

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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SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

Leon D. Schrei

It was my privilege to attend a lectureship in Sapulpa, Oklahoma this year. The theme was "Speaking The Truth In Love." Not once did I hear the notion that in order to speak the truth in love the speaker must be so concerned with not hurting the feelings of the hearers he must soften either the tone or word choice of the message. There is a major fallacy popular among many that consideration for the hearer must take priority over speaking plainly the message of God's Word.

Certainly the greatest needs of preaching today are clarity, conviction, boldness, and the willingness to stand alone. Does confusion result from clarity? Is ignorance the consequence of plainness of speech? Does conviction spring forth from pabulum? Does strength and courage arise from spinelessness? Is boldness to speak plainly, encouraged when the speaker is hit over the head repeatedly with remarks like: "You know, you really hurt so-and-so's feelings this morning with your sermon?" Would you remain unswervingly faithful even if it meant losing all your friends, having to endure scorn, derision, name calling, and certain financial ruin? Would you stand entirely alone without human encouragement for the truth of the Gospel?

Are we more concerned with not making people angry than we are preaching the pure, undiluted, soul convicting, Gospel of Jesus Christ? Could it not be the case that the emotion of anger turns out to be the motivation which causes a person to think seriously about his soul's condition?

Certainly we have all heard stories about how a certain person became so angry upon hearing the truth preached without compromise that he studied to prove the preacher wrong and wound up converting himself. Would this have ever happened if he had been made to feel comfortable right where he was?

What is it that motivates ordinary men to become preachers of the Word of God? Do we really believe they are motivated by some perverse desire to cruelly inflict pain? Faithful Gospel preachers are all good men striving with all their heart to proclaim the riches of God's grace and mercy in precisely the manner in which God has prescribed. Even those who could be regarded as strident in their language are just trying to wake us up so we might walk in the path of God's Word. Notice what God said to Jeremiah? "See, I have this day set thee over the nations and over the kingdoms, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant. ...Therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces.... And they shall fight against thee; but they shall not prevail against thee; for I am with thee, saith the LORD, to deliver thee" (Jer. 1:10,17-19). "To whom shall I speak, and give warning, that they may hear? behold, their ear is uncircumcised, and they cannot hearken: behold, the word of the LORD is unto them a reproach; they have no delight in it. Therefore I am full of the fury of the LORD; I am weary with holding in: I will pour it out upon the children abroad, and upon

the assembly of young men together: ... Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation.... Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it" (Jer. 6:10-19).

There isn't a preacher today (worth his salt) who doesn't think it is Jeremiah's style of preaching that is sorely needed now. After all, isn't that exactly what Paul told Timothy. He said: "I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:1-4).

Our politically correct generation has an uncanny tolerance of all things, except those things to which they are opposed. They desire to validate their

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Speaking The Truth...



Editorial...

WHAT DO MEN DO WHEN THEY DO NOT LIKE OR CANNOT ANSWER THE TRUTH?

Roger D. Campbell

Today, many laugh at us when we preach the Truth, but their mockery does not change anything: the Truth is still the Truth, and only those who obey it will receive eternal salvation (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

God's objective Truth exists. Jesus said the Father's Word is Truth (John 17:17). Jesus commanded His apostles to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every person (Mark 16:15). That is another way of saying that the apostles were to preach the Truth, for "the word of Truth" and "the Gospel of salvation" are the same (Eph. 1:13). The church has the same commission today: preach the Gospel or Truth. However, we understand that some reject the Truth and thus never receive the remission of sins. Others accept the Truth about how to be saved, and are baptized into Christ, but later do not receive what the Bible teaches on other themes. It is interesting and important to see how people, both in and out of the church, react when they do not like some Bible teaching, or when they cannot answer the Truth.

In both the Old and New Testaments we see that some physically persecuted the messengers of Jehovah when they did not like what the prophets preached or could not answer them. When **Zechariah** the son of Jehoiada rebuked the Jews for transgressing the commandments of God, king Joash ordered men to stone Zechariah to death (2 Chron. 24:20-22). Why? Not because Zechariah's message was false, but because Joash and the people did not like what he said! **Jeremiah** was imprisoned and beaten for the same reason.

