



Seek The Old Paths

“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths. . . and walk therein”
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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“I DON’T PREACH DOCTRINE”

Roger D. Campbell

That is what the man told me. When I knocked on his door he identified himself as an independent preacher, “Reverend ____.” In the course of our conversation he told me that he would go to any church to preach but he did not want anyone assigning him a topic. Why? His explanation went something like this: “I don’t preach doctrine ... I just preach what the Lord tells me to preach. If He tells me to preach on how to build a fire, that’s what I’ll do....”

Three questions come to mind from the above-noted statements. 1) Should we preach doctrine? 2) Should we preach what the Lord tells us to preach? 3) Should preachers be called “Reverend?” Let us see what the Bible has to say about these matters.

1) Should we preach doctrine?

Mark 4:2-3 says that Jesus *“taught them many things by parables, and said unto them in his doctrine, Hearken; Behold, there went out a sower to sow.”* What was Jesus doing? Teaching people “His doctrine.” Note how the “Sermon on the Mount” begins, and note how the listeners reacted when that sermon concluded: *“And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit...And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine”* (Matt. 5:2; 7:28). What did Jesus do? He taught the people (5:2). What did He teach them? His doctrine (7:28).

Jesus not only taught doctrine, His apostles also taught doctrine. The

Jewish leaders accused them of filling Jerusalem with their “doctrine” (Acts 5:28). But what had the apostles been doing? Teaching the people *“all the words of this life”* (Acts 5:20,26). What had Jesus charged them to do? Go and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15). Thus, when they were teaching the people doctrine, they were simply preaching the Gospel.

How did the people of Rome become saints of God? They *“obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine”* that was delivered or preached to them (Rom. 6:17). They had heard doctrine. Someone had preached doctrine to them. What doctrine? If faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God, then the word or doctrine that they heard, believed, and obeyed was the word of God or Gospel (Rom. 10:17).

The word “doctrine” is translated from the Greek word *didache* which simply means teaching or instruction. Thus, for someone to say, “I don’t preach doctrine” means that he does not preach any teaching. We wonder, what, then, does he preach?

Some have the idea that we ought to preach Jesus and leave off doctrine. Question: How does a person learn about Who Jesus is? Answer: From the teaching of the Bible. Thus, in order to “get to” Jesus, one must first have Bible teaching. Teaching is doctrine. Doctrine is teaching. In order to learn about Jesus, one must hear teaching or doctrine! Not only that, biblically speaking, “to preach Christ” means the same as “to preach the word.” In Acts 8 we read that the

apostles and early saints preached/taught: *“the word”* (8:4), *“Christ”* (8:5), *“things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ”* (8:12), *“the word of God”* (8:14), *“the word of the Lord”* (8:25), *“the gospel”* (8:25), and *“Jesus”* (8:35). Do these references show that the first century disciples preached or taught many different messages? No. They taught one message. It is simply described in a number of ways, and the record plainly shows that when one truly “preaches Jesus,” he is simply “preaching the Gospel.” The idea of, “Let’s preach Jesus and leave off doctrine” is a deceptive ploy and lie of Satan.

One final thought about “doctrine.” It is sometimes suggested that “Gospel” is the message that we are to preach to lost people outside of the Christ, and “doctrine” is the message that we are to preach to the saints. Get it? Gospel for the world, doctrine for the church. The problem, though, is this theory does not harmonize with what the Bible reveals. A brief look at the Book of Romans shows the fallacy of this line of reasoning. First, Paul said that he was ready to preach “the Gospel” to the saints at Rome (Rom. 1:15,7). Thus, “Gospel” can be preached to saved people. Second, Paul showed that the saints in Rome became saved people when they obeyed “doctrine” (Rom. 6:17). Therefore, “doctrine” can be preached to those who are outside the body of

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“I Don’t Preach Doctrine”...



Editorial...

