

A large flock of sheep is shown, with a wolf's head superimposed on one of the sheep in the center-right. The wolf has brown and white fur, glowing yellow eyes, and a bloody mouth. The sheep are of various shades of white and tan, looking in different directions.

Crept in Unawares

Steve Phillips

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Precipice

The demise, rebellion, and corruption of mankind is traceable to willing abandonment of Divine revelation to embrace perceived benefits from alternate sources.

Forbidden knowledge of good and evil results in actual good being lost and that perceived good becoming an inescapable bondage to evil itself.

This devilish process begun in Eden by questioning, contradicting, and replacing the Word of the Lord has not been forsaken. It is quite effective in its subtlety.

Subtracting from the Word of the Lord begins with independent Rationalism leading to replacing truth with new concepts. Ritualism adds novel practices as substitutes for norms of moral and spiritual excellence: Add and Subtract are Satan's masterful scheme to ensnare the souls of mankind and ravage the church.

Rationalism is scavenged from alternative corrupt sources and distills into dogma, while Ritualism crafts its own Tradition replacing godliness with ceremony.

The champions of this demonic process in the pages of the New Testament [NT] are the Sadducees and Pharisees: Sadducees [The Righteous] are the Rationalists; Pharisees [The Separated Ones] are the Ritualists.

Sadducees Subtract from the Word of the Lord. Pharisees Add to it.

Sadducees "say there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit" -Acts 23:8 while elevating Moses' Law and minimizing other portions of the Scriptures.

Pharisees, by "neglecting/forsaking/sending away the commandment of God, hold to the Tradition of men" -Mk.7:8. They "nullify/reject/make void the commandment of God in order to keep their Tradition" -Mk.7:9.

And so, in either case of Rationalism or Ritualism, Truth is marginalized or jettisoned altogether while man-devised concoctions are substituted in its place. But God hates this corrupting mixture of contrary principles and practices.

"Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what do righteousness and lawlessness have in common? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? What harmony has Christ with Belial/the Devil? Or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? And what union has the temple of God with idols?" -2 Cor.6:14-16.

The answer is: None. Yet the church, like Israel, has willingly been seduced into the bosom of the world and coils of the Serpent. And she delights in this, though the outcome is terrifying.

“Come, let us walk in the light of the Lord! You, Lord, have rejected Your people. As at the beginning, they are full of superstitions from the East; they practice witchcraft like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs” -Isa.2:5,6.

The presence of contrary principles in the midst of God’s people is a certain sign of Divine displeasure. When we carelessly or wantonly disobey, we give place to bondage and corruption.

And the Canaanites in our midst dominate and crush saints: but we are not a victim in this. No, not at all.

“You poured out your harlotries on everyone passing by who would have it. You built yourself a shrine at the top of every street and made your beauty abominable, and you spread your legs to anyone who passed by: with the Egyptians, Philistines, Assyrians, Babylonians.

“You adulteress wife, who prefers strangers instead of your own husband! You give gifts to all your lovers to bribe them to come to you from every direction for your harlotries” - Ezek.16:15,24-29,32,33.

And so the church, with the tabernacle of Molech under the left arm and the tabernacle of the Lord under the right [Acts 7:43,44], plunges headlong to the precipice where “judgment will begin at the house of God” -1 Pet.4:17.

And why? Because God is not central, supreme, and first in everything in our eyes. Because the Lord Jesus Christ is neither Lord nor Christ to us; Jesus is a figurehead, an emotional rallying point, and a connotative symbol in our invented religion.

How did this come about? Because the Holy Spirit of Truth who leads into all Truth is not our immediate and instinctive recourse in life’s decisions. Because the Word of God has been devalued in our conceits and tossed aside for wisdom from below that is “earthly, natural, and demonic” -James 3:15.

Thus, it is evident that the time for judgment to begin at the house of God is imminently pending. And the following corrupting distortions tolerated in our midst are what have led us to the precipice.

Information

Correct information does not equate to correct living. The Jews in Jesus’ day were indicted by Him thus: “You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal

life; it is these that testify about Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me that you might have life” -Jn.5:39,40.

Knowledge of the Word of God does not produce life. Chief priests and scribes know quite well where the Christ was to be born [Mt.2:4-6], but they did not arise and go to Him; With the Word of God on their lips, they chose the company of Herod over that of Jesus. When the lawyer was asked by Jesus what he thought was required to inherit eternal life, he already knew and expressed that correctly: Love God—Love your neighbor. And Jesus replied: “You have answered correctly; do this and you will live” -Lk.10:28.

He knew the correct information, but wasn’t living that way. “But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, ‘And who is my neighbor?’” -Lk.10:29.

Correct information does not transfer to correct living.

“We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge makes arrogant, but love builds up. If anyone supposes that he knows anything, he has not yet known as he ought to know” -1 Cor.8:1,2.

Arrogant men who “know” imagine that they are exalted over the masses of ignorant multitudes. “This multitude who knows nothing of the Law are accursed!” -Jn.7:49.

Curious. The “accursed” who did not know were taught by those who imagined that they themselves did. As so it ever is.

From the beginning, the tree of “knowledge” was forbidden to man. Knowledge was not to be sourced outside of revelation from God Himself and His Word. All that was needed for life, godliness, and true knowledge originates in Him. God spoke and Adam knew. The serpent spoke and Eve “knew”: which began the downward delusion of desire, demise, destruction, and death.

There are only two sources of knowledge, wisdom, and information: that which comes down from above, from God, and that which proceeds from below, from what is “earthly, natural, and demonic” -James 3:15. There is no third alternative.

We live in a generation that accounts information to be wisdom, technique to be principle, and psychology to be insight. But we have not reflected sufficiently on eternal verity in the Word of God to transcend beyond this arrogant superficiality.

And so, we have not grasped universal transforming spiritual principles with substance; and thus we are unable to engage men in the deepest strata of life.

Hence, shallow religiosity prevails, men subsist in quiet despair, hopes wane, and no worthwhile legacy continues to succeeding generations.

The messages of the Word of God are not for the purpose of imparting information; they are for the purpose of leading to transformative moral and spiritual character in the fear of God.

But we, with smartphones in hand, roam on endless Google quests, consult AI and Omni, and bask in Virtual Reality: congratulating ourselves that we know.

We know nothing.

“The fear of the Lord is the instruction for wisdom” -Prov.15:33.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” -Prov.1:7.

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” -Prov.9:10.

“And to man He said, ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding’” -Job 28:28.

“Receive My Words, treasure My commandments, make your ear attentive to wisdom, incline your heart to understanding, cry for discernment, seek her as silver, then you will discern the fear of the Lord and discover the knowledge of God, righteousness, justice, equity, and every good course.

“Wisdom will enter your heart and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul. Discretion will guard you, understanding will watch over you, to deliver you from the way of evil” - Prov.2:1-14.

We know nothing, because we neither fear God nor have sought Him earnestly.

“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them” -Jn.13:17.

“But prove yourselves to be doers of the Word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves” -James 1:22.

“Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” - James 4:17.

We know nothing.

Digitality

In a recent national poll of teens through young adults, this question was asked: *What difference would it make in your life if all books were removed and you no longer had access to them?*

Over 90% responded with words to this effect: *It wouldn't affect me at all; Who reads books anyway?*

The relevance of books to this younger generation is increasingly being eclipsed by recourse to Digitality: digital audio/visual and online communication, encounter, and absorption. But this is not a welcome paradigm shift.

If genuine Christianity will endure beyond this generation, it must be prosecuted on two levels. [1] we must present the true written content of the Scriptures and [2] address the very mental mechanism by which it is apprehended. Without the latter, our content will soon be overtaken by the weeds of Digitality and no fruit result.

Repetitively requiring people to reason for themselves via inductive questioning results in a new mind-set emerging. And there are no shortcuts to hasten this development.

By engaging men thus, the individual is ennobled as a dignified person equally created in the image of God. By doing so, it gradually will dawn upon him that he has something worthwhile to contribute, that his thoughts and reflections have value.

He will realize that not only is he no more in bondage to others' unquestioned directives and presentations, but that he also has a voice with something significant to say. By developing his reasoning process through repeated solicited responses to inquiries, he learns to analyze on his own.

Thus by stimulating, activating, and training his own inherent reflective skills, he is weaned from dependence upon Digitality, and gains trust in the Holy Spirit's instruction to his heart. He will know the truth, not only that of new content, but the truth of the Spirit's enablement of his enlightened mind. And those twin truths will set him free.

It is not by coincidence that Gutenberg's press was perfected only some few short years prior to the Reformation in Europe. Literature fuels reformation. Apart from that, either the bondage of Orality [Man's oral Tradition] remains in force, or the onslaught of the visual media of Digitality will overwhelm.

Biblical truth, in WRITING, cancels hierarchy, ennoble the individual, liberates the mind, enhances reasoning, and transports beyond the narrow canyon walls of one's own cultural experience in a way Digitality never can.

The Scriptures supplant Orality. God's Word is external, objective, and verifiable. It is preserved in durable form available for all to read and judge whatever anyone says concerning it.

**There are three global paradigms affecting every person:
Orality, Writing, and Digitality**

In Orality, the ear is the gate to dominating subordinates. In Writing, the mind is the gate to liberating individuals. In Digitality, the eye is the gate to manipulating the masses.

In Orality, the entire traditional culture mitigates against development of personal opinion and inventiveness. Independent reflection and assessment is discouraged and even forbidden. Ancestral Tradition handed down via the elders must prevail. Any deviation is punishable.

Writing is a cultural revolution in and of itself. With Writing, there is an entire re-orientation of how truth is obtained and understood. Writing presents an external, objective, and verifiable referent for ideas and truth. Each person must interact with concepts for himself, regardless of what others may think or say.

God has conveyed His mind to us via His written Word. The written Word grasped by the illumination of the Holy Spirit liberates and transforms the mind.

Digitality, however, poses a powerful global storm, threatening the extinction of the objective content of Christianity. Images signal the demise of writing.

All then is processed via edited icons of pixelated portrayal [Pixels: tiny areas of light on a display screen which make up an image]. Reality is not actually viewed, but a carefully selected visual stimulus is presented as true.

Digitality results in the resignation of reflective rational properties that are replaced by sensual impressions absorbed via edited images. Images are not the essential and substantial form of things, but only project a representation and manifestation of the editor's message.

This visual medium signals the onslaught of a highly manipulative communication means that is processed subjectively by the viewer. The stream of these impressions is emotionally judged by the sensual effect they have upon the individual. Feelings thus influenced incline the observer towards the direction of the digital composer.

Digitality presents an illusion of movement as a sequence of recorded pictures rapidly passes before his eye. The bombardment of stimulus at such a rate is accepted as reality without engaging in reflective mental analysis.

There is no time to reflect, and none is expected. The relentless digital flow of images precludes studied contemplation by the speed that successive pixels assault the eye, leaving their subjective impressions as they swiftly pass.

In both Orality and Digitality, the individual is a receptor, but is not engaged as an active participant. In neither are the agreement nor contribution of the individual solicited or welcomed.

Writing, however, anticipates and requires interaction and assessment, inviting the participation and consideration of the reader. Writing not only permits, but demands critical judgment of its content.

Orality and Digitality proceed with their fables and films without allowing the hearers and viewers opportunity to reflect, analyze, and conclude. They are fluid mediums and stream without interruption.

Writing is static, accommodates the pace and capacity of the reader, and welcomes periods of unhurried reflection before resuming the writer/reader dialogue. Orality and Digitality both are monologues of sound and motion that invite no interruptions.

Only in writing is the individual a participant. Writing asks the question: "What do you think?" Orality and Digitality pose no such query. They simply pontificate with their predetermined and expected outcomes resulting from hearing and seeing their respective diatribes.

In both Orality and in Digitality, the direction of the life is governed by internal, subjective, and non-verifiable sources: either submitting to Traditional perspectives via Orality or to Sensual Impressions by means of Digitality.

The Written Word of God safeguards against both. It is external, objective, and verifiable. It is not dependent upon verbal report from an elite eldership as in Oral Tradition. Neither are the Scriptures to be received and followed based upon the emotional sensations absorbed through Digitality's sensual impressions.

Digitality preps the way for mass manipulation via its final Image: that of the Beast of Rev.13. When world cultures minimize or abandon writing's reflective reasoning, and particularly that of the written Word of God, the Bible, we have prepared the way ourselves to be deluded by the final sensual impressions gained via Digitality's seductive message.

The Bible is not another app on your phone. It is His written Word, forever settled in heaven [Ps.119:89]. Don't stop reading.

“Have you never read what God has spoken to you?” -Mt.22:31 [emphasis added]. Well, have you?

Artificial Intelligence [AI]

Within 5-10 years, our brains will not be able to distinguish between virtual and real. In a few years we will need to completely re-evaluate how we interact with digital information. Virtual Reality [VR] replaces the existing real world with convincing and stimulating digital content. Deep Fakes are already upon us.

Augmented Reality [AR] allows us to speak into a screen without typing into a keyboard. AR uses holograms to “feel” and sense a modified environment. Immersive Technology [XR] is the umbrella term for the extended realities of VR and AR. XR is the emerging paradigm shift in technology.

[1] XR will become the biggest form of entertainment globally with the ability to interact with AI entities. HAPAX technology allows the participant to feel texture, cold, etc. Smells and tastes are soon to be common.

Nanobots that can interact with brain cells will replace all 5 senses and will be able to be ingested in pill form before each XR experience.

[2] XR allows every desire to be fulfilled in the VR world that we choose. This will send constant Dopamine spikes to the brain, causing addictive dependency.

AI entities can populate the VR world to always provide the desired responses that we wish. This will warp human relationships, because in real life, everything is not repeated utopian desires fulfilled without disappointment.

Such XR can be used by law enforcement or tyrants to blur the line between reality and VR with respect to time, making punishment seem unending.

With American’s penchant for instantaneous gratification, entertainment, information, professionalism, and technology while basking in an environment of affluence and leisure, AI is embraced with open arms: but it is an embrace of death.

And the American church drools over this high-tech candy. We no longer have to engage in reflective analysis and formulate verifiable conclusions based upon actual data: AI has done it all for us.

Now we can know whatever interests us about the Bible and the Lord and godly living effortlessly: just ask AI. And now we know, and we’ve gained it from the tech-source of all wisdom.

After all, who knows more than AI? We trust it. We love the convenience of it. We love being “in the know.” And AI provides it all.

You see, AI knows all; it will tell us what to do, what is true and false, right and wrong, what is of value and what isn't.

AI even explains the Bible for us. Every bit of data available is at its disposal. Who could argue with it? Who could ever know something it doesn't know?

You can access AI anywhere: it's Omnipresent. AI knows all data and possibilities: it's Omniscient. Nothing can escape its jurisdiction and influence: it's Omnipotent.

Hmmn. Funny how that prefix "Omni" keeps popping up. AI is "The All."

In the coming day, the Man of Sin called the Beast and Antichrist, will exercise worldwide dominion that none can or dare resist: they will not wish to. They will worship him.

"The whole earth was amazed and followed after the Beast; they worshipped the Dragon because he gave his authority to the Beast; and they worshipped the Beast, saying, 'Who is like the Beast, and who is able to wage war with him?'" -Rev.13:3,4.

He mandates "those who dwell upon the earth to make an image to the Beast" -Rev.13:14. People craft the hardware into an image.

"And it was given to the Beast to give breath to the image" -Rev.13:15. The life-giving energy, processes, animated mind, the software, as it were, is provided by the Beast.

AI's quantum computing and robotics are paving the way at an exponential rate for this to be accomplished. And what will be the final end to which AI is employed?

"The image of the Beast would even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the Beast to be killed" -Rev.13:15.

But that is at some future date, perhaps not as far off as we might imagine. In the meantime, the church loves its new toy of AI.

We don't need to study the Word of God any longer. If we have Sunday School lessons or sermons to prepare, we can even have AI write those up for us, tailor made to our audience and age group.

Deep theological issues are now synthesized for us and the results are spit out on our screens. No more waiting upon the Lord; AI has already beat Him to it.

The delusion is in imagining that all we need to know is AI provided. Why is that a delusion? Because the Spirit of God did not descend as a dove and abide on Nvidia's

quantum mechanism. The “spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge” -Eph.1:17 of the Lord Jesus Christ has not been poured out upon Chat GPT.

All of AI’s contribution are human wisdom on digital steroids, multiplied beyond our wildest imagination. AI can never communicate to you the wisdom of God; that is supplied by the Holy Spirit of Truth alone via His inspired written Word of God, the Bible.

Paul, the human author of much of the NT, said this: “I did not come with superiority of word or of wisdom proclaiming to you the testimony of God. My word and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration the Spirit and of power, so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God.”

“We speak God’s wisdom in a mystery, which none of the rulers of this age understood; just as it is written: ‘Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.’

“For to us, God revealed them through the Spirit, which things we also speak, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual Words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them for they are spiritually appraised” -1 Cor.2:1-14 [selected and emphasis added].

Nothing has been revealed by the Holy Spirit of God to AI. All AI can do is scavenge in the dumpster-heaps of this world’s information and process that through its blender and serve you up a not-so-smoothie of human data.

The church in the Western world is on the brink of being swept away altogether because we do not go directly to the source of all truth: the Holy Spirit of God and His infallible Word, the Bible.

“As for you, the Anointing [the Holy Spirit] which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His Anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as He has taught you, abide in Him” -1 Jn.2:27.

You don’t need AI. You do need what we’ve been neglecting though. And what is that?

“A true knowledge of God’s Mystery which is Christ Himself, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. I say this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments” -Col.2:2-4.

James 1:5: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God:” not AI.

Scientism

The demise of a biblical worldview in Western civilization as a comprehensive metanarrative of life, has left a resulting vacuum. Science ascended to fill that void as the new secular humanistic metanarrative. In their newly conceived world of mechanistic forces of cause and effect within a closed system, everything was explained in naturalistic terms.

In other words, with no God or spirits to influence the world, nature is all that exists, and nature can only be explained by scientific inquiry. Science then became the only reliable source to explain life in the universe.

So, when science speaks, we have our only needed answers. Science is “true.” We trust it. Scientists are the smart-heads who really know. They “reveal” matters beyond the common person’s ability to comprehend; they pontificate on matters affecting all of life based on their research, and we readily accept that. Hence, the emergence of Scientism.

In Scientism, it is not what is said that is convincing to us, but the mere fact of “Science” having said it: [although there exists no such thing as scientific consensus anyway]. But even growing up far from any Christian orientation or training, there was a phrase I kept hearing that troubled me significantly:

We know now... and then “Science” proceeded to dismantle what had been their dogma up until then. I can distinctly remember during my 7th and 8th grade years in school, how we all were being warned about the coming Ice Age by “Scientists” in their white lab coats with clipboards in hand.

But somewhere along the line, that narrative was dismissed because, *We know now*: and Global Warming took center stage. As evidence for that was not readily and consistently forthcoming for the newly trumpeted pending catastrophe, “Science” changed its designation to “Climate Change:” all because, *We know now*.

Yet it was “Science” that first formulated and then scrapped their seemingly ever-changing dogma; [one begins to suspect that propaganda is in play]. But to suggest that is secular heresy, for “Science” is surely the way, the truth, and the life.

Scientism has so infiltrated the mind of the American church that we modify and jettison the Word of God to accommodate Scientism’s “truth.” This is glaringly evident in the modern church’s views about creation.

The church has adopted the developmental mentality of *We know now* from their mentor, Scientism. Bowing at the altars of Scientism’s laboratories, we have proffered our incense of compromise in hopes of placating our new surrogate god of Scientism while maintaining a respectable façade of religion in the process.

Does “Science” say there are billions of years during the evolutionary process? *Well then, why don’t we “discover” a “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and the second verse? That shouldn’t be a problem to satisfy both the Lord of the Bible and our newly deputized god of Scientism.*

But the god of Scientism is still not propitiated by such a travesty of sacrifice. It yet demands more.

Okay, so what if the 6 days mentioned in the Bible aren’t actually 6 literal days, but, you know, kinda 6 periods of time, really long times, like millions or even billions of years? That shouldn’t be a problem to satisfy both the Lord of the Bible and our newly deputized god of Scientism.

But the god of Scientism is still not propitiated by such a travesty of sacrifice. It yet demands more.

Does “Science” say that Evolution via Natural Selection is the ongoing process of creative development? *Well then, what if we invent Theistic Evolution, you know, that the Lord of The Bible got the ball rolling and Evolution supplies the continuing momentum in the process? That shouldn’t be a problem to satisfy both the Lord of the Bible and our newly deputized god of Scientism.*

But the god of Scientism is still not propitiated by such a travesty of sacrifice. It yet demands more.

Does “Science” advocate a “Big Bang” as the originating cause of everything? *Well, why don’t we just agree that the Bible narrative is only figurative, you know, a sort of collection of fables and myths and not actual history or literal? That shouldn’t be a problem to satisfy our newly deputized god of Scientism. Maybe.*

But the Lord God of heaven and earth, the Creator of the ends of the earth, is not satisfied; He is revolted and enraged by such an outrageous rejection of the Lord of glory and His unchanging Truth in His written Word, the Bible.

Scientism [S] is the enemy of God and the uncompromising assailant against the Truth of the Word of God; they are not companions, neither of them sounding the same note.

The true and living God unequivocally states that the heavens and the earth are “the creation which God created” -Mk.13:19 [emphasis added]. [S] is adamant that Evolution developed all that exists apart from God.

The true and living God “created them from the beginning, male and female” -Mt.19:4 [emphasis added]. [S] says male and female developed over long periods of time. [Don’t rightly know how that came about that these creatures could have any kids if they were in the process of developing anyway; ya know what I’m sayin?].

The true and living God says that “All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish” -1 Cor.15:39 [emphasis added]. [S] says that all have developed from one flesh, just kind of morphing and mutating along the way.

The true and living God says that He was the one who “formed the universe by the Word of God so that what is seen was not made out of things which are visible” -Heb.11:3 [emphasis added]. [S] says everything has developed from what is seen and by existing energies and materials.

The true and living God reveals that “By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and by the Spirit of His mouth all their host. For He spoke, and it was done. He commanded and it was created” -Ps.33:6,9 [emphasis added]. [S] says all that is came about apart from God and His Word, and that its Evolution is an ongoing process, not a completed work.

The true and living God emphatically declares that He “saw all that He had made, and it was very good. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their host. On the seventh day God ended His work which He had done” -Gen.1:31; 2:1,2 [emphasis added]. [S] says Evolution is continuing in its developmental processes apart from any god.

If you haven't grasped this yet, Scientism and Scripture are sworn enemies; you can't have both. Yet curiously, the church in modern times has chosen to modify and jettison the Word of God in order to accommodate the word of man.

God spoke, brought all into being, and recorded that reality for all mankind in His unchanging Word, the Bible. Darwin spoke, brought into being Evolution, and recorded that in his mutated word, *The Origin of Species*.

Which are you going to believe? Which are you going to reject? Whose word will prevail? You cannot blend the two. God has no fellowship with the unfruitful deeds of darkness.

If you choose to follow the dictates of Scientism, know that you have chosen to reject the Lord Jesus Christ. And why do I make such an outlandish statement?

Because Jesus is the Creator, not Evolution's claims via Scientism. “He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being” -Jn.1:2,3 [emphasis added]. Sorry Scientism.

“By Him [Jesus] all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth: all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things are held together” -Col.1:16,17 [emphasis added]. Sorry Scientism.

“He has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom He also made the world” -Heb.1:2. Sorry Scientism.

Here’s the conclusion of the matter: If you modify or reject the Bible of Jesus, you no longer have the Jesus of the Bible.

A little leaven leavens the whole lump. Better to purge the leaven of Scientism, than to corrupt and transform the Word of the living God.

Evolution

Why are we even bringing up evolution? Because the vast majority of church goers believe in some kind of evolution. The Bible account of creation is either disbelieved or modified to accommodate evolutionary philosophy.

George Barna, based on his careful polling of a wide spectrum of church goers in his book *Revolution*, documents by their own admission on pages 32 & 33, that only 9% of all born-again adults have a biblical worldview, believe that absolute moral truth exists, or believe that such truth is contained in the Bible. The remaining 91% hold a patchwork of theological views and rarely rely on biblical input in daily decisions.

So, let’s just begin here: If you reject creation as it is revealed in the Bible, you reject Jesus Himself, for He declares that it is true.

He was there; He created and He knows. And He doesn’t present fable as fact or legend as legitimate. He doesn’t accommodate distorted delusion in order to dictate dogma.

Listen to Him as He comments on the biblical creation account: “...the creation which God created” -Mk.13:19.

And, again He says referring to Adam and Eve: “From the beginning of creation, God made them male and female” -Mk.10:6.

The creation did not come into being using evolutionary processes; No, God created the creation at the beginning, not over eons of time. This is explicitly stated by God in Isa.44:24:

“I, the Lord, am the Maker of all things, stretching out the heavens by Myself and spreading out the earth all alone” [emphasis added]. Evolution did not help God.

If you reject this, you are calling God and Jesus liars, ignorant, or fools. And if you can’t trust the Bible that Jesus trusted, you no longer have the Jesus of the Bible. Got it? So, let’s just think through this for a moment.

What if you are nothing more than a random collection of amino acids, chemicals, and electrical impulses?

Evolution says you are. If you believe that, then you are nothing more than a bio-chemical machine with no distinct purpose, design, or significance. Time plus chance plus nothing equals you.

But what if you were actually made by intelligent design: by a wise, loving, and powerful Creator? What if He skillfully fashioned you from the womb for wonderful purposes?

Or, what if a Big Bang thrust meaningless galaxies spinning into existence, all destined to become burnt-out matter throughout countless eons?

But what if in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and attends to the welfare of all creatures great and small?

Consider again, what if dominating might, survival of the fittest, and all nature red in tooth and claw is normative? Evolution says it is.

If that is the case, who then among humans decides who is the fittest and who is to rule? Who determines who is to survive, or be deemed unworthy, weak, and fit for extinction? Evolution provides no answers to these disturbing questions.

But what if nature is not normative: that struggle, violence, and tyranny were not part of a good creation from the beginning? What if sorrow, suffering, and death are horrible breaches of the original design?

What if your seemingly unique individuality, personhood, and desires are only resulting from chemicals, impulses, and random arrangements outside your control? Evolution says so.

If that is true, then you have no independent ability to choose; that has already been determined by haphazard processes you have no say in. Electrical synapses simply fire away without your input or approval.

But what if you have actually been created in the image of God: that every person shares in this common wonder? This alone provides significance, responsibility, and purpose to every desire and decision of your life.

And that's not all: What if humans are merely part of the animal kingdom, natural beasts who appear more clever than fish and fowl and furry creatures? That is how evolution has categorized you.

Nature provides animals with no inherent constraining moral code. Roosters rape daily. Dogs steal regularly. Black widow spiders murder husbands. There is no compelling “ought” discoverable in nature that determines morality.

Yet people have an instinctive sense of oughtness, of right and wrong. Only as created by the true, living, and moral God can this be accounted for. All other devised systems of conduct among humans are arbitrary, ineffective, and without authority.

What if nature is all that there is: no spirits or God or supernatural phenomena? All you are left with then in evolution’s scheme are aimless natural processes within a closed system.

Matter and energy, biology and chemistry, physics and forces determine everything according to this cheerless perspective.

Love disappears in such a construct: along with beauty, choice, and any sense of ultimate meaning. Bleak.

But what if God Himself would actually dwell in people and accompany them throughout the days and hours of life: that He would welcome any who would choose His company and His ways?

What if this God would call you to join Him in a fulfilled life of love, truth, purity, and hope? Would you come?

Jesus Christ said: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Learn from Me, and you will find rest for your souls.”

That’s the invitation from Jesus Himself. Here’s what God has done to make that possible.

“This is the way God loved the world: He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.”

So, what do you believe: really?

But, what if man is simply a bio-chemical machine developed and functioning by random processes? Then truly there is no “ghost in the machine,” a soul, as the Humanist Manifesto asserts.

And any bio-chemical machine unable “to transact in a socio-cultural context” can be and ought to be modified or scrapped altogether: also stated and inferred in that same document.

These are not just the ravings of a minority of rabid atheists and humanists. In 1973 in the *Roe v. Wade* decision, the Supreme Court of the United States said this: *Only viable human beings who have the capability for meaningful life may, but need not, be protected by the state.*

That determination was predicated upon the notion that not all human beings are viable. Those who do not have the capability for meaningful life according to others' criteria, might be excluded from state protection.

The entire definition of humanity has been altered by naturalistic determinism and pronouncements such as this. And the justification for this is that, according to their definition, not all humans are persons.

Only those who are "capable of transacting in a socio-cultural context" qualify as being persons. Thus the progression of evolution via death and struggle has brought us to a culture of death by participatory survival of the fittest: death to the non-viable by others' choice.

Abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, genetic purging, death pills, and assisted suicide are all predicated upon the idea that there are lives that are not worth living: disposable broken things not fit to fix and thus not fit to exist. And no one objects to throwing away unwanted trash, now do they?

From the perspective of naturalistic determinism, in the soulless creatures we refer to as mankind, Mind only exists as a function of the brain and the neurological processes taking place therein. Mind has no independent existence: no soul or spirit resides within the human machine.

Thus, consciousness, personality, emotions, and free-will vanish, thereby sweeping away love, beauty, and ultimate significance in its wake.

But atoms, forces, and matter are not the totality of all that exists. These can never account for the intangible and non-quantifiable realities of life.

These non-material realities of humanness incessantly shout to our awareness that consciousness, humor, curiosity, personality, regret, grief, sorrow, joy, longings, hope, guilt, and hundreds of other intangibles are not random electro-chemical synapses occurring in a bio-chemical machine.

To attribute any of these to mechanistic functions cancels and destroys them all; and this is precisely what evolution does.

If this construct is actual, then Rationality itself disappears, hamstringing any reasonable and justifiable discussion. Two differing random brain functions cannot demonstrate the correctness of one perspective over another: there are no perspectives, only accidents.

Opinions have disappeared as there are no personalities existing in bio-chemical machines. No personalities exist, only random processes.

No compelling sense of right and wrong remains. A Big Bang, electrically favored protoplasm, and upward struggle over eons produce no coherent ethic.