What about our Lord Jesus? He always preached the Truth (John 8:45,46), but the Jewish leaders were jealous of Him (Mark 15:10) and turned Him over to Pilate, claiming He was worthy of death.

Stephen was killed, not because he preached falsehood or compromised the Truth, but because the Jews did not like the Truth he preached (Acts 7).

It is written that others mocked the prophets of God who preached the Truth. Jehovah sent His messengers to exhort the Jews to repent and return to Him, "But they mocked the messengers of God, and despised his words, and misused his prophets..." (2 Chron. 36:15,16). We read of the same thing in the New Testament when Paul preached the Gospel in Athens: "And when they heard of the resurrection of the dead, some mocked..." (Acts 17:32). On a later occasion when Paul preached the Gospel before King Agrippa II and Festus, Festus said to him, "Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad." Paul's response was, "I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness" (Acts 26:24,25). Today, many laugh at us when we preach the Truth, but their mockery does not change anything: the Truth is still the Truth, and only those who obey it will receive eternal salvation (2 Thess. 1:6-9).

"You do not have any love." That is what we often hear when we

preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) and refuse to compromise the Truth. It is possible that one may preach the Truth and do so in an unkind manner. We want to say without reservation that we do not approve of speaking unkindly or purposely offending someone when teaching or preaching. It is absolutely necessary to speak with a good attitude or a spirit of love. However, we must be careful that we do not make false conclusions on this matter. Consider this question: Which is more important, to preach the Truth, or to preach with a kind spirit or good attitude? In other words, which is more important, one's message or one's attitude? Both are important! It is false to say that it is acceptable to preach with an unkind spirit as long as one preaches the Truth. It is also false to say that it does not matter if one preaches the Truth or not, as long as he manifests a kind spirit. A third false conclusion would be to say that one who preaches the Truth, and nothing but the Truth, has no love. Jesus preached the Truth. Did everyone accept what He said? No. Does that prove He had no love? Of course not. Paul met opposition everywhere he preached the Gospel. Does that prove he had no love for those to whom he preached? Of course not. We will not knowingly continue to fellowship those who are walking disorderly, for this is the command of the Lord (2 Thess. 3:6,14). Does that mean we have no love? If so, then it means the Lord, who commanded us to withdraw from the disorderly, has no love. But, our God is a God of love and mercy, so those who carry out His will cannot be doing wrong. Paul told the church in Corinth to stop having fellowship with a brother who was a fornicator (1 Cor. 5), but he later told them, "Let all that you do be done with love" (16:14, NKJV). Thus, it is possible to obey the Lord's command to withdraw from the ungodly, and to take such action with a spirit of love for them.

"You are a legalist or law-keeper." How often have we heard that accusation after we have taught the Bible Truth in a discussion or class! We want to say plainly that regardless of what names others might call us ("legalists," "command-

ment keepers,” “Pharisees,” “ultra-conservatives,” “antis,” or whatever), if God be our helper, we will continue to preach the Truth of the Gospel, all the Truth of the Gospel, and only the Truth of the Gospel. For only the Truth of the Gospel can make men free (John 8:32) and only the Truth of the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Rom. 1:16).

Does Jesus have commandments we must obey? He Himself said, “*If ye love me, keep my commandments*” (John 14:15). Which is better, to keep Jesus’ commandments, or to break them? You know the answer! Does Jesus have a law? Paul wrote of the “*law of Christ*” (Gal. 6:2), calling it also “*the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 8:2). Through James the Holy Spirit wrote that one is blessed who hears and continues in “*the perfect law of liberty*” (James 1:25). These references plainly show that, yes, the Lord does have a law under which Christians live today. No, we do not count on perfect obedience to save us, but we with joy accept God’s promise to extend His grace to those who live faithfully.