CHANGING THE TREND OF MORAL DIGRESSION #2

Garland M. Robinson

Even though the world is full of wickedness and corruption (1 John 5:19), what can we do to change it? By ourselves we can't change it, but the Gospel of Jesus Christ can. It is both simple and profound. It's simple when men's hearts are convicted of their sin and turn from it in obedience to the Gospel. It's profound when they buck and rebel and refuse to conform to the Gospel. As long as they resist it, it will be a torment in their lives (if they have any conscience at all).

So, what can WE do to help the world see the glorious and blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ (cf. Rom. 15:29; 1 Tim. 1:11)? How do we help them see the peace of God that passeth all understanding (cf. Phil. 4:7)? We can't make them see it or embrace it, but we can be an example of it before their eyes.

What can we do?

Become a Christian and live a faithful Christian life. If you are not a faithful Christian, you're lost — for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God (Rom. 3:23) The wages, the reward, the recompense of living in sin is eternal death, a conscience death (Rom. 6:23). It is separation from God (all that is good and right) for eternity in a devil's hell (Matt. 22:9-13). It is being lost forever to be with the devil and his angels in a lake that burneth with fire and brimstone (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 21:8). However, God desires you to be saved. *"Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Tim. 2:4). *"The Lord...is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance"* (2 Peter 3:9).

God has provided the means of forgiveness for your sins. It is up to you to accept it by obeying his will. **Believe** in Jesus the Christ and his word, the Bible (John 3:16; 8:24), **Repent and Turn** from your sins (Acts

2:38; 17:30; 26:20), **Confess** faith in Christ as the Son of God (Matt. 10:32; Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37) and be **Baptized** (immersed) into water for the forgiveness of your sins (Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; 1 Peter 3:21). Then, continue to **Live Faithful** to the Lord all your life (1 Cor. 15:58; Rev. 2:10).

Live a morally upright life even when those around you do not. James 1:22 says, *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."* By our good example, we are showing the world what living a Christian life is all about. We influence others to learn the truth and obey the Gospel. Jesus said, *"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven"* (Matt. 5:13-16).

There are scores of people in society who are not Christians, yet they live a decent life of basic morals. They do not steal, murder, lie, cheat, commit adultery or live in homosexuality, etc. etc. They are good neighbors. We often refer to them as "good moral people." They are not a detriment to society as those who fill our jails and prisons. But they are still lost because their sins have not been forgiven. Cornelius was *"a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway"* (Acts 10:2). However, he was lost and needed to hear what to do to be saved (Acts 9:6; 11:14). When he heard the Gospel, he readily obeyed it and became a New Testament Christian (Acts 10:48).

Teach your children basic morals of decency and how to live in this life. Morality begins at home! Multitudes of children are left to themselves each day (called latch-key kids) and have no moral guidance from their parents. They are allowed to run wild and more than half the time parents do not even know where they are! Some parents even think it's wrong to teach their children moral uprightness. Their thinking is that they are to learn and make that decision for themselves. What a shame and disgrace! Children must be taught! *"Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."* *"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."* *"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Prov 22:15; 29:15; Eph. 6:4). The nation cannot continue to stand when morality continues to plunge!

Be the proper influence and example before your family, neighbors, working associates and classmates. Watch your **language.** Vulgarity and cursing has become common-place with so many. Let it not be so with you. *"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man"* (Col. 4:6). *"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh"* (Luke 6:45). *"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers"* (Eph. 4:29). Watch your **actions.** *"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation"* (living) (1 Peter 5:8; 1:13).

Exercise your right at election time to vote for those who promote righteous principles. Far too often people vote merely because of political party or a promise of eco-

conomic prosperity. It ought not be that way. There is a vast difference between politicians in their moral stance. So many run their campaign on the promise of defending a “woman’s right” to kill their unborn baby. They call it “pro-choice.” God forbid!! Pro-choice says, I may not choose to kill my children but I’ll defend your right if you choose to kill yours! There is absolutely NO DIFFERENCE between a three month old in the womb and a three month old out of the womb. How disgraceful and disgusting can one possibly be? Such thinking and practice of killing the unborn is twisted and warped and void of any moral decency! Those with this view

are disastrous to the moral climate of our country. Don’t be guilty of contributing to moral decay. Learn where the candidates stand on moral issues and vote according to moral uprightness.