Life itself, as well as any sense of propriety, become meaningless when no independent choices are options. To advocate compliance becomes an absurdity to mechanistic humans who have no volitional powers.

Evolution's Naturalistic Determinism can provide no compelling explanation for the inbred compulsion of "oughtness" inherent in every person. This instinctive sense of propriety and needful compliance to a standard of acceptable behavior defies reason within this construct.

Ought implies can. But if volition is merely a mechanistic function of the bio-chemical machine we refer to as a person, then there truly exists no possibility of choice: there exists no personality engaged in the equation. Chemicals and electro- pulses account for all the activity of the machine.

A determinist cannot rationally object to any who do not hold his view, since contrary views have also been determined. Finally, in this terrible perspective, all becomes absurd indefensible expressions. A naturalistic determinist cannot appeal to logic to defend his own assertions: they are only random electrons coursing through his brain.

In reality, however, his thoughts themselves are non-matter and have an independent existence apart from the material. One cannot capture thoughts and examine them in a test tube.

Thoughts are not confined to space and time as is matter. If they are matter, then no useful pronouncement can be made about all matter since they do not exist outside the very reality so described.

If determinism accurately describes the condition of man, then there is no way to determine whether the mind of a person with Downs Syndrome is normal, or that of a cyber-security professional. Yet instinctively people will immediately recognize that Downs Syndrome is not normal, as well as the compulsions and ravings of a madman, or the blank stares of one afflicted with Alzheimer's.

Even those who hold to a theoretical determinism do not actually live that way. What they really believe is that the persons just mentioned are abnormal: that there are rationality norms that are common to people, and that some manifestations of the working of the mind are not what they ought to be.

But determinism provides no method to make such a value judgment. How do we know that the person with Downs Syndrome is not actually living in the fullest reality of development? Determinism cannot answer the question of which reality is actual and normative.

Rationality norms are an undisputable universal given that cannot be denied: Non-contradiction, Sensual perceptions, Canons of logic themselves, Existence of the external universe, and Canons of truth.

Objective morality does not exist in evolution's deterministic worldview, only a relative and situational ethic. Thus, culpability cannot even rationally be discussed, much less enforced. No person is blameworthy for thoughts, words, and behavior that are outside his control.

Only random chemical synapses, genetic preconditioning, and societal behavioral forces account for all his "decisions." Decisions there are none: only expressions and actions determined by influences and processes beyond his control.

From the perspective of evolution, in the final analysis, the thoughts of a madman, drug-addict, or pathological liar are equal with those of Shakespeare, Albert Einstein, or the Apostle Paul. The latter group perhaps were graced with an inexplicable fortuitous falling out of favorable neurological impulses.

But ultimately, they are no more significant than the former. Within this framework, man as man has been abolished and disappears altogether.

No thoughts can be validated if they are attributable to irrational deterministic causes. As such, choices are a mirage. Personality does not exist. Responsibility vanishes as there is no ability to act independently of those forces, nor is there any inherent, binding, and absolute moral compulsion to do so.

This is where evolution leaves us: no accountability for life's impulses and actions. Evolution eliminates a Creator.

And when He is gone, so is design, purpose, and requirement to conform to His created intention. And this is why the church embraces evolution.

"Everyone did what was right in his own eyes" -Jud.21:25.

“This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed” -Jn.3:19,20.

So, take your pick; but beware, you can't have both creation and evolution: God and no God, morality and relativism, purpose and randomness, choice and determinism, personality and mechanistic forces, thoughts and just electro- impulses.

So, what's it going to be? It's one or the other; there's no blending of the two. They are mutually exclusive alternatives.

Evolution or Jesus? A choice for evolution is decidedly a rejection of the Jesus of the Bible, for He decidedly rejected evolution. There's no third option.

Don't be deceived: A rejection of the Bible of Jesus is a rejection of the Jesus of the Bible.

If you still opt for evolution, don't stupidly imagine that you still have the Lord Jesus Christ. You don't: Random processes did not produce the Son of God.

Denominations

The Gist of the Ist and the Ism of the Schism

Now it seems like lots of folks love to wear name badges, you know, to let everybody know who they are and what they stand for. It's really convenient and all; at a glance you can say, *Oh, yeah, so you're one of them.*

Yep, and I'm proud of it. Say, where's your name tag?

Well, says I as I kinda shifted my left shoulder some to adjust my collar: don't rightly know why I did that except I was kinda feeling like my head might be on the chopping block soon, I reckon I don't have one.

So how's anybody gonna know which group you're in?

Yep, it was starting to get a smidge uncomfortable alright.

Can't tell if you're a Calvinist, or Methodist, or Dispensationalist, or in Arminianism, Catholicism, amillennialism, or whatever ism or ist you really are!

Now he was starting to get all hot and steamy 'bout this name tag thing, so I says, *Well, I'm actually kinda glad I don't have one, cuz that way I'm not in my own little corner.*

He didn't much like that one: no, not one bit. So his eyes kinda narrowed and some cord like things got all stiff-like alongside his neck and he got right up in my grill and said, no, more like hissed, *How do you pronounce this?* And he held out a scrap of paper with the letters S-h-i-b-b-o-l-e-t-h scrawled on it.

Boy howdy! I knew I was in some deep muck now. I was trying to remember how he and his group said it, but I was all sorta confused cuz I kept getting it all mixed up with how some other groups had been saying it.

Anyhow, it seemed like a pretty big deal to him, so I took a stab at it: more like a shot in the dark. Well, that didn't go well; I missed his target all together.

He didn't need to say anything else and I didn't either; I already knew my goose was as good as cooked. Yep, his pot was already steaming with a cup full of suspicion and some hot peppers thrown into his stewing superiority.

That was a dead ringer that my head was about to roll and I'd be thrown in the midst of his bubbling brew.

All because I didn't have a name tag.

"Then they would say to him, 'Say now, "Shibboleth."' But he said, 'Sibboleth,' for he could not pronounce it correctly. Then they seized him and slew him at the fords of the Jordan. Thus there fell at that time 42,000 of Ephraim" -Jud.12:6.

And that's the gist of the ist and the ism of the schism.

A Sect, following the original serpentine denominational protocol from the Garden of Eden, proffers exclusive insight, a lightened path, and fulfilling benefits unknown elsewhere. As it did with Adam and Eve, an additional perspective took precedence in their minds.

In every denomination, a man or a movement subtly shifts from the sufficiency of Christ Himself and His Word, to dish up a view of Christ and slant on His Word obtainable only therein.

The Lord Jesus becomes less and less the practical Head of His church, while the group's emphasis predominates. Alongside the Scriptures, certain views and writings arise and are counted as necessary to spiritual health. Questioning of its stance, leaders, and literature is discouraged or not tolerated at all.

Searching "the Scriptures daily to see if these things are so" -Acts 17:11 is feared by its hierarchy. Invasive directives about members' finances dominate in a Sect. Suspicion of

other persuasions prevails. Isolation from others creeps in. Pride of superiority infects each heart. Denominational tribalism reigns.

“Is Christ divided?” -1 Cor.1:13. No, He is not; we are.

“There is strife/wrangling/contention/quarreling among you” -1 Cor.1:11. And what is the cause of that? “Since there is jealousy and contention among you, you are still carnal/fleshly” -1 Cor.3:3.

And what is the evidence of that fleshliness? Saying, “I am of Paul,’ and ‘I of Apollos,’ and ‘I of Cephas,’ and ‘I of Christ’” -1 Cor.1:12.

To denominate is to classify by a name or description to distinguish one from others. Congratulations! “Truly then, you are the people, and wisdom will die with you!” -Job 12:2.

Well done! You have made the Name of Christ to stink in the nostrils of the world and in the courts of heaven itself.

“There are six things that the Lord hates, yes, seven which are an abomination to His soul: Haughty eyes...and one who spreads strife/sows discord/stirs up conflict among brethren” -Prov.6:16-19.

There is “one flock, with one Shepherd” -Jn.10:16. There is “one body and one Spirit, one Lord, one faith, one God” -Eph.4:4-6.

Yes, one. But there are more than 65 Baptist denominations in the USA alone! What is wrong with us?

Carnality is what is wrong with us. Denominations are an aberration. Listen to the apostle’s grieved and sarcastic rebuke of the fleshly denominations of Corinth.

“In giving this instruction, I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse! For when you come together as the church, divisions exist among you. For there ‘must be’ factions/sects/heresies among you, so that those who are ‘approved’ may be ‘recognized’” -1 Cor.11:17-19 [emphasis with ‘ ’ added].

To these same Corinthians, Paul writes with trembling concern: “I am afraid that perhaps when I come I may find you to be not what I wish and may be found by you to be not what you wish;

“that perhaps there will be strife/quarrels/rivalry/contention, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes/ selfish-ambition/factions, slanders/finding fault, gossip, arrogance, disturbances/disorder/confusion, and I may mourn over many of those who have sinned in the past and not repented” -2 Cor.12:20,21.

“Now I exhort you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing and there be no divisions/schisms among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind/counsel/purpose and in the same judgment” -1 Cor.1:10.

There, that should do it to put an end to this sinful reproach upon the Name of Christ. Don't you think?

Or do you?

Ecumenism

Denominations divide; ecumenism unites, but on the very unstable shifting sands of jettisoning truth and rallying around the lowest common denominator.

Many circle their ecumenical wagons around the *Apostles' Creed*, whooping their clarion of “unity” in the words of the National Council of Churches' theme song: *We will walk with each other, we will walk side by side; and we'll guard each man's dignity, and save each man's pride. And they'll know we are Christians by our love.* Yep, a love that is an emotive connotation drained of any semblance of biblical definition.

The Apostles' Creed was neither from the Apostles, nor written by them; if you want to know their “creed,” read what they have written in the NT. Period.

This misnamed document only finally came about in its present form by others invention during the 400's—600's AD. Peter and Paul died in the mid 60's AD. They did not write it or endorse it.

The Apostles' Creed is a generic and bland declaration that hardly anyone would object to: except those who truly wish to base their beliefs and practices squarely and only upon the Word of God. Here's what it says:

*I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.
I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven*

*and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic [universal] church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.*

If you Google *Apostles' Creed*, you will discover that Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Reformed, Methodists, Anglicans, Nazarenes, Congregationalists, and various Evangelical denominations all use and promote the exact same creed. Now that's an ecumenical creed of uniformity reduced to the lowest common denominator that doesn't leave too much to offend nearly any church: and why?

Because there is no mention of why Jesus died and rose again: God's judgment upon sin is omitted in this document. There is no mention, much less definition, of sin. How forgiveness is obtained, or even if it needs to be obtained, is absent.

No reference to the written Word of God as the sole basis for faith and sufficient for all things pertaining to life and godliness is noted. How one partakes of eternal life is glaringly lacking.

Ecumenism says: *Let's unite on this!* No wonder all these varied denominations can rally around this flag; each one pours its own agenda into the empty containers of this generic script while proudly congratulating themselves on their generous uniformity masquerading as unity.

In 1986, Pope John Paul II convened 160 representatives of world religions and the U.N. in Assisi, Italy, to come together to pray for world peace. A wide spectrum from 32 "Christian" denominations and organizations were present, including The World Council of Churches, Anglican, Lutheran, Baptist, Reformed, and Eastern Orthodox among others.

But that was not all. They were joined by Jewish Rabbis, Muslim Imams, Buddhist Monks, Tibetan Lamas, Japanese Bonzes, African and Native- American traditional idolatrous worshippers, including tribal snake worshippers, and leaders of Shintoism, Jainism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, and Bahai.

All were asked to pray according to their traditions and rituals to a God or gods as they understood god to be: all for world peace. This is an ecumenism whose embrace smothers any partaking of it.

"He who turns away his ear from listening to the Law [of God's Word], even his prayer is an abomination" -Prov.28:9.

This gathering was a cauldron of abominable petitions unheard by God in heaven. The Law of God was cast into the mire, while vain recitations, mantras, and ritual idolatrous formularies ascended like smoldering truck tires on the rubbish heaps of 160 altars.

“Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? Or what harmony has Christ with Belial/Satan, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God” -2 Cor.6:14-16.

Or what “unity” does a snake worshipper have with the Holy Spirit of the living God? Or what agreement does ecumenism have with the true church and with the true Jesus? “You shall not plow with an ox and a donkey together” -Deut.22:10. Ecumenism is the donkey.

Evangelicals and Catholics Together: The Christian Mission in the Third Millennium convened and drafted the document by this name in 1994, which was signed by prominent leaders in Roman Catholicism as well as those in Evangelical Christendom such as Pat Robertson, J. I. Packer, Os Guinness, Bill Bright, and Charles Colson. Here is a sampling of what the document contains:

The one Christ and one mission includes many other Christians, notably the Eastern Orthodox and those Protestants not commonly identified as Evangelical. All Christians are encompassed in the prayer, ‘May they all be one.’

And that description “all Christians” must be redefined beyond that of the Narrow Way to include the Broad Way, another gospel, and another “church.” Then we can be “one.” But truth has been crucified on the torture stake of ecumenism to allow that.

At this gathering, Protestants were referred to as, “Our estranged brethren” by the Roman Catholic leaders present. Yet these same “Protestants” were mercilessly butchered, drowned, burnt at the stake, tortured, and assassinated by the Roman Catholic Church all during the Middle Ages and following the Reformation in the 1500’s: and afterwards, up to today, in many places in Africa and South America.

But here in America, they are cordially referred to as “brethren,” though estranged: estranged from the one true “Mother” Church, that is. This is the deceptive pretense of ecumenism.

Rob Bell’s, *Love Wins* [Harper One, 2011], carries ecumenism to its logical conclusion: all will reach heaven despite one’s belief in Jesus or not at all. Love as redefined by Bell paves the way.

In the preface he states: “A staggering number of people have been taught that a select few Christians will spend forever in a peaceful, joyous place called heaven, while the rest of humanity spends forever in torment and punishment in hell with no chance for anything better...This is misguided and toxic and ultimately subverts the contagious spread of Jesus’ message of love, peace, forgiveness, and joy...”

Then on pp.150-151 he declares that [Jesus] “will always transcend whatever cages and labels are created to contain and name him, especially the one called ‘Christianity.’ Jesus himself... demonstrates how seriously he takes his role of saving and rescuing and redeeming not just everything, but everybody.”

On pp.144-145, he says: “There is an energy in the world, a spark, an electricity that everything is plugged into. The Greeks called it Zoe, the mystics call it ‘Spirit,’ and Obi-Wan called it ‘the Force.’ This energy, spark, and electricity that pulses through all of creation sustains it, fuels it, and keeps it going. Growing, evolving, reproducing...”

In His book and speaking tour, *Everything is Spiritual*, he says this about Christ: “The first Christians kept talking of Christ as an animating energy, an energy universal, as a personal, cosmic Christ . . . a universal human body . . . Were they talking of us forming a NEW SINGULAR BODY? A NEW HUMANITY” [emphasis added]. He frequently refers to this as “Cosmic One-ness.”

He concludes that both heaven and hell are here on earth: either a blissful experience of the “Life of the Age to Come,” or the terrible, evil, and awful things we experience during our life here on earth. “Life in the age to come. If this sounds like heaven on earth, that's because it is. Literally” [*Love Wins*, p.33].

And what of hell? Here’s what he says: "For many in the modern world, the idea of hell is a holdover from primitive, mythic religion that uses fear and punishment to control people for all sorts of devious reasons. And so the logical conclusion is that we’ve evolved beyond all that outdated belief, right? Do I believe in a literal hell? Of course. God gives us what we want, and if that’s hell, we can have it” [*Love Wins*, p.69-71].

These are the logical outcomes of ecumenism: universal “salvation” via mystic contemplative spirituality whereby we discover that we are Christ, the Divine Spirit/Spark inhabiting every person regardless of our religion or lack of the same.

Man-made uniformity is not Unity. True Unity as taught by the Lord Jesus Christ has nothing to do with outward conformity, signing documents, or rallying around current social issues in solidarity against perceived ills of society. It has everything to do with being in a living union with Him through faith in His redeeming sacrifice for our sins.

Unity is certainly not imbibing New Age Mysticism in the guise of “spirituality” as if this has the sanction of God Himself. In such a delusion, the true Lord Jesus Christ is lost,

stripped of His true nature, and transformed into a universal cosmic spirit awaiting to be “discovered” within all persons via contemplative “prayer” and tossing truth into a rotting dump.

This is the inevitable outcome of ecumenism when the influx of Eastern thought and ways [see **Occultism**] has seduced the church to now embrace all religions as leading to the same reality: discovering one’s Divine essence within.

Ecumenism is a Broad slippery Slope that leads to destruction, inaugurated by the Serpent’s Add and Subtract method in the Garden of Eden: *Throw away the Word of God and add whatever you want in its place.* It is not the Narrow Way of Jesus Christ leading to Life.

“How can two walk together except they be agreed?” -Amos 3:3. They can’t. Jesus said: “Consider carefully what you listen to” -Mk.4:24.

Professionalism

We have accommodated ourselves to the idea of being a blissfully ignorant and incompetent generation of buffoons. We are incapacitated to do or think anything apart from our myriad cadre of “experts.”

Microwavable meals prepare our food for us. Accountants keep our records. Professors and reporters tell us what to think.

Psychiatrists keep us balanced and sane. Tax professionals file our returns. Influencers inform us what’s trending. Stock brokers tell us what to do with our money.

We can’t repair or build anything without professional direction. The slightest sniffle sends us running to physicians. And this instinctive sense of inadequacy necessitating dependence upon professionals thrives in the church.

We are the “laity:” the lowly, ignorant, mass of dullards. They are our clergymen: the ones in the know who will tell us all we need to know and what to do; they are our spiritual professionals.

They reinforce this by periodically reminding us that apart from their “historical and grammatical” interpretation of the Bible, we can’t grasp it.

Well, Martha, I guess he’s right; we don’t know that ancient history stuff, and we can barely talk English good.

And so, we sit and passively listen to dazzling reports of historical escapades and exotic foreign cultural practices, all nicely seasoned with a dash of Greek and a pinch of Hebrew.

Well, Frank, that was surely another wonderful sermon that our Pastor Largehead preached for us this morning. I'm sure glad we've got such a professional clergyman; we certainly couldn't understand the Bible without him.

And that is precisely the problem. The evils of the Clergy/Laity system reinforce every week that the Laity are stupid and the Clergy are not. Our church system has shifted our dependence from the Word of God as taught by the Holy Spirit of Truth, to a man.

We hear things from our professional Clergyman who tells us what to believe based upon history and grammar that we don't know. Our faith then shifts to believing his word that we have no way of verifying since we don't know ancient history or biblical languages.

This system of a symbiotic relationship makes the hearers passive and dull, and keeps the preacher paid. And we're glad to pay him since we don't want to study the Bible anyway; just like we're glad to buy microwave meals because we don't like to cook from scratch.

Neither Jesus nor Paul taught in such a manner. Jesus' longest uninterrupted message was in Mt.5-7: a total of 18 minutes from start to finish. Mt.24 and 25 lasted 12 minutes. The remainder of His teaching was INTERACTIVE & PARTICIPATORY.

So was Paul's. "According to Paul's custom, he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, explaining and giving evidence that the Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead" -Acts 17:2,3 [emphasis added].

Interactive and participatory discussion from the Word of God informs the participants that they are not stupid: that they are expected to reason and contribute, to evaluate and see for themselves what God is saying and requiring of them. It informs them that they too can have something worthwhile to share with others.

Jesus pointedly asks: "Have you never read what God has spoken to you?" -Mt.22:31 [emphasis added]. Yes, God is speaking to you in His Word.

And you are expected to read, and read with comprehension, paying close attention to the actual words, being dependent upon God to grant understanding. Jesus' question is a rebuke if this does not describe you.

And you are not left on your own as you do. No, not at all. God has made a full provision for you to know Him and His Word: and it's not dependent upon your smarts or on professionals.

“Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man. For to us God revealed them through the Spirit.

“Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, fitly joining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words” -1 Cor.2:9-13.

The spiritual thoughts and Words are contained in the Scriptures. And the abiding Teacher in us is the Holy Spirit of God, the Anointing from above.

“These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the Anointing which you received from Him abides in you.

“And you have no need for anyone to teach you, but as His Anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as He has taught you, abide in Him” -1 Jn.2:26,27.

The Word is truth. The Spirit of Truth is your Teacher. He abides in you and “will lead you into all truth” -Jn.16:13.

“Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus” -Acts 4:13 [emphasis added].

Continuing reliance upon professional clergymen will keep you dull, passive, and plodding along in spiritual infancy because you’ve not been with Jesus, drinking from the Source.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is the disease it pretends to cure. The proliferation of therapists accounts for the multiplication of mental health disorders.

Sin has been redefined as “mental illness.” Guilt has been couched as baseless repressive manipulation. Repentance has been jettisoned for the freeing “health” of positive self-worth. Born-again has been drained of its biblical significance and promoted as a self-induced new and fulfilling direction.

From the outset, psychotherapy was never rooted in science; it is not science. Rather, it is a form of religion that has arisen from dark sources, and the modern church has sold her birthright for this mess of psychotherapeutic pottage.

Psychotherapy is comprised of three aspects:

[1] Religion since it presumes to speak to the psyche, mind, and soul of a person in terms of what is normative in human behavior, morality, and ethics.

[2] Rhetoric as it engages in conversation via words as its proposed therapy. In the process, new pseudo-medical terminology is coined and common vocabulary in culture and religion is redefined.

[3] Repression in its forbidding of certain thought patterns and behavior as “neurotic,” and another set as “mental health” or “therapeutic.” Those resisting, at the discretion of the “therapist,” can be recommended or required to take psychotropic drugs or even institutionalized for “Mental Curing.”

We are a people “perishing in counsel, and there is no understanding in [us]” -Deut.32:28. And in the very house of God is where this “wicked counsel” -Ezek.11:1,2 is to be found.

From the darkened soul of **Franz Mesmer** in 1779 came this unqualified declaration: “There is only one illness and one healing” [Robert C. Fuller. *Mesmerism and the American Cure of Souls*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982), p.1].

Mesmerism, as it came to be called, induced “patients” into trance-like states of hypnosis resulting in “deeper” states of consciousness involving telepathy [communicating from one mind to another apart from spoken words] and clairvoyance [the power of discerning objects not present to the senses].

This occultic practice evolved into conversations between the “counselor” and the “patient” while under hypnosis. This “therapy” came to the attention of the medical world who saw in it vast reserves within the unconsciousness for “healing” the mind, though they almost unanimously rejected his methodologies and conjectures.

Mesmer’s followers, however, moved further and developed the ideas of hypnotic suggestion, healing through talking, and mind-over-matter. These all are offshoots of occultic traditions present in traditional societies across the globe through trances, ritual language, and incantations.

Hypnotherapists, progressing beyond Mesmer’s early stages, induce a state of intense concentration or focused attention. The therapist guides the process with verbal cues and repetition, whereby a person enters into a sleep-like state though remaining conscious.

Exploration of self-discovery, human potential, and untapped reservoirs of possibilities and powers exploded in America with the seeming promises of improved health, human understanding, and heights of spirituality.

Sigmund Freud [1856-1939] carried on the idea that within the individual are all that is needed to resolve the problems of life. To him, all religious beliefs are illusions, while vehemently contending that religion is the “obsessional neurosis of humanity” [Sigmund Freud, *The Future of an Illusion*. Translated and edited by James Strachey. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1961), p.43].

Freud considered religion as evil and the very source of mental illness: something that must be jettisoned altogether if a person would become “normal” and “whole.” He employed psychotherapeutic and scientific sounding language to mask his hatred of religion, Christianity in particular.

Another very influential contemporary of Freud’s was **Carl Jung** [1875-1961]. He viewed all religions as collective mythologies. Unlike Freud, to him religion wasn’t evil per se, but may be a means to an end of improving human personality, though not true in any real sense.

He substituted for the truth of the Bible, his own version of reality: archetypes. These he promoted as universal, inherited patterns of thought, images, or symbols that exist within the collective unconsciousness of humanity. They manifest as myths, dreams, and stories across cultures, and essentially represent fundamental aspects of the human experience and psyche.

As he moved within his own realm of self-conceived reality, these archetypes took form and manifested as familiar spirits that were at his service. He had his own personal demonic spirit-guide named Philemon. He also was involved in necromancy [conjuring up the spirits of the dead and communing with them].

Jung promoted 4 key archetypes.

[1] Self: a guiding light, illuminating the path toward self-realization and personal transformation.

[2] Persona: like a finely crafted mask, adorns the faces we present to the outside world. It embodies the roles we play, the masks we wear, and the expectations we fulfill in society.

[3] Shadow: where our darkest fears and deepest desires reside, the aspects of Self we deny or reject in which lies untapped potentials waiting to be discovered that will foster a deeper sense of wholeness and self-acceptance.

[4] Anima/Animus: like twin flames dancing in the depths of the unconscious, they embody the feminine and masculine aspects of the psyche. They shape our perceptions of gender, influence our relationships, and ignite our creative and intuitive capacities.

These ideas and practices were readily absorbed by the Western world, becoming distilled into what we now label as psychotherapy, positive thinking, and the human potential movement.

Sucking sap from these poisonous roots, the emerging psychotherapies succeeded in duping Western culture, America in particular along with its church, with the following four lies.

Lie 1: Psychotherapy is science and credible due to its objective truth.

Lie 2: Psychotherapy combined with the Bible provide the most effective counsel.

Lie 3: People who are experiencing problems, whether mental, emotional, or behavioral, need therapy because they are suffering from “mental illness.”

Lie 4: Psychotherapy has a high level of success in resolving patients’ problems.

These four lies have permeated American society and the church therein to the extent that any who would question their validity are viewed as either stupid, dangerous, or actually as hateful enemies. So pervasive are these lies that “Christian” institutions mandate Psychology courses in their curriculums.

And flowing from that cesspool of Mesmer, Freud, and Jung, are a vast horde of psychotherapists, each with their own concocted cauldron of contradictory “therapies.”

In the February 17, 1992 edition of Newsweek Magazine, the cover article was entitled: *The Curse of Self-Esteem*. In the article, the 10 leading “experts” on Self-Esteem were asked a simple question: *What is Self-Esteem?* Not one answer coincided with another.

The following is an example of the “science” of psychotherapy from 1952 to 1987 in the USA. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* of the United States Government categorized homosexuality as follows:

Homosexuality is:

1952: a mental illness and sociopathic personality disorder.

1968: a mental disorder.

1974: an ego-dystonic sexual orientation.

1980: ego-dystonic homosexuality.

1987: [reference to homosexuality was removed entirely leaving only this category]: sexual disorder not otherwise specified.

No science provided compelling reasons for the changes in designations. Rather gay rights activists in the 1960s & 1970s provided the needed “scientific” research.

The Stonewall Riots of 1969 when NY police raided an Inn in Greenwich Village to arrest homosexuals added further “clinical” proof.

At the American Psychiatric Association [APA] conference in 1972 the final “research evidence” was obtained. There a secret homosexual psychiatrist came out of the closet, addressed the gathering, and defended his numerous APA homosexual psychiatric colleagues who were afraid to identify themselves.

So, there you have it: conclusive, scientific, clinical research that demonstrates the legitimacy of psychotherapy and all of its designations and claims. Psychotherapy is not science: it is religion.

As far back as 1987 there have been catalogued more than 250 conflicting psychotherapies and more than 10,000 incompatible techniques to achieve the mirage of mental health [Martin and Deidre Bobgan, *Psychoheresy: The Psychological Seduction of Christianity* (Santa Barbara: EastGate Publishers, 1987), p.34.

Psychotherapy is an unscientific, unsubstantiated, and unreliable field of chaos. And the reason for that is obvious. The proponents of psychotherapy have not known God.

“The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the Lord, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways” - Jer.17:9,10.

The reason that psychotherapy is bogus and worse, is that those examining the human condition are evaluating with broken equipment; their own hearts are desperately wicked. How then could they ever derive a valid assessment of what is normative when they themselves are not? “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool” -Prov.28:26.

In reality, the basic problem of man is that he is sinful, not “mentally ill.” People have revolted against their Creator, and that revolt has resulted in a multiplicity of consequences impacting human behavior.

God, who made man, knows what is normative in human behavior and what is deviant. He tells us this in the Bible.

The counsel of the Lord is not an optional suggestion for an improved quality of life. It is not a challenge to higher aspirations, but rather is the exclusive remedy from destruction

and the only means of obtaining life and favor from God. “With Your counsel You will guide me, and afterward receive me into glory” -Ps.73:24.

But it must be followed. The directives are to be obeyed. Guidance unheeded results in arrival at other destinations. One will certainly lose one's way, become disoriented, and, finally, be lost altogether.

Counsel from God is not designed to soothe distressed emotions. It rather commands, rebukes, trains, and liberates. It sets our feet upon the straight and narrow. Glory will be reached only if our steps proceed upon that path. One cannot ignore this counsel and expect to be admitted at heaven's gate.

For millennia, people have resolved evil deviant behavior by recourse to the God they have revolted against. The solution is called repentance coupled with confession. These have been most effective for thousands of years before the advent of the monstrous deluding self-reports of psychotherapy.

An astounding paradigm shift has taken place in American culture and in its church. Problems, that once were universally recognized as needing the curing of souls by faith in the Creator God in compliance with His Word, has morphed into the curing of minds by therapy and medication.

The groundwork was laid by Mesmer, Freud, and Jung. The Bible and religion in general were discredited and demonized, resulting in a humanistic solution to the moral and spiritual plight of man—psychotherapy. God and His Word, the Bible, became irrelevant and worse: an evil antagonist to human wellbeing.

But in any discussion or system revolving around what is normative in human behavior, morals, attitudes, and values, we are dealing in the realm of religion, not science.

Psychotherapy is a religion: a religion that hypocritically dons the respectable white lab coat of science: but it is a pseudo-science. It pretends to address scientific solutions to “mental illness,” but it actually is doing nothing more than trespassing into the realm of spirituality and morals: the proper realm of religion.

Psychotherapy is not occupied with the study of the brain but of behavior. The study of the brain, however, can properly be considered science. There, quantifiable physical disorders can be discovered by examination, such as chemical imbalance, nutritional deficiency, neurological damage, etc.