Is it wrong to strive with all of one’s heart to obey the Lord’s law (the teaching of Christ)? Of course not. But does the Bible not say that we are saved by mercy and grace? It surely does, and it also teaches that one’s good works could never save him (Eph. 2:4,5,8,9). However, the Bible clearly teaches that in order for a child of God to remain in fellowship with God and to continue to please Him, he must “*walk in truth*,” “*walk after his commandments*,” and “*abide in the doctrine of Christ*” (2 John 4,6,9). True, only the blood of Jesus can wash away a Christian’s sins, but that blood washes away one’s sins only when he walks in the light (1 John 1:7), that is, lives in harmony with Jesus’ teaching. There can be no salvation where there is no obedience to Jesus’ teaching.

“**Let’s quit arguing about little things and just work together to preach Christ.**” This is what some brethren say when we point out the error they are openly teaching or supporting. First of all, in the New Testament “*to preach Christ*” (Acts 8:5,35) means the same as “*to preach the word*,” “*to preach the word of the Lord*,” and “*to preach the*

Gospel” (Acts 8:4,25). Thus, if one is really “*preaching Christ*,” then he is preaching the Truth, not only about the earthly life of Jesus, but also the teaching that comes from Christ. Second, when a brother in Christ teaches that one can receive the remission of sins before baptism, we do not consider it a small thing, for the Scriptures teach that baptism is for one who is not yet saved (Acts 2:38; 22:16). We could never consider it a small thing for a congregation to have sisters leading prayers and songs in worship services or preaching when men are present, for the Holy Spirit clearly shows that men are to be in the role of leadership in the church (1 Tim. 2:8,11,12). It is not a small thing when one teaches a man can divorce his wife (not for her fornication) and marry another woman, and that God approves of this second so-called marriage. Jesus called this relationship “*adultery*” (Matt. 19:9), so how could we consider it a small thing? I mention these three specific examples of departure from the Scriptures because these things are currently being propagated in the Ukraine.

We have no desire to be the kind of people with whom it is difficult or impossible to work in peace. Our sincere desire is to strive “*to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Eph. 4:3), but we will not compromise the Gospel just in order to please men and avoid division. We hate division in the church, but compromising the Truth is not the answer to avoiding division. We can have true unity only when we walk together in the light of God’s Word.

“**You think you know everything.**” This is what some say to us when we stand strong for the Truth and against their false positions. This accusation is not pleasant to hear, because we know that it is not true. “*God knoweth all things*” (1 John 3:20), but we do not. We have many times confessed “*I don’t know the answer*” when asked questions in a Bible class. However, there are some things we must know. We must “*understand*” the will of God (Eph. 5:17). We must “*know*” the Truth before it can make us free (John 8:32). We “*understand*” that God created all things by His word (Heb. 11:3). We “*know*” God sent His Son to the earth (John 17:23), and

we “*know assuredly*” that God made Him Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). We can know how to become a Christian and how to live faithfully in Christ. Again, there are some Biblical matters of which we personally do not have full understanding, but this will not cause us to stop preaching the Gospel, nor will it cause us to cease pointing out and rebuking “*the unfruitful works of darkness*” that brethren are supporting (Eph. 5:11).

Some members of the church leave one congregation and begin attending another when they do not like the hard preaching they hear at the first one. There is nothing wrong with making a decision to attend a different congregation as long as we leave the first one in peace (that is, if the congregation is sound in the faith), and the one we now attend teaches and upholds the Truth. But, for one to decide to leave a church because the Truth is being preached there and he just does not like to hear the whole counsel of God, is not going to help anyone, and will in no way build up the body of Christ.

Let all of us think on these things and determine to strive to please the Lord in all things (Gal. 1:10), not allowing Satan to cause us to waver in our stand for the Truth.

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CARNALITY

Weigh Down Workshops

Ben F. Vick, Jr.

Earlier this year, David Lipscomb University named Gwen Shamblin "Christian Business Leader" for 1998. She is the founder and chief executive officer of Weigh Down Workshop Inc. Steve Flatt, president of Lipscomb, called her "a remarkable lady." According to the report on the Web, the honor was based on three criteria. Flatt said, "First, her life exemplifies a dedicated and consistent walk with Christ. Second, her business the Weigh Down Workshop is more ministry than industry. Third, the phenomenal success of the Weigh Down Workshop is attributable to the direct blessing of God and Gwen's prudent stewardship of the abilities and talents He has given to her."

