he give these dates?

As already stated, under the law of Moses there was the Sabbath day and many other special days, occasions, and festivals that they were to celebrate. It had gotten to the point where these had become mere rituals, and therefore, they were meaningless. With the coming of Christ, all of that, along with the rest of the law, was removed. (Colossians 2:14). Man would no longer be tied down and bound to keeping such days. Especially with the coming of Christ, and knowing how easy it was for man to pick up something and idolize it, then it would appear that he purposely kept the actual dates for his birth and resurrection secret lest man turn them into special occasions and days of worship.

In spite of the foregoing, somewhere between the birth of Christ and today, man has invented a date for the Lord's birth and a date for his resurrection. Actually, not one but several,

since some accept one date and others accept another date. The one most popular, and followed by the majority, dates back several hundred years. But if the Lord did not choose to reveal such dates in his word, could we conclude for a minute that the Lord would be pleased with us when we accept dates invented by men, and to therefore celebrate what man calls Christmas in honor of the Lord's birth, and to celebrate what he calls Easter in remembrance of the Lord's resurrection? Actually, the so-called Christian world has reduced what it calls Christianity to something like that which was practiced under the law of Moses and that which is practiced by other religions, in that it has its festivals even as they do.

True Christians, that is, members of the church of Christ, do not celebrate Christmas or Easter. Does that mean that we do not believe in the birth of Christ and that Christ arose from the grave? Certainly not. To the contrary, we do believe and we believe to the extent that we abide by the scriptures on these matters. We thank God that Jesus was born into this world, and greater still, we thank God that he was willing to die on the cross for our sins, and that three days and nights later he arose from the grave to be our Lord and Master. We remember that every first day of the week when we assemble in his name to partake of the Lord's Supper, partaking of the bread in remembrance of his body, and partaking of the cup or fruit of the vine in remembrance of his blood, the blood that was shed that we might have the remission of our sins and the hope of eternal life. (1 Corinthians 11:23-29). In doing this we not only point back to his death, burial, and resurrection, but we also allow this to remind us and all people that one day he will come again. Through this we are edified, we tell the world of our faith in Christ, and we glorify our Lord in doing what he has asked us to do.

Sometimes when one becomes a Christian, because of the practice of the majority of believers in Christ in celebrating Christmas, and Easter, then it is hard for them to give such up. Some even want to continue to participate in these festivals. This reminds us of Christians in Paul's day who wanted to go back to the law. But we cannot do this if we are going to remain faithful

to the Lord. When one leaves one of the other religions, the Lord certainly wouldn't condone him going on with those festivals that he had participated in all of his life. Neither can the Christian go along with festivals and practices that are carried on by believers in Christ when those things are not authorized in God's word. If the Lord had wanted us to celebrate his birth and the date of his resurrection then he would have revealed those dates in his word and then there would have been no question concerning them.

Our religious friends, especially our denominational friends, find it hard to believe that we do not celebrate Christmas and Easter. They remind us of what these days mean to the family, of special services that are conducted during these times, etc. We could also remind our friends of the many evils that are done during these times of the year in the name of these special occasions. But we are not bound by the laws of men but by the authority of Christ's word, and that makes all the difference in the world.

I invite you to return to the teaching of God's word and free yourself from all such festivals, special occasions, dates, traditions, customs, and practices of men. With the freedom that we have in Christ then we may proceed to worship the Lord as he has requested, and thereby honoring and glorifying him, to find the joy and happiness and satisfaction that results from so doing.



**associate
editorial**

"The Church Of Christ Does Not Believe In The Lord's Prayer"

Some are saying, "the church of Christ does not believe in

the Lord's prayer." Such people do not know what the Lord's prayer is, in fact. For most people the Lord's prayer is the one found in Matthew 6 and Luke 11 chapters of the Bible. Here we read, one of his disciples said to Jesus, "Lord teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." In reply Jesus said, "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven; Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: for thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen." (Matthew 6:9-13).

It is obvious that the Lord here was teaching his disciples the manner in which they were to pray. He was giving them an example of prayer. After this example or after this pattern, he said, you pray. He didn't mean for them to repeat the same prayer of example time after time and word by word. Because in the same chapter, that is, Matthew 6:7, just before he gave them the model prayer, he warned them by saying, "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions." In this prayer of example, however, Jesus taught some great principles which needs our serious consideration, and we would do well to always remember them when we pray.

First of all, when we pray, Jesus taught, we should address or call God "our Father". A prayer is a request, a supplication, a petition. When a little child make a certain request to his father, he does so without fear or doubt believing that his father can fulfil his request and he will. When we pray, therefore, we should not think that we are praying to the Creator or the Ruler of the heaven and earth, or to the Almighty, or the omniscient, of course, God is all of this, but our prayer should be addressed to our Father which is in heaven. When we call God our Father, it puts in the foreground his love and care and is chosen to suggest our relationship to him and his relationship to us.