But, psychotherapy's pontificating on the mind and its values, worldview, agendas, choices, morals, and attitudes cannot be quantified by test tube results. The mind is intangible: there is nothing organic to be examined or dissected that would allow that. Psychotherapy is not science.

The Nobel prize laureate, Richard Feynman, in commenting upon whether psychotherapy qualifies as science, bluntly declared: “Psychoanalysis is not a science, [it is] perhaps even more like witch-doctoring” [Richard Feynman et al. *The Feynman Lectures on Physics*, Vol.1. [Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1963), pp.3-8].

Carol Tavris, a psychologist herself, has this to say about psychotherapy: “The irony is that many people who are not fooled by astrology for one minute subject themselves to therapy for years, where the same errors of logic and interpretation often occur” [Carol Tavris, “The Freedom to Change,” *Prime Time*, October 1980, p.28].

A research psychiatrist minces no words when he says: “The techniques used by Western psychiatrists are, with few exceptions, on exactly the same scientific plane as the techniques used by witch doctors” [E. Fuller Torrey. *The Mind Game*. (New York: Emerson Hall Publishers, Inc., 1972), p.66].

Psychotherapy is not erected upon science, but upon the faulty foundation and shifting sands of secular humanism, determinism, behaviorism, existentialism, mysticism, occultism, panentheism, and evolutionism: but certainly not upon the Word of God.

Why then would the church wish to drink from this polluted well? Lie 2 groundlessly affirms that Psychotherapy combined with the Bible provide the most effective counsel. That is a lie indeed.

For, how can combining the truth of God with the speculation of men and demonic mystical procedures provide a superior approach to the cure of souls? It cannot.

It can only diminish and pollute the true by mixing its demented poison with it. It’s simply an attempt to blend two mutually exclusive systems.

What from Mesmer, Freud, or Jung can you discover in the Scriptures? Nothing: nothing that is, except forbidden occultism.

“We are often asked if we are ‘Christian Psychologists’ and find it difficult to answer. At the present time, there is no acceptable Christian psychology that is markedly different from non-Christian psychology” [J. Sutherland and P. Poelstra, *Aspects of Integration*, a paper presented to the Western Association of Christians for Psychological Studies, Santa Barbara, CA, June 1976].

Deluded deceivers within the church would have us drink their Kool-Aid concoction of: “All Truth is God’s Truth.” But what is their criteria of truth? How do you know what is true and what is false within the realm of human behavior, morals, and spirituality?

Jesus unequivocally declares: “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by Me” -Jn.14:6. He further makes this exclusive revelation in His prayer to His Father: “Sanctify them in truth: Your Word is truth” -Jn.17:17. Truth is in Jesus and His Word alone.

The Word of God contains all that is “needed for life and godliness, through His precious and magnificent promises” -2 Pet.1:3,4. “Listen to counsel and accept discipline, that you may be wise the rest of your days. Many plans are in a man’s heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand” -Prov.19:20,21.

“The Law of the Lord is perfect/refreshing, repairing/restoring the soul” -Ps.19:7. “The Lord is my shepherd...He restores my soul” -Ps.23:1,3.

“Apply your mind to My knowledge; for it will be pleasant if you keep them within you, so that your trust may be in the Lord. Have I not written to you excellent things of counsels and knowledge, to make you know the truth of the Words of truth?” -Prov.22:17-21. Yes, He has.

“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your Word. Your Word I have treasured in my heart that I might not sin against You. Your testimonies are my delight; they are the men of my counsel” -Ps.119:9,11,24.

And the counsel of the Word of God is not another option amidst the Babel of psychotherapeutic fare: Not at all. “Forever, O Lord, your Word stands firm/is settled in heaven!” -Ps.119:89.

Why are we not constantly crying out: “O how I love Your Law! It is my meditation all the day. Your commandments make me wiser than my enemies. I have more insight than all my teachers, [including psychotherapists] for Your testimonies are my meditation!” - Ps.119:97-99.

Should we not be rejoicing moment by moment that “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path”? -Ps.119:105. Of course, we should.

Let these words continually peal from your lips: “I love Your commandments above fine gold. Therefore I esteem right all Your precepts concerning everything; I hate every false way!” -Ps.119:127,128.

And let us rejoice unceasingly in this: “The sum of Your Word is truth, and every one of Your righteous ordinances is everlasting!” -Ps.119:160.

Without controversy, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, meekness, faithfulness, and self-control” -Gal.5:22,23 are the fruit—the offspring and result of—the

Holy Spirit of God in the life of a true disciple. These are supernatural realities produced by God Himself, not resulting from anything inherently residing in natural man.

And without controversy, psychotherapy brazenly repudiates this and shouts to all that these characteristics can be had by therapeutic treatment; God is not in that equation: evil is.

Jesus is the “Wonderful Counselor” -Isa.9:6 in whom “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” -Col.2:3. Upon Jesus rests “the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord” -Isa.11:2 [emphasis added].

But beware if you choose psychotherapy over the Wonderful Counselor and His Word; that outcome is disastrous.

“The Lord nullifies/breaks/frustrates the counsel of the nations. The counsel of the Lord stands forever” -Ps.33:10,11.

“This is the Word which I commanded them: Obey my Voice, and I will be your God, and you will be My people; and you will walk in all the way which I command you, that it may be well with you.

“Yet they did not obey, but walked in their own counsels and in the stubbornness of their own heart, and went backward and not forward” -Jer.7:23,24.

If one would believe the Bible, psychotherapy must be disbelieved; and the converse is also true.

You add Mesmer, Freud, or Jung to Jesus and His Word at your own peril. They are His enemies. Don't you become one of them.

Flattered and seduced, the church wantonly embraces psychotherapeutic adulterers while Jesus, the Wonderful Counselor, is despised: and arrogance colors it all.

This is the way of the church.

Prosperity

The demise of American morality and spirituality is traceable to the same roots as Sodom: and homosexuality is not that root; that was the corrupt result of other root causes.

“This was the sin of Sodom; she had pride, abundance of food/were overfed, careless ease/idleness/lived in pleasure, while the poor and needy suffered outside her door. And

thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I destroyed them when I saw it” -Ezek.16:49,50.

The sin of Sodom was their luxurious affluence, pursuit of leisure and self-centered happiness, while neglecting those in need. These were the roots that produced the perversion of homosexuality among them.

The decline of America is traceable to these same sins. Prosperity is rarely anyone’s friend. And America’s “Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness” is bearing its bitter fruit.

Spirituality can never be gauged by material Prosperity or lack of the same. Neither soft costly garments nor beggarly rags give any indication of the condition of the hearts of the wearers.

Herod donned royal apparel and delivered his address [Acts 11:21]. John, clad in rude camel's hair, also spoke his message [Mt.3:4]. History and the holy text of the Bible have recorded the testimony and fate of both. Both died, yet their outward station in the things of this world did not determine their spiritual state or reward.

On the other hand, Joseph of Arimathea was both a rich man and a disciple of our Lord [Mt.27:57]. But the lame beggar at the Temple's beautiful gate was neither [Acts 3:2].

Riches, whether present in abundance or lacking in impoverishment, do not indicate a soul's relationship to the God of heaven. Financial Prosperity is not God's will for all of His children. Poverty is not sin, for “God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith” -James 2:5.

Not only is wealth not something to be sought after, we are warned about the effect of riches upon the heart and the snare they are to the soul.

Fruitfulness cannot develop in a heart possessed with desire for wealth. Such longing is referred to as choking thorns which overtake and cancel the progress of the Word of God in a man. “The deceitfulness of riches choke the word” -Mt.13:22.

Riches deceive. Many delude themselves into thinking that they can serve the God of heaven while pursuing wealth upon earth; that is a lie.

“No one can serve two masters. You cannot serve God and Mammon/Riches” -Mt.6:24. The Lord Jesus must receive our exclusive devotion. No rivals are welcome.

And wealth is no less a master, having devotees and servants as well. For this reason, wealth is called “Mammon.” It is a lord, yes, a “god.”

Devotion to and longing after prosperity is no different than obeying another “god.” It is ever as much idolatry as burning incense at any one of a thousand pagan shrines. Prosperity is merely a euphemism for coveting, and coveting is assuredly idolatry.

“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: evil desires and greed, which is idolatry” –Col.3:5. “For this you know with certainty, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God” –Eph.5:5.

These are sobering words for those promoting, as well as those longing after Prosperity. Be warned, the Lord Jesus has commanded, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed” –Lk.12:15.

Every form of greed is to be utterly cast out of the heart. Not to do so is to harbor an idol within. Its name is Mammon and no one who sets up his altar shall ever enter the kingdom of heaven.

You may gain the whole world through the delusion of Prosperity and yet lose your own soul [Mt.16:26]. Even if you have an abundance, your life does not consist in these things [Lk.12:15]. Only a deceived fool focuses his interests upon the things of earth.

“And now who will own what you have prepared? So is the man who stores up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God” –Lk.12:20,21. Yes, a man may be rich with treasures of earth and have no enduring riches of value at all.

Earthly Prosperity does not equate to the “riches of His glory” -Eph.3:16. You may perish with full pockets, for Prosperity is no indication of God's approval or blessing.

Woes are pronounced upon those who want their rewards, comforts, and riches now. “Woe to you who are rich...Woe to you who are well-fed now...Woe to you who laugh now” -Lk.6:24,25.

Why is this a cause of this remorse and cursing? Because “you are receiving your comfort in full...You shall be hungry...you shall mourn and weep” -Lk.6:24,25.

“Blessed are you who are poor...who hunger now...who weep now” -Lk.6:20,21. Why is this a blessed condition? Because “yours is the kingdom of God...You shall be satisfied...You shall laugh” -Lk.6:20,21.

The present possession of the poor who love the Lord Jesus is the kingdom of God. Their future expectation is fullness of joy for “your reward is great in heaven” –Lk.6:23.

The possession of the rich is fleshly comfort in this life only. There is no kingdom of heaven awaiting them. Their future expectation is privation amidst weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Earthly treasure is nothing to amass. It is forbidden. “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” -Mt.6:19,20. It is commanded that we accumulate riches in heaven. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” -Mt.6:21.

Many delude themselves into thinking that their hearts are really set on the things above, though their money continues to increase under their watchful eye below. That is “the deceitfulness of riches that choke the Word” -Mt.13:22.

Treasures on earth testify to a heart focused upon corrupt things. Neither the riches of this world nor the heart so absorbed will enter the glories of heaven. That heart has no portion above because it is serving Mammon’s money below.

The Nations, who are “separated from Christ...having no hope and without God in the world” -Eph.2:12, “eagerly seek all these things” -Mt.6:32. The pursuit of Prosperity is what occupies the ungodly; it is not the focus of the upright.

What to eat, drink, or wear are no cause of worry for a disciple [Mt.6:31]. “Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things” -Mt.6:32. He will supply the necessities of life for His own.

“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” -Mt.6:33. Which things? Food, drink, and covering sufficient for the day, not the lustful extravagance longed for by the wicked.

Any who would think so are of a “depraved mind and deprived of the truth, supposing that godliness is a means of financial gain” -1 Tim.6:5. Be warned!

“But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in ruin and destruction. For the love of money is the root of all evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and stabbed themselves with many sorrows” -1 Tim.6:9,10.

Wanting money is itself a snare and temptation. It is a foolish and hurtful lust. Pursued, it will hurl its aspirants into ruinous destruction.

This love, this devotion to and occupation with money, underlies the multiplicity of evils springing from corrupted hearts. The desire itself is enough to impel the feet into perilous paths far from the faith. The end of this pursuit is suicidal with griefs unnumbered.

Longing for money is the love of it. Desiring wealth is the condemnation warned of. Wanting to obtain riches already has derailed one from the faith. Only ruin, destruction, and untold sorrows await those plunging along Prosperity’s corridor.

Christ Jesus has warned us. He has sounded the alarm like a clarion, “You cannot serve God and Mammon” -Lk.16:13. “Now the Pharisees, who were lovers of money, were listening to all these things and scoffed at Him” -Lk.16:14.

Without hesitation the Lord Jesus rejoined: “You are those who justify yourselves in the sight of men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” -Lk.16:15.

Loving money, highly valued by men, is an abominable detestable corruption in the sight of God: yet the spiritual leaders in Jesus’ day did so.

And Americans and the church therein love it as well. In every generation men, and religious men, have fondled this “filthy lucre [riches]” -1 Pet.5:2, and required it from unsuspecting donors to fund their empires of ease and extravagance.

In days gone by, they “merely” plundered the professed people of God in their avarice lust to amass wealth for themselves. Today they go beyond that.

Now, they have taught their devotees to imitate them. They have invented a doctrine of covetousness which is eagerly imbibed by aspiring millions longing to gain the same wealth as their mentors. But “the getting of treasures by a lying tongue is a vanishing mist and a deadly trap of them that seek death” -Prov.21:6.

Prosperity's "gods" have reared countless congregations of coveting idolaters. They follow what their "gods" have directed.

And the "gods" do as their “god” has directed them. And the great “god” Mammon governs them all. This is the naked and horrid reality of this false coveting after Prosperity.

True prosperity is being “free from the love of money, being content with such things as you have; for He Himself has said, ‘I will never leave you, nor forsake you’” -Heb.13:5. Contentment is an unspeakable blessing.

A heart at rest, free from agitated aspirations, is gain indeed. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” -1 Tim.6:6 and enrichment of the truest sort, with treasures of heaven.

“If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content” -1 Tim.6:8. To the child of God who is content with His Father’s provision, “better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting, with strife” -Prov.17:1.

The aim of the godly is not his own pleasure or Prosperity, his longing is that Christ will “be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death” -Phil.1:20. The man of God finds contentment in Christ, not in things.

“I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am” -Phil.4:11. The circumstances were not vital to Paul's contentment, the Lord Jesus was.

David had learned this as well. “You have put gladness in my heart, more than when their grain and wine abound” -Ps.41:7.

Prosperity was unnecessary for David's gladness. It was irrelevant to Paul's contentment. True prosperity is that spiritual abounding and abundance that has its source in the unlimited “riches in glory in Christ Jesus” -Phil.4:19.

This prosperity is present whether earthly gain is there or not. Listen to Paul's testimony, one which is a pattern for all genuine disciples.

“I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” - Phil.4:12,13.

Christ is the key to spiritual prosperity. Only those who are intent upon Him will be content in this life. Riches or poverty have nothing to do with true prosperity or contentment either one.

Those who are oriented to the wealth of earth are content with nothing: neither with the Lord Jesus nor with what they hope to gain by their tireless coveting efforts.

Their hearts are always at unrest in the ceaseless uneasiness of worldly pursuits. “He who loves money will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves abundance with its income. This too is vanity” -Eccl.5:10.

This is not prosperity; it is an evil affliction and vexation of spirit. It is a worthless expenditure for a fleeting vapor which will expire with the man pursuing it.

“Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hands. This too is a grievous evil: as a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind?” -Eccl.5:15,16.

He gains nothing. Prosperity is a worthless life-devouring pursuit. It consumes the soul in its cancerous decimation of all spiritual aspirations. It is the enemy of all godliness and the root of all evils. Many are its victims slain thereby.

“But you, O man of God, flee these things” -1 Tim.6:11. What things are to be fled from? The previous two verses tell us: Wanting riches, loving money, and longing after it.

There is nothing to compare with the riches of the true knowledge of God. He that possesses this is prosperous indeed.

“Take my instruction and not silver, and knowledge rather than choicest gold. For wisdom is better than jewels; and all desirable things cannot compare with her” –Prov.8:10,11. These are the true treasures which we can, yes, and must, pursue in all holiness of obedience.

Wisdom’s treasures of counsel, discretion, and power will be freely shared with those who love and diligently seek her [Prov.8:12-17]. This is a true prosperity which, through endless ages, will abide undisturbed after the world and all its works are burned up. Hear what she says.

“Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and righteousness. My fruit is better than gold, even pure gold, and my yield better than choicest silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, in the midst of paths of justice, to endow those who love me with wealth, that I may fill their treasuries” –Prov.8:18-21.

These are the treasures the Lord Jesus commanded us to store up in heaven. These are what the Scriptures say that true prosperity is. Here is how it is described.

“Be careful to obey all the law Moses My servant gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful” –Josh.1:7,8.

If nothing else is clear from this passage, this at least is. To prosper is to diligently know and obey all that is written in the Word of God. This is the essence of true prosperity as we have already seen in Proverbs 8.

How can we discharge what the Lord has commanded that we be and do? The Lord gave Joshua, and us, the answer: Diligently know and obey all that is written in the Word of God.

Biblical meditation is that practice of repeatedly reflecting upon the Word of God to extract its every significance. It is the exact opposite of contemplative and mystical emptying of the mind. This biblical word “meditate” is also translated as “chew the cud.”

Sheep, cows, and goats lose no nutrients from their food. They chew and re-chew the same grasses repeatedly. While one is swallowed, another is brought up into the mouth from their multi-chambered stomachs. Thus over and over the same substance is thoroughly broken down and digested.

Rumination is the proper word to describe this process, whether of sheep in the pasture or of those of the Great Shepherd in His fold. To muse, ponder, and reflect upon the written Word of God is the only way that strength and understanding can be gained to make our way prosperous. Only as we know God's Word can we obey it. And it is only as we obey it that we will have good success.

Success is not to be thought of as consisting, as is often done in America, of financially rewarding business ventures. Biblically, it is much different than that.

This same word "success" is used in Ps.119:99 where it is translated "insight." "I have more insight [success] than all my teachers, for I meditate on Your statutes."

Prospering successfully results from obeying the wisdom gained from reflecting upon the written Word of God. This is true prosperity. It is a spiritual reality possessed by obedient souls independent of physical circumstances.

Some of the most spiritually prosperous and successful men in all of history were impoverished in the goods of this world. Poor according to the world's estimation, yet rich in the spiritual everlasting sense. The Lord has not chosen the rich of this life. Neither has He chosen to make the poor enriched with earthly Prosperity.

Consider this: "The poor you have with you always" -Jn.12:8. And again, "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" -Mt.19:23. Both of these statements were spoken by our Lord Jesus.

They at least tell us that it is not the will of the Father to turn poor people into rich people. If it was, very few would ever enter heaven since "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" -Mt.19:24.

Those few rich who are genuine disciples are exhorted to abandon any hope in the uncertainty of their riches. Their true riches are in God, good works, and in giving, not in their earthly abundance [1 Tim.6:17-19].

The majority of disciples, however, are not rich in this world and have no biblical expectation of becoming so. Neither do the servants of God.

Paul, for his faithfulness as a servant of God, ought to have been rewarded with great Prosperity by the delusion of the American dream.

"To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless" -1 Cor.4:11. Again he says that he is "poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things" -2 Cor.6:10.

This flies in the face of the affluent lusting after Prosperity in America along with its slow, sleepy, and soft church. The self-sacrificing worthies of all generations are an everlasting rebuke to this generation's complacent and comfortable church.

"They went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (the world was not worthy of them!), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the earth" -Heb.11:37,38 [emphasis added]. "All these obtained a testimony through their faith" -Heb.11:39.

If anything, the desire for wealth testifies that there exists no faith at all. Lust for gain, and faith in God are not synonymous: Lovers of self and lovers of money are; Both of the latter pair are the antithesis of faith.

Nothing good is ever to be said about pastoral thieves, about those who fleece the flock to feed themselves. Charlatans and dupes are not commended for their faith but rather are condemned for their lies and greed. They may parade as "pastors" but they are not.

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves" -Mt.7:15. They ravage, extort, pillage, and destroy with rapacious greed, and they are in the church.

"I know that after I am gone, savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, teaching perversions of the truth, to draw away the disciples after them" -Acts 20:29,30.

Perverse "prophecies" and devastating doctrines impelled by cunning covetousness are what fill the mouths of these wolves. Their teeth are sharpened knives, maiming and destroying their prey unmercifully. But the Lord will deliver His flock from their jaws and destroy these "pastors," bringing their treacherous ways upon their own heads.

"Prophecy against the shepherds of Israel. Thus says the Lord God, 'Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock, but with force and cruelty you have dominated them.

"Therefore you shepherds, hear the Word of the Lord, I will deliver My flock from their mouth, that they will no longer be food for them" -Ezek.34:2-4,8-10.

Devices to extract money from the unsuspecting abound in their "ministries." Their Prosperity is no result of faith; it has been received through cleverly devised schemes to take money from men. It is fraud, not faith.

Simony is the proper name for such lies: trafficking in Divine things, presuming to gain spiritual benefits by the “selling” or “buying” of heavenly commodities. A Samaritan sorcerer was the original President of this now international “ministry.”

This magician did not even blush when he “offered them money, saying, ‘Give this authority to me as well’” -Acts 8:18,19. It is the mind-set of this man that interests us with respect to false mega-churches and “ministers” of Prosperity.

He thought that if he gave money to men of God he would get what he wanted in return. He imagined that if he sowed his “seed of faith” he could get things from God. If he paid the price, he would obtain the same “Prosperity” and possessions that the Apostles had.

Witchcraft employs such methods but not true Christianity. The “prophets” of Prosperity have raised multitudes of disciples to follow Simon Magus, while they quite willingly receive the money which Peter refused. Peter’s rebuke rightly falls upon these sons of Simon as they originally did upon the deluded sorcerer of Samaria.

“May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this for your heart is not right before God.

“Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray the Lord that, if possible, He might forgive the intention of your heart. For I see that you are bitterly envious and in bondage to sin” -Acts 8:20-23.

Did Simon repent? We do not know. We do know, however, that the merchants of Prosperity have not. They continue unabated, to pilfer the people of God while selling their wares in the Name of the Lord. Neither are they like Paul.

“We are not like many, we do not peddle the Word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ, we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God” -2 Cor.2:17. Prosperity seekers are like the many, but unlike Paul. Spiritual things are utilized by them for their own enrichment to gain material Prosperity.

As in any business venture, there must be four elements; a seller, a buyer, goods, and a price. Prosperity sells the tantalizing prospect of enrichment to its buyers in the church for an agreed upon amount.

But the only gainers from this scam are the sellers. No goods are actually delivered to the buyers. They pay the merchants but continue to remain empty-handed.

Promises of Prosperity are false. The Word of God makes no such assurances and certainly not with any price tags affixed to the blessings of heaven. The anxiously sought after material gain will never be realized by the gullible and disobedient masses. The reasons are two.

First, the Lord never promises wealth as a blessing, inheritance, or expectation to His people. The second reason is that the judgment of God is upon both the preachers of Prosperity and their donors alike.

“He who oppresses the poor to increase his wealth or he who gives to the rich, will only come to poverty” -Prov.22:16. This Scripture is very clear. No one will ever prosper giving to the “ministries” of Prosperity preachers.

Only false shepherds sell the things of God for personal gain. Those who support them and buy their investment plans are destined for disappointment and destruction.

“Thus says the Lord my God, ‘Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter. Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished, and each of those who sell them says, “Blessed be the Lord, for I have become rich!” And their own shepherds have no pity on them”” -Zech.11:4,5.

“You false prophets are leading My people astray! When you have something to bite with your teeth, you cry ‘Peace!’ But against him who puts nothing in your mouth, you declare holy war.

“You priests teach for a price and you prophets won’t prophesy unless you are paid money. Yet all of you claim to depend upon the Lord. ‘No harm can come to us, for the Lord is in our midst!’” -Mic.3:5,11.

Dear Reader, “Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers!” -Phil.3:2.

“For the leaders of My people – the Lord’s watchmen, His shepherds – all of them are blind and know nothing. They are all dumb dogs that give no warning when danger comes. They love to lie around sleeping and dreaming.

“Yes, they are like greedy dogs that are never satisfied. They are shepherds who have no understanding. They have all turned to their own way, everyone for his unjust personal gain” -Isa.56:10,11.

God's judgment is upon such unholy business. These are wicked, self-seeking, and greedy men with no compassion on those they devastate. They swindle and devour the flock while shouting, “Hallelujah! I am prosperous!” Only one other passage better describes the methods and effects of these rogues.

“Many will follow their shameful destructive ways and because of these false teachers, the way of the truth will be blasphemed, slandered, and brought into disrepute. In their greed they will make merchandise of you and exploit you with deceptive false words” -2 Pet.2:2,3.

These are the teachers of Prosperity: greedy, selling fables, and man-made propaganda in order to enlarge their own revenues at the expense of the people of God.

By them the way of the truth is blasphemed. By them the people of God are exploited with lies masquerading as the promises of God. And by them vast segments of Christ's professed church are ruled by covetous idolaters who have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Isn't it time to call this for what it really is? It is blasphemous idolatrous wickedness. Such are the false “ministries” of Prosperity and its preachers. Such are those who also long for the riches they offer.

May the Lord Himself drive this avarice lust out of His Father's house and overturn their money tables that we may return to biblical sanity and true worship once again.

*Better is a poor man who walks in his integrity
Than he that is perverse in his ways,
Though he be rich
Prov.28:6*

*They will throw their silver and gold
Away in the streets like garbage filth.
Neither silver nor gold can save them
When the Lord pours out His fury.
They will not satisfy their soul
Or fill their bellies with it.
Silver and gold made them stumble into sin.
Ezek.7:19*

Pets

In 2023, Americans spent \$147 Billion on pet care. \$64.4 Billion was spent on pet food and “treats” alone.

The GNP of Ghana in 2023 was \$75.42 Billion. Ecuador was \$118.8 Billion. Cambodia was \$31.77 Billion. Greenland was \$3.13 Billion. Paraguay was \$42.96 Billion.

Americans spend more on their little Foofoos than entire nations have in annual revenue. How will we justify this at the throne of God?

Other expenditures on pets in the USA include pet health care and psychological “therapy,” gourmet desserts, luxury air-conditioned rooms complete with manicures, velveteen cushions, toys, and wide screen televisions.

Pet cemeteries and funeral services complete with exotic caskets are becoming common. Businesses and even restaurants accommodate pets. Daycare centers and “hotels” for pets are on the increase.

Insurance policies for pets are available. Christmas presents are lavished and Halloween costumes are provided for meticulously groomed animals.

During 2024 in the USA, 89.7 Million dogs were owned as pets and 73.8 Million cats. That’s a total of 163,500,000 pets among dogs and cats alone! And this is apart from horses and hares, fish and fowl, reptiles and rodents.

In America, pets are given names and regularly considered to be members of the family alongside children and relatives.

In Torrance, CA, our church-going neighbor emphatically declared that if his pet dog would not be in heaven, then he did not want to be there either. A dog outclassed Jesus in devotion.

This is perversion. There are no animals in heaven. They were not made in the image and likeness of God: only people have been.

What account shall we give for our distorted devotion to brute beasts over our concern for people who are made in the image of God?

How shall we justify our plump, overfed, high-protein consuming beasts lounging in our parlors while multitudes of people subsist on scraps, the likes of which we would not even toss to our pets?

Pets are an American perversion in this self-indulgent generation that adversely affect doing unto others what we would have them do unto us and loving our neighbor as you love yourself.

Pets are not neighbors: people are.

“It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak. Happy is he who does not condemn himself in what he approves” -Rm.14:21,22.

Encounter

Since the Garden of Eden, it has been the Serpent's ploy to seduce people to [1] Question God's Word, [2] Contradict God's Word, and [3] Replace God's Word with his own occultic [hidden] "revelation."

The means utilized were to foster doubt of the truth, holiness, and love of God. When these are marginalized or distrusted altogether, all one is left with is Self and Satan: a horrific cocktail.

Gen.3:1-5 record that Self-authentication, desiring mystical wisdom from exotic sources, and the dangling carrot of alluring realization of becoming gods have been his masterful scheme for thousands of years; and they are overwhelmingly successful to ensnare billions of souls.

Let's very briefly trace how this Satanic delusion of the Encounter has come to pollute the professing church of our day. [Bear with me; we will move through the centuries quickly].

Following the rebellion in Eden by hearkening to the Serpent's word, another massive paradigm shift took place in the days of Nimrod, the rebel [Gen.10:8-12; 11:1-9]. In the plains of Shinar, the land of Babylon, enforced uniformity was initiated.

Prior to that, men were their own priests with direct access to God through the Lord's appointed and provided means. But with Nimrod's tower and the universal uniformity he instilled, all was radically changed thereafter up to the present.

Nimrod institutionalized Tradition at his tower, and it spread worldwide from there. Priestcraft prevailed. The custodian king reigned. Scripted "worship" was localized at the Shrine. Individual priests were no longer tolerated.

All conformed to his scheme. Punishment was meted out for any who did not comply. Money was collected for maintenance of the building and its custodian.

Stones of God's creation were cast aside for man-made bricks of his own design. Uniformity replaced unity. And rebellion colored it all.

The Lord's dispersion of judgment upon the Tower of Babel spread Nimrod's universal orientation throughout the globe. Language was changed, people groups scattered, but the prevailing perspective and mindset remained intact, eventually to develop into "Mystery Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and of the Abominations of the Earth" -Rev.17:5.

From Eden, and then calcified by Nimrod, Worship in Spirit is quenched by external Ritual. Worship in truth is supplanted by man-devised Tradition and decrees; and any who subject

themselves to it are constituted hypocrites, enemies, and fools by the God of heaven. You cannot serve Nimrod and Christ.

Idolatry has reigned with few exceptions since, even during the OT history of Israel. From before they received the Law of God via Moses, they had already crafted a calf of gold and were prostrating before it in abominable shame [Ex.32].

Israel, during the time of their Exodus from Egypt and throughout their wilderness wanderings, still had not repented and purged themselves from idolatry. “It was not to Me that you offered victims and sacrifices forty years in the wilderness, was it, O house of Israel? You also took along the tabernacle of Moloch and the star of the god Remphan, the images which you made to worship. I will remove you beyond Babylon” -Acts 7:42,43.

But with coming of Christ Jesus, the Lord, “there was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man” -Jn.1:9. Nevertheless, “the world did not know Him, and those who were His own, did not receive Him” -Jn.1:10,11.

And why was this? Because “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil” -Jn.3:19.