Proverbs 14:34 says, “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people.*” God desires we contend for righteousness and moral decency. Men can do “right things” even though their life is not right itself. I had much rather live near one who, though not a Christian, has a moral sense of decency and uprightness than live near one who doesn’t. Hadn’t you? Ideally, I would love to teach and convert such a person, but

at least if they don’t embrace the Gospel by obeying it, they exhibit parts of it in their lives.

God blesses a nation when it works righteousness. But, if it continues a downward plunge into debauchery, immorality, wickedness and corruption, that nation will not be blessed nor will God allow it to continue to stand. He will eventually bring it low as we see he did time and time again throughout the Old Testament.

All that wickedness needs to succeed is for good people, decent people, to do nothing! Are you having a part in America’s moral rise or decline?

“I Don’t Preach Doctrine”...

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Christ. Should we preach doctrine? Absolutely. Which doctrine? The doctrine of the Christ (2 John 9). To whom should we preach it? To every person that has ears to hear.

2) **Should we preach what the Lord tells us to preach?** Yes. The Lord charged His apostles (and us) to preach “the Gospel” (Mark 16:15). Timothy was charged by the inspired apostle Paul to “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). The same command is just as appropriate for us today. The Spirit guided Peter to tell first century saints (and us), “*If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God*” (1 Peter 4:11). Conclusion? The Lord tells us to preach His word, nothing more, nothing less.

But, as you surely know if you have ever discussed the Bible with others or heard denominational preachers, many today claim that the Lord speaks directly to them and directly gives them the message that He wants them to preach. Friends, God speaks to mankind and calls mankind **through the Gospel** (2 Thess. 2:14). He draws men to Jesus through the message of the Bible (John 6:44,45). All of God’s truth was revealed in the first century (John 16:13). No new revelation(s) are being given today because they are not needed! When inspired men of the first century spoke, they could perform miracles to confirm the word they preached (Mark 16:17-20).

Despite their claims, no person

living today has a “direct line” from God in heaven to their mind. Despite their claims, no person today is doing genuine miracles to prove any new revelation from God. Yes, we do need to preach “what the Lord tells us to preach.” But the message that the Lord wants us to preach is simply the teaching of the Bible. Do not err, my brethren. Any preacher today who claims to preach something because “The Lord laid it on my heart,” is involved in fantasy and deception.

3) **Should preachers be called “Reverend?”** The man whom I met claimed that he preached what God told him to (he meant direct revelations from God). He also identified himself as “Reverend ____.” Well, surely if this man is preaching divinely revealed messages from heaven, then calling himself “Reverend” must be part of God’s teaching, right? Consider two points. First, the word “reverend” is never used in the Bible in reference to one who preaches the Gospel. Thus, to call someone “Reverend ____” is doing that which the Lord has not authorized in the Bible (Col. 3:17). Second, Jesus plainly condemned the use of religious titles. He taught that using the words “Rabbi,” “Master,” and “Father” as religious titles is forbidden (Matt. 23:8-10). How in the world any human being ever came up with the idea of calling a preacher “Reverend,” is beyond me. One thing is certain: the idea did not come from the Bible. Nuff said.

Our preaching brothers that insist on being identified as “Doctor ____” instead of their first name or

“brother ____,” are in the same category of those that use the title “Reverend.” They are violating the principle of Matthew 23:8-10 and need to give it up.

“I don’t preach doctrine.” God forbid that you or I should ever make such a statement. Let us give serious attention to each of the three questions we have considered. They are not trivial. We need to be able to discuss and answer them from the Bible.

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FACING TRAGEDY

Life is filled with troubles, trials and tragedy of all sorts (James 1:11). “Man [that is] born of a woman [is] of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). As long as we live upon the face of this earth, such will be with us. How are we going to face it is the question that comes to mind?

Facing tragedy, How?