Secondly, while praying, we should remember that God's name is Holy. Christ said, "Hallowed be thy name." God's name is Holy. We should not use his name in vain. We are to give

réverence to his name. At Psalm 111:9 prophet David said, God's name is Holy and reverend. My name is not Holy and neither is my name Reverend, which means *Most Fearful*. Because the Bible says, God's name is Holy and his name is Reverend. Some times people address their mail to me as Reverend Sunny David. It is wrong, and it is sinful. Because God's name is Reverend and not man's. We should remember that the name of our Father God which is in heaven is Holy and Reverend.

Thirdly, in the model prayer Jesus taught that our first petition should not be for ourselves, but for the interest of his kingdom. His kingdom must be put first. (Matthew 6:33). Of course, today we cannot pray to God, saying, "Thy kingdom come," as Jesus taught then to his disciples. Because the Kingdom of God has since been established. We should therefore pray today for the growth and increase of the kingdom. However, the twelve disciples of the Lord who were asking him, "teach us to pray" (Luke 11:1), were asked to pray for the coming of the kingdom, because at that time it was yet to come. They were to look forward with prayer to its coming. God's kingdom on earth is his church. The church or the kingdom are two different words used by the Lord in Matthew 16:18, 19 interchangeably to refer to the same institution. It was in the future when Jesus taught his disciples the model prayer. At Matthew 16:18 he had promised, "I will build my church." And on another occasion he had told his disciples that God's kingdom would be established in their life time. (Mark 9:1). But then when Jesus died on the cross and after his resurrection and ascension into heaven, on the day of pentecost, he fulfilled his promise, that is, his church or the kingdom was established exactly as he had revealed or said. We read about this in Matthew 16:18,19; Mark 9:1; Luke 24:46-49; Acts 1:1-12; Acts 2:1-4, 38-47. And at Colossians 1:13, after the establishment of the church, we are told that all Christians are in the kingdom of God or Christ. Hebrews 12:28 says, we have received the kingdom which cannot be moved. Now, for any earthly kingdom to exist following four things are necessary: It must have a king, and a people, and a territory, and a law or constitution. In Christ's spiritual kingdom, he is the king, because he is the head of the body which is the church. (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23).

All the members of his church are his people in his kingdom. Being in the church they are in the territory of his spiritual kingdom. And his New Testament is the constitution which governs them who are in the kingdom. (2 John 9-11). Since the kingdom has already come and is in existence, therefore we cannot pray today for its coming but our prayer should be for its spread and growth.

Fourthly, Jesus, in his prayer of example taught that we should pray for God's will to be accomplished on earth as it is done in heaven. Psalm 103:20 says, "Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word." For God's will to be accomplished on earth it is necessary that we hear his word and do what he says. For instance, God's will is that none should perish but that all should be saved. (2 Peter 3:9). But if we do not obey his word we can't be saved, and if we do not teach his will to others, how can the world be saved? Prayer demands action. We pray for the harvest, but we also work to receive it. The same is true when we pray, God's will be done. We should always be ready to hear him and to do his will.

Next, fifthly, Christ said that we should pray for our daily bread. We should pray for our daily necessities, so that we would always be dependent on God for our needs. A man who works on monthly basis can afford one or more day off from his work, but the one who works for daily wages would never want to miss a single working day. This helps us to understand why we should pray for our daily bread.

Sixthly, Christ taught, we should pray for forgiveness. Being human we commit many mistakes and wrong by words and deeds and thoughts in our daily living. Thus we need God's forgiveness daily. But God's forgiveness is obtained when we have first forgiven those who have wronged us. The Bible teaches, "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matthew 6:15). Therefore in the model prayer Jesus taught, we should pray to God to forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. We should be willing to forgive others when

they approach us for forgiveness, if we desire God to forgive us our sins. Read Matthew 18:23-35.

Then, seventhly, Jesus taught his disciples to pray that they may not be led into temptation. God may permit us to be tempted, but we ask not to be led into temptation and not to be tempted above that we are able to bear. Even Jesus, God's Son, was tempted. (Matthew 4). The Bible says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Peter 2:9). And, "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear." (1 Corinthians 10:13). This promise, however, is made to God's children only. Then James, one of the writers of the Holy Bible, speaking about temptation, in James 1:2-4, said, "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptation; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing." So temptations can be for our good. But we should pray that we not be led into temptation and not be tempted above that we are able to bear, and God has promised to his children that he will see that they are not tempted above that they are able to bear.