Gwen is a member of the Otter Creek Church of Christ, which has bragged about being the first church in its fellowship to hire a full-time female minister. Gwen Shamblin is going around the world via the Internet, her book, and personal visits, selling her doctrine of weight reduction. Her workshops are located in 68 countries. The Lord desires that we take care of our physical bodies. Paul wrote, "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). Temperance, or self-control, is one of the Christian graces we are to add to our lives (2 Peter 1:5-9).

However, I am sounding the alarm about Shamblin's work for several reasons.

First, she is guilty of teaching and usurping authority over men in her semi-religious weight-reduction workshops. She is teaching over men in these settings. Is she limiting her teaching to women only? Absolutely not! But Paul wrote, "Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.

But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, nor to be in silence" (1 Tim. 2:11-12). Anyone who has taken the time to read what she is putting out would know she is teaching religion.

Second, her message is Pentecostal and Calvinistic. Shamblin teaches that God still gives signs. She claims that God called her on the phone (The Weigh Down Diet, p. 246). She danced a ballet for the Lord (p. 247). She interprets love songs as God's speaking to her (p. 141). Gwen thinks that God awakens her at night, giving her signs. Listen: "As I learned to be directed by Him in little ways, I eventually decided that it was God who is waking me in the night. It took a long time before I made the connection. Then, to be sure, I asked God to make it clear to me. I asked, 'If it is You, O Lord, wanting me to get up to read Your Word or to talk to You (pray), then could You wake me with two things at once? For example, Lord, could You wake me having to go to the bathroom and blow my nose, or could you combine the moon shining in my eyes and Puss'n'Boots, our cat, rattling a bowl in the kitchen?' You see, getting out of bed in the middle of the night is painful to me... So, God would You send two things to wake me?" (pp. 153-154)

In another place in her book, THE WEIGH DOWN DIET, she wrote: "Recently, as I was driving to work, I worried that God was mad at me or that He was not with me. So I pouted to Him and explained to Him that I had kept my end of the bargain and that I could feel the love I had for Him in my heart. It was a strong love. So I asked for something visible from this invisible God to show me that He was still there with me and loved me. I really could not come up with a creative sign for God, so I prayed that He would just send maybe a bird into view. Well, before the words got out of my mouth, I came upon a mail box that I had

passed every day on my way to work. That day, the dove and the word "Faith" on the mail box jumped out at me. God was telling me to have faith that he loves me, I started crying as I saw how kind He was to hear my prayers and answer them so quickly..." (p. 122).

The writer of Hebrews tells us, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things by whom also he made the worlds" (Heb. 1:1-2). God speaks today through his Son, Jesus Christ. Christ speaks to us through the Word revealed to the apostles and prophets by the Holy Spirit. It is the Bible that reveals God's Will today. He does not speak through signs and miracles as he did at one time. But, throughout Shamblin's book we read of God's having revealed His Will in some way other than through the Bible, either by the author herself or testimonies she has placed in the book with no disclaimers.

She implies the Bible is not sufficient to reveal God's will to man. Then, she puts down those who uphold the Bible. She wrote: "...When you realize that we can even worship religion, or the written word more than God Himself, you know that we need to be aware of the deceitfulness of the world. The Pharisees were into "bibliolatry" — the worship of the written word — but they did not know Jesus. John 5:39-40 tells us that Jesus said, 'You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me, yet you refuse to come to me to have life.' So, we need to wake up" (Gwen's Web page, n.d.).

First, Gwen needs to take a dose of her own medicine. She's inebriated in her pseudo-religious fat reduction program. She has a book. She

has a web site. She has workshops. All of these things deal with this physical body that is going to return to the dust one day (Eccl. 12:7). Who is worshipping what?

Second, sister Shamblin would do well to search the Scriptures herself and learn the Truth concerning Christ and how he speaks today. Actually, the Pharisees with blind prejudice, read the Old Testament. If they had been open minded, they would have learned that the Scriptures testified of Jesus Christ. Upholding the Bible does not mean one is worshipping it. Though she perverts the Bible, she often refers to it. Is she guilty of “bibliolatry?” She would do far better to quote the Scriptures and quit referring to signs and calls from God. She’s a dreamer (Jer. 23:16-29).