- **FOCUS** on the unseen (2 Cor. 4:16-18; Col. 3:1-3).
- **ACKNOWLEDGE** God (Prov. 3:5-6; James 4:13-15).
- **CAST** thy burdens upon the Lord (Psalm 55:22; 1 Peter 5:7).
- **INVESTIGATE** the Word (2 Tim. 2:15; Psalm 119:11).
- **NUMBER** our days (Psalm 90:12; 1 Peter 3:10-11).
- **GIVE THANKS** (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20).

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CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM #2: HOLY BOOKS

Adam Good

Muslims believe that the Bible has been corrupted while the Qur'an has been perfectly preserved, word for word, since the time of Muhammad. Islam's own religious texts refute this belief.

In order to understand a religion, it is necessary to examine the book(s) it venerates. What adherents claim their religion teaches is not as important as what is actually stated in their foundational documents. Individuals may not understand or measure up to the standards of their religion. A faith's canonical texts present that system of belief in an ideal, pure form.

Islam is based on the teachings set forth in the *Qur'an* and on the words and actions of Muhammad found in the *Sunna*. The *Qur'an* (i.e. *Koran*) is organized into 114 chapters known as Surahs. Although the *Qur'an* is the book most associated with Islam, it only contains about 14% of the total Islamic text. The *Sunna* is comprised of the *Hadith*, the further sayings and actions attributed to Muhammad, and the *Sira*, the biography of Muhammad. The *Hadith* expounds upon and further develops the teachings found in the *Qur'an* while the *Sira* provides historical context. The *Sunna* is essential for making sense of the *Qur'an* and for knowing how to practice Islam.

Muhammad lived in present-day Saudi Arabia from 570 to 632 A.D. Muslims believe that at the age of forty, Muhammad went to a cave during what they call the sacred month of Ramadan. While meditating, the angel Gabriel appeared to him for the first time. Illiterate, Muhammad memorized each revelation and recited it to his followers (Surah 7:157; *Qur'an* means recitation). They in turn memorized it and scribbled down certain passages on sundry materials. Over the following centuries, oral traditions about Muhammad proliferated. In the later ninth and early tenth centuries, Muslim scholars began to assemble these sayings. Ap-

plying various criteria, they began to weed out the hadiths they considered spurious (false) from those they considered genuine. Two collections of hadiths, the *Sahih Bukhari* (870 AD) and the *Sahih Muslim* (875 AD), are considered accurate and authoritative. Four additional volumes are well regarded, but not to the same degree. Together, these six *Hadith* collections are known as the *al-kutub al-sittah*, the authentic six. Muslims believe that the Bible has been corrupted while the *Qur'an* has been perfectly preserved, word for word, since the time of Muhammad. Islam's own religious texts refute this belief.

Muhammad never assembled the *Qur'an* in written form. Variations in recitation existed even during his lifetime. One Muslim, Umar bin Al-Khat-tab,

heard Hisham... reciting Surat-al-Furqan in a way different to that of mine. Allah's Messenger had taught it to me (in a different way). So, I...brought him to Allah's Messenger and said, 'I have heard him reciting Surat-al-Furqan in a way different to the way you taught it to me.' The Prophet... asked Hisham to recite it. When he recited it, Allah's Apostle said, 'It was revealed in this way.' He then asked me to recite it. When I recited it, he said, 'It was revealed in this way. The *Qur'an* has been revealed in seven different ways, so recite it in the way that is easier for you' (Bukhari 2419).

Muhammad himself forgot portions of the *Qur'an*. In Bukhari 5038 we read, "Allah's Messenger heard a

man reciting the *Qur'an* at night, and said, 'May Allah bestow His Mercy on him, as he has reminded me of such-and-such Verses of such-and-such Suras, which I was caused to forget.'" On one occasion, Muhammad led public prayer. When he had finished, "the people whispered among themselves. He asked 'what is the matter with you?' They said: 'Messenger of Allah, has (the number of rak'ahs of) the prayer been increased?'" The term rak'ah refers to the ritualized movements and words said by Muslims during prayer. Muhammad responded "No." They said: 'you have offered five rak'ahs of prayer.' He then turned away and performed two prostrations, and afterwards gave the salutation. He then said: 'I am only a human being, I forget, as you forget'" (Dawud 1022).