So the model prayer, as recorded in Matthew 6 and Luke 11 chapters teaches us many good lessons about prayer. But we should, however, remember that it is not the Lord's prayer, as is commonly called today by many. The Bible does not say that it is the Lord's prayer. But as we have already noticed that when Christ was teaching his disciples to pray he gave them this model prayer, a prayer of example. Sad to say, however, many today believe that it is the Lord's prayer. In the churches of denominational origin they have included this prayer in their prayer books and creed books. In their religious services this prayer is said and repeated, again and again, word by word, without any sincerity and thoughtfulness. Even if it was the Lord's prayer, it has become a vain repetitions, which the Lord himself condemned. (Matthew 6:7). Like I have said, such people are, in fact, ignorant

of the Lord's prayer. The Lord's prayer would be the one that he prayed himself. His prayer is recorded in John 17 Chapter. Here we see Jesus himself prayed to God, and he said, "I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through the truth: thy word is truth. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:15-21). Here the Lord prayed for his disciples and for them also who would later become his followers through their preaching, and he said that they should all be one in him as he and God are one. What are you today? Are you a Christian only or something else too,—ist Christian,—dist Christian, etc.? (1 Peter 4:16). Have you been saved in the way Christ said he would save people (Mark 16:16), or in some other way? Are you in his one body, his church, of which he is the builder and the head, (Matthew 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1:22, 23; Ephesians 4:4), or in a denominational church which had its beginning several hundred years after the Lord established his church? Christ wants all his followers to be one in him. He prayed for their unity. But as long as people want to be called by different and man's given denominational names, and belong to man-made denominational churches, and wants to be saved in ways Christ has never authorised, and follow their prayer books and creed books besides or with the Bible, we all can never be united as one in Christ.

Who then does not believe in the Lord's prayer? The very people who ignorantly say, "The church of Christ does not believe in the Lord's prayer" are guilty for not believing his prayer.

Does God Mean What He Says ?

Rusty Maynard

There are many who don't admit, or don't believe that God means what He says. The most noticeable example would probably be the atheist. Since they don't believe in the Almighty at all they certainly would not believe that He means what he says. Then there are some people who don't act like they believe that God means what he says, evidenced by the careless way they live. And then there are some people who would say they believe in God but then not live a life to enable them to enter heaven. Perhaps we could consider the lives of others with whom God has dealt and see if He means what He says.

We begin by considering Adam and Eve, the first man and woman to live upon the earth. We know that when God created man He also created a helper for him and put them in the Garden of Eden which He had especially prepared for them. God loved them very much. He had made them in His own image, with His own hands, and He loved them. He gave them the whole garden to use and eat from except one tree. He commanded them not to eat of this one tree. One day Eve and the Serpent or Satan met and he told Eve that if she ate of the fruit she wouldn't die. He also said that the reason God told them not to eat of it was because it would make them as wise as He was. Satan appealed to Eve in the same three ways he does to us today as we find in I John 2:15-17. We are tempted from the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. Satan tempted Eve and she ate and she gave to Adam and he ate. Then their eyes were opened but they were not given the wisdom of God as Satan had said they would but rather they were ashamed of their nakedness. In the cool of the day when God was walking He had to call them out of their hiding places and ask them what they had done. When they owned up to eating the fruit, it hurt them, and especially God because He loved them so much. He had to drive man from the garden and separate them from Him as He had

before said he would. He kept His word and drove them out of the garden. He said that they would surely die if they partook of the fruit and he kept his promise. Did God mean what He said in dealing with Adam and Eve? Yes!

What about Nadab and Abihu? God commanded them to put the offering upon the altar and He would send fire from heaven and devour it. He wanted them not to offer strange fire or other fire. However Nadab and Abihu offered their own fire upon the altar. The fire that usually came to burn the sacrifices devoured Nadab and Abihu. I'm sure it hurt God to destroy them, they were His priests, He loved them, yet they disobeyed. Did God mean what He said to Nadab and Abihu? Yes!

Did God mean what he said to Lot's wife? When the angels came and made Lot and his wife and daughters leave the wicked city of Sodom, Lot's boys just mocked him and refused to leave. Lot and his family tarried and the Bible says that the Lord was merciful and moved them to the outside of the town and told them where to go and commanded them not to look back on the city as they left. God rained fire and brimstone upon the city. Just think of the cries that probably could have been heard by Lot and his family. Maybe Lot's wife could hear the cry of destruction knowing that her own flesh and blood was being destroyed. Maybe that is why she looked back. What mother today with true love for her children would not be tempted to look back at such a scene if in those circumstances? But no matter, God had laid down His law and it had to be obeyed. I know God loved Lot's wife or He wouldn't have spared her life from the brimstone. However God had to keep His promise and He turned her into a pillar of salt. Did God mean what He said to Lot's wife? Yes!

What about Saul, the first king of Israel, when God sent him to utterly destroy the Amalekites? Back in Exodus the 17th chapter when the children of Israel came out of Egypt, the Amalekites came out and made war against Israel, and the children of Israel "discomfited Amalek and his people." God told Moses in verse 14 of the 17th chapter of Exodus, "Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put

out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven." We come now to I Samuel the 15th chapter and find God through Samuel telling Saul to utterly destroy the Amalekites, he said to destroy them altogether. He promised He would and He told Saul to carry out that promise. So Saul took 20,000 foot-men down to Amalek and utterly destroyed—except for Agag and the best of the sheep and animals. Did he fully obey? God commanded him to destroy all and he disobeyed God, just a little. God carried out punishment against him for that sin. He had the kingship taken from him and given to David. Did God mean what He said to Saul? Yes!