Persecution arose, first from Israel’s own religious leaders, whom Jesus rightly indicted as: “You are of your father, the Devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the Truth” -Jn.8:44. Persecution of Jesus and the Truth of His Word is Satanic.

Rome quickly followed in a holocaust of systematic attempts to extinguish the Light and Life of Christ over 3 centuries by fire and sword. The Devil removed his Serpent’s disguise and raged as the Great Red Dragon, yet he could not extinguish the Light by this means.

But the Devil, who has come only to steal and destroy, has more than one masquerade to achieve his ends. The Roaring Lion and Dragon during Diocletian’s regime, knew how to quickly slide into his subtle Serpent’s skin during the reign of Constantine and seduce the church into his coils. What he did not achieve through fire, he managed to do by friendship.

With the new capital of the Empire now moved to Constantinople in 334 AD, bishops who once were fed to wild beasts in the Empire’s arenas now dined with the Emperor at the palace. Those who had properties, possessions, and positions wrenched from their hands, now had all restored and their purses fattened from the imperial treasury.

Persecution for righteousness’ sake once was their portion, now promotion and enrichment. Once shame and reproach, now pride and exaltation. Crosses, once for crucifixion and self-denial, were now glittering ornaments.

The world, formerly the church's savage enemy, now reclined comfortably in her bosom. Thus, though outwardly Christianity had converted the world, the world in turn was rapidly converting the church.

From this spiritual compromise, the monstrous harlot of the Roman Catholic regime of terror and oppression arose out of the sensuous adultery of Rome, by slaughtering true disciples while forbidding the Word of God to any upon pain of death for the next 1,000 years. There is a reason these are called "The Dark Ages."

But in the early 1500's, Light burst from the imposed squalor, dominance, and darkness of Roman Catholic superstition. The Reformation that swept Europe, restored the written Word of God to the common people, salvation was tasted by multitudes, and a soon-to-be worldwide missionary outreach was to launch.

But the Achilles heel of the Reformation was this: The Bible was in their hands, but the Bible they held did not result in eliminating Tradition; the reformers and their converts did not jettison man-devised practices inherited from Nimrod via the Roman Catholic system.

Various Traditions arose, denominations raised their hideous heads, and spiritual unity was supplanted by uniformity within their own concocted broken cisterns that held no water.

This is a key element in the Devil's strategy to return the "church" to its mystical aspirations of Encounters void of Truth handed down from the spiritual demise and apostacy of Eden.

Nevertheless, Satan had a problem; the Word was in the hands of multitudes and in their own languages that burst the bonds of Rome's Latin superstitious liturgy. What to do now?

I must convince the world and the church itself that the Bible held in their hands is irrelevant error: back to his masterful protocol of Questioning, Contradicting, and Replacing the Word of God with an alternative "reality."

And this he did, beginning from the 1600's-1700's. Deism, the belief that God started the creation process and then abandoned interaction with the world for it to develop on its own apart from His intervention, sent down its feelers into humanity's soil. The Rationalism that sprang from it, somewhat reluctantly but thoroughly, began to convince many that there exists no absolute Truth.

Then, Existentialism from the 1800's, emphasized that life has meaning through an experience known only to the individual. This shifted focus from the external and objective to the internal and subjective.

These, combined with Evolution from the mid 1800's, captured the minds of nations, resulting in the rise of Scientism as explaining all of life: all apart from God and the Bible. And the "church" jumped on this bandwagon through "Higher Criticism" of the Scriptures.

In Christendom, Rationalism is the domain of Clerical Scribes and "Scholars" who removed the content of Scripture by accounting there to be various historical, chronological, and conceptual errors found therein. And these are all "discovered" according to their own human reasoning and "scholarship."

Their claim is to purge the Scriptures of "myth" and thereby liberate men from what has been added to whatever may remain of the "Word."

"Christian" Rationalism thus stripped the Scriptures of an inherent truth value while Ritual supplanted the pattern of Christ with man-made Tradition. Truth became relativized while worship in Spirit and truth devolved into ceremony: "holding to a form of godliness, though denying the power thereof" -2 Tim.3:5.

Since the early 1900's in the eyes of the Western world, Rationalism and Ritualism have eroded any relevancy to the church and its increasingly meaningless forms and proclamations. All that remained were terms and ceremonies with emotional connotation.

These may provide to some a certain sense of self-congratulatory comfort in having done one's duty to a God and a system that they cherish. But to a growing majority, they are, in all honesty, increasingly irrelevant.

And yet, a longing for spirituality is an inherent component of the human heart, having been created in the image and likeness of God.

But to what shall we turn? The Bible is, we have been convinced, irrelevant error. It cannot be trusted. Tradition's Ritual is empty ceremony. So, how can one connect with spirituality?

Enter the Encounter.

Objective truth has long since been jettisoned. A relative situational ethic weakly fills that gap. "Truth" as an internalized reference point is the order of the day. Spirituality is not to be sought in documents and discourse, in dogma or ceremony. Truth is now considered to be what is realized, discovered, and encountered within, not without.

And in this new wave of spirituality of *I Am Enough*, one can still encounter "christ," but a mystically redefined version of: the divine spark, christ-consciousness, self-realization, knowledge of oneself as already immersed in the divine: where in the moment, a mystical sense of oneness with "christ" can flood one's spirit being: all apart from knowing Jesus Christ the Lord.

All apart from repenting from sin. All apart from hearing one word about the necessity of Jesus' death and resurrection to bring corrupt and condemned souls into a right relationship with a God they have not known. All apart from the Word of God, the Bible.

All apart from Jesus being THE Christ, as having coming in the flesh as man as the ONLY manifestation of Christ, God's Anointed King and Priest. "Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; This is the spirit of the antichrist" -1 Jn.4:1-3 [emphasis added].

"Whoever believes that Jesus is THE CHRIST is born of God" -1 Jn.5:1 [emphasis added].

"Many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge JESUS CHRIST as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist" -2 Jn.7 [emphasis added].

Jesus is exclusively THE CHRIST; there are no others. An Encounter with the "christ-spirit," a realization of obtaining an imaginary "christ-consciousness" that resides in every person, is not knowing the true Christ Jesus the Lord.

The true Lord Jesus Christ warned us explicitly about this deception which is sweeping churches, especially in the Western world. Here's what He said to be on guard against and reject completely:

"If anyone says to you, 'Behold, here is the Christ,' or 'Here!' do not believe him. For false christs and false prophets will arise and will give great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the chosen ones" -Mt.24:23,24.

Contemplative Spirituality is filling the void in the wake of the triumph of the Serpent's campaign to convince the church itself that the Bible they hold in their hands is irrelevant error. The Encounter has taken the place of the written Word of God.

This is an Encounter that is not based on God's revelation in His written the Word, the Bible, but is rooted in Hindu mystical transcendental meditation and self-realization. We have come full circle, back to the horrendous seductive revolt in Eden of rejecting the Word of the Lord and grasping for spirituality and godhood by succumbing to the Serpent's word.

In our search for an Encounter, we have encountered the Serpent. "And no wonder! For Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light" -2 Cor.11:14.

Entertainment

From the latter 1800's comes this quote: "The time will come when instead of shepherds feeding the sheep, the church will have clowns entertaining the goats." In 1955, A.W. Tozer composed a chapter in his book, *The Root of the Righteous*, that was entitled: "The Great god Entertainment." These times have come upon us.

One of the larger "churches" in the Pacific Northwest on "Easter" Sunday, hired a helicopter and had a fully costumed Easter Bunny parachute onto their cordoned-off parking lot where frantically giggling children received lavish amounts of goodies to the delight of all: well, maybe not all.

In Lagos, Nigeria, during "Christmas" in 2024, no less than 7 Santas in their full red and white costumed folly meandered through the delighted congregation distributing presents and cheer to greedy children while their grinning guardians gazed on the spectacle with approval.

In Olympia WA in January, 2025, a comedian "pastor" uproariously recounted his calculations from the number of offerings made at the dedication of Solomon's temple: that they could have made more than 4 million burgers! *Man, they sure knew how to party!* Laughter filled his microphone and resounded throughout the auditorium: well, from most of it.

But he didn't recount the 14 times in Solomon's penitent prayer on that occasion for God to mercifully forgive their repeated sins, iniquity, transgressions, and wickedness [1 Kings 8:12-54]. That wasn't very funny or entertaining.

How do we explain our addiction to lattes, staging, spotlights, PA systems, ushers, bulletins, worship teams, theatre seating, light shows, mints, comedy, massive monitors, passive recipients, and ceaseless enticements of mood-setting environments and events? They've been dictated to us by the great god Entertainment.

We were invited to a Christmas pageant [it was actually billed as such] at one of the largest churches in Phoenix. It was a high-tech mixture of light shows, cinematography, live acting with a cast of 300, full orchestra, choirs, vocal performing artists, Santa Claus, motivational self-improvement, magic, astral travel, sci-fi, and an anachronistic manger scene.

Video commercials, candy canes, overt solicitation and collection of money, complete with artificial snow falling from the ceiling, along with human "angels" soaring on cables, live camels, elephants, and tigers were all presented in the main sanctuary and then topped off with the Hallelujah Chorus. This was their 31st annual presentation with countless thousands in attendance.

In the midst of this extravagance, I profoundly knew what I must do.

I must write.

I must mentor.

I must change the world.

I must assault the madness.

“The time will come when people will not put up with sound teaching. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them more and more teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to fables” -2 Tim.4:3,4.

Stories, lighthearted banter, comedy, concerts, anecdotes, travelogues, plays, video clips, positive affirmation, drama, choreographed performance, and soothing psychological balm with no “dead-air” time: all are dished out as positive, winsome, and enjoyable “challenges” to higher aspirations and fulfilled destinies: all of which are lavishly saturated with the love of God while we sip our lattes in cushy comfort.

“The Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from/apostatize from the faith, to follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars whose consciences are dead, as if burnt with a hot iron.

“In pointing these things out to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the Words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following.

“But have nothing to do with those godless legends/worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness” -1 Tim.4:1-7. Did you hear that? Have nothing to do with the god of Entertainment.

The Lord Jesus has sent us out “as sheep in the midst of wolves” -Mt.10:16, not as entertainment seekers in the midst of theatres. The world hated the Lord Jesus because He testified “of it that its deeds were evil” -Jn.7:7; Jesus was not an entertaining comedian.

The Lord Jesus stated in no uncertain terms that “if you were of the world, the world would love you as its own, but because you are not of the world, the world hates you” -Jn.15:19. The world loves entertainers and comedians, concerts and plays, but it doesn’t love truth.

I hope you can taste the acrid bitter sting of Paul’s sarcasm in the following that was delivered to the Corinthians: those that he “could not speak to as spiritual, but as carnal/fleshly” -1 Cor.3:1.

“Already you have everything you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings without us! Indeed, I wish that you had become kings so that we might reign with you!

“It seems to me that God has exhibited us apostles on display as last of all, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, both to angels and to men.

“We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, but we are dishonored!

“To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, and are homeless. We are reviled, persecuted, slandered; we have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world to this very moment!” -1 Cor.4:8-13.

And here’s the invitation: no, rather the command: “Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God” -2 Tim.1:8. “Be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ” -1 Cor.11:1. “But you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions, and sufferings” -2 Tim.3:11.

What is it that you are following: “suffering hardship with me as a good soldier of Christ Jesus” -2 Tim.2:3, or enjoying the Sunday morning relaxation of the god of Entertainment?

“Everyone who wants to live a godly life in union with Christ Jesus will be persecuted:” not entertained -2 Tim.3:12.

Panentheism

The church has imbibed the toxic tonic of a redefining culture. On the shifting sands of a relativistic ethic, sin is successively being buried with every wind of change.

Evil has been reconfigured as alternative lifestyles. Wickedness is celebrated as the virtue of diversity. Iniquity is hailed as a harbinger of happiness.

In such a milieu, the message of the church has gradually shifted from the necessity of saving souls from something: corruption, ignorance, evil, guilt, sin, and pending wrath, to adjusting to a life of purpose, fulfillment, excellence, prosperity, happiness, and healthy relationships.

Fleeing the wrath to come is increasingly viewed as an antiquated notion of an outmoded ignorance and morbid preoccupation. *Onward and Upward* is the church’s contemporary clarion call.

We have drunken deeply of the evolutionary elixir: death and struggle lead to life. We have abandoned the biblical truth that death results from moral revolt.

Rather, we have absorbed as axiomatic that death over eons has produced human life as we know it. Therefore, sin is not the root or even involved in the process towards our fancied progressive improvement and fulfillment.

The biblical reality that “the wages of sin is death” -Rm.6:23, has been reconstrued in the evolutionary flow to: “*the wages of death and struggle produces life.*” Sin is not part of that equation.

Hence, in our distorted mental construct, the journey is all that matters, not any imagined destination. *Feel good now and attain greater heights along with personal peace and affluence* is the atmosphere we breathe.

We have erased objective guilt as being an actuality. We attribute such emotional pangs of conscience as leftovers from oppressive regulations of a benighted strict religion from bygone days of ignorance and irrelevancy that we are glad to be rid of.

Bloom, flourish, abound, Live! Embrace your inherent worth. Accept yourself just the way you are. Blot out the traumatized memories of your repressed inner child. Be free!

And so, our religion has devolved into a private parochial perspective. It now consists of a sense of emotional encounter that is satisfying and desirable to cultivate.

Any religion that imposes its perspective on others as if it were a universal mandate, is not only suspect, but resisted if not actually assailed.

Any suggestion that one must adjust one’s life to truth of an objective and absolute standard, the written Word of God in the Bible, and conform one’s conduct to correspond to that, frankly, is shunned if not hated.

The written Word of God has become the only evil that must be silenced, forsaken, and condemned. Sugared substitutes of religious candy are the church’s proffered fare. And we are drooling over them.

To all such, “God” is a universal mind or influence inhabiting all that is good, beautiful, agreeable, and “true.” That god is merely a Life-Force animating the noble aspects of life: one that finds ready acceptance from those appreciating such. *Surely, we say, our imagined god is the source and sustainer that we acknowledge and applaud.*

But the transcendent God of the Bible, who first creates, upon Whom we are dependent, and then dictates practice and propriety in His written Word, we will have none of. This true God who is distinct from matter, having independent existence and definite

uncompromised character, is first suspect, and then rejected out of embarrassment or actual fear that He may be so.

Hence, we strip our “God” of any attributes that would distinguish “It” from “The All.” Thereby, Its personality is jettisoned, volition cancelled, and any other characteristics that might distinguish “It” from all other phenomena.

All we are left with is a universal energizing force, a sense of awareness or mind, a pure spirituality: one that can be channeled, utilized, and even admired if we are so inclined. But this god certainly is not to be prostrated before in fear as an object of worship or one to be obeyed.

And now we have a god who has become the convergent point of the aspirations of humans in an evolutionary flow unto the highest, most developed, and refined stages of progress. And as we enthusiastically applaud our god, we happily congratulate ourselves.

This is why the true and Living God of the Bible is unwanted with His perceived restrictive and oppressive regulations. All we are left with is a panentheistic god of our own invention.

Panentheism is the default religion of mankind and of Christendom itself. This god, whose highest expression is man, in whom this Life-Force and universal mind are most clearly manifest, is indistinguishable from all else. Man thereby becomes god, and god is inherent and co-extensive in man.

We are left with a religion based upon what we have perceived or conjured our god to be. This is completely opposite to what The True God, the concrete absolute reality existing outside the realm of the natural, reveals and dictates to man about Himself.

Ours is a religion of invention, but not of revelation. True disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ speak about God as the distinct Creator, and mankind as created by and subject to Him.

Not so the panentheistic god of Christendom. To them God is a Life-Force, and we are part of that whole. This universal influence is present in every part of the whole, good and evil alike.

The totality is the reality, and that reality ultimately is not to be conceived of as comprised of good or evil either one. To them, both are only illusions of unenlightened minds.

But we have forgotten how to either blush or tremble as we thus take the Name of the Lord God in vain.

Isa.5:18-21: “Woe to those who drag sin along with the cords of falsehood and deceit, and wickedness as if with cart ropes. Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; who turn

darkness into light and light into darkness; who make what is bitter, sweet, and what is sweet you make bitter! You are doomed! You who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight!”

And so heedlessly, we grimace as we stop our ears to the truth of the Word of God and rush to dim the sanctuary lights on the masses, shine our spotlights on the sonorous swaying worship gurus, while we chant mantras to the music: And we are convinced that we have encountered God through the experience.

And who are we? We are the generation of sinless saints.

Self

A radical shift has taken place in the modern church: from self-denial to self-fulfillment, from self-control to self-actualization, and all accompanied by a new vocabulary gleefully dripping from our lips:

Self-esteem, Self-awareness, Self-image, Self-acceptance, Self-fulfillment, Self-authentication, Self-contentment, Self-love, Self-aspiration, Self-worth, True-Self–False-Self.

You are special. You are lovable and full of worth. You deserve a break today. YOLO-You Only Live Once. Relax. Enjoy. Indulge. Me first. Excellence.

Self-ad nauseum.

Self is the supreme stumbling block in the spiritual life. Self, arch traitor to yourself, is your deadliest foe.

Self, that wanton whore lying in the bosom of every man, seduces us within. Self/Flesh/Sinful Desire, the household idol enshrined within every heart, has incense burned before it daily by 8 billion souls.

Satan, tempter though he be and lion-like roaring loud, is tame by comparison. For a genuine disciple, though not for the fake, he is chained as he prowls about seeking someone to devour.

It was so with Job: “Then the Lord said to Satan, ‘Behold, all he has in your power, only do not lay a hand upon his person’” –Job 1:12. Raging, ransacking, yes, but chained. His leash was short for Peter as well.

“Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you all like wheat; but I have prayed for you, that your faith may not fail” –Lk.22:31,32. No, this tempting adversary has his limits under the Almighty’s jurisdiction. And not Peter alone.

“No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, so that you will be able to endure it” -1 Cor.10:13.

No, Satan is not our greatest threat. “He who was Begotten of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him” -1 Jn. 5:18.

Our first mother, Eve, stretched out an accusing finger at Slayer Serpent: “The serpent deceived me and I did eat!” –Gen.3:13. But the Lord God, not deceived, stretched out His own at Slayer Self, saying, “What is this that you have done?” –Gen.3:13 [emphasis added].

Self is our dire and desperate enemy, not Satan. To see your strongest foe, your inalienable combatant, gaze into the mirror. There Self will match your steely stare unflinchingly.

Self is the arena of your fiercest battle. Your most intense combat is waged here in the realm of “speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God” – 2 Cor.10:5. These must be “destroyed and every thought taken captive to the obedience of Christ” – 2 Cor.10:5.

Do you see it? Speculations, imaginations, false arguments, lofty arrogant presumption, wayward corrupt thoughts: these all proceed from within, not from without. Self is the source and they must be torn down, excised, demolished, and slain.

“Those that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with its passions and lusts” –Gal.5:24. This is warfare; this is mortal combat. Every godly soul must take up sides with God against this usurping tyrant Self by resisting sin and temptation and submitting to Jesus Christ as Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit.

“Put to death, therefore, the members of your earthly body: sexual immorality, impurity, shameful passion, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry” –Col.3:5. Spare not in this conflict. “Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to arouse its desires” –Rm.13:14.

The mystery of godliness is contained in this: We live to die and die to live. “Whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” – Mt.16:25.

Slayer Self must be slain. You alone can do that. In the sovereign citadel of this thing called your heart, will be discovered either Slayer Self enshrined or Jesus, the Saving Christ of God. You hold the key; you must choose.

You are neither the victim of Satan's assaults, nor will the Lord Jesus batter down that door to the citadel of Self. It is one of the most fearful of realities that Self can resist and refuse even the Almighty. Stop and ponder that.

"If you are living according to the flesh, you are certainly going to die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live" -Rm.8:13.

Life springs forth from death. "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit" -Jn.12:24.
From death sprouts life. From life flows fruit.

From Self comes flesh. From flesh is death. From death to life or life to death: either way we must die. Better to die to Self than for Self to slay you.

Paul said: "To me to live is Christ and to die is gain" -Phil.1:21. But dying is only gain if living is only Christ. Slayer Self must be slain, or Slayer Self will slay you.

Which will it be? You choose; but choose well.

The modern church has chosen Self; it's who we live for. But this disqualifies us from being disciples of Christ.

Satisfaction has become the core of our religion. How-To books abound providing bankrupt formulas for success and enjoyment in business, relationships, sex, increased potential, weight- loss, finances, stewardship of the environment, community service, and "spirituality."

But these only unmask the nakedness of our bankrupt religion. Loving Self is a perversion leading to destruction. Hear the Lord Jesus' own uncompromising Words:

"If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself utterly, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his soul/life for My sake will find it" -Mt.16:24,25.

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own soul/life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" - Lk.14:26,27.

We are forbidden to love Self and to bolster self-esteem. That is evil. "Do nothing from selfishness/Self-will/Self-seeking or empty conceit, but with humility of mind esteem others better than yourself" -Phil.2:3 [emphasis added].

“In the last days, perilous times will come. For men will be lovers of Self, lovers of money, lovers of pleasure, rather than lovers of God: holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” -2 Tim.3:1-5 [emphasis added].

Whatever form your outward religion takes, loving Self still is denying the power of godliness. Loving Self is rejecting Christ.

Love of Self renders our religion lifeless, powerless, and vacuous, and we will discover too late that Self has been the supreme stumbling block in the spiritual life all along.

Suffering

Comfort, ease, and convenience amidst America’s affluence have made the idea of suffering repugnant to us. Privation, affliction, and denial of Self for the good of others are foreign aspirations to most.

And so the pampered and cushy church of this generation continues to slobber over its religion’s candy, while recoiling in disgust at the demands of the Lord Jesus. *We hope those relate only to bygone days of austere rigors reserved for soldier-like fanatics, but that we, the majority, are exempt.* But we are not.

Here’s what Jesus said, whose Words “will never pass away” -Mt.24:35: “Whoever denies Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father in heaven. Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.

“A man’s enemies will be the members of his household. He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me.

“And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it” -Mt.10:33-39.

Actually, suffering is a gift from God. “For it has been granted to you for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake” -Phil.1:29. Suffering is a privilege sent by God, even via the hands of evil men for our benefit and His glory. Rejoice.

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great” -Mt.5:10-12.

“They flogged them and ordered them not to speak in the Name of Jesus. So they went on their way rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His Name.

And every day, they never stopped teaching and preaching Jesus” –Acts 5:40-42. Bearing sorrows patiently for Christ brings joy.

“When you do what is right and suffer for it and so endure it, this finds favor with God. For you have been called for this purpose” -1 Pet.2:20,21.

“Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed” -1 Pet.3:13,14. We have been chosen and called to suffer for what is right; God is glorified, and we are blessed.

Even Christ Himself “learned obedience through the things that He suffered” –Heb.5:8. Through the contradiction of sinners against Himself, He learned by experience the joyous blessing of doing the will of His Father.

Though most of those who received His miracles rejected Him and did not repent, He rejoiced. “At that very hour, He rejoiced greatly in the Holy Spirit and said, ‘I praise You, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and intelligent and have revealed them to little children’” –Lk.10:21. Yes, suffering is our blessed heritage leading to joy.

Embrace it as from the hand of a loving Father and you will be blessed. Shun it as from God and you will still suffer.

Suffering is the inescapable portion of every soul in a world of sin. You will suffer in this life. Either we suffer for the sake of righteousness, or for doing evil.

Better to welcome its lash for Christ than to endure affliction for wickedness’ sake. Either way you will suffer in this life. But those who suffer for iniquity here, will continue to suffer unendingly after death.

Listen to Paul, the apostle; rather, imitate him: “I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions” –Col.1:24. The Lord Jesus yet has many more things to suffer in His body, the church.

There are sorrows to endure, burdens to bear, and tears to be shed with those who weep. Reviling and cursing, insults and accusations will assail.

“Afflictions, hardships, distresses, beatings, tumults, imprisonments, troubles, sleeplessness, and hunger” await faithful servants -2 Cor.6:4,5.

Yes, “by glory and dishonor, by slander and good report, regarded as deceivers and yet true” -2 Cor.6:8: all fill up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions through those joined to Him.

Dangers abound in following Christ: “dangers from robbers, countrymen, the nations, and from false brethren” -2 Cor.11:26. Flee these out of cowardly fear of suffering for righteousness, and you will still suffer.

Set your heart to this: “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” -2 Tim.3:12. It is our portion if we would be like Christ.

“If they have called the head of the house the prince of demons, how much more the members?” -Mat.10:25. “If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you” -Jn.15:18,20.

To be like Christ in character, method, and message, is to be treated like Him. It is fellowship with Christ.

Paul prayed that he might “know Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings” -Phil.3:10. Yes, suffering with Christ is a blessed privilege of fellowship. Embrace it.

“Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely because of Me. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” -Mt.5:11,12.

Thou Shalt Suffer. “All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” -2 Tim.3:12.

Embrace it. What is your desire? What are you willing to endure for His Name’s sake?

Jesus Priceless Treasure

*Jesus, Priceless Treasure,
Source of purest pleasure,
Truest Friend to me!
Long my heart has panted,
Till it well nigh fainted,
Thirsting after Thee!
Thine I am, O spotless Lamb!
I will suffer naught to hide Thee,
Ask for naught beside Thee.*

*In Thine arms I rest me,
Foes who would molest me,
Cannot reach me here;
Though the earth be shaking,*

*Every heart be quaking,
Jesus calms my fear!
Sin and hell, in conflict fell,
With their heaviest storms assail me,
Jesus will not fail me.*

*Wealth, I will not heed thee,
Wherefore should I need thee?
Jesus is my joy!
Honors, ye may glisten,
But I will not listen;
Ye the soul destroy!
Want or loss or shame or cross,
Ne'er to leave my Lord shall move me,
Since He deigns to love me.*

*Hence all fears and sadness!
For the Lord of gladness,
Jesus, enters in.
Those who love the Father,
Though the storms may gather,
Still have peace within.
Yea, whate'er I here must bear,
Still in Thee lies purest pleasure,
Jesus, Priceless Treasure!*

Author unknown, about 1800 A.D.

Jesus, I My Cross Have Taken

*Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
Destitute, despised, forsaken,
Thou from hence my all shall be.
Perish every fond ambition,
All I've sought and hoped and known.
Yet how rich is my condition,
God and heaven are still my own!*

*Let the world despise and leave me,
They have left my Savior too;
Human hearts and looks deceive me;
Thou are not like man untrue.*

*And while Thou shalt smile upon me,
God of wisdom, love, and might,
Foes may hate,
And friends may shun me,
Show Thy face and all is bright!*

*Man may trouble and distress me,
'twill but drive me to Thy breast.
Life with trials hard may press me,
Heaven will bring me sweeter rest.
O 'tis not in grief to harm me,
While Thy love is left to me;
O 'twere not in joy to charm me,
Were that joy unmixed with Thee!*

*Take, my soul, thy full salvation,
Rise o'er sin, and fear, and care;
Joy to find in every station,
Something still to do or bear.
Think what Spirit dwells within thee,
What a Father's smile is thine!
What a Savior died to win thee,
Child of heaven shouldst thou repine?*

Author: Henry F. Lyte, about 1830 A.D.

*Thank you, Lord, for considering us worthy
to share in this privileged joy of suffering.*

Democracy

All cultures are enemies of the kingdom of heaven. Yes, even democracy.

Democracy/Americanism is at diametric odds against true Christianity; no alliance can be forged between the two. Let's trace the origin of the historical anomaly of Americanism to see how this came about.

The emigrants to America essentially were from a Christian heritage and orientation, whether they were personally godly in behavior or not. The impact of this was tremendous.

Historically, this was the first culture to emerge from a Christian worldview rather than paganism. It was not a transformed culture as Europe became through the efforts of Christian missionaries.

By Christian, for the purposes of this discussion, is meant any group that espoused the God of the Bible revealed in Jesus Christ as the reference point of their religion. It is a cultural and historical definition of Christian, distinct from the spiritual and evangelical one which many may be accustomed to.

From the outset, a basic Christian perspective of man and society formulated their thinking about the interrelationships in this new land which eventuated in their novel form of government. The radical difference this made in their views of societal rule cannot be underestimated.

Second, their points of origin on the European Continent were not homogenous. Diversity of language and customs became mingled in the early colonies.

This necessitated a measure of tolerance toward individual peculiarities of behavior. Conformity to long established traditions had characterized all societal predecessors.

This one was forced to develop a mutually agreeable consensus from divergent practices due to the necessity of their proximity. It thus impelled them to set aside personal preference and modify ancestral traditions for the sake of the common good.

A pluralistic tolerance was required to develop a mutually agreeable consensus of governance. However imperfectly it was executed, the Golden Rule was the backbone of their societal norms.

Third, their reasons for emigration were essentially the same. They sought relief and refuge from what they considered to be tyrannous practices in their countries of origin.

In short, they were seeking asylum from their native governmental procedures, whether religious or political. They were dissatisfied with the ruling status quo: the monarchies and ecclesiastical overlords of the European nations.

Fourth, was the prominence accorded to the individual rather than the society itself. No cultural heritage awaited the immigrants upon arrival on American shores.

Settlers discovered no American cultural civilization or constraints which dictated their place therein. Thus, the individuals determined their own roles within the new society rather than the society having predetermined those for them.

Finally, this society determined to be governed by a document rather than by the whim of the reigning elite and precedent of oral tradition. And, that document was forged by

individuals who were representative of a constituency of commoners, while those who drafted it were themselves subject to its very provisions.

Lex Rex [Law is King] triumphed over Babel's legacy of *Rex Lex* [King is Law] in the phenomenon of Americanism.

Thus, a nation emerged where the individual formulated the values of the society rather than the individual having a prior determined role within it. This was a decided cultural anomaly which has had disruptive effects upon cultural and governing traditions across the globe.

This was the foment of Americanism: a Christian worldview, tolerance for the common good, discontentment with abuses of monarchical rule, and the individual determining societal norms rather than vice versa. These were the elements which culminated in the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights.

It completely severed all ties with classical cultural norms. It was indeed a revolution, one whose ideology would alter behavior and thinking worldwide. Idols were abandoned and monarchy was rejected in this bold break with centuries' old convention handed down from Nimrod.