Shortly after Muhammad's unexpected death in 632 AD, a battle took place in which hundreds of his companions (who heard him recite the *Qur'an*) were killed. Concerned that "a large part of the *Qur'an* may be lost," Abu Bakr, Muhammad's father-in-law and the first caliph or leader of the Muslim community, instructed Zaid bin Thabit to collect the *Qur'an*. He protested "How dare I do something which [Muhammad] did not do?" Eventually, Thabit agreed to "search for the fragmentary scripts of the *Qur'an* and collect it (in one book)." He described the task "if Abu Bakr had ordered me to shift a mountain...from one place to another it would not have been heavier for me than this ordering me to collect the *Qur'an*." Thabit assembled scraps of the *Qur'an* written upon "leafless stalks of the date-palm tree and from the pieces of leather and hides and from the stones, and from the chests of men (who had memorized the

Qur'an)” (Bukhari 7191). What guarantee is there that Thabit found everything?

As the Muslim Empire expanded, “differences in the recitation of the *Qur'an*” threatened to divide the Islamic community (Bukhari 4987). Where did these competing versions come from? Muhammad instructed his followers to “learn the recitation of *Qur'an* from four persons: Ibn Mas'un, Salim, the freed slave of Abu Hudhaifa, Ubai and Mu'adh bin Jabal” (Bukhari 3806). Differences were inevitable between these four men. The origin of the *Qur'an* is comparable to an enormous game of telephone.

In the 640s AD, the third caliph, Uthman, instructed Thabit and three other scribes to standardize the *Qur'an*. As the scribes worked to redact a canonical *Qur'an* “from various written manuscripts,” Thabit realized “one of the Verses of Surat Al-Ahzab was missing which I used to hear Allah’s Apostle reciting. I could not find it except with Khuza’ima bin Thabjt An-Ansari, whose witness Allah’s Apostle regarded as equal to the witnesses of two men” (Bukhari 4784). How many verses were lost due to Thabit’s imperfect recall or because he could find no collaboration? This is not conjecture. The *Hadith* references a teaching that is not found in the modern *Qur'an*.

...among what Allah revealed, was the Verse of the Rajam [stoning adulterers] and we did recite this Verse and understood and memorized it. Allah’s Apostle did carry out the punishment of stoning and so did we after him. I am afraid that after a long time has passed, somebody will say, ‘By Allah, we did not find the Verse of the Rajam in Allah’s Book,’ and thus they will go astray by leaving an obligation which Allah has revealed’ (Bukhari 6830).

That the *Qur'an* is incomplete and imperfect is established by Islam’s own documents.

“Every Muslim province” received a copy of Uthman’s new *Qur'an*. Uthman then ordered “all the other *Qur'anic* materials, whether written in fragmentary manuscripts or whole

copies, be burnt” (Bukhari 4987). Uthman’s standardization sparked dissent. Incensed, Ibn Mas’ud, one of the four men singled out by Muhammad as an authority on the *Qur'an*, asked “How do you want me to recite [the *Qur'an*]? According to the recitation of Zaid bin Thabit, when I learned seventy-odd Surahs from the mouth of the Messenger of Allah when Zaid was with the other boys with two braids” (an-Nasa’i 5064)? He refused to surrender his materials and eventually completed his own version of the *Qur'an*. Known as the *Kufan Codex*, it omits Surahs 1, 113, and 114.

The oldest extant *Qur'an* dates to around 790 AD — some 160 years after Muhammad. There is no way to verify any of the transcribed oral tradition found in the *Hadith* regarding the origin of the *Qur'an*. Consider that when Muhammad Ibn Ismail Al-Bukhari compiled the *Sahih* Bukhari, he gathered over 300,000 hadiths, but only accepted about 2,600 as genuine (only 0.867% made the cut). It is apparent that error, omission, collusion, and censorship took place in the assembly of both the *Qur'an* and the *Hadith*.