And Uzzah, the man who was just trying to help. God commanded that the Ark not be touched by anyone except for the ones He told to. He laid that down as a law. The Ark was being moved on a cart and the cart must have hit a bump or the oxen jerked or something made the Ark become unbalanced. All Uzzah did was to put forth his hand to steady or to keep the Ark from falling, and he fell dead. God killed Him for trying to do something good, or so he thought. But God laid down His law. He meant for His commands to be obeyed. Did God mean what he said to Uzzah? Yes!

Consider the time God told Moses to speak to the Rock. One of the weaknesses of the children of Israel was murmuring, just as with us today. When they were thirsty, hungry, etc., God always provided a way. One time they were in the wilderness, the people were thirsty, their cattle were dry, all their live stock needed water seriously, and so they began murmuring against Moses. Moses prayed to God and he said the people were to the point of stoning him. God told Moses to go and speak to the Rock and it would bring forth water. On an earlier occasion, Moses had struck a rock to make it bring water. He was probably angry with the complaining people and he said, "Must we bring forth water?" Mistake number 1. And then he struck the rock instead of speaking to it. Mistake number 2. When Moses said must we, he was taking part of the credit for what God was doing and when he struck or smote the rock he directly disobeyed God's command to speak to the rock. By doing that, Moses prevented himself from

going into the promised land, Canaan land. God loved Moses. He had been God's servant in bringing His children out of Egypt. Moses gave the 10 commandments from God; he was the law-giver. Moses was dear to God, yet he disobeyed and God dealt punishment to him. He was permitted to see the land promised to Israel but he never set foot in the land. Now as well as God loved Moses, He didn't go back on His word and make an exception to His word for Moses. Did God mean what He said to Moses? Yes!

Let's think about the children of Israel when God told them to "have no other God's before Him." When the children of Israel came to Mount Sinai, Moses went up to get the commandments and the people waited 40 days for Moses to return. When they thought Moses was not coming back they brought all their gold to Aaron, and he made them a golden calf. They thought they had to have something to worship, so they began worshipping this calf. This seems so silly to us, we think we would certainly not do that at all. But think of these people. They were in bondage for 430 years in Egypt. They knew nothing but bondage, their leader was gone, and they thought he wasn't coming back. I wonder if we were in the same circumstances if we might not do the same thing. Anyway, it displeased God very much and He was ready to destroy them all, but Moses talked Him out of it. When Moses returned and saw what had happened he was angered by their actions and threw the stones, upon which was written the law, and broke them. He burnt the calf, ground the ashes, and put it in their drinking water and made them drink it. Then he stood in the camp and said for the ones who were on the Lord's side to come to him and then he sent those who came to slay everyone who was not on the Lord's side. The Bible says that that day there fell about 3000 men. God loved the children of Israel; He loved them dearly; they were His chosen people. He had to love them to bring them out of the land of bondage. Yet He commanded them not to have any other gods and when they disobeyed His commandment He had to punish them. As much as God loved the children of Israel, did He mean what He said to them? Yes!

Now, what about Achan? When Israel conquered Jericho they were instructed in Josh. 6:18-19 concerning certain things. If they acquired any of the silver or spoil they were to turn it into the Lord's treasury. If they partake and did not turn it over to the Lord, they were accursed and would make the camp accursed and trouble it. After they conquered Jericho, Israel was going to take a place called Ai. Joshua sent spies up to the place and they reported that they only needed two or three thousand men to take over the city, and so it was. When they began the battle they were turned away and fled. They were defeated by such a small place. Joshua rent his clothes and fell on his face in front of the Ark and asked God why they had failed. He asked Him what their defeat would do to God's name. God told Joshua to get up, that there was sin in the camp, and find the accursed and get it out of the camp. So Joshua rose the next morning and began to search the camp. Achan came to him and confessed that he had taken some of the silver and gold wedges. Joshua immediately sent men to his tent and they found the spoils. This man had done wrong and admitted doing so. Yet he had sinned and done wrong. The children of Israel took him, his wife, children, cattle, sheep, oxen, camels, and so on, to a valley. There they stoned them to death, burned them, then they piled a great heap of stones on them and the valley was from then on called Achor, which means trouble. Did God mean what he said to the children of Israel and to Achan? Yes!

One thing we need to notice before we continue is that God does not change. There would be no point in studying this lesson if God changed. We know God does not change because Malachi 3:6 says, "For I am the Lord, I change NOT." This scripture is very plain and exact. This is one thing we must realize when studying God's word. God has given commands and just as He expected obedience in the olden times, He also expects the commands he has given us to be obeyed. The commands he gives today apply to every man living on the earth or any man who will ever live on the earth. And he expects man to obey them.