Third, Gwen Shamblin claims God is providing her opportunities to spread “His message of deliverance from strongholds.” In April, 1992, the Bellevue Baptist Church, located in the Memphis suburb of Cordova, hosted one of her workshops. At that time the attendance on Sunday morning was about 12,000. She has spread her doctrine via CHARISMA, a pentecostal-type magazine. This summer in Nashville, a national conference called *Desert Oasis '98*, sponsored by the Weigh Down Workshop took place. It was held at the Nashville Convention Center July 31 through August 1. On Shamblin’s web site we are told, “There will be periods of awesome praise and worship, Gwen will be sharing messages from the heart, and there will be life-changing testimonies shared....” Music was provided by Billy and Sarah Gaines, David Baroni, and Full Access.

Finally, another reason why I oppose Shamblin and her Weigh Down Workshops is because she is making merchandise of the church, causing it to veer from its God-given work. Some who claim to be Churches of Christ are putting on these workshops. They have departed from the work of the church, which is to seek and save the lost, not the overweight (Luke 19:10).

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A POLLUTED ALTAR

Roelf L. Ruffner

Our God has always been a God who desired worship, yet on His terms. When He brought the children of Israel out of bondage, one of the first things He did was to instruct them in proper worship. He dictated to His friend Moses, “*And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it*” (Exodus 20:25). God’s instructions were in sharp contrast to the ornate altars of Israel’s heathen neighbors, such as the Egyptians. Moses faithfully recorded God’s pattern concerning worship and followed it all his life (Heb. 8:5).

Approximately forty years later, Joshua, the successor to Moses, built an altar for offerings to thank God for the Israelites’ victory over their enemies, in accordance with Moses’s instructions. The writer records the manner in which the altar was constructed, “*as it is written in the book of the law of Moses, an altar of whole stones, over which no man hath lifted up any iron*” (Josh. 8:30-31). If Joshua had built an altar of hewn or dressed stone, would it have been pleasing to God? One can quickly turn to the example of Aaron’s sons, Nadab and Abihu, who tried to offer strange (unauthorized) fire in worship and find that Jehovah destroyed them (Lev. 10:1,2). They failed to follow the divine pattern!

More than one hundred and fifty years ago, men and women came out of the darkness of denominationalism and set about to restore New Testament Christianity. Using God’s divine pattern, the New Testament, they cast aside their inherited ideas concerning salvation and embraced simple obedience of the Lord’s command, “*He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). By the all sufficient light of God’s Word they left sentimentality and emotionalism regarding worship and sought to follow the example of the Pentecostians: “*And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42). They built their spiritual altars of unhewn stone. They became part of the “holy temple in the Lord” and a “habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:21-22).

But soon, “educated, urbane” men came along introducing unauthorized worship in the church of God. They admired the melodious sound of their denominational neighbor’s organ and despaired at the rough, unaccompanied singing of the church. However, they were challenged by the God-fearing who consulted the divine pattern and found only unaccompanied singing as authorized by God (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16,17). These usurpers could not meet the challenge of God’s Word so they left the temple of God to form just one more denomination among many, the **Christian Church**. To this day these spiritual descendants of Jeroboam “kiss the calves” of mechanical instruments of music (Hosea 13:6).

Now, almost 2,000 years after the New Covenant of Jesus Christ was given, modern day Nadabs and Abihus seek to change the worship of the church of Christ. Like their spiritual forbearers of the late nineteenth century, they imagine themselves exceedingly clever. Instead of trying to bring the piano in the front door of the church building, they are slipping it in the rear entrance by promoting “innovations” such as the use of choirs and solos. Yet these are just as unauthorized as the use of mechanical instruments of music in praise to God. On the surface they seem to be “unaccompanied” and “acapella” but in reality they are as much entertainment as a rock music band or a trained monkey doing tricks. They do not meet the requirements of congregational singing as commanded by the Apostle Paul and the Holy Spirit. The New Testament requires we sing “*speaking to one another*” (Eph. 5:19, ASV). In other words I sing to you and you sing to me. Anything else is just spectator religion.