The **origin of the Bible** presents a stark contrast. Abundant evidence proves that the Bible has come down to the present day essentially identical to the original manuscripts penned by the “holy men of God” who wrote as they were “moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). The Dead Sea Scrolls are a salient corroboration of this truth. Prior to their discovery, the most ancient Old Testament manuscript (the Aleppo Codex) dated to 935 AD. Then, among the Dead Sea Scrolls, researchers discovered a nearly complete copy of the book of Isaiah — the famous Isaiah scroll. Gleason Archer summarized “Even though the two copies of Isaiah discovered...near the Dead Sea in 1947 were a thousand years earlier than the oldest dated manuscript previously known...they proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95 percent of the text. The five percent of variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling” (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, 25). Over a thousand years of copying and not a single meaningful error had entered the sacred text.

There are literally tens of thousands of manuscripts that collectively attest to the accurate transmission of the holy Scriptures through time down to the present. Truly, the Bible, “the word of our God, stands forever” (Isa. 40:8; 1 Peter 1:25).

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Elder's COLUMN

POSTMODERN THINKING #2 PLURALISM

Victor M. Eskew

In our first installment (Jan/17), we introduced the fact that the United States is a society that has embraced postmodern thinking. In this article, and four to follow, we are going to briefly examine five of the main pillars of postmodern thought. When a person is cognizant of these foundational elements, he will have a better understanding of what is taking place in our nation and with many in the church as well. Basically, we are being influenced by a thought process that runs contrary to the thinking of our nation's Founding Fathers and tragically, contrary to the teaching of the New Testament of Jesus Christ.

The cornerstone of postmodern thought is the concept of **pluralism**. Pluralism is defined as "the mixture of many diverse people, things, elements, etc." In our *nation*, we see pluralism everywhere we look. In fact, our nation has defined itself as pluralistic. On the base of the Statue of Liberty are the words of Emma Lazarus, entitled: "The New Colossus." The second half of her poem reads as follows:

'Keep, ancient land, your storied
pomp!' cries she
With silent lips. 'Give me your
tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to
breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teem-
ing shore.
Send these, the homeless, tem-
pest tost to me.
I lift my lamp beside the golden
door!'

The United States calls for people of all races, cultures, and nationalities to come to us. We welcome diversity into our borders. This huge "melting pot" is one example of pluralism.

Pluralism can also be seen in the *business world*. There used to be a time when our nation went through 'fashion fads.' Different fads could come and go. Now, anything goes. At the mall a person can see individuals

dressed as executives, jocks, Goths, hippies, rockers, cowboys, yuppies, rappers, or a host of other fashionistas. In fashion, anything goes. Everything is acceptable. The fashion world has embraced pluralism. The same can be said of the car industry. It used to be easy to keep up with the various models of cars produced by "The Big Three." Now, there are literally hundreds of makes and models from which to choose. It is extremely difficult to shop for a car because of all the options available. The car industry has embraced pluralism.

In many ways, pluralism is a wonderful concept. Indeed, the Lord's church accepts men and women from all walks of life — every culture, ethnic background, economic status, etc. etc. None are excluded. The Gospel is for all with no exceptions (Acts 10:34-35). However, pluralism's *concepts* and *practices* also creates havoc in the religious world. The reason is because Christianity (as the Lord made it, not the way the world sees it) is an "exclusive" religion. Exclusive means: "not admitting of something else; incompatible." When men and women obey the Gospel to become Christians, they cannot bring their culture, background, status, philosophy, habits, etc. etc. with them when it's contrary to the Scriptures. The Lord's church is indeed a "melting pot" because all the things of the world (moral and doctrinal habits, concepts and practices) are left behind. Acts 17:30 demands all repent of such things. All blend (melt) into one body, speaking the same thing, having no divisions among us, being perfectly joined together in the same mind and the same judgment (1 Cor. 1:10).