Let's think of preparing for eternity. God gave us certain things to do. He gave certain commands for us to obey. Not

the same onces He gave to Adam and Eve, Nadab and Abihu, Lot's wife, Saul, the children of Israel, Mose, Uzzah, or to Achan. But the commands He has given to us today, He means for us to obey just the same as He did then. He gave them commands and He warned them of what would happen if they did not obey and we've already seen, God meant what He said. Today He tells us in Romans 10:17 to hear His word, and in Hebrews 11:6 to believe, and He says in Mark 16:15-16 that those who refuse to believe will be damned. In Acts 17:30 He says that all men are to repent. Luke 13:3 tells us to repent or perish. Also Romans 10:10 says the mouth is, for confession. Jesus said He would confess before the Father those who confess Him in this life, and those who do not will be denied before the Father. Matthew 10:32-33. We are told in Acts 2:38 to be baptized for the remission of sins. My dear reader, HE MEANS WHAT HE SAID. We were also told as Christians to be faithful unto death in Revelation 2:10 and have no doubt, HE MEANS EVERY WORD OF IT.

Now let's think of worship. God has given a specific plan of worship. He has told us how to worship. He has told us exactly how to worship Him. But there are those who change it around a little bit and say that a little alteration will not hurt anything. They only add an instrument here or change something there. Before you accept this man-made way, please consider what happened to Nadab and Abihu. God set down a specific plan of offering sacrifices, just like He has set down a specific plan of worship for us. However, Nadab and Abihu just changed the plan a little bit. In their sight that surely would not have hurt anything at all. But remember that they were consumed with fire for that offense. God meant what he said to Nadab and Abihu. I can assure you that He means no less to us today! God does not punish on earth today. He will not strike us dead for disobedience like He did then. It is truly a good thing, for if the same principle applied today and with all the additions and substractions to worship in the land today, a lot of people would have died for it. But God has mercy and offers whoever sins a chance to repent. But after time ends, if such sins are not repented of, one will have no more chances.

We could compare every command that God has given and see that He means what He says. Do YOU believe that God means what He says? Are you going to obey and be prepared or are you going to forget and be unprepared? The choice is yours. If we can help you in any way, please contact us.

The Sculptor

Thomas Premanandam

Patience in its fullness, concentration in its intensity, determination in its strength, and dexterity in its perfection are the gifts in which few can compare with the sculptor. The workmanship in diverse handiworks, as we know, is the product of three-fold faculty—the acuteness of the brain, the keenness of the eye, and the subtle touch of the hand. The potter and the smith can afford to commit mistakes, for there is a possibility for rectification, but such possibilities are extremely limited in sculpture.

The immortal fame of Michael Angelo, the Italian painter and sculptor, and Dr. Arthur Fleischmann, the greatest sculptor of Britain and a host of others the world over who belong to the galaxy of the renowned and gifted masters of art, rest upon their life-like monumental productions.

A sculptor no less celebrated either in rank or workmanship was once at his task. Strength of mind and unswerving determination were writ large on his face. The place which this sculptor held was unparalleled and unrivalled because he alone could endow his statuary with life. With mysteries of inlaced design and shapes of symbolic significance, he was diligently hewing and chiselling a grey stone.

A passer-by asked him why he was so patiently and steadily working on that useless stone. The sculptor with a radiance in his face and smile on his lips answered, "there is an angel in the

stone." This answer sprang a surprise on the man because he knew that angels would never make useless stones their abodes; but the far-off sky.

Every stroke of the chisel sent bits off the carved stone. The patient toil continued: with much assiduity and determination, he bent upon his work to shape an angel out of the grey stone. But when the angelic form had just begun to take shape, to his utter dismay, the massive marble cracked. The task of numerous hours and patient labour of several days went waste.

Notwithstanding, the sculptor was not dispirited nor did he give up in despair but went in search of another stone that would stand the strain of the chisel and the stroke of the hammer—a stone that would withstand the vicissitudes of wind and rain. Having found such a one on the wide mountain range, he resumed his work afresh with yet greater seriousness and resolve. The chiselling called for greater care, steadiness and endurance; the carving for the sweat of the brow. Slow but steady work and unremitting toil at the marble persisted. The dreams and visions in the hidden chambers of his brain were by degrees translated into a seraphic form of marvellous grace and beauty. The sculptor's visage beamed with joy and immense satisfaction. He rejoiced to see the countenance of an angel without a blemish or flaw.

It came about that on a certain day, the king of the country chanced to see this wondrous work of the sculptor. Having been highly pleased with the perfection of the art in the cherubic statue, he bought it at great price and gave it a place of honour in his royal place. But the grey stone that broke beneath the master's stroke was abandoned. It lay by the wayside all alone, a worthless rubble.

Disobedience obliterates the image of God and renders one naked. (Gen. 3:9-11). Absolute submission to the divine discipline alone helps restoration of the lost likeness of Christ and his divine effulgence.

As the Divine Sculptor works on you with His chisel and

hammer to bring back the effaced likeness of the image of Christ, brother, can you bear the stress and strain and not complain? As the strokes of the hammer repeat like the beating hail on the castle walls and as the daily polishing continues until spots and wrinkles vanish, can you stand the excruciating pain?

In the days of old, the Divine Hand tried its chisel on a grey stone. It was cut by the trial and buffeted by the winds of adversity. The hewing caused utmost suffering and loss. Abuse, ridicule and scoffing lashed against it but the stone, in total obedience to the divine will and discipline withstood and bore it all. In the end the unspeakable agony, ultimately gave rise to a servant in the person of Job, the patriarch of the Old Testament who said, 'When he hath tried me I shall come forth as gold.' (Job. 23:10).