When will men learn to take God at His word and desist from engaging in “*vain worship*” (Matt. 15:9)? God does not want altars built to Him made of the man-made stones of faulty reasoning and subjectivism. He wants us to worship Him “*in spirit and in truth*” (John 4:24). But by not following God’s pattern for worship, these liberals have neither. They seek to magnify the Holy One on polluted altars.

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Speaking The Truth...

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own evil behavior. According to them, even Jesus is to be criticized for disturbing the peace of the rich young ruler. Wanting to know what thing he lacked to inherit eternal life, signifying he kept all the commandments, Jesus required him to go and sell all he had, give to the poor, and follow Him. The young man grieved and went away sorrowful, "...for he had great possessions" (Matt. 19:22; cf. Mark 10:22). Jesus took the occasion to remark: "*How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! And the disciples were astonished at his words. But Jesus answereth again, and saith unto them, Children, how hard is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God*" (Mark. 10:23-24)! Not only did Jesus disturb the rich young ruler, but the disciples also. The apostles said: "*Who then can be saved*" (Mark 10:26)? Is it the case that Jesus was insensitive, taking pleasure inflicting unnecessary pain? Who can believe such? If pain was inflicted, rest assured it was only that which was necessary!

If it is the task of the preacher to so speak as not to offend the hearers, Jesus blundered when answering the Pharisees. They inquired: "*Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread*" (Matt. 15:2). Jesus replied: "*This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men*" (Matt.

15:8-9). The disciples remarked to Jesus: "*...knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying*" (Matt. 15:12)? At this point, according to many today, Jesus should have apologized to the Pharisees and hung His head in shame for offending them. No, instead Jesus responded: "*...Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch*" (Matt. 15:13-14). Now, that's preaching, at least for those whose minds aren't filled with cobwebs and are given to fuzzy thinking!

I don't know of a single, sound, faithful preacher who preaches so as to deliberately inflict pain, embarrassment, or humiliation. Do you really think such people exist? On the other hand, I know plenty who, because of a single word of criticism, will wring their hands and worry themselves to death because someone didn't like something they said. Of course, let's not forget those who will succumb to every criticism, especially when a paycheck is waved under their noses. Shame on those who succumb and on those who would use a paycheck as an intoxicant to influence a faithful Gospel preacher to turn him away from preaching the truth!

I am reminded of the example of the apostles in Jerusalem when pressured by the council. Using intimidation, the Jews conspired against the apostles saying: "*What shall we do to these men? ...let us straitly threaten them, that they speak henceforth to no man in this name. And they called them, and commanded them not to*

speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus" (Acts 4:16-18). Not bowing to the threat, the reply came: "*...we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*" (Acts 4:19-20). Indeed, as the apostles, "*We ought to obey God rather than men*" (Acts 5:29).

It's about proclaiming the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ plainly, without fear or compromise. The ungodly foundations of sand upon which people have built their lives must be exposed for the eternally unstable substances they are. This is a hard enough task. It is only compounded when people with weak minds, and equally weak constitutions and backbones, obstruct and hinder faithful preachers from proclaiming the whole counsel of God.

Every faithful child of God ought to rejoice with his voice raised high when God's Word is being faithfully proclaimed. Are there going to be hard words spoken to get people to see the error of their way? It's got to be that way. Is every speaker so eloquent that every word flows like honey and is as smooth as silk? Hardly. Will every person who hears the gospel preached repent and obey it? Not likely. Are there those who would not repent and obey under any circumstance? Unquestionably.

Let us do as Paul described: "*That we henceforth be no more children, tossed about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things*" (Eph. 4:14-15).