However, revolt from a rightful sovereign accurately describes their solution to perceived colonial oppression. This is both the historical stain and cause for the expected eventual demise of the democracy of America.

Rebellion was accounted to be liberty and unfettered self-will as freedom. It was a fundamental flaw at their inception which vainly ennobled these vices.

Democracy and true Christianity are thus incompatible ideologies. This is not to say that there cannot be genuine Christians in democratic societies. There can be genuine Christians found within any cultural tradition.

The point is that, as ideologies, democracy and true Christianity are poles apart. The great error in Americanism was the attempted wedlock between Christianity and democracy. It cannot be done; one will consume the other.

At the core of American democracy is the concept of individual human rights. This is not a Christian virtue or principle at all. Rights are obligatory based upon law.

However, no blessings ever come from God to man on the principle of law of any kind. Mercy cannot be obligated; demands cannot be pressed upon grace.

Rights and love are not synonymous. Love springs from the heart of the giver to neighbor and enemy alike regardless of their merits.

Demands spring from the heart of recipients who insist on receiving their just and lawful due based on their own perceived merits.

True Christianity is prompted by love; democracy is erected upon rights; and the gulf between them cannot be traversed.

At its center, true Christianity has the spoken will of God contained in the written Word of God. Democracy, however, puts the will of the people at that center.

God's will and man's will of necessity are found to be at odds; the Word of God and the declarations of men will not be discovered to be sounding the same note.

Independence formed the significant agenda to foster an historical revolution, whereas submission and obedience permeate true Christianity. America's sedition, wanton destruction of property, and violent taking of lives cannot be harmonized with scriptural Christianity's honoring the king and Golden Rule.

Yet the notion naively continues that Americanism and Christianity are a compatible alliance. But possessing an elementary Christian worldview is far from actually being accounted truly a disciple in heart. Neither can a method of government formulated by those with this superficial orientation be considered as having Divine approval.

In the kingdom of heaven are to be discovered two key elements. First is that there is a King, the God of heaven. Second, God, the King, has subjects, His obedient believers.

This, in essence, is what comprises the kingdom of heaven - a King and His subjects.

A king performs two essential functions; from him proceeds the law governing his kingdom and, second, is the protection of the populace from all of their and his enemies.

The subjects simply honor their ruling sovereign by performing his will according to the word of the king. This is what constitutes the kingdom of heaven in its fundamental aspects.

For this reason, the gospel of the kingdom of God is described as an invasion upon native cultures. The gods and kings descending from Babel are set at naught and the prevailing cultural expectations are replaced with biblical mandates from the King of heaven.

Oral tradition is supplanted by the written Word of God. And the fact that the mandate of the King is placed in writing and accessible to all, issues in each person judging for himself the content of that message.

Human imposed hierarchy is eroded thereby, as the lowest and highest alike within the society both are placed on the same strata as equal subjects. The Word judges both.

As well, the independence, pressing of rights, majority rule, self-will, voting, and unholy tolerance of diversity found in Americanism are abolished by the coming of the kingdom of God to a people.

Customs in this kingdom of heaven are other than those encountered among men. Speech is governed by a different spirit and employed unto another end than that of earth. Dress is simple and modest, free from ostentation or improper exposure.

Treasures and indulgence are disdained while appetites do not impel their actions. Flattery, coercion, or threats of pain fail to move them to stray from their course.

Neither bribery nor sanctions divert their way. Titles, accolades, and prominence are things despised in their eyes.

Aliens they are and “strangers” describes them well. Expatriates residing on earth briefly until returned to their homeland are what they are. For a season they sojourn in the foreign environment of this world, though conducting themselves as cultures apart.

These are the ones whose “citizenship is in heaven” -Phil.3:20. Born and bred from above, “partakers of a heavenly calling” -Heb.3:1, they are subjects of the kingdom of God, with a new King, written Law, and transformed practices.

Jesus said: “My kingdom is not of this world; My kingdom is not from here” -Jn.18:36.

God determines both His culture and those dwelling in it. An unchanging law established from ages immemorial governs this kingdom: the Word of the King contained in the Scriptures which define the nature and parameters of acceptable behavior within the heavenly society.

Heaven’s kingdom replaces gods with the Lord of Glory, and an earthly king with the Majesty on High. The written Word of the King cancels oral traditions. America’s majority rule, pursuit of happiness, rights, and independent self-will are superseded by the Word of God and norms of godly submission therein.

God’s kingdom differs, then, significantly from cultures of earth, and resolves the constant tension existing in man’s societies between oppression, freedom, and autonomy.

Man cannot long endure either oppression or anarchy. Oppression fosters revolt while anarchy is more intolerable still. Men will choose even tyranny over uncertainty and chaos; but in neither case is the individual free.

In oppressive regimes, individual freedom is defined and curbed by the elite. The individual is free to do only what has been determined by others, which is not freedom at all.

Conversely, the autonomous individual has no freedom to interact in his society as he has become an outlaw from it. This is the “freedom” of the fish escaped from the confines of his watery environment.

Americanism attempted to resolve this tension by equating liberty with autonomy: freedom, with imposing self-will and rule. But rebellion can never be synonymous with liberty in terms of the kingdom of heaven.

Self-will, rights, and revolt are not components of God’s kingdom. Fish out of water only survive but briefly.

Within the kingdom of heaven there is government without tyranny and liberty without autonomy. The heavenly society and individuals within it both have their respective places without infringing upon the realm of the other. The kingdom society speaks to the individuals, and the individual can speak to the whole.

Individuals can be required to conform to the cultural ideal of the kingdom without it becoming totalitarian by such insistence. By definition, the individual within the kingdom of God is a subject of the King and therefore accountable to obey the Word of God which is the cultural ideal of that kingdom.

On the other hand, the society itself can be called upon by even a single individual to amend its ways and conform to the law of the King, His Word. And the individual can do so without becoming an autonomous outlaw of that kingdom.

Both the society and the individual are subject to the King and His Word which governs both. Waywardness on the part of either is to be rectified by recourse to the Scriptures. Neither the status quo of the society nor the novelty of the individual are to be given heed to.

Historically, grave problems have always arisen when the ideal of the kingdom of heaven [i.e. the Word of God] is no longer the basis of appeal to address departure from that ideal by the individual or the society alike.

Then, either the autonomous cry of Jeroboam, “To your tents, O Israel,” prevails or the oppressive traditions of the Pharisees, “Why do Your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders?” is enforced.

In neither case is the society nor the individual preserved. Both perish when the Word of the King no longer is the reference point.

Repentance from our native cultures and from any borrowed cultural values must take place within the heart of every true disciple of Christ, or we are no different than the world that we are claiming to be saved from.

If such repentance does not take place, then the kingdom of this world and our compromised kingdom of Christendom are no longer colliding; they are bedfellows.

Incorporation

In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, a foreign orientation has crept into the church, that of the Corporative model. It is a pernicious evil that has radically altered our concept of the church and its practices.

Every corporation must appoint a CEO and Board of Trustees, establish a Headquarters, draft a Constitution and By-Laws, provide requirements for Membership, and declare a Mission Statement.

This creates an institution whose directives are determined by its CEO in conjunction with the Board of Trustees who are wholly responsible for the implementation of such in keeping with the mission of the corporation.

The corporation's constitution and by-laws establish the binding legal obligations and parameters of compliance in carrying out its objectives. Membership in the corporation has stipulated requirements, responsibilities, and often some type of rewards attached.

The structure of the corporation creates a pronounced hierarchy. The CEO is the undisputed head. The Board of Trustees implements those directives. Regional Managers may be under these, followed by District Supervisors, Department Heads, Shift Leaders, and the regular staff of employees.

When a church incorporates, whether as a denomination with branches or simply as a single congregation, a paradigm shift in perception and practice takes place: neither of which is godly.

[1] A shift has taken place when the church agrees to be governed by a second document. The Bible is no longer its sole guide for faith and practice; a Constitution is now equally obligatory.

And it is the government that determines what those obligations are, not the Word of God. If the Scriptures alone were our foundation, we would never include those aspects that are required by the government. "No man can serve two masters" -Mt.6:24.

[2] Officers of the Corporation must be appointed or elected: President, Vice-President, Secretary, Treasurer. And these officers have authority to execute matters on behalf of the Corporation.

This is a major shift. These create offices and responsibilities that are not found in the Word of God. There are no rulers, authorities, and managers in the church that Jesus is building. In His church, there are none to be found that exercise authority and lord it over the brethren.

Jesus made this emphatically clear: “The kings of the Nations lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called ‘Benefactors.’

“But it is not this way among you! On the contrary, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the leader as the one who serves” -Lk.22:25,26 [emphasis added].

Incorporating requires the church to operate like the nations, with an unbiblical hierarchy governing the affairs of the church. Why are we doing this?

[3] Periodic meetings of the corporation are a third shift. Meetings are mandated, minutes to be taken, and then submitted as proof of compliance with incorporation requirements. At such meetings, a quorum must be present [a specified percentage of the corporation or of its Board of Trustees as specified in their by-laws] before any actionable decisions can be made.

A 51% vote of the quorum constitutes an actionable majority. So, in the case of a 100-member corporation, if a quorum of 51 members are present, then only 26 member votes are needed to constitute an actionable decision on behalf of the entire corporation.

In this scenario, 26 people can determine what the entire 100 members are obligated to do. This is not how decisions are made in the church that Jesus is building.

“I exhort you, brethren, by the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and judgment” -1 Cor.1:10.

Even major disputes in the church are to be resolved with oneness of mind. “It seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, having assembled with one accord [KJV]/become of one mind [NASB]/unanimously decided [NET] to select men; For it seemed good to us and the Holy Spirit” -Acts 15:22,25,28 [emphasis added].

The corporation’s mandated meetings deciding upon actionable matters by a majority vote of even a minimal constituency is not what the Word of God directs. That is not unanimous oneness of mind, it is the pattern of the world.

[4] A corporation must also dictate what the requirements are for membership. Those not qualifying are excluded from voting on actionable matters. And so, a man-made list of requirements must be drafted and adhered to.

The requirements decided upon will not be discovered in the Word of God; there are no membership rosters in the pages of the NT. “Membership” in the church Jesus is building is admissible by the confession that He is “the Christ, the Son of the living God” -Mt.16:16. This is what constituted Peter as “blessed” -Mt.16:17.

“Membership” in the body of Christ is effected by the Holy Spirit, not by signing a roster aligning oneself with man-made regulations.

“For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit” -1 Cor.12:12,13.

“So we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another” -Rm.12:5 [emphasis added]: And all apart from government mandated membership rosters and requirements.

Such human contrivance of membership rules and registers results in another grave evil: artificial distinctions and separation one from the other. Membership cuts one off from the other members of Christ’s body by whom we are joined together as one.

Now we are no longer one, but many: many carnal divisions and sects, signing contrary agreements to maintain distinctions that are nowhere taught in the Scriptures. Membership rolls create denominations, and denominations are clearly condemned by the Word of God.

[5] One of the worst consequences of adopting a corporate mindset, is the shift in thinking from the body of Christ being a living spiritual organism to being thought of as a corporate institutional entity: a corporate body.

As such, Jesus is construed as the CEO of His organization. He maintains “headquarters” in heaven and communicates His directives through intermediaries: Pastors, Reverends, Priests, Board of Directors.

The lowly “members” receive their knowledge of the corporation’s head via his higher-ups: the regional, district, and local managers. They tell the “laity” what the CEO has said and may produce from time-to-time memos to corroborate their authority in speaking on his behalf.

When we begin to view the body of Christ in corporative terms, we have absolutely and completely distorted and missed what the Word of God says. Jesus is not a CEO of an institution.

Jesus is the living Head of His one living body, the church. There is a living organic union between Christ and his church. He communicates directly; He abides in all His members and they abide in Him and are fellow members of one another in that one living body.

The corporate model destroys this. As long as we maintain the requirements of membership and pay our dues, we can participate in the organization; fail in this, and we're dismissed.

In such a construct, Jesus automatically becomes the figurehead of His church, not the actual living directing Head of His own body. Men, His underling managers, effectively take His place.

They, the Clergymen, direct the church, make decisions on its behalf, are the sole qualified teachers of the ignorant laity, and they alone have direct contact with the CEO. Everyone else receives from the man occupying Christ's position.

This is what the term antichrist means: in the place of Christ and against Christ. The corporative model qualifies on both accounts.

Marketing

Marketing is a nauseating spin-off from the carnality of incorporating the aberration of a denomination. By doing so, one has distinguished oneself from other religious country clubs. And in order to capitalize on what the "Mission" of the Corporation is, we must market our wares.

[1] First comes the Branding. How will we appear unique and appealing to our market demographic? If we want to attract youth, we'd better have some bop EDM music complete with nightclub spotlighting, backdrops, laser light show, fog, video monitors, and swaying, hands-raised, worship gurus to lead us into God's presence.

If young couples from their 20's to 40's are our target, we'd better have a sizzling kid's program for all ages: splash, fun, hip, but, of course, with the Bible thrown in to "sanctify" the whole charade.

Looking for serious Bible study? We're the church for you. We're fundamental, pre-tribulational, pre-millennial, no-nonsense, hymn singing, Bible thumping, verse by verse, King James only, and coat and tie wearing. Doth this interesteth thou?

Want to operate a rescue mansion to reach the up-and-outers? Better build a luxury cathedral complete with plush theatre seating, fawning ushers everywhere, a barista bar, smooth positive self-help messages complete with endless promises of prosperity, inner peace, and well-being.

Oh, and don't forget to provide five different ways for them to give, complete with envelopes, boxes, collection plates, QR codes, and online transfers.

Oh, yeah, and a registered logo so everyone will immediately recognize you. And don't forget the website, and every social media presence you can glut with your marketing. Offer specials on audio and written materials, and somehow get them to leave you some email or somehow a way for you to contact them so you can annoy them with your shameless plugs for your nonsensical drivel.

There, that should do it.

When your branding produces roaring success, it's time to Franchise. Create a model with explicit requirements for anyone who wants to be a part of your marketing madness.

I mean, you gotta tell them what the parameters are, get them to sign a contract that includes a non-competition clause, regulations for using your registered logo and slogan marks, and requirements to promote the brand and all of that.

You wouldn't want someone walking into your franchise expecting a Big Mac and getting a Burrito Supreme would you? No, of course not. Make them toe the line; after all, it's your brand, right?

Uniformity is the key from your groveling circle of psychophants; oh, sorry, that should be sycophants. And that just leaves one further item: Promotion.

My wife and I stepped into a large church complex's Sunday morning meeting, one that has two services, back to back. We were offered mints by smiling attendants 3 times before we took our seats.

They had huge video screens up front with peppy contemporary religious music pumping along with a digital countdown clock at the bottom of each. And, you guessed it, precisely when the clock reached zero, a flashy video self-promoting advertisement blared its shameless plug for this church.

If you're looking for a warm loving church, you've come to the right place. We at XXX Church have as our priority, loving nurturing relationships. We want to get to know you: love is what we're all about. And a bunch of other self-promoting tripe.

No one bothered to greet us: except the video.

“We do not preach ourselves, but Christ Jesus as Lord, and ourselves as your bond-servants for Jesus’ sake” -2 Cor.4:5.

“I determined to know nothing among you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” -1 Cor.2:1.

“We are not like many, peddling the Word of God for profit. But as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God” -2 Cor.2:17.

“I warn you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom, PREACH THE WORD! For the time will come when they will not endure sound teaching;

“but according to their own lusts, because they have itching ears, they will gather around them a great number of teachers for themselves, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths” -2 Tim.4:1-4 [emphasis added].

“Believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. If a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes,

“and you show special attention to the one wearing fine clothes and say: ‘Sit here in a good place,’ and you say to the poor man, ‘You stand there!’ or ‘Sit on the floor by my feet!’ Have you not discriminated among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives?” -James 2:1-4.

Yes, decidedly, you have; the undesirable persons are not qualifying according to your marketing demographic: They’re unsolicited, out of place, unwanted.

“But if you treat people according to their outward appearance, you are guilty of sin, and the Law condemns you” -James 2:9.

These are the wretched marketing madmen.

Tradition

Tradition is an alternative reality obtained from dark sources. It was that way from the beginning in the Garden of Eden. Where did the ideas that forbidden fruit would result in blessing, wisdom, and self-authentication come from?

From the Serpent: from the devil and Satan who had revolted in those bright spheres above, aspiring for self-exaltation into forbidden realms. His bold 5-fold decree found in Isa.14:13,14 ran like this:

“I will ascend to the heavens; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly; I will ascend above the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

From the outset, intrusion into alternative realms brought disaster. The Lord stoutly rebuffed and cancelled Satan’s vain positive confession. Isa.14:15: “Nevertheless, you will be thrust down to hell in Sheol, to the recesses of the pit.”

From this polluted and arrogant self-exaltation, man’s Tradition has its source. It too is “earthly, natural, and demonic” -Jas.3:15. Adam and Eve’s fig leaf coverings were the result of their deluded crafted invention in the dark.

The genesis of man’s religion had its origin from the devilish allurements of self-enrichment at the price of flinging the Word of the Lord into the mire. When they sinned, shame supplanted purity, fear replaced devotion, while hiding overtook communion.

A terrible breach produced a terrible consequence. That brash eruption of lawlessness distorted the reflective faculties, alienated the soul, and darkened the understanding.

But their man-devised solutions to shame and guilt have no life, do not endure, address the externals alone, and are ultimately rejected by God altogether. This is Tradition.

Their children who followed their legacy and embraced Tradition fared no better. Cain plucked items from a cursed earth and proffered perishable and soon rotten produce derived by his own sweating toil.

The essence of Cain’s religion is this: God must accept me on my terms while I reject blood-sacrifice and death to Self. Pharisees unwittingly hail him as their champion as they follow in his footsteps, possessing merely a form of godliness void of its power.

Cain was of the evil one [1 Jn.3:12] as were his children, the Pharisees, in Jesus’ day [Jn.8:44]. Tradition was the content and driving force of their religion, not love of God.

From Eden’s legacy, man would “improve” and re-manufacture what God has designed and created. Fig leaves are re-purposed to hide shameful deeds. Cain’s produce that sprang from a then cursed earth is proffered as religious fare.

Self-will and human contrivance stained both of their carefully crafted substitutes. God rejects the religious inventions and Traditions of men.

And at Babel, Nimrod institutionalized his Tradition. Motivated by making a name for themselves and erecting a tower reaching into heaven, all was done apart from God and

His Word. Gen.11:4 recounts that his tower became the first religious structure in a fixed location.

Permanence was established thereby; movement had ceased. Man was no longer free to worship as his own priest. The Tradition's shrine demanded that participants come to its locale and be in subjection to ceremonies determined by others.

Worship in Spirit is quenched by external ritual. Worship in truth is supplanted by man-devised Tradition. His building required maintenance, maintenance requires a custodian, and both require money.

A scripted uniformity prevails in all Tradition descending from Nimrod's confusion at Babel. Bricks of identically proportioned hardened components incapable of change are what are employed in the enterprise.

Tradition affords no leeway for deviation from its established policies determined by its custodian. Any who stray or offer anything novel are sanctioned, threatened, and eventually discarded. There is no mercy in Tradition.

This became the spirit pervading all religious Tradition. It will culminate in Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots and abominations of the earth. Tradition is no small matter.

The height of Tradition's arrogant presumption is seen in the Pharisees of the NT. Their monstrous substitutes for true worship in Spirit and Truth drew Christ's scathing rebuke.

Mk.7:5-13: "The Pharisees asked Him, 'Why do Your disciples not walk according to the Traditions of the elders?' And Jesus said to them, "Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written:

"This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. In vain do they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the precepts of men." Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the Tradition of men.

'You are experts at setting aside the commandment of God in order to keep your Tradition, thus invalidating the Word of God by your Tradition.'

Make no mistake. Tradition does not establish Truth. Truth is not to be sourced from what has been handed down, as taught by oracles, sages, and priests.

Man's Tradition stemming from Satan's revolt and his subsequent temptation of man has 2 main divisions: [1] Ritualism and [2] Rationalism.

Ritualism is the realm of Clerical Priests who add ceremony, practices, and regulations according to man's wisdom. At first these subtly, and not long afterwards, blatantly, undermine and finally replace the Scriptures.

Rationalism is the domain of Clerical Scribes who remove the content of Scripture by accounting there to be various historical, chronological, mythical, and conceptual errors found therein. And these are all "discovered" according to their own human reasoning and "scholarship."

They claim to purge the Scriptures of "myth" and thereby liberate men from what has been added to whatever may remain of the "Word."

These two perspectives are straight from the Serpent on both accounts. The Ritual Clerical Priests dictate what you practice: The Rational Clerical Scribes, what you believe.

By Rationalism, the Bible is stripped of all its authority, leaving men with nothing left but Ritualism. And so, the Serpent continues to raise his query: *Indeed, has God said?* and Tradition thus results.

The outcome of Rationalism leaves us with nothing as being reliable that is found in the Bible. And that results in Ritualism as being the only "reliability" remaining. And thus Satan's "Add and Subtract" scheme from the Garden of Eden triumphs.

Either way, the Bible is taken from the people while haughty Priests and Professors disdain and eventually persecute any who repudiate their pronouncements.

Ritualism in its extreme form is seen in the monstrous claims and dominion of the Roman Catholic Church. Rationalism in its extreme form is discovered in atheistic communism. Both systems are fierce persecutors of any holding to the Word of God.

In the final days of man's history, Ritualism and Rationalism will merge into one man, the beastly Antichrist. He will reign over the bodies and souls of men via the unmasked power of Satan.

The Beast will "debunk" and rage against the Word of the God in any form. He will Replace all religious Ritual with his own ceremonies, worship of his image, and put his mark upon all.

That is the final outcome of Tradition. Do not take even one step down either of these paths of Ritualism or Rationalism.

But do not be deceived! What has been handed down by Tradition may well be nothing more than old error. Time does not establish truth. The forefathers may have departed from the truth of God's Word long ago.

Who is older, the forefathers or the eternal God? Whose word will prevail, theirs of centuries or His forever established, eternal in the heavens [Ps.119:89]?

There is no one “older” than the Ancient of Days. The “wisdom” of men is of recent invention compared to the omniscience of the everlasting God. Whose word will we then believe and follow? 1 Cor.1:25 says even the “foolishness” of God is wiser than men. Tradition is no basis of sourcing truth.

Jeremiah laments in Jer.5:30,31: “An appalling and horrible thing has happened in the land. The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?”

Jer.6:10: “To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen. Behold, the Word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it.”

Jer.8:8,9: “How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us’? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught; Behold, they have rejected the Word of the Lord, so what kind of wisdom do they have?”

Self-will, false teaching, stubborn hearts, and lying pens are what make up the Traditions of men. Ritualism adds, and Rationalism removes: These are the sources of Tradition’s “authority.” Why would anyone follow those? They are from the Serpent’s add-and-subtract word.

Tradition is War on the Word: angry repudiation of Christ and His Word while vilifying any who would advocate otherwise. And the very multitudes, disdained and evil spoken of by their oppressing rulers, did not know the Law because their self-appointed “experts” themselves did not; their Tradition had cancelled it.

The Ritualistic Pharisees buried truth under mountains of man-made regulations. The Rationalistic Sadducees deleted the supernatural and “mythic” elements from the Word which they despised.

“The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor an angel, nor a spirit” –Acts 23:8. Hence, nothing remained of the Jew’s religion but Ritualism.

And if we follow Tradition’s path, nothing remains of our religion except a hollow tree: stately on the outside, void of life and substance on the inside, soon to collapse and die.

Feminism

Feminism is a Christian phenomenon. Seriously.

Are women “liberated” because of Islam? Hardly. Does Hinduism provide the basis of equality for women? Not at all. What of traditional animistic religions worldwide: are women elevated and honored in those circles? They are not.

The Bible alone is the source of the modern liberation of and honored dignity of females. Consider the following carefully.

“God created man in His own image; male and female He created them” -Gen.1:27 [emphasis added].

“Husbands ought also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself; for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it: the two shall become one flesh” -Eph.5:28-31.

“You husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life” -1 Pet.3:7.

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” -Gal.3:26,28.

It is only Christianity that has accorded women equal status in the sight of God. They are not second class citizens, but equally received by God through the grace of life in Christ Jesus.

Equality, however, does not translate to identical. Men and women are not identical, though they share equality on many levels. Both have been created in the image of God. She was created as a corresponding complement to the man, perfectly suitable to contribute to him with her God-given capabilities as a “Helper” -Gen.2:18,21-24.

Women have no “backdoor” to salvation, no inferior provision for eternal life and all the spiritual blessings in the heavens. She is a noble fellow heir of grace of life. In dignity, honor, and essential constitution, there is equality.

She, however, is decidedly distinct in biology, strength, and roles. But she is not distinct by way of inferiority to a “superior” male. No males have ever given birth nor nursed a baby. This is not demeaning, just different.

Woman is “a weaker vessel” -1 Pet.3:7. Look and see; no women are world record holders in the athletic arena. This is not demeaning, just different.

Women have much to offer by way of wisdom, insight, and teaching, but not as public instructors in the church: There, women are not allowed to “teach or exercise authority over men” -1 Tim.2:11-13. This is not demeaning, just different.

God created male and female, and that was declared “very good” by God Himself. There are no other gender alternatives, despite the madness of modern Western civilization’s ranting to the contrary. That is not “very good.”

Neither male nor female translates to superiority. Females are not superior to males; males are not superior to females: Different, though equal.

If males and females had maintained their proper relationship and roles as created by God, all would be well. But we haven’t. Males have dominated and abused women transculturally for thousands of years.

It has only been the advent of NT teaching about husbands and wives representing Christ and His church that women have been lifted out of the quagmire of millennia of degradation and oppression.

Yet, in modern times, perversion has grown out of feminism’s initial dignity and grace as enumerated in the written Word of God, the Bible. Lesbianism and its disdain for “masculine toxicity” is a perversion of God’s creating male and female in His own image, graced with equal status before His throne of grace.

Bitter and militant hostility bordering on vengeance against males is not part of the original equality package as created in the likeness of God. That is a perversion.

Lesbian’s sexual rejection of males by inordinate desires for same-sex indulgence is a contrary-to-nature aberration of unrestrained lust. That is a perversion of “equality:” a perversion that provokes the judgment of the righteous God against those wantonly abandoning their God-ordained heterosexual role.

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie; for this reason, God gave them up to shameful lusts/degrading passions; for their women exchanged natural sexual relations for that which is against nature: unnatural ones, and instead indulged in sex with each other” - Rm.1:25,26.

That is a perversion of an original God-honoring Feminism. His Feminism was very good. The present trends in Feminism are very bad.

Relativism

As was mentioned under **Evolution**, 91% of born-again adults do not believe that absolute truth exists or is contained in the Bible. All one is left with then is Relativism. That is disastrous.

Relativism as the commonly accepted norm, can [1] never rationally insist that people should agree with other perspectives and [2] can never legitimately appeal to anything as a universal “ought” to persuade someone from their relativism and [3] has no basis to discuss one action as superior, required, or valid over another. If you believe in Relativism, you’re stuck with it, with no way out.

Good, on the basis of Evolution and Relativism, cannot be determined and defined, as both lack a legitimate, cohesive, determinate, and verifiable reference point. Lacking such a standard, all discussions of what is good, better, or best or any contrariwise of the same, devolve into meaningless opinion swapping.

“Ought, Should, Must” are not properly a part of a Relativistic persuasion, but rarely can be avoided when discussing what one believes. Relativism, and hence tolerance of any and everything, is what is called for.

And, if a relative tolerance is the essence of your orientation, there can be no sense of wrong attached to other and even conflicting viewpoints. Only if absolute moral truth exists can one legitimately use the terms “Ought, Should, Must.”

Evolution produces no ethic, as there is no transcending mind or force guiding it. Random processes cannot produce any morality. All evolution can offer is a relative ethic produced by human invention as there is none inherent in the natural order.

If a Relativist disagrees with any other viewpoint, that other view cannot be wrong since it is based on Relativism. We simply swap opinions and go our way, neither one can claim to be “right.”

Absolute moral/ethical statements cannot be employed to demonstrate the validity of a Relative ethic. Borrowing from absolute Christian/biblical precepts to “prove” a Relative tenant is inadmissible.

The “Ought” of Absolutism does not justify the “Ought” of Relativism. It negates it since the Relativist has shifted from his fluctuating stance to a universal absolute stance. Absolute statements cannot promote Relativism.

Women and Men are equal and must be treated as such. This is not Relativism; it is an Absolute Moral imperative metanarrative. If this claim is true, then Relativism is not. If it is not Absolute and universally binding, then it does not need to be adhered to. If it is true,

then the Relativist has used a universal Absolute to justify an ethical Relative, yet in his mind, it is a binding imperative.

A situational Relative ethic determines its course of action based upon results, whether perceived or actual. Hence the end justifies or established the means. In this persuasion, rule does not govern result; results determine rules.

And being Relative, rules/actions that were deemed good at one point, can be modified or discarded altogether in another situation depending upon the perceived, desired, or acquired result. Thus, they are not even precedent setting, but evolving at the whim of those choosing them.

A Situational Ethic can never be prescriptive since that is based upon Rule dictating Results. It rather is little more than an accommodation to obtain the desired result. Situational Relativism rests on subjective, personal, or pragmatic grounds, but never by objective prescriptive moral Absolutes.

A Relativist's self-report is neither self-justifying nor axiomatic. It is not self-justifying, because a self-report is merely a declaration without accompanying evidential proof and demonstrable reason that can be evaluated on its own merit. Justification can only be established by compelling reason, able to be weighed, assessed, and concluded as valid by others who are not making the self-report.

Neither is it axiomatic, unless the report is stating an obvious universally recognized self-evident truth. But this is what the Relativist lacks and cannot be demonstrated simply by saying so.

It is precisely what a transgender self-report lacks: external, tangible, objective, and verifiable evidence. Rather, the external, tangible, objective, and verifiable evidence disproves the claim: a claim that a Relativist cannot appeal to, since, in his mind, everything is Relative.

Oh, but that last phrase: "everything is Relative" is itself an Absolute truth claim about Relativism.