Can you therefore endure the ache of the body, heart and soul till a beautiful first likeness shall gleam and shine in your person? or would you complain and give way in the process of being carved to the likeness of Christ?

Once God wanted to make an even more useful servant of a great Missionary Lady whose daughter was on the death-bed. When the sculpturing began, she little realised that there was neither frown nor fury beneath the Master's stroke. She failed to understand that a greater rigidity in divine discipline will secure greater splendour to the chiselled angelic statue. But refusing to submit herself to the divine discipline, she complained; the art expended on her by the Master turned fruitless. It is the stone that has failed and not the Master Sculptor.

Christ, the unique Sculptor is anxious to make a Christian of you (Phil 3:21) provided you willingly yield unto His chiselling, bravely smiling all the time. When you have borne the cross and suffered the loss and when you are a finished product at the hands of the Divine Sculptor, you will be invited to a place of honour in the heavenly mansion (Jn. 14:2) and offered a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). You will live for ever in the holy city of God, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10-27) built of pure, transparent gold and

varied kinds of brilliant precious stones, gems and pearls and illuminated not by the sun and the moon but by the glory and resplendence of God and the Lamb. In deep adoration, the angelic host ever sing Alleluias unto the Lord Almighty. Senescence and senility, disease and mortality are unknown there. Eternal joy and everlasting bliss will ever be yours in the holy assembly of God's holy people (Rev. 7:9-12).

Christ—The Way, The Truth, The Life

Dean Buchanan

The heart of the message of Christ is His claim to being the Son of God. Indeed, His entire message depended upon the fact of His Sonship. He was either the Christ, the Son of God, or He was a liar, con-man and the lowest type of individual. If His claims were false then He should be denounced as being the sort of character that would perpetrate such a hoax on mankind. On the other hand, if He is actually the Son of God, man should follow Him wherever He leads. The evidence cannot be successfully refuted. Jesus Christ, born of a virgin, is the Son of God.

In the gospel written by the apostle John, it seems the major effect of our Lord was to show that He was God's Son. While this was true of all His teaching, it is especially true in this book. Thus the claims made by Christ concerning man's salvation follow naturally from His claims to being the Son of God.

CHRIST THE WAY

"I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me," He told his apostles. (John 14:6).

In stating His claim in this manner, Christ excluded all other

possible ways of salvation. One either comes to God (that is, one is saved) in the manner prescribed by Christ or he cannot come to God. The way of Christ is the way of eternal life. Our Saviour spoke of this same concept in the sermon on the Mount. "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." (Matt. 7:13, 14).

The word strait used here means difficult. The way of Christ is a difficult way. Then too, the exclusion of all other ways to salvation is implied in these verses.

A corruption of the way of Christ will not get the job done. In the letter Paul wrote to the Galatians this is made clear. There were those in Galatia who were perverting the Gospel of Christ. They were changing the message of our Lord, and Paul pronounced a curse on them.

There are many who go in the name of Christ who are false teachers. If any man claims to preach Christ and yet refuses or neglects to preach certain commandments, he is not following the way. It is not sufficient simply to say that one must "believe in Christ" and then go about his Christianity in whatsoever way he may desire. Christ said, "If ye love me keep my commandments." (John 14:15). Thus one must not only believe the teaching of our Lord, he must also do the teaching.

To some people the words of Jesus in John 14:6 may sound rather narrow, yet it is the teaching of our Lord. And, really, in view of the fact that the teaching is true, it could not be otherwise. Truth never contradicts itself, but is always consistent. God is truth. Thus to grant the possibility of the value of other religions to salvation is to reject the truth of Christianity. Christ is the way, there is no other.

CHRIST THE TRUTH

The concept of truth has always been with man. The question

“What is truth” has been the classic question of every generation of every civilization. Philosophers were asking the question and searching for the answer hundreds of years before Christ. Pilate asked the question of Christ (John 18:38).

One often hears the statement nowadays that everything is relative. Or, truth is relative. This means that truth is changing constantly. The situation ethics of Joseph Fletcher tells us that truth depends upon what the individual sees as truth. This may vary from person to person. The pragmatism of such men as William James tells us that whatever works at a given time is truth. This also is subject to change—from one day or year or generation to the next. The subjectivism of many religionists tells us that truth depends upon feelings, experience and emotion. This of course is also subject to change with the moods of the individual.

This is basically what is meant by the expression that everything (even truth) is relative. And underlying all of it is a philosophic principle set out hundreds of years ago by Hegel. In recent decades it has been evident in philosophical systems such as Existentialism.

But Christ affirmed that He is truth. That is, He is the embodiment of truth. By the very nature of the case truth does not vary. If a thing is true in one generation then it is true in every generation. If Christ was the Son of God two thousand years ago He is still the Son of God. If He could save men then He can save men now. If His word was truth then it must be truth now. To affirm that truth is relative is to prostitute the concept which the word itself expresses.