Christianity cries out to the world that it is the one, the only, true religion. It was Jesus Himself who said: "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (John 14:6). Peter echoed Jesus' words when he proclaimed: "*Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name*

under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

In addition to there being only **one Savior** in Christianity, there is also only **one truth** that will set men free from sin. In John 17:17, we have these words of the Christ: "*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*" This Word, when it is heard, understood, and acted on, will set a man free from sin. "*Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, [then] are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31-32). Christianity does not declare there are "many truths" that exist. Christianity proclaims that there is "one truth" and "only one truth." The truth is the Bible, the Word of the living God; particularly the New Testament since it is the book by which the whole world will be judged at the last great day.

There is one other thing that is exclusive to Christianity, the **one church** wherein salvation can be found. In Ephesians 4:4, Paul begins his list of the "seven ones." Here is how he starts the list: "*There is one body....*" In Ephesians 1:22-23, Paul reveals the identity of the one body. It is the church of Christ. He writes that God the Father "*...hath put all things under his feet (the feet of Jesus the Christ), and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.*" The church is the body and the body is the church (Col. 1:18). There is one body (Eph. 4:4). Therefore, there is only one church. In Acts 2:47, we learn the saved are added by the Lord to the body, his church. In Ephesians 5:23, Jesus is referred to as "*the savior of the body.*" Salvation can only be found in the church built by Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:18; Acts 20:28). His church is exclusive and man cannot change it!

Dear readers, when exclusive ideas are introduced into a pluralistic society, controversy, to say the least,

will be started. Usually, there will be an ‘all out war’ of ideologies. The things that declare themselves to be exclusive are despised. They are mocked, ridiculed, and persecuted. Some will seek to eliminate them altogether. Exclusivism and pluralism do not mix. They are as opposite as light and darkness.

The faithful Christian who stands opposed to pluralism in religious and moral matters is a thorn in the side of those who accept pluralism. Some Christians have not been able to handle the pressure and the persecution of a pluralistic society. Instead of standing, they have compromised their principles. Instead of condemn-

ing all that opposes truth, they condone the lies, falsehoods, and evils of religious pluralism. Those who do are accepted by the world. We will find out why in another section of this study.

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ANTIDOTE FOR WORRY

Rod Rutherford

“In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and thoughts through Christ Jesus” (Phil. 4:6,7).

Worry is a killer! It is a contributing factor in heart disease and hypertension according to medical experts. It is also directly linked to mental and emotional illness. Worry is not only a killer of the human body, it is also a killer of the joy of living. Many people are so paralyzed with worry they cannot enjoy the simple pleasures of life.

Worry is distinctively a human characteristic. Did you ever see a horse or a dog or any other animal with a worried expression on its face? Unfortunately, Christians seem to be as much afflicted with worry as people in the world.

Many of our worries are unnecessary. God does not want us to be miserable and morose, filled with fear of the present and dread of the future. Jesus said: *“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (John 10:10).

In God’s Word we can learn a few simple rules which, if applied, will largely eliminate worry from our lives.

First, **let us realize God loves us** and is PERSONALLY concerned about each one of us as individuals. Jesus told his disciples: *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows”* (Matt. 10:29-31). Paul said: *“What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things”* (Rom. 8:31,32)?

Second, **let us have faith in God.** We may think we trust God but falter when a crisis comes. Jesus chided His disciples on one occasion by saying, *“O ye of little faith!”* (Matt. 6:30). God has all the abundance of the universe at His disposal (Psa. 24:1). He loves us

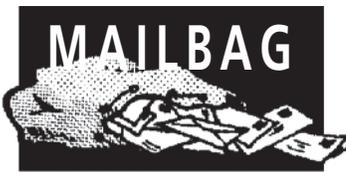
and will not withhold any good thing from us if we but ask Him according to His will. *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matt. 6:33). Most if not all of our worries would be dissipated if we had a stronger faith in God and in His providence.

Third, **let us learn to live one day at a time.** What is past cannot be changed. What is future is in the hands of God. We need to learn to live in the present tense and we will not be so tense. Jesus said: *“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof”* (Matt. 6:34).