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INSPIRATION OF SCRIPTURE

Jesse Whitlock

Is the Bible the work of man, or is it God's inspired Word? Is it the product of human wisdom only, or did its authors speak as they were moved by the Holy Spirit? [See 2 Peter 1:20-21]

The atheists, agnostics, materialists and modernists assert the Bible is simply the work of mere man; that it was written merely by human wisdom. Taking their assumption to the limit, they would

have to insist that, unless man has somehow degenerated in ability and declined in wisdom, today he should be able to produce a book equal to the Bible — yea, superior to the Bible! The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (i.e., Mormonism), has made such a feeble attempt, and failed miserably! [See 1 Peter 4:11]

According to the unproved and unprovable theory of evolution, man should be better prepared to write

such a volume today than when the Bible was actually written. Back then, there were no printing presses, they were without our institutions of "higher learning," no telegraph, no telephone, no television and NO COMPUTERS! Man's wisdom was a drop in the proverbial bucket then, as compared to the threshold of the 21st century! Yet, the heroes of the Bible grappled with every problem and situation that confronts man

Boone And Beam: Calvin's Bedfellows

Jerry C. Brewer

A fatalistic system of spiritual determinism, Calvinistic theology denigrates the power of God's word, permeates and influences every strata of American society and is a major factor in the apostasy of the church today. Influencing tongue-speaking digressives such as Pat Boone in the 1960s, Calvinism extended its deadly tentacles into the decades following. The basis of error relating to the person, mission and work of the Holy Spirit, its fruit of holyrollerism is embraced by "change agents" and taught in churches of Christ today. We've witnessed a revival of the age-old Calvinistic cry that religion is "better-felt-than told" and many of our brethren – especially the young – have swallowed this damnable doctrine, hook, line and sinker. Deriving from feelings rather than a logical assessment of God's Word, it holds thousands in its grip of darkness,

"The subject may be made plain or simple according to the manner we may treat it. If we view it in the light of psychological manifestations in our own hearts, or in the lives of those around us, which are ascribed to the Spirit, we shall find ourselves wandering in a maze of mystery. If we follow the word of God, which is the only source of knowledge, we shall find ourselves walking in a light that shall grow brighter as we proceed."

Entering the maze of subjective religion, Pat Boone departed from the

faith and in 1970 attempted to pawn off the old worn-out denominational line of personal experience as proof of his "new" discovery.

"I'm fearfully, and prayerfully, aware of the controversial nature of our experiences. But they are experiences – not theory, or hearsay, or wishful thinking, or psychological fantasy. They're life-changing experiences."

Contrasting his "life-changing experiences" with "theory," "hearsay," "wishful thinking," and "psychological fantasy," Boone offers his own subjective experience for religious authority. That's the essence of the "better-felt-than-told" religion of the holy roller, who offers personal experience as proof of their doctrines. Their experiences are *their own* hearsay, theories and wishful thinking, deriving their proofs from the subjective meanderings of heretical minds.

"The one who claims personal experience as an evidence of the indwelling Spirit abandons the Bible – he cannot prove it by the Bible, so he proves it by himself. But that is the personal proof that a Holiness preacher offers, and the same facility that establishes one will establish the similar claim of all the cults."

One of the church's earlier "change agents," Boone trumpeted the cry that was picked up and echoed by others in the ensuing years. What he wrote in 1970 is as fresh as something spewing

from today's Calvinistic Jubilee orgy.

"Churches today are in a terrible crisis: young people are rejecting organized religion. They're not buying the comfortable, dogmatic, lethargic, impractical, unwieldy, clannish groups that meet in fancy buildings. They're looking for God! The God of Abraham, Moses, Peter, Paul and Christ! The God of action, of change, the God of now! What the Holy Spirit is doing today is disturbing – in the same manner that Christ disturbed "organized religion" and the world 2,000 years ago."

Boone could have written speeches for heretics like Joe Beam. That's the same kind of drivel that oozed from Beam's lips at 1996's Jubilee/Holyroller circus. Truly, "there is no new thing under the sun!" Today's "change agents" are heirs of heretics like Pat Boone who departed the faith a generation ago. Having climbed into bed with John Calvin, Boone and Beam are preaching the same old tired doctrines that have led millions to hell since Calvin first promulgated them in 1536.

ENDNOTES

¹Z. T. Sweeney, *The Spirit and The Word*, Gospel Advocate Co., Nashville, Tenn., p. 9.

²Pat Boone, *A New Song*, Creation House, Carol Stream, IL 1970, p. 7.

³Foy E. Wallace, Jr., *The Mission and Medium of The Holy Spirit*. Foy E. Wallace, Jr. Publications, Nashville, 1967, p. 6.