Again, whatever man's reaction to truth may be, it does not, it cannot,—alter the fact of truth. For example, one may deny that Christ is truth, that He is the Son of God. But this does not alter the fact He really is the Son of God.

Christ also said the truth would make man free. (John 8:32). If Christ is truth then it follows that if we know Christ we can be free. This of course implies that we can be free if we are willing

to accept truth with all of the implications thereof.

Truth provides an objective standard. Something man can live by. Something that provides an example. In fact the position set out above that is held by some, that is, that truth is relative, is actually self contradictory. The statement itself presumes to be accepted as being true. If it indeed be true, then it has established the very thing it argues against. If in fact (as is the case) the statement is not true, then of course the argument is lost.

“I am the way, the truth and the life, no man cometh to the Father but by me” (John 14:6). Christ here has primary reference to eternal life. The heart, the core, the crux, the centre, the foundation—of the Bible is eternal life. The question concerning life beyond the grave is raised and answered over and over again in the Bible.

CHRIST THE LIFE

Christ said that He came to seek and save the lost. (Luke 19:10). The greatest gift He assured His apostles was eternal life. (Mark 10:28-31). If a man could gain all the wealth in the world and lose eternal life then he would profit nothing according to Christ. Hence the whole reason behind the Scriptures, behind the Scheme of Redemption—is eternal life.

I am well aware that many today laugh at the idea of eternal life as a “pie in the sky” of short of fantasy. That religion (even Christianity falsely so called) has come to look upon the main impetus of religion to be of a social nature. The feeding of the hungry, clothing of the naked and providing housing for the poor. It is almost as if the great commission of our Lord had been to go into all the world and provide food, clothing and shelter.

Must we then view Christianity as only having value in this world? It is simply a social organization through which benevolent works can be carried out? If so, then it has been a miserable failure. Better we revert simply to welfare programmes funded by government.

But the good news of the gospel is that man does live after death. Either in hell or in heaven, depending upon his works in this life. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." (II Cor. 5:10). There is life after death.

The way of Christ is eternal life. This is not to say that Christianity is no good so far as this life is concerned. On the contrary, it makes this life a very happy one. There are numerous promises in the Scriptures concerning the peace and happiness of Christians in this life. For example, the Apostle Paul discusses the peace that passes all understanding in his letter to the Philippians. (Phil. 4:6, 7).

The problem is that many times Christianity is preached as the cure-all to problems in this life. People accept it after a fashion, expecting it to be balm to all their problems. Eternal life has been given no consideration. They have moved solely on the basis of a better life here. Thus they are sadly disappointed.

So far as human relationships are concerned, there will most likely be more problems after one becomes a Christian. For his life-style will then be changed so drastically those fond of the world will not prefer his association any longer.

Christ is the life. That is, He provides man the opportunity of receiving eternal life. The choice of course still lies with the individual. One must be willing to "lay hold" of the life which our Saviour offers.

Christ truly is the way, the truth, and the life. Only through him can we go to the Father.

Denominationalism And Its Fruits

John Stacy

Why do denominations exist? I am sure that many have asked this question throughout the centuries. It deserves an answer. I ask you to consider three reasons.

First the Devil is obviously trying to divide and conquer. Satan knows what Jesus taught in Matthew 12:25, "...every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; every city or house divided against itself cannot stand." How does Satan do this? He blinds the minds of the unbelievers from the light of the gospel. (II Cor. 4:4). He steals the word of God out of the hearts of men, so that they will not believe and be saved. (Luke 8:12). Satan also stays busy sowing tares or bad seed among the wheat. He is the primary source of all false teaching. (Matthew 13:39). Satan transforms himself into an angel of light and his ministers are ministers of seeming righteousness. He is a master of deceit. (II Cor. 11:14, 15). Yes good reader, in the later times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and the doctrines of demons. (I Tim. 4:1).

Secondly, denominationalism exists because of a lack of respect for Jesus and the all sufficiency of his word. Jesus said, "If ye love me, ye will keep my commandments." (John 14:15). Again the Master declared, "If any man love me, he will keep my words." (John 14:23). In John 12:48 the Redeemer taught us, "He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that shall judge him, the words that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last days." We will be judged by Christ's teachings. Jesus taught that there shall be one shepherd (Christ) and there shall be one flock (church) (John 10:16). Do we love Jesus enough to unite into one body or church? Throughout the Bible (Deut. 4:2; Prov. 30:6; Rev. 22:18-19), God has warned that man should not add to or take away from the word of God. We simply must learn not to go beyond that which is written. (I Cor. 4:6).

Denominationalism violates these Bible warnings.

Thirdly, denominationalism exists because the will of man has been exalted above the will of God! Jesus taught His disciples to pray, not my will but thine be done, when He said, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Christ practiced what He preached. While in the garden Jesus agonized in prayer before going to the cross. In Luke 22:42 He cried out to the Father, "Father not my will but thine be done." Jesus condemned the religious leaders of His day by asking, why do ye transgress the commandments of God with your tradition! (Matthew 15:3). They had exalted human opinion over God's will! Christ told them that they made void the word of God with their traditions (Mark 7:13).