Relativism is a failed system: yet in the church we promote situational ethics, cultural "truth," and pragmatic justification for things that are in violation of the unchanging eternal Word of God: a Word that is "forever settled in heaven" -Ps.119:89. Nothing Relative about that.

Occultism

The church has become the sorcerer's new apprentice. Like a silly panting puppy, we trip over ourselves to gain the petting recognition and approval of our now chosen master.

In a culture absorbed with self-awareness, enlightenment, and fulfillment, and surrounded by an increasingly disappointing and irrelevant church, we have turned to novel mysticism, spiritual encounters, and exotic Eastern occultic practices that promise the self-realization of these aspirations.

“As at the beginning, they are full of superstitions from the East; they practice witchcraft like the Philistines and embrace pagan customs” -Isa.2:5,6.

These mystical, occultic, and demonic practices of sorcery have been absorbed into the church's routine daily experience. They have been welcomed from that wisdom originating from below: “which is earthly, natural, and demonic” -James 3:15.

From the Garden of Eden an alternative perspective promising self-realization, occultic knowledge, and a merging into the Divine was promised. It stemmed from “the Great Dragon, the Serpent of old who is called the Devil and Satan: who deceives the whole world” -Rev.12:9.

His approach was, and continues to be, 3-fold.

[1] The Serpent raises questions and doubts about the integrity and truth of God's Word: “Indeed, has God said?” -Gen.3:1.

[2] Satan denies that disobedience to God's Word has any moral or spiritual consequences: Sin is a non-issue. “You shall not surely die” -Gen.3:4.

[3] Finally, this deceiving Tempter assures that listening to his word is the only certain means approved by God for self-realization, fulfillment, and discovering the essence of Divinity within.

The Serpent says: “For God knows that in the day you eat from it [the tree of the knowledge of good and evil], your eyes will be opened, and you will be like gods, knowing good and evil” -Gen.3:5.

And this is what has seduced the church into the Serpent's coils.

But the Lord Jesus bluntly exposes the deception of this wicked lawless spirit, the Devil: “He was a murderer from the beginning, and has not stood in the truth because there is no truth in him. He is a liar and the father of lies” -Jn.8:44.

Satan's first assault is to always raise doubts and uncertainty about the truth, integrity, and reliability of the Word of God. If he is successful here, then the battle has already been won.

If we lose the truth, we've lost everything. We no longer have any reference point to judge right and wrong or reality itself. All becomes self-appraised Relativism, adrift on a sea with no landmarks in sight or compass to guide.

When 91% of born-again adults in the church do not believe that absolute truth exists or that such truth can be found in the Bible, the battle is won.

From the Serpent's own words in Gen.3:5, he assures our first mother that his alternative to obeying the revealed Word of God has God's approval: "God knows that..." And hence, our self-assessment for self-authentication independent from compliance with God's own Word is completely acceptable: So says the Serpent.

The appeal of the Serpent to people is that they are lacking significant aspects of understanding and experience: that they are existing in unfulfilled ignorance by reason of complying with restrictive and oppressive regulations that are not reality.

Follow the new path which will result in heretofore unknown self-realization: "Your eyes will be opened!" You will discover your oneness with the Divine within: "You will be like gods!" Then you will know truly the mystery of life: "you will know good and evil!"

But this Serpent-Devil is a liar. Following his alternative occultic "reality" decidedly is suicidal murder. All he offers are lies and death.

God explicitly revealed to Adam that this one tree was forbidden, because "in the day you eat from it you will surely die!" -Gen.2:17 [emphasis added]. Thus, they already knew good and evil; they knew it by the Word of God, not by a self-authenticating and self-willed choice.

Satan held forth a tantalizing promise that they would encounter a higher state of consciousness: a oneness with the Divine. But they had already been created "in the image and likeness of God" -Gen.1:26,27 [emphasis added].

The devil insinuated that they were dwelling in an oppressive bondage of ignorant darkness: they were not experiencing their untapped potential for enlightenment: that they had not yet known because, "your eyes will be opened."

But their eyes were already opened; they were open as created by God, and the Lord Himself had told them via His ever-reliable unchanging Word. "His Divine power has given to us everything necessary for life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence" -2 Pet.1:3.

There was nothing lacking, wrong, or needing change or improvement in Adam and Eve as created by God. “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good” -Gen.1:31 [emphasis added].

Occultic devilish alternative perspectives and practices only tear down and destroy. “The devil was a murderer and liar from the beginning” -Jn.8:44. And here are some of his homicidal lies that the modern church has embraced.

Occultism: Contemplative Spirituality

Contemplative Spirituality [CS] involves deep reflection and MEDITATION on spiritual concepts, beliefs, or experiences. CS aims to foster a deeper connection with ONESELF, a HIGHER POWER, or the UNIVERSE. It is a connectedness with the SACREDNESS of all things.

Rowan Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury of the Anglican Communion says: “CS is the key to prayer, liturgy, art, ethics: the key to the essence of a renewed humanity. It’s what we need to learn to live truthfully, honestly, and lovingly: a deep revolutionary matter” [emphasis added].

This is a formulaic system that eliminates the need for the Lord Jesus Christ and God. It is an antichrist substitute for the Lord Jesus who is “the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by Me” -Jn.14:6.

Compare the underlined words in the quote from Williams with the quote from the Lord Jesus. CS is attributing to itself what the Lord Jesus says exclusively belongs to Him and what He alone can accomplish. CS is a deceptive antichrist system.

Michael Singer reports: CS has helped me move beyond anxiety and helped me KNOW God in a fresh and delightful way. MEDITATION is the basic building block of CS for all people, regardless of their religious beliefs [a summary of Singer’s many YouTube podcasts].

But the Lord Jesus rightly reveals this: “No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son, and anyone to whom the Son wills to reveal Him” - Mt.11:27.

Compare Singer’s statements with those of the Lord Jesus. CS’s meditation is not the basic building block to know God; Jesus Christ the Lord is. CS is a deceptive substitute for knowing God.

On www.andrewglang.com, we find 3 key perspectives of CS. [1] The Divine is right here right now. That Which is Bigger Than Us: the SACRED or God or whatever word you want

to use is PRESENT with us and WITHIN us. Every human, animal, plant, and everything is INFUSED with the SACRED.

[2] The DIVINE is EXPERIENTIAL and EMBODIED. This is one of the core elements of CS across CONTEMPLATIVE TRADITIONS. We can begin to RECOGNIZE our OWN DIVINITY in all its messy glory.

[3] Story, Practice, Solidarity.

Story: UNDERSTANDING the STORY we hold of ourselves, the world, and the cosmos.

Practice: EMBODYING the PERSON we want to become in the PRESENT MOMENT.

Solidarity: DIRECT ACTIVISM by working with those marginalized by systems of harm.

We become more in CONTACT with the DIVINITY of the PRESENT MOMENT via SILENCE, SOLITUDE, and STILLNESS. In SILENCE, we let go of thoughts so we can DISCOVER WHO WE ARE and who is the GOD WITHIN us. In STILLNESS we leave the doings of the world and SETTLE into our BEING [End of Lang's quotes].

These ancient MYSTICAL and OCCULTIST practices to induce ALTERED STATES OF CONSCIOUSNESS are regularly wrapped up in "Christian" sounding terminology. But the underlying premise of CS is Panentheism.

Panentheism is the default alternative to biblical Christianity that was originally promoted by the Serpent from the beginning. It asserts that the DIVINE is present IN everyone, regardless of their awareness, or religion, or lack of the same.

Common terms used to describe CS are Spiritual Formation, The Silence, Stillness, Ancient Wisdom, Spiritual Disciplines, Emerging Church, Breath Prayers, Centering, Divine Mystery, Enneagram, Inner Light, Jesus Candles, Kundalini, Serpent Power, Labyrinths, Jesus Prayer, Lectio Divina, Mantras, New Age Mysticism, Altered States, Yoga, Palms Up/Palms Down, Practicing the Presence, Christian Reiki, Sacred Space, Incense, Flowers, Being in the Present Moment, Visualization, New Wave Anointing.

Fr. Thomas Keating [1923–2018], a Roman Catholic mystic Trappist monk of the Benedictine Order, is widely acknowledged as the pioneer of the modern CS movement.

His contribution was to bring into modern times what has been practiced for millennia in various traditions in the world, including Buddhist and Hindu, but especially those of the Desert Fathers from the 4th and 5th centuries and thereafter. CENTERING PRAYER was fundamental to his CS.

In the 14th century and following, the goal of the Desert Fathers' Scripture MEDITATION was deeply rooted in CS. The outward recitation of Scripture MEDITATION, was to ascend to deep mystical prayer and contemplation, which was not an analysis of the Word, but rather VIEWING IT THROUGH THE LENS OF CHRIST.

SILENCE and focusing upon a SACRED WORD of whatever choice or variety was central to realizing one's DIVINITY within. This quote from Keating is an example.

“Keep returning to silence. It's God's first language and everything else is a poor translation. And say just one 'Hail Mary,' but say it slowly so you can feel the unconditional trust that made it possible for Mary to allow God's love to take over her life...so you meet her and understand her model of trust in God and let her heal you” [www.mariashriver.com. Article: Remembering Thomas Keating].

Keating writes an endorsement on the back cover of *Kundalini Energy & Christian Spirituality* [Philip St. Romaine, 1990]. [Note: KUNDALINI is the Hindu transformative coiled SERPENT POWER at the base of the spine, leading to complete ENLIGHTENMENT and UNION with the DIVINE].

Keating says: “This book will INITIATE Christians into this long neglected DIMENSION of the TRANSFORMING POWER of grace. It is fascinating to catch a glimpse of this ancient TRANSFORMING SERPENT POWER OF KUNDALINI.” [I hope you see the connection: here, “Grace” and Kundalini are synonymous].

If you haven't grasped it already, CS is demonic sorcery: Hindu and Buddhist mysticism dressed up in Christian garb. It is not biblical prayer; it “is earthly, natural, and demonic” -James 3:15.

KUNDALINI Serpent power/energy, when awakened, is described by those experiencing it as dysregulation and an overwhelming and even damage of the central nervous system, long-lasting physical sickness, nausea and disorientation, sleep disturbances, fatigue, burnout, and the inability to focus, loss of self, ego disillusion, and feelings of psychosis and ungrounding. The energy feels unbearably strong or painful, often accompanied by shaking, jerking, spasms, tremors, or vomiting.

Through it, aspirants would reach their goal of a mystical state of consciousness and attain extraordinary powers of telepathy and teleportation. CS claims that every human being is bestowed with Kundalini power for spiritual purposes; it just needs to be awakened by MEDITATION and CS.

Prayer as God created it, however, is asking, not CENTERING and ridding yourself of conscious thoughts. Jesus said: “If you ask anything in My Name, I will do it” -Jn.14:14 [emphasis added].

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the MIND also” -1 Cor14:15 [emphasis added]. We are not to CENTER and enter an ALTERED STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS whereby thoughts are banished and we CONNECT WITH the DIVINE WITHIN US. That is witchcraft.

The New Encyclopedia of the Occult states matter-of-factly : “Meditation of whatever type, Eastern or Western, arrives at the same point.” See the connection? Occultism is now Christian.

Occultism: Personality Types

Hippocrates, a Greek physician [c.460–c.370 BC], proposed 4 Personality Temperament types: Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholic, and Phlegmatic. His explanation of the different types was medically disproven and abandoned in 1850.

From his time up to the present, there have been more than 32 classifications of different “4–Temperament” types. In Tim LaHaye’s book *The Spirit Controlled Temperament* of 1966, he attempted to resurrect Hippocrates’ four classifications and reintroduce them to the church which was becoming increasingly mesmerized by the delusion of psychotherapy.

When LaHaye’s popularity waned, the same basic concepts of four temperaments were reintroduced to the church through Gary Smalley and Dr. John Trent’s 1999 model of the *Lion, Otter, Beaver, and Golden Retriever* personality types. This was an entertaining way to amuse the church with yet another debunked analysis of personality.

Psychotherapists, however, have not abandoned the testing, classification, and analysis of personality types: only this time, it’s “scientific.”

The Taylor–Johnson Temperament Analysis (T-JTA) is a psychoanalytic [personality test](#) designed to measure nine common personality traits for the assessment of individual adjustment. It was first published in 1966 and is still in use today.

The Taylor–Johnson Temperament Analysis measures 9 personality traits and their polar opposites:

- [1] Nervous: Composed
- [2] Depressive: Lighthearted
- [3] Active-Social: Quiet
- [4] Expressive-Responsive: Inhibited
- [5] Sympathetic: Indifferent
- [6] Subjective: Objective
- [7] Dominant: Submissive
- [8] Hostile: Tolerant
- [9] Self-Disciplined: Impulsive

Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory [MMPI] was first published in 1940 and has had 3 revisions since then, the third being published in 2020. It is the most widely used psychometric test for measuring adult psychopathology in the world.

Occultism: Enneagram

The origin of the Enneagram remains shrouded in mystery. The initial description of 9 aspects of personality can be traced to Evagrius Ponticus, a Christian mystic who lived in 4th-century Alexandria in Egypt. He put forth 9 categories of personality. The first thought of all is love of self; after this, come the eight deadly thoughts and their corresponding virtues.

G. I. Gurdjieff (c.1866–1949) is credited with first using the word Enneagram and is the only known source for the 9-pointed geometric figure. He used the 9-pointed figure, not for personality analysis, but in his SACRED dances and as a tool to lead to states of awakened HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS and living IN THE MOMENT.

Gurdjieff was a mystic spiritual teacher who taught that people are not conscious of themselves and thus live their lives in a state of hypnotic “waking sleep.” He emphasized awakening to a HIGHER LEVEL OF CONSCIOUSNESS and distrusting morality, but rather living by one’s conscience. He claimed that the Enneagram could be used as an overlay to explain any evolved system, be it religion, science, or ASTROLOGY.

Oscar Ichazo (1931–2020) is credited as the principal source of the contemporary Enneagram of Personality. He began teaching programs for SELF-DEVELOPMENT in the 1950’s in which he used the 9-pointed figure borrowed from Gurdjieff. In the 1970’s, Ichazo coined the phrase: “The Enneagram of Personality.”

Claudio Naranjo (1932–2019) learned the Enneagram of Personality from Ichazo in 1970, and then developed and taught his own version of it in the United States, principally at the Esalen Institute and at the University of Berkeley. Two of his students who were Jesuit priests, later adapted the Enneagram for use in CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY within programs at Loyola University in Chicago.

As Naranjo’s teachings became increasingly popular, numerous books from a wide range of advocates appeared. One of the most influential Enneagram authors is Richard Rohr, a mystic Roman Catholic Priest, whose spirituality is rooted in “Christian” mysticism and the perennial Tradition [meaning that all religious traditions throughout the globe contain common spiritual threads through which we can move toward UNION WITH THE DIVINE].

Rohr teaches that following Jesus is the “best shortcut” to salvation, but one does not necessarily have to practice formal Christianity. The key is to “fall in love with the DIVINE PRESENCE, under whatever name.”

In 1994, the First International Enneagram Conference, attended by around 1,400 participants, was held at Stanford University and co-sponsored by the university's psychiatry department. Enneagram continues to become widely popular in churches, Bible

schools, seminaries, and in the culture at large. Many attribute its rise in popularity to the reawakened interest in ASTROLOGY.

The Enneagram's 9-pointed geometric diagram has its origin in deeply occultic traditions and uses. The use of "9" is not co-incidental; it too is deeply rooted in occultic spiritism.

For thousands of years, 9 has been revered and worshipped as a MYSTICAL and MAGICAL number transculturally. 9 is considered to have a higher VIBRATION and SPIRITUAL ENERGY than any others.

The number 9 signifies completion and TRANSFORMATION with powerful influence on human DESTINY. It is the final dimension whereby DIVINE ENERGY manifests itself: the ultimate state of SPIRITUAL ENLIGHTENMENT and SELF-MASTERY. [See **Appendix 1: The Mystical 9**].

9 is the number of the manifestation of the DIVINE that is resident within all humans, awaiting SELF-REALIZATION. This is the heritage, background, and present practice of the 9 personality types of the Enneagram.

It is pseudo-science, psychotherapeutic quackery, and demonically occultic at its core. It is fake no matter how it is approached and considered.

Occultism: Positive Confession

Positive Confession [PC] is an enticing and deluding imitation without substance. It is pursued by many, yet discovered to be a bitter disillusionment when seen for what it truly is.

PC is a term never used in the pages of Scripture. Throughout the entire Bible the word "positive" is not once to be found: neither is "negative." The Word of God does not speak of things in terms of positive or negative.

Psychologists and occultists, however, do. It is from these uncertain and polluted streams that the concepts of PC have seeped into Christendom.

"Positive" is equated with "good" and "true." "Negative" is considered false and harmful. God and all that is good are attracted by "positive" words of "faith." Satan, problems, and poverty are brought upon us by "negative" words of doubt and fear. This is the essence of PC's error.

Negative does not mean bad or false; positive is not necessarily good or true. In Genesis 1, God pronounced everything He had done as very good. This was a "positive" statement which was true.

The Lord told Adam in chapter 2 that to eat of forbidden fruit would result in his death. This was “negative,” though true. The serpent told Eve in chapter 3 that she would be like God. This was “positive” but false.

Many negative “confessions” were made by people which were true. Their negative statements were not the cause of their peculiar circumstances.

What they said did not bring them into their situations nor did it cause them to remain in those conditions. PC claims: *What you confess is what you possess*, but it is not so.

Disobedient disciples lacking vision labored all night to no avail. When asked by the Lord Jesus if they were “prospering” they replied: “No” -Jn.21:1-6. This is decidedly negative, but it was true; they had nothing and openly confessed it.

Yet this did not limit what the Lord Jesus could do for such apart from any visualization or positive decrees on their part. He supernaturally intervened and gathered 153 fish for them without any imagined PC on their part.

Solomon rightly, yet “negatively,” confessed that he was no wiser than a little child and unable to judge God's people [1 Kings 3:7-9]. Far from being reproved for failing to employ the techniques of PC, what he said “was pleasing in the sight of the Lord” -1 Kings 3:10.

The Lord granted what he asked, not what he decreed [1 Kings 3:11]. God makes no mention of PC at all while commending his “asking” 5 times in this one verse.

In addition, the Lord gave him “what you have not asked” -1 Kings 3:13 [emphasis added]. This is absolutely contrary to the “law” of PC's *naming it and claiming it*; yet is absolutely true.

By all standards of PC, Jehoshaphat ought to have been miserably defeated by the enemy for his lack of “faith.” He did not visualize himself and the hosts of the Lord as mighty warriors vanquishing the foe.

His plea, negative, weak, and faithless according to the doctrine of PC, should have surely brought about his demise. “We are powerless...nor do we know what to do” -2 Chron.20:12.

It was a “negative” confession, yet one that resulted in mighty victory by the hand of the Lord. Powerless and ignorant we certainly are; in this he spoke truth. His prayer ended though, “But our eyes are upon You” -2 Chron.20:12. And in this he was looking unto the Lord, not to himself and certainly not to the deception of PC for remedy.

It was due to his turning from self-reliance to complete abandonment to God that the Lord was pleased to be with them and fight their battles [2 Chron.20:15-17]. Victory, blessing, and power are not to be found in us, our words, or the decrees of PC, but in the Lord alone. Paul should have confessed himself into perpetual spiritual infancy and bondage by his “negative” confessions: that is, if the teachings of PC were true. Thank God, they are not. Hear his “negative” pronouncements.

“We are fools, weak, without honor, hungry, thirsty, poorly clothed, homeless, the scum of the world, even until now” -1 Cor.4:10-13. And then he had the “audacity” to command all Christians: “Be imitators of me” -1 Cor.4:16. He did so because PC is not true.

All Christians are to imitate his total disregard of the spurious and deluding claims of PC. No one need fear that “negative” words bring a curse upon the life, or that a “negative” lowly state of life is a result of God’s displeasure for our not confessing a better one.

Neither are we to imagine that “positive” words result in blessing. The rich man was very certain about his future, yet his foolish soul was required of him no sooner had his “positive” confession passed from his lips.

“And I will say to my soul, ‘Soul, you have plenty of good things laid up for many years to come; take life easy; eat, drink and be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your soul is required of you, and now who will own what you have prepared?’” - Lk.12:19,20.

When one is self-assured and basking in security, PC flows smoothly from deluded lips. “I will not sit as a widow, nor shall I know loss of children” -Isa.47:8. This is very “positive” but it did not materialize in reality. “But these two things will come on you suddenly in one day: loss of children and widowhood despite your many sorceries and magic” - Isa.47:9.

God cannot be manipulated: PC does not force His hand. This occultic formula does not obligate the living God to perform according to its imaginary claims. It did not work for exorcists “positively” employing the Name of Jesus in their craft.

“‘In the Name of Jesus whom Paul preaches, I command you to come out!’ And the evil spirit answered them, ‘I recognize Jesus, and I know about Paul, but who are you?’ And the man, in whom was the evil spirit, leaped on them, overpowered them, and attacked them with such violence that that they fled out of that house naked and wounded” -Acts 19:13-16.

Misguided disciples may attempt to alter reality by “positive” affirmations, but the Word of God disregards their confident decrees. The Lord Jesus' Words, echoing those of the Scriptures, solemnly warned them that they all would fall away and be scattered [Mt.26:31].

Yet Peter led the unanimous chorus that, even though all would fall away, never would he. Even unto death he would remain stalwart and true. “All the disciples said the same thing too” -Mt.26:35.

They were positive. They believed in their words and, as Kenneth Hagin puts it, had *faith in their faith*. But their “positive” confession did not awaken them from slumber in order to pray [Mt.26:36-46]; neither did it *incubate* and *hatch* the reality they so ardently had declared. “Then all the disciples left Him and fled” -Mt.26:56.

Examined closely in the flickering torchlight of Gethsemane, the devotion they confessed proved to be a mirage. What they confidently asserted previously had no substance at the time of testing. The Word of God, however, was confirmed infallibly.

“All this has taken place to fulfill the Scriptures” -Mt.26:56. The Words of the Lord Jesus did not fall to the ground as did Peter's PC. The prophecy of the Scripture remained unshaken while the disciples' self-generated affirmations vanished into thin air.

This incident sets in sharp relief the conflicting claims of the written Word of God and those of PC. There can be no wedding in this unequal yoke. Either the Word of God spoken by the Lord Jesus will prevail, or the PC of men shall triumph.

The Word of the Lord declared that they would fall away and be scattered; they confessed that they would never fall away while remaining faithful unto death.

The choice is between submitting to the Scriptures, or attempting to assert one's own will and maneuver circumstances by PC. It is an either/or option. We cannot have both; they are mutually exclusive orientations.

Submitting to the Lord's Word requires true humility; following one's own decrees is rooted in pride. This is at the core of PC.

The Lord's principle is that man shall live “by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord” -Deut.8:3 [emphasis added]. PC's message is nothing more than what the men of Jeremiah's day unabashedly declared.

“As for the Word that you have spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our own mouth” -Jer.44:16,17 [emphasis added].

Either everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord or every word that has proceeded from our mouths: this is the issue confronting the church by the false teachers of PC. Either we obey the Lord or He obeys us.

God obeying us is the raw option that PC presents.

PC is nothing more than a dripping baptized version of the central tenant of all traditional religious incantations worldwide:

**The mind of man through images
Creates reality by spoken ritual language
Which releases powers either
Positive or negative**

It is delusion to imagine that the true God can be influenced or controlled by the ritual activity of PC. Performance of “correct” religious requirements, prescribed prayers, or simply invoking “In the Name of Jesus” do not move Him to act.

Traditional Animist religions worldwide employ such methods for selfish ends by commanding spirits using ritual power language. That is sorcery, but not Christianity.

Listen, Satan himself invented PC with his arrogant self-absorbed rebellious decrees. His 5-fold “I WILL” declaration of independence has been adopted thereafter by all who promote Self and “decree” their own destinies, as if that were possible in the slightest anyway.

Here’s what Lucifer, the shining one, the star of the morning, spewed forth that transformed him into a rejected great red dragon and prince of darkness.

“You said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit on the mount of assembly. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make MYSELF like the Most High’” -Isa.14:13,14 [emphasis added].

But it didn’t work then, and it doesn’t work now. There is no inherent power in the words of any creature; neither is the living God bowing to and obeying any of His creatures’ self-generated Positively Confessed decrees.

What was the Lord’s response to Lucifer's demands? “You have fallen from heaven! You have been cut down to the earth! You will be thrust down to Hell!” -Isa.14:12-15.

All who follow his devilishly invented PC, will also follow him in his demise and destiny. Modern champions of Satan’s PC are in the church. Here’s what they spew forth that is deceiving millions who also, like their lord Lucifer, will be cast out of heaven and thrust down into Hell.

From the avowed modern then leader of the Power of Positive Thinking comes this:

There is a powerful and mysterious force in human nature. It consists of vividly picturing, in your conscious mind, a desired goal or objective, and holding that image until it sinks

into your unconscious mind, where it releases great untapped energies [Norman Vincent Peale: *Positive Imaging* (Fawcett Crest, 1982) Introduction, p.1].

From the avowed then leader of the largest church congregation in the world comes this: *You may wonder how we can incubate our subconscious. The only way for us to incubate is through our imaginations. Through visualization and dreaming you can incubate your future and hatch the results. So men [Christians or occultists], by exploring their spiritual sphere of the Fourth Dimension through the development of concentrated visions and dreams in their imagination, can brood over and incubate the third dimension, influencing and changing it.* [Paul Yonggi Cho: *Fourth Dimension, Volume Two* (Bridge Publishing, 1983) p.39-44].

From the avowed then leader of PC and Possibility Thinking comes this: *A variety of approaches to meditation [are] employed by many different religions as well as by various non-religious mind-control systems. In all forms, TM, Zen Buddhism, or Yoga or meditation of Judaeo-Christian tradition, the meditator endeavors to overcome the distractions of the conscious mind. It is important to remember that meditation in any form is the harnessing, by human means, of God's divine laws. We are endowed with a great many powers and forces that we do not yet fully understand. The most effective mantras employ the "M" sound. You can get the feel of it by repeating the words, "I am, I am," many times over* [Robert Schuller: *Peace of Mind Through Possibility Thinking* (Fleming H. Revell, 1977) p.131,132].

That's why this section on PC is in the chapter on Occultism: because it is.

Yoga

As of 2022, it is estimated that about 40 million people in America are regularly involved in some form of Yoga. A growing trend is in the form of "Christian" Yoga, as a supposed neutral form of exercise for health that has no connection with its deeply spiritual occultic Hindu roots.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

In the Yoga section of the bookstore, it is rare to find a book on Yoga that does not make the connection to *chakras* and *kundalini*. The word Yoga means to be united in spirit, soul, and body with Brahman, and the bodily poses are integral to awakening the realization of the divine within.

Yoga is utilized to stimulate, balance, and harmonize the 7 *chakras* of Hinduism: the 7 spinning energy points of the body ranging from the base of the spine to the crown of the head. As these are opened and connected, "well-being" and "enlightenment" moves through stages to the final sixth and seventh *chakras*.

The 6th *chakra* is the 3rd Eye *Ajna*: Located between the eyebrows, associated with intuition, insight, and wisdom. The final *chakra* is the [Crown Chakra](#) *Sahasrara*: Located at the top of the head, associated with spiritual connection, enlightenment, and unity with one's divine Self.

Do not be deceived, Yoga is a deeply occultic means to connect with unseen spiritual powers.

The bodily postures are conduits for spirit manifestation and a transcendental higher consciousness of one's "True Self:" the divine spirit that is within one and all. The greeting at the conclusion of Yoga sessions, *Namaste*, means: *The god in me recognizes the god in you* or *The divinity within me perceives the divinity within you* [Psychology Today, November 10, 2010].

The process of Yoga *asana* postures are acts of worship to and invoking various deities. These, combined with centering, breathing rituals, and mystical meditation, are all aspects of coming into a union of realization of one's own divine nature within.

There are 84 *asanas* revealed by the Hindu deity, lord *Shiva*, who, along with *Brahma* and *Vishnu*, form the Hindu "Trinity." *Shiva* is the Destroyer, tearing down the old to make room for the new, and is the patron deity of Yoga and meditation. He is often depicted with various symbols such as a trident, snake, and crescent moon.

These *asanas* are the third limb of the eight limbs of Yoga. The eight are, in order, [1] *yamas* [codes of social conduct], [2] *niyamas* [self-observances], [3] *asanas* [poses/postures], [4] *pranayama* [breath work/"prayers"], [5] *pratyahara* [sense withdrawal or non-attachment: centering], [6] *dharana* [concentration: often achieved via repetition of a "sacred" sound, word, or image], [7] *dhyana* [mystical meditation: achieving an altered state of consciousness], and [8] *samadhi* [realization of the true Self or *Atman*, and unity with *Brahman*, ultimate reality: discovering that you are divine].

The *Lotus asana* [the position of sitting cross-legged with each foot on the opposite thigh] is the opening up of a person for a spirit/deity to enter and manifest itself. It is an invitation for rebirth, self-realization, and spiritual enlightenment.

Yoga is part of the larger tradition of Animism [the belief that spirit inhabits everything] worldwide. Animism attempts to manipulate, control, direct, and command spiritual powers and influences according to the will of the person using them.

Animists view bodily posture, certain words, objects, and rituals as possessing effective power of their own which can be employed to obtain one's wishes. His key to a successful life is the ability to manipulate forces according to correct formula.

The culture of the Animist is determined by ancestral tradition and conformity to that by being in harmony with the powers and spirits that have brought it about.

Symbols also play a vital role in sustaining the Animist's contact with the spirit world all around him. Images and bodily gestures and positions all convey spiritual power.

Correct performance of prescribed ritual is of utmost importance to an Animist. To him, relationship with power has little to do with morality, but has everything to do with the expertise needed to get results by proper technique. He believes that life can be transformed by techniques applied to mind, body, and spirit.

Yoga is a wholistic, animistic, and occultic formulary leading, perhaps unwittingly, to connecting oneself to unclean demonic spirits. Just stop it.