Fourth, **let us remember to “take it to the Lord in prayer”** — as the words of an old hymn state so well. If we would do this, it would lift many a burden from our shoulders. The Apostle Paul said: *“In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall guard your hearts and thoughts through Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:6,7). The Apostle Peter adds: *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time: casting all your cares upon him; for he careth for you”* (1 Peter 5:6).

Let us not shorten our lives or fail to enjoy everyday living because of needless worry. Let us trust our gracious heavenly Father to fulfill His promises to us. Just as we want the very best for our fleshly children, so God wants us, His spiritual children, to have what is best for us. *“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him”* (Matt. 7:11)?

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

We appreciate the great work you are doing through *Seek The Old Paths*. May our heavenly Father continue to bless you with many years of proclaiming the Old Jerusalem Gospel. After fifty years of local work we moved back to our home in West Plains Missouri July 1, 2015. I

work two days a week in counseling with the Curry Street congregation in West Plains, and preach each Lord's day for the Prairie Grove congregation in Caulfield, Missouri. In addition to this, I conduct Gospel meetings as opportunities are presented. I have also developed a series of lessons "Strengthening Your Marriage or I Married Who." This series is conservative regarding MDR. If any of your readers are interested in scheduling me for a meeting or seminar they may contact me at: **Ivie Powell, P.O. Box 92, West Plains, MO 65775. Email: iwph3@gmail.com.** "Please put a reminder in *Seek The Old Paths* about the error in the *English Standard Version (ESV)* written by Robert R. Taylor, Jr. I was in a congregation the other day and the preacher used a lot of Bible, but each one advertised the ESV. Thank you" ...**James Berry, Montgomery, AL.** [NOTE: Some of the errors of the ESV was reviewed in a series of three articles in *Seek The Old Paths* back in February, March and April, 2013. You can read them online at: www.seektheoldpaths.com/stop2013.htm]. "Thank you all so much for this publication! It is so needed" ...**Judith Sutterfield, Indianapolis, IN.** "I appreciate your stand for the truth. May God bless you as you continue this work" ...**Millboro, VA.** "My mother has gone to a nursing home and would like to receive STOP. Thank you for your work for the Lord" ...**Norma Chaffin, Russellville, AL.** "I would like very much to be put on your mailing list for your publication *Seek The Old Paths*. I enjoy your articles very much and they are right on point. Your writers always follow the Scriptures to the letter. That is something that is not too common these days. Thank you and please keep up the good work" ...**Jim W. Foshee, McCloud, OK.** "Your paper is of great value. Thank you" ...**Ray Moran, Springdale, PA.** "Please stop sending" ...**Clarence Callis, Portland, TN.** "I pray that this finds you in good spirits and health. I want to commend you for the work you are doing for the Lord. I have been receiving *Seek The Old Paths* for a few months now and I enjoy it very much because it's from the Word of God — sound doctrine. I am writing to let you know that I have been transferred to the Texas State prison system and I would love to continue to study the word of God with you. I want to thank you for allowing me to study with you and for sending me STOP. Thanks for everything. May God bless you" ...**Ryan Leatherman, Abilene, TX.** "It is very encouraging to hear faithful men speak the truth of God's word so boldly as you do in *Seek The Old Paths*. Thank you" ...**Ripley, MS.** "Thank you for the good work. I enjoy your paper so much. I attend a small congregation and I know they would enjoy your publication of *Seek The Old Paths* also. Thank you and keep up the good work" ...**Martha Hudgins, Centerville, TN.** "Thanks for all you do to send forth God's word. We pray God to bless your efforts" ...**Don & Judy Gribble, McMinnville, TN.** "We appreciate your work in *Seek The Old Paths*. We have been receiving the paper now for several years. We need to reduce the number you send us by 10. We have about that many left over each time. Thank you" ...**Dayton Church of Christ, Dayton, TN.** "Please send STOP to the following brethren. Thank you for the good work you are doing with this good paper. Trust things are going well with you and your family" ...**James Sampson, Marshfield, WI.** "Thank you brethren" ...**Christopher Kidd, Dana, KY.** "Remove us from your mailing

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