Finally denominationalism exists because men have been willing to compromise the truth for the sake of keeping the peace. Rather than compromising the truth, God's people are to defend it. Paul was set for the defense of the gospel (Phil. 1:16). Timothy was told by Paul not to allow men to teach another doctrine (I Tim. 1:3). Christians are to war a good warfare and fight the good fight of faith (I Tim. 1:18; 6:12). Paul spent his life in defense of the gospel. When his life was drawing to an end, he declared, "I have fought a good fight." (II Tim. 4:6-7). Christians are peacemakers. (Matt. 5:9). But we do not want peace at the price of compromising Bible truth!

Look at the fruits of denominationalism. Christ said, "by their fruits, ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:20). Let's take a look at six bitter fruits of religious division.

Denominationalism ignores Christ's prayer for unity. "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one Father as thou art in me and I in thee, that they all may be one in us, that the world may believe that thou didst send me." (John 17:20:21).

Secondly, denominationalism ignores Paul's teaching and plea for unity. In Ephesians 4:3-6 Paul taught, "Let us give

diligence to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, for there is one body and one Spirit, even as ye were called in one hope for your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, in all, and through all." Note Paul's plea: "Now, I beseech you brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same things, and that there be no division among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (I Cor. 1:10).

In the third place sectarianism ignores the example of the unity of the first century church. Acts 4:32 states, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul..."

Ill will in the home is another fruit of division. Husband and wife are often separated because of religious differences. Parents and children are often at odds with each other because they are members of differing religious bodies. Paul said that God is not the author of confusion. (I Cor. 14:33). That is so true. The religious confusion in many families today is tragic. Anyone knows this could not be pleasing to God.

A fifth bitter fruit of denominationalism is a failure to evangelize the world. Jesus in Mark 16:15-16 said, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned." Winning the world to Jesus is hampered by denominational groups that are warring among themselves. They spend so much time stealing each other's members, that they have utterly failed to evangelize the world in this present generation. Paul and the early Christians did not have these problems. The world of their day heard Christ in one generation. (Col. 1:23).

Finally, one of the bitterest fruits of division among the ranks of those who profess to follow Christ is infidelity. Men like Marx, Engels, Lenin, Voltaire, Ingersol, Darwin, were not rejecting Christianity. They rebelled against denominationalism which was a perverted form of pure, simple, primitive, New Testament

Christianity! Denominationalism does not present a true picture of Christianity.

In conclusion, let us observe that modern denominationalism is wholly unnecessary. When we speak out against denominationalism, we are speaking out against the system, principles, aims, and organization, not the people.

Feelings

Grady M. Miller

It seems that we are living in an age where any cute slogan or phrase can be ironed on to a T-shirt or put on a bumper sticker. One phrase that has been quite popular is, "If it feels good, do it." Fortunately, there are many who realize that our lives must maintain a bit more discipline than that, but yet, it is becoming increasingly clear that feelings—or pleasure—is the only standard that many are choosing to live by.

Actually, this should come as no surprise to us. The philosophy behind the phrase "If it feels good, do it" has been around as long as man has; in today's world, it has only been brushed up a mite.

Perhaps you will better recognize this philosophy in another cliché: "Let your conscience be your guide." For generations, the world has been taught that if you feel right, then you are right; if what you are doing makes you feel guilty and depressed, then you are wrong and should stop. For many people, that is the only consistent rule of life.

Nevertheless, we would like to suggest another standard to live by which we feel is far better than personal feelings or conscience. We should not for a moment belittle the power of conscience because we, too, understand the importance of being at

peace with ourselves. However, conscience, or feelings, by themselves, are not sufficient to guide us through life. Our conscience tells us that we ought to do right, but it does not tell us what is right—that must come from somewhere else. We agree with Tryon Edwards, who said, "Conscience is merely our own judgment of the right or wrong of our actions, and so can never be a safe guide unless enlightened by the word of God."

Our personal feelings are not adequate by themselves because it is possible for them to be wrong. For example, in Genesis 37 Jacob was led to believe that his favorite son, Joseph, was dead. In his grief Jacob tore his clothing, put on sackcloth, and refused to be comforted. But, was Joseph really dead? Jacob felt that he was; however, his feelings were wrong. In the New Testament, the Apostle Paul could declare that he had always lived before God with a "good conscience" (Acts 21:1); in other words, he felt that he was right even in persecuting the church of our Lord. Later, when he saw that he was wrong, he admitted that he had been the chief of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15).

Solomon said it well in Proverbs 14:12. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death." It is possible to be dead certain that we are going the right way only to discover, too late, that we have been lost all long.

We would urge you to select a standard of living that is superior to your own, personal feelings; the Bible, the word of God. Examine the way that you are living by the Scriptures: if the Bible declares your life to be acceptable to the Father, continue to walk in that way; if your life is contrary to the course that God's word declares that you ought to follow, do not listen to your heart—use your head. Let the infallible word of God lead and direct you as you go through this life.

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