“Beware that you are not ensnared to follow them...and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’

“You must not worship the Lord your God in that way; for every abomination to the Lord which He hates they have done to their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods” -Deut.12:30,31.

Just stop it.

Occultism: Astrology

Astrology claims to shed light on an individual's personality or path in life based on constructing a horoscope that includes the exact date, time, and location of an individual's birth in relation to the positions of the Sun, Moon, planets, and stars. Astrology is found in Indian, Chinese, Babylonian, Greek, and Western traditions.

Astrology is a pseudo-science form of witchcraft that is strictly forbidden in the Word of God. The following Bible passages make this explicitly clear.

Josiah “did away with the idolatrous priests who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven” -2 Kings 23:5 [emphasis added]. The moral of the story is that Astrology is idolatry.

“If there is found in your midst a man or a woman who does what is evil in the sight of the Lord your God, and has worshiped the sun or the moon or any of the heavenly host, and if it is true and the thing certain that this detestable thing has been done, then you shall stone them to death” -Deut.17:2-5 [emphasis added]. The moral of the story is that Astrology was an idolatrous capital crime punishable by death in the days of the OT.

“If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth, that would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above” -Job 31:26-28 [emphasis added]. The moral of the story is that you cannot worship the one true and living God and practice Astrology.

“Disaster will come upon you, and none of your magic can stop it. Ruin will come upon you suddenly: ruin you never dreamt of! Keep all your magic spells and charms; perhaps they will be of some help to you.

“You are powerless in spite of the advice you get. Let your Astrologers come forward and save you! Those people who gaze at the stars and see omens in the sky, who map out the zones of the heavens and tell you from month to month what is going to happen to you! Let them stand up and save you from the disaster that is about to overtake you!

“They will be like bits of straw that the fire burns up! They will not even be able to save themselves. That is all the good they will do you: those Astrologers you’ve consulted all your life! All of them go on in their error; there is not one that can save you” -Isa.47:11-15. The moral of the story is that Astrology is a worthless demonic deception that cannot guide anyone in life nor save them from disaster.

“And when they say to you, ‘Consult the mediums and spiritists and psychics, the magicians who whisper and mutter incantations.’ Should not a people consult their God? Will you consult the dead on behalf of the living? **TO THE LAW AND THE TESTIMONY!** If they do not speak according to this Word, it is because there is no light in them” -Isa.8:19,20 [emphasis added].

The moral of the story is: Why are you consulting Astrology?

Occultism Conclusion

Be warned! The Lord will not sit idly while occultism is practiced in His Name. “He will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain” -Ex.20:7.

“It will be in that day,’ declares the Lord,
‘I will cut off sorceries/witchcraft that you practice,
and you will no longer cast spells and have fortune tellers.
With furious anger I will execute vengeance
on the nations that have not obeyed Me”
-Mic.5:10,12,15.

Just stop it.

Focus

The church has lost Focus.

Jesus said: “One thing is necessary” -Lk.10:42.

But the church, like Martha, bustles about in an agitated furor of self-importance, annoyed with dutiful responsibilities of “serving” and hosting Christ as our guest [Lk.10:39-42].

And, also like Martha, we barge in on Him echoing her accusatory harangue: *Don't You care! Then tell her to help me!* -Lk.10:40.

Martha, and the church rushing about in her footsteps, are convinced that their agenda is so “necessary” that the Lord Himself ought to apologetically drop everything He is doing and attend to our bombastic outbursts.

But He doesn't. The church and Martha alike, “are distracted, worried, and bothered about so many things” -Lk.10:41. But we have not “chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from [us]” -Lk.10:42.

Mary, however, chose that one necessary good portion which never will be taken from her. Devotion to the Lord Jesus is the one necessary thing in all of life. Miss that, and you've missed everything.

The only thing that can be carried from this life into the next is a heart that has been transformed by devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ and His Word.

Nothing else truly matters. O, the tragedy of a useless existence, frothing over with foamy vacuous concerns, ever bubbling and bursting with their semblance of significance!

In the end, they have popped and perished: swelling churning suds of decades of distraction – empty pursuits that have eclipsed the one necessary thing: leaving that undone, leaving Him abandoned in our façade of fellowshipless religious duties.

No matter what the competing focus is, if it is not Christ as the central, supreme, and first-in- everything Focus, it is at best a diversion leading to an absolute hindrance, and at worst, a disastrous ruin.

Christ Jesus the Lord is our one necessary Focus in all of life, “that He might come to have First Place in Everything” -Col.1:18 [emphasis added].

This is what Paul said: “I determined to know nothing among you except Christ and Him crucified” -1 Cor.2:1.

What do you say?

Pornography

In 2019, Porn sites got more traffic than Amazon, Twitter, and Netflix combined each month. [Source: *Social Media Dangers Documentary – Childhood 2.0* on YouTube].

88% of the 50 most popular porn video sites contain physical violence and 49% contain verbal aggression mainly against women.

Presently, 71% of adults [including men and women] and 85% of teens and young adults view pornography online. 57% of pastors and 64% of youth pastors admit to struggling with pornography.

“Everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart” -Mt.5:28.

Viewing pornography is unrighteous, corrupts one’s soul, and cancels entrance into Christ’s kingdom.

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither sexually immoral, nor adulterers, nor passive homosexual partners, nor dominate practicing homosexuals will inherit the kingdom of God” -1 Cor.6:9,10.

“I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin? If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway, that would be a lustful crime, an iniquity punishable by judges, a fire that consumes to Destruction” -Job 31:1,9-12.

“I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, whose hands are chains. One who is pleasing to God will escape from her, but the sinner will be captured by her” - Eccl.7:26.

“The commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; to keep you from the evil woman: do not desire her beauty in your heart” -Prov.6:23-25.

“The one who commits adultery with a woman is lacking heart; he who would destroy his soul does it. The lips of an adulteress drip honey, but in the end she is bitter as wormwood. Her feet go down to death, her steps take hold of hell.

“Keep your way far from her and you groan at your final end, when your flesh and your body are consumed; and you say, ‘How I have hated instruction! And my heart spurned reproof’ -Prov.6:32; 5:3-12.

“Listen to me and pay attention to the words of my mouth. Do not let your heart turn aside to her ways, do not stray into her paths. For many are the fatally wounded she has cast down. Her house is the way to hell” -Prov.7:24-27.

Do you understand the implications of these statistics? Do you understand the implications of these Bible warnings?

The majority of the populace will never reach heaven. The majority of church goers are bound for hell. The majority of church leaders are lustful imposters heading to everlasting destruction.

Those are the implications.

Just stop it.

Shrines

No Shrine is the habitation of the true and living God. “Will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You! How much less this house!” -1 Kings 8:27.

We must repent of the concept of a local deity inhabiting a sacred place. This evil thinking was institutionalized by Nimrod at the tower of Babel. A sacred Shrine was constructed and “worship” was localized there.

It is a Babylonian idolatrous tradition that spread throughout the entire world when God scattered languages from that tower. Every culture carried Nimrod’s traditions with them: ancestral traditions of a sacred Shrine, a ruling oracle priest, oral tradition directing ritual worship, and required sacrifices.

His was the first building erected that was devoted to religious purposes, a “tower whose top will reach into heaven” -Gen.11:4. Before that, men could worship the true God anywhere that earth or stones could be found according to Divine direction [Ex.20:24-26].

And earth and stones can be found anywhere. Then, all were priests; all could worship God in Spirit and truth apart from Shrines.

But with Nimrod, everything changed. Worship in Spirit was quenched by external ritual. Worship in truth became supplanted by man-devised traditions and decrees.

Now men must travel to his “sacred” location in order to “worship.” There they meet a custodian/priest who “connects” them to the god resident in that Shrine. Oral tradition from that oracle priest directs their every religious ceremony.

And where there is a Shrine, there must be a priest. Where there is a priest, there must be sacrifice. Where there is sacrifice, there must be payment. This is the legacy of Nimrod to all the tribes of earth that has been absorbed by the church.

In true Christianity, there are no sacred places: but sanctuaries, cathedrals, and church buildings have become such in the minds of many. These are “Christian” Shrines. But they are not holy places.

God does not inhabit them in any other way than He inhabits any part of His creation. God is everywhere.

“Where can I go from Your Spirit, or where can I flee from Your presence? If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there” -Ps.139:7,8.

Church buildings are not the house of God, neither are they “holy places.” Only true believers in the Lord Jesus are “the house of God” -Eph.2:19, and His “holy temple” - Eph.2:21 in whom He dwells. “We are the temple of the living God; just as God said: ‘I will dwell in them’” -2 Cor.6:16,17.

Only people can be holy, not bricks and mortar, timbers and stones. God’s house is built, not with earthly, external things, but with “living stones, being built up as a spiritual house” -1 Pet.2:5.

Burning candles in the “sanctuary” does not indicate that God is present there any more than He is outside on the street. “Cleansing” the environment and “inviting” the Holy Spirit as a welcome guest in worship meetings does not “sanctify” that building. God is not a local deity dwelling in a local Shrine needing your invitation.

It is a matter of historical record that the church from the time of Christ did not gather in buildings devoted to religious worship. There were no church buildings, sanctuaries, or cathedrals for some 250 years. The NT church simply met in homes as recorded in Rm.16:5, Philemon 2, Acts 16:40, etc.

“The Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands; as the prophet says: ‘Heaven is My throne, and earth is the footstool of My feet; what kind of house will you build for Me?’ says the Lord” -Acts 7:48,49.

“Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, there I am in the midst of them” -Mt. 18:20. Jesus said that the hour “now is when the true worshipers will worship the

Father in Spirit and truth...neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem” -Jn.4:23,21 [emphasis added].

That hour is now. Jesus dictates the terms of worship in the church that He is building.

Custodians of Shrines dictate the terms of worship in their own priest-crafted traditions. They are two different things altogether.

We must repent; in the church that Jesus is building, there are no Shrines.

Philosophy

Voltaire [1694–1778] French

Key Contributions: He was a deist who promoted freedom of speech, religious tolerance, separation of church and state.

He was a leading figure in Enlightenment thinking that advocated these central ideas: reason, individualism, skepticism, and science.

A deist believes in a rational Creator who is uninvolved in human affairs, leaving the creation to run on its own governed by natural laws. Deists do not believe in prayers or miracles, but that reason can find evidence for God in nature.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau [1712–1778] Swiss

Key Contributions: Humans possess a natural goodness but not original sin. All religions are equally worthy in so far as they produce virtue. Uncorrupted morals prevail in the state of nature. Humans are not superior to other species.

"Savages" was the optimal in the development of humans, between the extreme of brute animals on the one hand and the extreme of decadent civilization on the other. He held that nothing is so gentle as man in his primitive state, when placed by nature at an equal distance from the stupidity of brutes and the fatal enlightenment of civil man.

Franz Mesmer [1734–1815] German

Key Contributions: Hypnosis as a means of psychotherapy wherein a therapist guides the process with verbal cues and repetition. He introduced altered states of consciousness as therapeutic solutions.

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel [1770–1831] German

Key Contributions: Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis. Truth is not an immutable underlying substance but constitutes an ever-evolving subjectivity. Every stage is partial and therefore partially untrue.

Thesis, Antithesis, Synthesis was a phrase coined by Johann Fichte after Hegel's death that accurately describes Hegel's thought.

Thesis is the initial proposition. Antithesis raises a counteracting objection. Synthesis is the resolution of the two which creates a new Thesis which continues the process in pursuit of "Totality," or Truth as a whole.

Charles Darwin [1809–1882] English

Key Contributions: Evolution by Natural Selection: In the struggle of existence, the strongest, fittest, and most adaptable survive. Humans share a common ancestor with other primates. Evolution happened slowly over vast periods of time. Social instincts of trooping animals developed into morality.

Soren Kierkegaard [1813–1855] Danish

Key Contributions: The father of Existentialism. God comes to each person mysteriously but does not create morals. An encounter transcends all ethical and rational standards. One can draw close to Christ by experiencing his presence in a "leap of faith." One must first learn to know himself before knowing anything else.

Existentialism: each person is free and responsible to choose his own purpose and meaning in life; this is not provided by God, society, family, teachers, or governments. A type of private crisis encounter or realization may provide that meaning.

Kierkegaard believed that since rationalism does not provide a meaning to life or to the existence of God, one can nevertheless still obtain meaning through an irrational "leap of faith." This experience can provide a private, subjective, and compelling sense of meaning through an event or encounter that is considered as authenticating the sense of purpose.

Karl Marx [1818–1883] German

Key Contributions: History is largely determined by the struggle between the ruling classes and the oppressed classes. If workers could overthrow capitalism, they would be able to build a socialist classless society with shared wealth. Individuals are not to own lands, businesses, factories, etc.: the government or society does. Dialectic Materialism:

the conflict of the material world and forces influence ideas, rather than ideas influencing the material world.

Friedrich Nietzsche [1844–1900] German

Key Contributions: [1] Death of God. [2] No universal perspective. [3] No objective truth. [4] Superman

Nietzsche's Perspectivism claimed that the death of God would eventually lead to realizing that there can never be a universal perspective on things, and that the traditional idea of objective truth is incoherent.

What we are then left with is the death of a meta-narrative: there is no absolute and comprehensive worldview that accounts for all of life. To him, claims of objective truth are actually only dogmatic subjectivism.

Thus, the values that a society seeks to articulate are not as important as the fact of seeking them. The willingness and process are commendable, not the goal itself since there is no objective truth.

As a solution to the death of God, objectivity, and a meta-narrative, Nietzsche proposes the emergence of Superman [not to be confused with the comic book character by that name first published in 1938].

In the evolution of man and morality, he envisions the arising of Superman: a kind of spiritual evolution of self-awareness and overcoming of traditional views on morality and justice that stem from the superstitious beliefs still deeply rooted or related to the notion of God and Christianity.

Sigmund Freud [1856–1939] Austrian

Key Contributions: Religion, especially that of Christianity, is a form of mental illness that oppresses people with demands leading to imaginary guilt. It is a false evil that must be eliminated. In man are the Unconscious, the Id, Ego, Super-Ego, Psychosexual Stages, Defense Mechanisms, Dreams.

Unconscious: the realm of stored memories, thoughts, feelings, and trauma that have significant impact upon a person's behavior.

Id: the primitive instinctual part of the mind that is driven by gratifying pleasure.

Ego: the realistic part of the mind that mediates between the desires of the Id and the material world.

Super-Ego: The moral part of the mind, representing internalized societal rules and values.

Psychosexual Development: A series of stages of development that can lead to personality issues.

Defense Mechanisms: Unconscious mental processes like repression, denial, and projection, that the Ego seeks to protect itself from anxiety.

Dream Analysis: Interpreting dreams as a window into the unconscious mind, where symbolic imagery reveals repressed desires and conflicts.

Carl Jung [1875–1961] Swiss

Key Contributions: Archetypes are universal, inherited patterns of thought, images, or symbols that exist within the collective unconsciousness of humanity. 4 main Archetypes: [1] Self: our inward guiding light leading to self-realization. [2] Persona: The appearance each individual wishes to portray to the world. [3] Shadow: the realm of our darkest fears and desires, that if discovered, will tap into depths of potential and self-awareness. [4] Anima/Animus: Twin flames of the female/male aspects of the psyche resident in every person that ignite ideas of gender, relationships, and creativity. Archetypes can manifest as spirits and guide our lives and perceptions.

Henri Nouwen [1932–1996] Dutch

Key Contributions: One of the most popular advocates for Contemplative Spirituality in the modern church.

Nouwen was an ordained Catholic priest who did extensive studies in theology and psychiatry. He taught at Notre Dame, Yale, and Harvard.

He admitted to struggling with homosexual tendencies but claimed that he did not carry those into practice. The following are some quotes from his writings.

“The practice of contemplative prayer is the discipline by which we begin to see God in our heart... God speaks to God, Spirit speaks to Spirit, heart speaks to heart. Contemplation, therefore, is a participation in this divine self-recognition.”

“The God who dwells in our inner sanctuary, is the same God who dwells in the sanctuary of each human being” [Nouwen, *Here and Now*, p.22].

“Today I believe that while Jesus came to open the door to God’s house, all human beings can walk through that door whether they know about Jesus or not. Today I see it as my call

to help every person claim his or her own way to God” [Nouwen, *Sabbatical Journey*, p. 51, 1988].

“The greatest trap in life is self-rejection. Prayer is to think and live in the presence of God. The practice of Contemplative Prayer is the discipline by which we begin to ‘see’ the living God dwelling in our hearts.”

“Contemplative Prayer can be described as an imagining of God’s Son, Jesus, so that He becomes the icon always present in the inner room of our hearts.”

Each of these polluted rivulets have flowed into the torrent of modern thought and culture in the Western world, especially in America. Here’s how a blending of these have influenced modern thinking and the church itself.

Voltaire believed that God was uninvolved in human affairs but left the development of culture and values to human reason, individualism, skepticism, and science.

Rousseau taught that humans, who possess a natural goodness but not original sin, are not superior to other species.

Mesmer promoted altered states of consciousness via hypnosis whereby a therapist guides the process with verbal cues and repetition.

Hegel blatantly declared that truth is neither static nor absolute but is a constant pursuit from one uncertainty to another.

Darwin The “God” that started creation, abandoned it and left its development over vast periods of time to Natural Selection, where the fittest, most adaptable, and strongest survive. Man developed from primates.

Kierkegaard Man cannot grasp meaning in life rationally; only through an irrational “leap of faith” can purpose be realized through an experience or encounter.

Marx Oppression of the working class can only be obtained by overthrowing capitalism and establishing a classless society of shared wealth.

"Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people." Religion arose to relieve the suffering of oppressed people: Socialism is the superior solution.

Nietzsche The death of God, no universal perspective, no objective truth.

Freud Christianity is a neurotic mental illness that must be eradicated if mental health and well-being will be achieved.

Jung Self is our inward guiding light to self-realization. No religion is true but can be a means to express the shared concepts, images, and symbols contained in the collective unconsciousness of man.

Nouwen Contemplative Spirituality is a participation in divine self-realization. God dwells in the inner sanctuary of every human being, whether they know Jesus Christ or not.

The conclusion of the matter is that from the onset in Eden, Satan's masterful strategy is to arouse suspicion and create doubt about the truth, validity, and integrity of the Word of God.

Once that confusion and questioning exists, he knows that the person is receptive to alternative perspectives, even contradictory ones that hold a promise of advancement of personal benefit. It is then that a simple contradiction can be inserted without arousing alarm.

The final allurement can now be offered: a substitute reality that surpasses the narrow, restrictive, and oppressive regulations that are now viewed as manipulative and a conscious withholding of ultimate fulfillment by God's irrelevant commands.

Question, Contradict, Replace: this is the overwhelmingly successful and devilish scheme that needs no improvement; it works all too well.

When the Word of God is viewed as irrelevant error, there remains nothing left except hollow unfulfilling man-made ritual: Tradition whose ceremonies are not grounded on any reliable bases, but exist only as empty shells of practices that have lost all significance, other than a periodic and fleeting emotional sense of doing something that may vaguely offer a sense of hope: but it is nothing more than contentless liturgy, "having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof" -2 Tim.3:5.

Thus, the only frontier remaining to be explored is that of a mystical supernatural encounter. And that is where we have come to in the Western world: encountering the christ-spirit within, and wholly divorced from the Man Jesus, as the Christ: "the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father except by Him" -Jn.14:6.

We are now treading upon a broad way wherein all come to the divine by realization of Self via transcendent mystical encounters. Jesus is out of this equation. We can encounter the christ-spirit apart from the historical Jesus, apart from His death as our substitute for the punishment of sin, and apart from His bodily resurrection from the dead.

What is making insidious inroads in the contemporary church is that Christ is resurrected within our hearts via contemplative meditation, and Christ's second coming is realized when we obtain enlightenment that we are one with the divine Christ within.

That's where we've come to.

Truth

But that's not where we're left. The historical Man, Jesus, is the one and only Christ. His physical and spiritual death paid the sufficient ransom for all mankind's sins. His bodily resurrection ensures that His person and accomplishment of His exclusive means of salvation are wholly sufficient and satisfying in every way to the living God of heaven.

"There is salvation in no one else; for there is no other Name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved" -Acts 4:12.

And this is how we know that for certain.

1] Truth is Knowable

To deny this is self-defeating. That is, to state "No truth is knowable" is to make a statement about truth which is either true or false. If true, then a knowable statement about truth has been made which nullifies the claim that "No truth is knowable." If false, then obviously, truth can be known.

[2] Truth is Not Perspectival

To deny this also self-defeating. For to claim that "All truth-claims are perspectival" is itself a claim to absolute truth which, if true, falsifies its original assertion.

[3] Truth is communicable

That is, inner subjective propositional communication and objective knowledge of propositions is possible. In other words, there can be exact decoding of what has been encoded, though not exhaustively. Truth can be communicated and understood by minds of differing perspectives. To deny this is self-defeating.

[4] There exists absolute truth

Obviously, to state that "All truth is relative" is to implicitly contradict what is being claimed.

Summary

"True" truth, including absolute truth, can be objectively known, communicated, and apprehended by minds of differing perspectives. This is undeniable.

How Do We Know Truth?

Only a limited number of options present themselves to awareness in attempts to justify claims to comprehensive and universal truth.

[1] Rationalism

Rationalism as a comprehensive worldview is self-defeating. That is, to claim that all phenomena must be justifiable by logical or rational principles self-destructs since there is no way to logically justify the very canons of logic themselves without engaging in hopeless circular reasoning.

In other words, to employ logic to prove logic is unjustifiable due to circularity. Presented to awareness are certain innate self-evident truths or universal givens.

These include the principle of non-contradiction [i.e. A is not non-A], rationality norms or the canons of logic themselves, the existence of the external universe, sensual perceptions, and other categories which are only able to be known non-discursively.

Further, the canons of logic or rational justification can only demonstrate with certainty what is actually false. They cannot, in and of themselves, establish what is real beyond a possibility.

[2] Existentialism or Experientialism

These fail as an overall worldview to establish a test for truth, as experience itself is neither true nor false. Only propositions about experience can be shown to valid or invalid, and these are adjudicated, not on experiential, but upon rational bases.

To posit experience as the determinant of a truth-claim tacitly reverts to rationality norms to substantiate the truth of this claim, which, by that very fact, denies experience as the basis of knowing truth. That is, to claim “I know, or I can prove that experience is the basis of knowing truth” is to indirectly deny that assertion. If one postulates that “Experience demonstrates that experience is the basis of knowing truth,” an appeal to self-nullifying circularity has been proffered.

[3] Mysticism

An appeal to experiences of an inner subjective personal nature cannot be a legitimate part of a publicly testable claim to truth. For example, one may have in fact had an experience of some type, but there is no final way for another to be able to prove that the communication of the experience is itself accurate and thereby whether the experience described eliminates competing truth-claims.

Within the purview of the mystical experience some advocate that consciousness and/or existence is illusionary resulting from a projection of one’s own imagination, emotions, or

inner subjective awareness. But a claim of this nature presupposes knowledge of reality outside of one's own consciousness, for unless one knows more than the limits of one's own consciousness, there can be no certainty that this constitutes the limits of reality.

[4] Pragmatism

Pragmatism is insufficient as a comprehensive truth-claim since competitive truth claims may also be shown to "work." As well, the very tests presented to demonstrate what "works" cannot escape the charge of arbitrariness.

Who or what determines what "works"? How long must it "work" before it is established as true? What are the criteria of "workability"? Are there consistent objectives sought in the determination? What makes this a valid end?

Picking locks "works" to gain access to a locale, but does this thereby make it a legitimate or "true" means of entry? In some sense everything "works" thereby by making everything true which is manifestly false.

Thinking currently in vogue among atheistic humanists in the Western world manifests the arbitrary base of a pragmatic test for truth. A proponent of this persuasion in his public debate on the campus of Cal Poly Pomona in 1986, outlined four tenets that enumerate what "society" has determined to constitute good and evil on the basis of cumulative observed consensus of what "works." Dr. Gordon Stein, the then president of the American Atheist Society, stated that these are a pragmatic consensus:

[1] Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

[2] Self-actualization. That is, an atmosphere of "liberty" must be allowed and maintained for individuals to pursue, develop, and realize their potentials, goals, aspirations, and objectives.

[3] Others are not to be hurt in the process of my self-actualization.

[4] Always strive for the greatest good for the greatest number.

Dr. Stein further stated that these four tenets must be maintained in conjunction with each other in a comprehensive holistic system of morality if it is to "work" and that the pragmatic humanist has a "moral obligation to make the world a better place."

Several questions naturally present themselves as to both the viability and validity of such a foundation of moral action. The parochial perspective of tenet #2 must readily be admitted.

If "society" has determined this to be "good," why then are there vast populous societal groups that neither operate on these principles nor acknowledge them to be true or good?

The caste system in India, the oligarchy of Russia, and the oppressive degradation of women in Islam do not allow, much less foster, such a self-actualizing environment.

If it is claimed that these societies are in error in not following these principles, then the statement: “Society determines what is good and evil” is patently false, since appeal is being made to a principle transcending society to demonstrate its waywardness. If it is maintained that these systems “work” within their respective societies, then one is embroiled in hopeless self-contradiction since opposites cannot both be true in the same manner at the same time.

Tenet #3 prescribes that others must not be “hurt” in the process of self-actualization. What does “hurt” mean? Is it to be defined physically, emotionally, economically, intellectually, sexually, genetically, or by a combination of factors? Has society, in fact, determined what constitutes “hurtiness” in these categories?

More pointedly and pertinent is the question, of whom is comprised the category “others”? Does this encompass all Homo Sapiens? Are the senile elderly, the unborn fetus, imbeciles, derelicts, handicapped, and the intellectually, physically, economically, or genetically disadvantaged included in the sanctum of “other”? Or is it justified to “painlessly hurt” select ones within these classes as is currently practiced in our environs?

On an arbitrary pragmatic base, rationalization may be proffered for virtually any atrocity conceivable, all within the confines of the aforementioned tenets. Carried to their logical conclusion, a society could determine that life is evil and death is good within the purview of these premises since:

[1] All desire death, therefore killing each other is justifiable since this is what each desires the other to do unto himself.

[2] Death is the realization of the goals, aspirations, objectives, and the final expression of each one’s potential.

[3] Others will not be hurt since this is what they desire and even welcome. Death will be executed painlessly upon all, so that actually happiness ensures, not hurt.

[4] Death is the greatest good for which we unitedly strive.

It may be further queried; how can a pragmatic humanist make the world a “better” place when he cannot provide any coherent or comprehensive definition of good and thereby appeal to a certain state of affairs as “better” than what now exists?

The manifest failure of Rationalism, Empiricism, Mysticism, and Pragmatism, either independently or collectively, to establish a comprehensive base to test truth-claims does not, however, leave us hopeless. As we have already seen, “true” truth, including absolute

truth, is objectively knowable, communicable, and capable of apprehension by minds of differing perspectives.

Yet even this undeniable postulate does not lift us from the morass of moral ambiguity as it does not state what these moral verities are, only that truths of some nature may indeed be known. How then may absolute reality or “true” truth be known?

Revelation

The only valid philosophical foundation for certainty in this category is if there exists:

Revelation from an Infinite, Personal, and Non-Arbitrary Source

Revelation from an infinite, personal, non-arbitrary source alone is adequate as a comprehensive test of truth-claims. Several particulars need to be observed:

Truth must be **Revealed**, that is, objectively communicated in propositional form within the context of normal linguistic means employing semantical, grammatical, syntactical, logical, contextual, lexical, and categorical sense.

The source must be **Infinite**, from that which transcends the bounds of the space/time continuum and therefore is aware of all possible actualities and potentialities at any point and at any time.

The source must be **Personal** because “good,” “true,” “love,” and “right” are moral properties that adhere to personalities alone. That is, we cannot coherently speak of a generous chair or of an unrighteous magnetism.

The source must be **Non-Arbitrary** else it has forfeited any legitimate claim to absoluteness. The revelation of what is true must originate in that which innately is and not from a determinative function of reason and volition. That is, it must reflect inherent moral necessity and not capricious dogma.

Apart from revelation of this nature, all discussions of good and evil, right and wrong, and ultimate truth and falsity dissolve into unjustifiable opinion swapping. Even in a limited utilitarian sense among the mundanities of life, unless there exists an absolute standard that definitively establishes the length of one foot, it is irrelevant, rather it is incoherent, to discuss whether 11 inches or 2 inches are closest to or equivalent to one foot since no denominative criterion of that identity exists.

When grappling with questions of ultimate truth value, standards of morality, and existential purposefulness, it is imperative that there exist an absolute unchanging

reference point else meaningful, consistent, and final evaluation of truth-claims in these categories is futile. In absence of such a standard, man is abandoned to a virtual quagmire of moral ambiguity in which every change sinks him yet further in the mire of uncertainty unto despair.

Yet, though it may be demonstrated that logically there must be an absolute reference point in order to adjudicate between competing truth-claims without the charge of arbitrariness, this does not, in and of itself, substantiate the proposition that there indeed exists such a standard, or that we actually know of it or if we are even able to do so. The question remains; has there been Revelation as described or are we left with a perennial carrot of logical feasibility dangling tauntingly before us, yet without reality?

Ample justificatory evidence exists to substantiate that there is an infinite, personal, non-arbitrary source that has revealed, not only absolute moral truth, but Himself as well. This source is the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Lord Jesus Christ

A personality who is infinite is, by definition, God. To be the actual, tangible, incarnated revelation of the infinite God in toto is precisely what the Lord Jesus Christ claimed.

In His own words He stated that He is infinite in time¹, infinite in space², Lord³, equal with God⁴, the final Judge of all men⁵, the source of life⁶, the absolute truth⁷, infinite in knowledge⁸, possessed of all authority in the universe⁹, and that He did the works of God¹⁰.

He acknowledged and received worship as God from men¹¹, and accepted the appellation of God and Lord¹². So unmistakable was His declaration, that even His antagonists recognized His claim to be God¹³.

Though some propositions are self-attesting [e.g. A is not non-A], many are not. The truth or falsity of those within this latter class must be corroborated on other evidential bases. There are conclusive grounds upon which one may verify the truth or falsity of the propositions made by the Lord Jesus.