⁴Boone, op. cit. p. 7.

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today, i.e., the creation of the world to eternal life beyond the grave. We can learn from them and their lives. [See Romans 15:41]

Let us challenge the atheists, agnostics, materialists, modernists, evolutionists and humanists today to simply produce a book better than the Bible! Let them look among their own ranks to the very best and the most highly educated they are capable of putting forth. Let them select as many authors as they want. I would think forty would be enough! Let this group consult the great

libraries of our time. Let them get on the internet and glean from all the sciences; i.e., biology, geology, zoology, and any — ology at all! Let them have free access to the greatest quotes of oratory and history of mankind. When they have done all their research and have gleaned the best of human intelligence the world has to offer, let them put this in book form and then offer it to the world as a substitute for the Word of God! Do they have the confidence and courage to make such an attempt? If not, what excuse will they offer?

Could it be the case that man has fallen from his noble estate of wisdom of almost 20 centuries ago? Or, is it the case that the Bible came from a source that is higher than man of any century can possibly hope to attain? [See 2 Timothy 3:16-17]

"For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Cor. 1:21).

THE CENTURION, ADOLPH HITLER, AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

Mark K. Lewis

When one reads Matthew 8:5-13, he is left with the distinct impression that a Roman centurion came directly to Jesus to beseech the Lord on behalf of his infirmed servant. However, Matthew's account is abbreviated; from Luke we learn that the centurion himself did not approach Jesus but sent "elders of the Jews to Him" (Luke 7:3). Is there a contradiction between the two accounts? Of course not. Matthew is entirely correct — the centurion came to Jesus, but he did so by means of the ambassage of Jewish elders. This is proper language and used all the time in everyday discourse. Yet, there are apparently some who do not realize the commonality of such language.

To give a further example: A few months ago I was watching a program about World War II on The History Channel. During the course of the program, the narrator intoned (and this is an exact quote): "On September 1, 1939, Hitler invaded Poland." My immediate reaction (tongue in cheek) was "By himself?" A chuckle. Of course Hitler did not invade Poland by himself, he did so by means of a huge, powerful army. And surely no one who watched the program and heard what the narrator said understood any differently. Hitler was the monster behind the invasion, but he certainly did not do it himself; and yet, the narrator said "Hitler did it." Again, common language.

Another illustration: Back in 1986, headlines read, "Reagan bombs Libya!" Yet, Ronald Reagan, to my knowledge, has never come anywhere near Libya and certainly wasn't personally in any of the planes that devastated Moammar Ghadafi's homeland. Yet it was in all ways proper, not an abuse of the language, to say that Reagan did it, just as it is proper to say that Hitler invaded Poland, and the centurion came to Jesus.

Why then is this such a difficult principle to learn when speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit? Too many, when they find a verse which says the Spirit does thus and so, immediately assume He **MUST** do it directly, with no intervening agency. Yet the Bible tells us that the Word of God is the "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17), and is all-sufficient for our spiritual needs (2 Tim. 3:16-17). No faithful Christian has ever questioned the Spirit's work in redemption; we only deny He works directly, separate and apart from the Word of God. One is indeed "born of the Spirit" (John 3:5), just as surely as "Hitler invaded Poland;" but the agency of the Spirit's begettal is the word of God (1 Peter 1:23; 1 Cor. 4:15), just as surely as the German Fuhrer used his army and did not directly, himself, enter Poland with a gun. And, this principle, concerning the Holy Spirit, is true regarding all of His work; otherwise, Paul spoke an untruth when he said that the scriptures can make us "complete" and "thoroughly [equip us] for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). The scriptures are the Spirit's device, His medium, His

means of producing such effects in humans, just as Hitler's army was his device, medium, and means of invading Poland, American fighter planes were President Reagan's device, medium, and means of bombing Libya, and "the elders of the Jews" were the device, medium, and means of the centurion approaching the Lord. Such is simply a common usage in any language.

Let us fear not to say "the Holy Spirit does such and such (i.e., begets, leads, strengthens, indwells)," but let us equally remember that He has a means by which He accomplishes His work. It is the Holy Bible.

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