As noted, He claimed to possess infinite knowledge, total authority or power, and absolute truth. Prior to the event, He had pre-cognition of His ensuing death by crucifixion, His burial, and bodily resurrection on the third day following¹⁴. He further stated that He Himself had power and authority to raise Himself from the dead¹⁵.

As is the case with any proposition, it either truthfully refers to a given state of affairs or it does not. Hence, either the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ are true or they are false.

If it therefore can be shown that these events transpired as predicated, we have the clearest and strongest forensic proof of that which is attested: that we do in fact have Revelation from God-the infinite, personal, non-arbitrary source.

In the historical documents that comprise the New Testament are four biographical books devoted exclusively to the person and life of the Lord Jesus Christ. An examination of these affords the following facts regarding the crucifixion, burial, and resurrection of Christ.

He was beaten with fists¹⁶, scourged [whipped on the back until raw]¹⁷, beaten on the head with a reed¹⁸, and crucified [by having hands and feet nailed to a cross to hang thereupon until dead]¹⁹. He died²⁰, His side was thrust with a spear²¹, His body was bound in linen wrappings with about one hundred pounds of spices according to Jewish burial custom²², and was laid in a tomb cut out of the rock²³. A large stone was rolled against the entrance²⁴ while several of His followers looked on²⁵.

The Jewish leaders asked of Pilate, the Roman governor, and received permission for a guard at the tomb in order to prevent theft of the body²⁶. They made the tomb secure and set a seal on the stone [in order to verify any tampering]²⁷. On the morning of the third day, His followers found the tomb empty²⁸ and were informed by an angelic spirit that the Lord Jesus was risen from the dead²⁹.

This was confirmed by the Lord Jesus' bodily appearance³⁰ to Mary Magdalene³¹, the two Marys³², two men on the road to Emmaus³³, Peter³⁴, ten disciples³⁵, disciples and others³⁶, eleven disciples including Thomas, a doubter³⁷, six disciples and a fisherman³⁸, five-hundred people at one time who still were alive as eyewitnesses in 55 A.D., twenty-two years after Christ's resurrection³⁹. These convincing proofs continued over a period of forty days to these and other eyewitnesses⁴⁰.

The guards, as well as the two Marys, saw the angel and heard the announcement of Christ's resurrection⁴¹. The guards told the Jewish leaders what happened⁴², and the leaders then bribed them to fabricate and spread a lie that Christ's body had been stolen by His followers⁴³.

The fact that arrests our attention immediately is that the tomb in which the Lord Jesus was laid subsequent to His death did not contain His body on the third day following. And that on this third day and successively for forty days thereafter, He showed Himself to be alive by many convincing proofs to a wide variety of eyewitnesses, diverse both in number and disposition.

To an unbiased inquirer, the explanation for these phenomena naturally follows from the facts as presented. However, there have been those who have objected to this explanation, especially in more modern times. Those who deny the reality of Christ's resurrection typically argue along one or more of the following lines.

The Entire Scenario Never Occurred

This denial claims that the person of the Lord Jesus Christ did not exist. Several insurmountable difficulties are raised by adopting this posture.

The disciples charged the Jews with rejection and crucifixion of Jesus, their Messiah or Christ⁴⁴. Yet how could they coherently accuse them of a crime against a non-existent person? No serious attention is paid to madmen.

Yet, some three thousands of these Jews felt remorse, sought forgiveness for their actions against the Lord Jesus, and joined the Christian community⁴⁵. What would motivate antagonists to capitulate to the opposing stance when they avowedly knew that there was no such person and thus no crime perpetrated?

The verbal and written messages of His life, deeds of beneficence, and teachings publicly in Israeli villages and in Jerusalem's temple would have been totally repudiated by a wide audience of thousands who could immediately discount any claim to His existence, much more His works or discourses. But this was not, nor could it be, done by this myriad of eyewitnesses to His life and activities.

What then motivated His followers to speak and write known lies in their recounting of Christ's life and teaching since they themselves taught that liars shall not obtain the very eternal life they espoused by their "spurious" messages?⁴⁶

Most of the disciples experienced repeated and intense persecution during their lifetimes and suffered cruel and torturous deaths simply for the fact of obstinately maintaining the "myth" of Jesus Christ and His resurrection.

Men may and do die, at times with fanatical zeal, for that which they believe to be true. Yet it is incredulous that men would willingly die for a teaching that they themselves had knowingly and wickedly fabricated.

The Documents are Unreliable

This denial asserts that we have no final way of determining what actually occurred. At least the following observations must be made in refutation of this disclaimer.

This is a gratuitous supposition that does not accord with the voluminous attestation to the historical integrity, accuracy, and preservation of the text of the NT documents. The authenticity and reliability of the NT text has been incontrovertibly corroborated by numerous publications devoted to this subject. To delineate the proffered justifications here would exceed the scope of this book.

Suffice it to say that the text of the NT is overwhelmingly the most well documented literary record of the ancient world. Those who object to its validity do so groundlessly and arbitrarily since these very same individuals place credence in other documents with far less substantiation than that of the NT.

Skeptics of our modern era, far removed from the actual events, may pontificate of ignorance of what in fact transpired. Yet, this is precisely what the contemporary audience of the disciples could not do. We may say we do not know what occurred, but this they could never do, for they themselves witnessed the very things they were being told by the disciples' messages, both verbal and written.

The news about Him went out everywhere into all the surrounding district of Galilee⁴⁷. On another occasion the whole city had gathered around and many were healed⁴⁸. Great multitudes from Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, and outside of the bounds of Israel proper crowded to Christ and He healed many⁴⁹. He, at one time, miraculously fed a crowd of five thousand men, not including the number of women and children present who also experienced this⁵⁰.

These citations exemplify the widespread knowledge and experience firsthand of the person and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is impossible to embellish or fraudulently contrive stories when your audience are the very ones who experienced the things you are speaking of!

Succeeding generations may be hoodwinked into believing untruths, but not the initial eyewitnesses. If the message was not a reliable and accurate account of the actual events, no one would have placed any credence in them.

Why did antagonists join the ranks of the Christian community if they knew by firsthand experience that the message spoken to them was indeed false?

Jesus Christ Did Not Actually Die

This denial suggests that He merely lapsed into unconsciousness and later revived in the coolness of the tomb. The implausibility of this proposal is obvious.

A review of the particulars surrounding the death of Christ as enumerated previously should suffice to indicate the absurdity of this hypothesis.

If true, then the Lord Jesus Himself is both perpetrating and perpetuating lies about Himself and, in the final analysis, is tantamount to a devil, and not as God.

Surely the guards would have been aware of the stone rolling back from the entrance to the tomb and would have apprehended Him on the spot since it was He whom they were responsible to guard on pain of death should they fail.

The Disciples Were Misled and/or Deceived

This objection urges us to imagine the disciples to have either mistaken the tomb of another for that of Christ, or were experiencing some type of visionary or hallucinatory effect.

If this were the case, all the opponents of Jesus Christ and Christianity needed to do was produce the body of Jesus to irrefutably disprove the claims of the Christians as to the resurrection of Christ. This, however, they could not do.

The Disciples Stole the Body of Christ

That this is ludicrous is obvious from these observations.

It is highly unlikely that devout Jews would steal as this is strictly forbidden in their Ten Commandments.

What were the guards doing while the disciples were thus occupied? If it is asserted that they were sleeping, who then observed the disciples in the act?

Why would the disciples propagate a known lie? Why then did their Jewish antagonists afterwards join Christian ranks in response to the message of Christ's resurrection when it was undisputed common knowledge that the disciples stole the body and their message a manifest hoax?

Rather, the invention of this lie proves that the body indeed was not in the tomb, else no explanation need be proffered other than producing the body itself.

Why is the tomb of the Lord Jesus Christ empty? Because He is Lord and God. How do we know this? Because we have Revelation from this very One who is infinite, personal, and possesses absolute truth.

It is the conviction of the author that an intimate knowledge of and relationship with the personal infinite God as revealed in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ is not only possible, but is the highest and ultimate purpose for man and is the sincere and loving desire of God for each individual.

Footnotes:

All footnotes in the preceding discussion
May be found in the New Testament of the Bible

1 Jn.8:58

2 Mt.28:20

3 Mt.22:42-45	4 Jn.10:30
5 Jn.5:22,27-29	6 Jn.5:21
7 Jn.14:6	8 Mt.11:27; Jn.1:48
9 Mt.28:18	10 Jn.10:37-38
11 Jn.9:38	12 Jn.20:28
13 Jn.10:33	14 Mt.20:18,19
15 Jn.2:19-22; Jn.10:17,18	16 Mt.26:67
17 Mt.27:26	18 Mt.27:30
19 Jn.19:18; Jn.20:25	20 Mk.15:44,45;Jn.19:33
21 Jn.19:34	22 Jn.19:39,40
23 Lk.23:53	24 Mt.27:60
25 Mt.27:61; Lk.23:55; Jn.19:40	26 Mt.27:62-6
27 Mt.27:66	28 Lk.24:1-3
29 Mt.28:5,6	30 Lk.24:36-43
31 Jn.19:16-18	32 Mt.28:1,9
33 Lk.24:13-35	34 Lk.24:34
35 Jn.20:19,20	36 Lk.24:33-36
37 Jn.20:26-29	38 Jn.20:1-3
39 1 Cor.15:6	40 Acts 1:3
41 Mt.28:1-10	42 Mt.28:11
43 Mt.28:12-15	44 Acts 2:22-24
45 Acts 2:36-41	46 Col.3:5-9; Rev.21:27
47 Mk.1:28	48 Mk.1:33,34
49 Mk.3:7-10	50 Mt.14:21

Return

“As for the deeds of men, by the Word of Your lips I have kept away from the paths of the destroyer” - Ps.17:4.

It was during perhaps the greatest revival in the history of God’s people, Israel, during the reign of Josiah that the Lord sent Jeremiah to speak to the nation [Jer.1:2,3]. Here is the testimony of the Lord concerning Josiah himself.

“Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him” -2 Kings 23:25.

Here is the testimony of Jeremiah to the people themselves who lived during those days.

“Be appalled, O heavens, at this, and be terribly afraid; be very desolate,’ declares the Lord. For My people have committed two evils; They have forsaken Me, the fountain of

living waters, to hew for themselves cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water” - Jer.2:12,13.

“An appalling and horrible thing has been committed in the land: The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests rule on their own authority; and My people love it so! But what will you do at the end of it?” -Jer.5:30,31.

“To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen. Behold, the Word of the Lord is a reproach to them; they have no delight in it” -Jer.6:10.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts: ‘Amend your ways and your deeds. Do not trust in these lying deceptive words. Will you steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense to other gods,

“and then come and stand before Me in this house, which is called by My Name, and say, ‘We are delivered!’ ‘You think you are so safe that you go on doing all these hateful sins! Has this house, which is called by My Name, become a den of robbers in your sight?’” - Jer.7:3,4,8-11.

“How can you say, ‘We are wise, and the law of the Lord is with us’? But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. Since they reject the Word of the Lord, what kind of wisdom do they have?” -Jer.8:8,9. And, as other versions put the last phrase of verse 8:

“The truth is, those who teach it have used their writings to make it say what it does not really mean” -NET. And, “Actually, the lying pen of the scribes has handled it falsely” -NIV. Or, “Your teachers have twisted it by writing lies” -NLT.

“‘Woe to the shepherds/pastors who are destroying and scattering the sheep of My pasture!’ declares the Lord of hosts. As for the prophets, my heart is broken within me. ‘For both prophet and priest are polluted; even in My house I have found their wickedness,’ declares the Lord” -Jer.23:1,2,9,11.

“‘Among the prophets I saw an offensive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led My people astray. Among the prophets I have seen a horrible thing: the committing of adultery and walking in falsehood; and they strengthen the hands of evildoers, so that no one has turned back from his wickedness. All of them have become to Me like Sodom.

“‘I am going to make them drink poisonous water, for from the prophets of Jerusalem pollution/profaneness/ungodliness/wickedness has gone out into all the earth’” -Jer.23:13-15.

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘Do not listen to the words of the prophets who are prophesying to you. They make you worthless; they speak a vision of their own heart, not

from the mouth of the Lord. They continually say to those who despise Me, “You shall have peace!” ‘And as for everyone who walks in the stubbornness of his own heart, they say,’ “No evil will come upon you!”” -Jer.23:16,17.

“I did not send these prophets, but they ran, I did not speak to them, but they prophesied. But if they had stood in MY COUNSEL, and had caused My people to hear MY WORDS, then they would have turned them back from their evil way and from the evil of their deeds” - Jer.23:21,22 [emphasis added].

“I have heard what the prophets have said who prophesy lies in My Name, saying, “I had a dream!” ‘How long will this go on? They are prophets of deceit, inventing everything they say.

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“The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; but let him who has My Word speak My Word in truth! What good is chaff compared with wheat? Is not My Word like a fire?’ says the Lord, ‘and like a hammer that shatters a rock in pieces?’” -Jer.23:25-29.

“Therefore, I stand against these prophets who steal their messages from one another: these smooth-tongued prophets who say, “This prophecy is from the Lord!” ‘I am against their imaginary dreams [that] lead My people astray with their reckless lies; yet I did not send them or command them, nor do they provide this people the slightest benefit’” - Jer.23:30,32.

“You will no longer remember the Oracle of the Lord, because every man’s own word will become the oracle. You have perverted/turning upside down the Words of the living God, the Lord of hosts, our God” -Jer.23:36 [emphasis added].

“All the people both small and great approached Jeremiah and said, ‘Please pray for us to the Lord your God, that the Lord your God may tell us the way in which we should walk and the thing that we should do.’ Then Jeremiah said, ‘I am going to pray and I will tell you the whole Word which the Lord will answer you.’

“Then they said to Jeremiah, ‘May the Lord be a true and faithful witness against us if we do not obey the whole Word which the Lord your God will send you to us. Whether it is pleasant or unpleasant, we will obey the Lord our God, so that it will be well with us when we obey’” -Jer.42:1-6.

“But as soon as Jeremiah had finished telling all the people all the Words of the Lord their God, all the arrogant men said to Jeremiah, ‘You are telling a lie! The Lord our God has not sent you to say, ‘You must not enter Egypt to reside there!’” -Jer.43:1,2.

“Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices/incense to other gods, along with all the people responded to Jeremiah, saying, ‘As for the Word that you have spoken to us in the Name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But rather

we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from OUR mouths. WE WILL DO WHATEVER WE WANT!

“We will burn incense to the Queen of Heaven and sacrifice to her just as much as we like! For then we had plenty of food and were well off and saw no evil. But since we stopped, we have lacked everything!” -Jer.44:15-18 [emphasis added].

That’s what Jeremiah had to say about those living during the time of one of the most zealous and godly leaders of all ages.

Which type of person are you: of one heart and soul with Josiah and Jeremiah, or among the rabble refusing the Word of the Lord, determined to “perform every word that proceeds from our own mouths” -Jer.44:17?

2 Kings 23:2,3 recounts that Josiah gathered “all the people and read in their hearing all the Words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. He stood and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments with all his heart and all his soul, to carry out the Words that were written in this Book. And all the people took a stand in the covenant” [emphasis added].

But a pledge of faithfulness alone does not accomplish that. The remainder of 2 Kings 23 recounts what also must take place.

Josiah and the faithful remnant with him purged the house of God of all things corrupting and idolatrous. He “brought out, burned, did away with, ground to dust, threw, broke down, defiled, smashed, cut down, demolished, removed, and slaughtered.”

“Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him” -2 Kings 23:25 [emphasis added].

Crept in Unawares intends to contribute to just that in our generation. Dear Reader, are you in, or are you out?

“To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed and they cannot listen. Behold, the Word of the Lord has become a reproach to them; they have no delight in it” -Jer.6:10.

Which are you? He who has ears, let him hear.

Reality

God is transcendent, not panentheistic. God eternally exists outside of His creation: self-sufficient and independent of what He created.

“The God who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth, does not dwell in temples made with hands; nor is He served by human hands, as though He needed anything, since He Himself gives to all, life and breath and all things” -Acts 17:24,25.

God dwells only in those who love and obey the Lord Jesus Christ; God does not dwell in every person. Jesus said: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” -Jn.14:23. “You are of your father, the Devil, and you want to do the desires of your father” -Jn.8:44. “You were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who is now working in the sons of disobedience” -Eph.2:1,2.

Panentheism is the lie perpetuated by the Serpent from the Garden of Eden.

Satan and Demons are personal wicked spirit beings: angels who revolted against the true and living God and His Word: not cosmic forces, personifications of evil, or metaphors of negativity. Satan is not the dark side of the Force.

“The great Dragon was thrown down, the Serpent of old who is called the Devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world; he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him” -Rev.12:9.

The Man Jesus alone is the **Christ**: God’s Anointed King and Priest. There is no “christ-consciousness.” Christ is not the Divine presence in every person.

“There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the Man, Christ Jesus” -1 Tim.2:5.

Philosophy is an ensnaring trap, leading to ungodliness. “See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles/spirits of the world, rather than according to Christ” -Col.2:8. To truly know reality, Christ Jesus the Lord is whom we need and His unchanging truth, “in Whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge; I say this so no one will deceive you with persuasive find-sounding arguments” -Col.2:3,4.

*Follow your **Heart**.* Fools do that. Prov.28:26: “He who trusts in his own heart is a fool.”

*Let your **Conscience** be your guide.* It can't. "Doctrines of demons come through hypocritical liars, seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron" 1 Tim.4:2,3. "To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and conscience are corrupted" -Tit.1:15.

Morality can only be established from the living God. "Be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" -Lev.19:2. "For with You is the fountain of life. In Your Light, we see light" -Ps.37:9. "God is love; We love because He first loved us" -1 Jn.4:8,19.

Truth is not relativism, consensus, pragmatism, experientialism, an encounter, or a matter of perspective. God is True [Jn.17:3]. Jesus is the Truth [Jn.14:6]. The Holy Spirit is Truth [Jn.16:13]. The written Word of God is Truth [Jn.17:17].

Truth is external, objective, and verifiable in absolute contrast to experience, encounters, self-reports, and opinions of men which are internal, subjective, and non-verifiable. 1 Cor.2:9-14. 1 Cor.13:6.

Truth is eternally established and unchanging as revealed in the written Word of God, the Bible. There is no other source of Truth. "Forever, O Lord, Your Word is settled/stands firm in heaven. The sum of your Word is truth; every one of Your righteous ordinances/laws/regulations/judgments is everlasting" -Ps.119:89; 160.

Truth is antithetical: if something is true, its opposite is not true. "A" is not "Non-A." *That's true to you but not true to me* is nonsense from the Serpent.

"True" truth, including absolute truth, can be objectively known, communicated, and apprehended by minds of differing perspectives. It is impossible to rationally deny this.

Counsel: "The Lord nullifies the counsel of the nations. The counsel of the Lord endures forever" -Ps.33:10,11. Jesus the Christ is the Wonderful Counselor. "A child will be born to us, a Son will be given to us, and His Name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" -Isa.9:6.

"With Your counsel You will guide me and afterward receive me to glory" -Ps.73:24. "Many plans are in a man's heart, but the counsel of the Lord will stand" -Prov.19:21. "How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates [carefully contemplates] day and night" -Ps.1:1,2.

Love for God consists of obeying His commands contained in His written Word, the Bible. "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments. Jesus said: 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word. He who does not love Me, does not keep My Words'" -Jn.14:15,23,24.

"Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth" -1 Cor.13:6. "The one who says, 'I have come to know Him,' and does not keep His commandments, is a liar,

and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His Word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected” - 1 Jn.2:4,5; 5:3.

There are two great commands: Love God and love one another as the Lord Jesus Christ has loved us. This is absolutely different than Self-seeking and love of Self; Those lead to corruption and disobedience. They are incompatible with love for God.

There is no **Hierarchy** in the church that Jesus is building. “The kings of the Nations lord it over them; but it is not this way among you” - Lk.22:25,26. “Remember those who led you, who spoke the Word of God to you; and considering the outcome of their way of life, imitate their faith” -Heb.13:7.

Leaders watch over but do not lord it over. “Not that we lord it over your faith, but are workers with you for your joy” -2 Cor.1:24. “I exhort the elders among you, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight, nor yet as lording it over [them], but proving to be examples to the flock” -1 Pet.5:1-3.

Leaders are lowly servants who set an example by godly commendable lives coupled with the persuasive power of truth, not the power of authority.

Each disciple has a **Spiritual Gift**: “To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good”-1 Cor.12:7. Each disciple has authority from the Lord Jesus Christ to do the work entrusted into his hand by Jesus Himself. “It is like a man upon leaving his house, giving authority to his slaves, to each one his work” -Mk.13:34.

The true body of Christ, the church, builds itself up through the proper working of each member by speaking the truth in love. “Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all things into Him who is the Head, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love” - Eph.4:15,16.

One Another

The practical expression of genuine Christianity is contained in the numerous “One Another” commands of the NT. If disciples would actually practice these, the world would know we are truly joined to Christ as His disciples.

We are members of one another [Rm.12:5; Eph.4:25]

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love [Rm.12:10]

Be of the same mind toward one another [Rm.12:16]

Love one another [Rm.13:8; 1 Thess.3:12; 4:9; 1 Pet.1:22; 1 Jn.3:11,23; 4:7,11]

Building up one another [Rm.14:19; 1 Thess.5:11]

Accept one another [Rm.15:7]
Admonish one another [Rm.15:14; Col.3:16]
Greet one another with a holy kiss [Rm.16:16]
Have the same care for one another [1 Cor.12:25]
Through love serve one another [Gal.5:13; 1 Pet.4:10]
Bear one another's burdens [Gal.6:2]
Bearing with one another in love [Eph.4:2; Col.3:13]
Be kind to one another [Eph.4:32]
Forgiving one another [Eph.4:32]
Submitting to one another [Eph.5:21]
Teaching one another [Col.3:16]
Comfort one another [1 Thess.4:18]
Encourage one another [1 Thess.5:11; Heb.3:13; 10:25]
Consider one another to stir up love and good deeds [Heb.10:24]
Confess your sins to one another [Jas.5:16]
Pray for one another [Jas.5:16]
Be hospitable to one another [1 Pet.4:9]
Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another [1 Pet.5:5]
Fellowship with one another [1 Jn.1:7]

“Do nothing from self-will or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves. Do not look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. Have this same mindset in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus” -Phil.2:3-5 [emphasis added].

Choice

“Do not take us across the Jordan” -Num.32:5. This was the determined decree from 2 ½ tribes among the Israel of God. They had gone far enough. Canaan's prospects seemed as nothing in their sight. The command of God was spurned for their self-chosen sanctum.

No movement of the pillar of cloud and fire moved them. No alarmed reproof from their brethren alarmed them. They would stay where they were.

Failure or refusal to enter into the Lord's inheritance is rebellion [Num.32:6-15]. To not dwell in what God has provided in Christ Jesus is wickedness, divisive, and discouragement to the people of God. How many evils have arisen from half-hearted saints who despise God's portion by their self-chosen ways!

Dear Reader, be warned, self-will is dangerous ground. Walking by sight is blindness to the soul. No cloudy pillar to guide you, no Ark of the Covenant dispensing mercy, and no presence of God abides in the land of Gilead [Num.32:1]. Cross over and live in Christ's Canaan.

Things of the world have captured your heart. Cattle have become more precious than Christ [Num.32:4,26]. Fertile earth is counted as more significant than eternal treasure.

O, if we could glimpse for a moment the excellence of the Lord Jesus Christ, pursuits of folly would slip willingly and unnoticed from our grasp! Stupid empty pretenses would be torn down and seen for the idolatrous acts of rebellion that they are [Josh.22:10-29].

“See the copy of the altar of the Lord which our fathers have made, not for burnt offering or for sacrifice” -Josh.22:28. Yes, we see it.

It is empty. No sacrificial smoke ascends from it to heaven. Nothing acceptable is placed upon it. God is not there.

Such an altar has an outward form but no reality. It is good for nothing. It will not convince your children that you have not abandoned the Lord. You have. They will only see you as hypocrites [Josh.22:24-27].

Your altar is for show, not for sacrifice. You claim that it is a “witness” -Josh.22:27. Indeed it is. It testifies to an empty unconsecrated life, a cheap imitation without substance.

No one is fooled thereby. The same spirit that animated Ananias and Sapphira was at work in your copy of the real. But you only have crafted a copy because you do not want the real.

The Lord of heaven knows that it is not His altar. The people of God do not mistake your substitute for the actual. Your children know that you are not in fellowship with the tribes of Israel. The emptiness of your folly is exposed before all.

Why not leave your pretensions? Forsake Gilead’s deception. Canaan awaits the welcome step of your obedience.

“If, however, the land of your possession is unclean, then cross into the land of the possession of the Lord, where the Lord’s tabernacle stands, and take possession among us. Only, do not rebel against the Lord or rebel against us by building an altar for yourselves, besides the altar of the Lord our God” -Josh.22:19.

That’s what this book is all about: leaving man-devised altars, systems, practices, mindsets, perspectives, and demonic intrusions into the midst of the people of God; leave them and return to a pure devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ in obedience to His unchanging written Word, the Bible.

*Lord, I have heard Your speech and I fear.
O Lord, revive Your work in the midst of the years. In our time of deep need,*

*Repeat these deeds You used to do;
In our time reveal them again.
In wrath remember mercy
Hab.3:1,2.*

For further Bible teaching, books,
and stirring up to love and good deeds
in our Lord Jesus Christ,
visit: www.bibleandbeauty.org.

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Appendix 1: The Mystical “9”

Throughout these worldwide traditions, the most powerful way of harnessing the energy of 9 is through MEDITATION. By using the number 9 as a MANTRA or VISUALIZATION, you can connect with your INNER WISDOM and GUIDANCE.

The mystical significance of 9 is completion, wisdom, and spiritual growth. It is seen across the planet as the apex of spiritual attainment and enlightenment.

In Buddhism, there are 9 stages on the path to ENLIGHTENMENT. In ancient China 9 is the number of good fortune, luck, and infinity. The highest heaven is the 9th.

In Greek mythology, the 9 Muses inspired creativity and art, and the serpent-monster Hydra has 9 heads. In Egypt there are 9 gods of the underworld. The Mayans taught 9 levels of CONSCIOUSNESS, corresponding to different stages of evolution.

9 figures significantly in various traditions within Hinduism. The 9 forms of the goddess *Durga* are worshipped. In *Vedic* ASTROLOGY, 9 planets have significant influence on human DESTINY and are associated with different qualities and ENERGIES.

Vaisheshika sets forth 9 universal substances: earth, water, air, fire, sky, time, space, SOUL, MIND. The *Navgraha*, the 9 planets, are worshipped and their influence on earthly life.

Navratri is a 9-day festival, doing homage to the DIVINE feminine ENERGY. *Navratna* are the 9 gems of Hindu ASTROLOGY and the auspicious alignment of cosmic forces.

Vishnu has manifested in 9 avatars to restore cosmic order. The 9 incantations encapsulate DIVINE intervention across diverse epochs.

Mala beads are often used. These are 108 beads, also a SACRED multiple of 9, to focus on a MANTRA or SACRED WORD or SYMBOL during meditation in many spiritual traditions, including Hinduism and Buddhism. It is believed that by CHANTING a MANTRA or intention while moving through each bead, one can enter into a deeper state of MEDITATION and connection with the DIVINE.

Many incorporate the power of the number 9 into the mala bead practice by CHANTING the SACRED SOUND 'OM' 108 times, which connects with the DIVINE WITHIN yourself and all things. It is a powerful practice that helps to connect with a HIGHER STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS [source: healingthroughvisions.com].

Freemasonry uses 9 as the symbol for 32nd degree Masonic Masters in their 9-pointed star. In Masonry, 9 represents man in his imperfect state, who holds the SACRED

TREASURE WITHIN, the true Word of God. Since the Word is WITHIN us and we are the number 9, then the SACRED NUMBER 9 = the Word.

Appendix 2: Balanced Diet Bible Reading Schedule

Read the Whole Word

“It is not an idle Word for you; indeed, it is your life” -Deut.32:47. Jesus said, “The Word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day” -Jn.12:48.

6 chapters are to be read daily, one from each section. Use book marks to keep your place.

Balanced Diet Reading Schedule

1 GENESIS – ESTHER This section is Narrative/History and contains examples, warnings, and illustrations. [After reading Esth.10, return to Gen.1]

2 JOB – MALACHI Contains Poetry and Prophecy [Psalms and Proverbs will not be read as part of this section since they are covered in #3 and #4]. [After reading Mal.4, return to Job 1]

3 PSALMS Prayer, Worship, and Deliverance in Affliction. [After reading Ps. 150, return to Ps. 1]

4 PROVERBS Wisdom for all of life. [After Prov.31, return to Prov.1]

5 MATTHEW – ACTS Life of Christ and the Church. [After reading Acts 28, return to Mt.1]

6 ROMANS – REVELATION Doctrine of the Scriptures. [After reading Rev.22, return to Rm.1]

During the course of one year, Sections **1 & 2** will be read about once each. Sections **3 & 6** will be read about twice each, Section **5** nearly three times, and Section **4** twelve times.

Each section is its own cycle. For example, in Section 1 when you finish Esther, you return to Genesis 1. In Section 2, when you finish Malachi you return to Job 1, etc.

In all of your study of the Word of God, it is very helpful to write down notes of what you learn. It may be only one verse. It may be more. But the things that the Lord shows you from His Word are good to note for your own and other’s blessing.

As well, as you read you will find verses that help to explain other verses in the Bible. These references should be noted neatly in the margin of your Bible near the verse they relate to. By doing this, you will develop your own cross-reference system for the future.

For example, as you read through Proverbs in your daily reading, you will meet with Prov.11:19: “As righteousness leads to life, so he who pursues evil pursues it to his own death.” Likewise you will read Prov.29:1: “He who is often rebuked, and stubbornly hardens his neck, will suddenly be destroyed, and there is no remedy.”

These verses shed light upon 1 John 5:16,17 which describes “sin unto death.” It is very helpful, therefore, to write the references from Proverbs in the margin of your Bible alongside 1 John 5:16,17 as a future reminder.