



THE RESTORATION HERALD

God's Dress Code

By Dr. Jack Cottrell

I preached my first sermon in 1956 — that was over 65 years ago! Over the years, I have had the opportunity to preach many sermons covering a vast range of texts and topics. Recently I was asked, “Do you have a favorite sermon?” Yes, I do indeed have a favorite sermon!

I developed this favorite sermon nearly ten years after that first one, while studying at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. That is when my understanding of the Biblical doctrine of GRACE was developing through the study of Romans and the Protestant Reformation. The sermon was called “The Robe of Righteousness” and was based on Isaiah 61:10.

Over the next few decades, I did a lot of supply and guest preaching and was able to preach that sermon between FIFTY and SIXTY times. The most memorable occasion was for a chapel service during my first year of teaching theology at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary (1967-1968). I tailored the sermon specifically for that occasion, and that is the version printed in volume IX of my “Collected Writings” series, i.e., God’s Amazing Salvation, Volume I. I wrote a brief introduction to the sermon for that publication, and I will repeat excerpts for you here:

“I first began to understand what it means to be saved by grace by being exposed to the teachings of the Protestant Reformers, especially Martin Luther. This first happened while I was a student at Westminster Theological Seminary, 1962-1965; then later at Princeton Seminary, 1967-1969. During that time, I was preaching on most Sundays, visiting many different congregations. Early in that period, I developed one sermon that I felt represented the essence of grace, which is the one that follows here.

“When I began my teaching career as the associate professor of theology at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary graduate school in the fall of 1967, I was scheduled to preach my first chapel sermon that semester. I decided to preach this sermon. I made that decision with a bit of apprehension, knowing that the Restoration Movement had been rather weak in its grasp of the essence of grace.

“At the end of a chapel sermon in those days, it was customary for faculty members to come forward in order to greet and express thanks to the speaker. The first to greet me was my boss, the dean of the graduate school, the eminent Dr. Lewis Foster. He had kind words for me, but also some critical remarks about things I should have added or said in different ways. Gulp! Then I noticed that coming up behind him was his father, the honorable and intensely revered Professor R. C. Foster, one of the founders of the school—staring at me rather severely. My apprehension increased. He walked up to me (double gulp!), then smiled and reached out and kindly shook my trembling hand and said (words similar to this—I don’t remember for sure): ‘Wonderful sermon, Brother Cottrell! We are so glad to have you aboard!’

“I cannot express how relieved I felt when he said that. Ever since then I have been ‘full steam ahead’ in the proclamation of God’s wonderful grace.”

About a year ago, I was asked to preach at the First Church of Christ in Greendale, IN. I decided to preach my “church” version of my favorite sermon which I call “God’s Dress Code,” the text of which follows.

continued on page 4

The Christ

A couple of months ago, I mentioned that we would like our readers to read and know the content of Our Platform — the principles upon which we stand. This month, let's look at another key aspect of our platform, namely The Christ: the only begotten Son of God, man's only Savior and Lord.

Special — The title Son of God testifies to the divine nature of Jesus, that He is indeed special. We see His divinity expressed in the much beloved verse John 3:16, and in the words of God Himself at Jesus' baptism in Matthew 3:17.



John R. Mitchell

Even the demons understood the divine nature of Jesus as seen in their acknowledgement of Him as the Son of God in Mark 3:11. Finally, Paul states emphatically that Jesus was declared the Son of God with power in Romans 1:4.

In John 10, Jesus has yet another dispute with the Jewish leaders, this time about His identity. Jesus affirmed His special relationship with God the Father by referring to God as "My Father" multiple times in this dialogue.

Included in this encounter is the truly remarkable claim by Jesus that, "I and the Father are one" (v. 30). This infuriated the Jews to the point that the Jews took up stones again to stone Him, "for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." The Jewish leaders understood perfectly that Jesus' claim to be the Son of God was a direct claim to divine sonship.

We, too, fully acknowledge Jesus as Special — the divine only begotten Son of God.

Savior — Jesus is man's only Savior. While I don't have any formal proof, my guess is the most popular title for Jesus today is that of Savior. Most of us freely acknowledge that Paul was correct when he stated that "all have sinned..." and that "the wages of sin is death."

Sin is a brutal tyrant, a cruel master that destroys all in its path. Sin takes man, made in God's image, and first distorts and then ultimately destroys him. In our current culture, we see the proof of such destruction on display every day.

Jesus Christ is the Savior from the ravages of sin. Yes, He is the Savior, but it is critical for us to realize that Christ

is man's *only* Savior. As Peter proclaimed in Acts 4:12, and Jesus emphasized in John 14:6, there is no alternative to man's problem of sin outside of the salvation found in Christ Himself. It is imperative that we live in a way consistent with this Bible truth.

Over the past year, the *Restoration Herald* has contained several articles challenging us to recommit to personal evangelism. Our world is a mess, and the only viable solution is Christ. We must acknowledge that Christ truly is man's *only* Savior, pray for God to open doors, and unashamedly seek to share the glorious message of salvation in Christ.

Sovereign — Finally, Christ is Lord. As a friend of mine said, "The Lordship of Christ has fallen upon hard times." It seems the old cliché is often true, "Many people want Jesus as Savior, but not as Lord."

One of the foundational tenets of the Restoration Movement was its commitment to God's Word, taking the Bible just as it is. In other words, to accept the Word as plainly stated and to put it into action, as opposed to twisting and distorting the Word to make it say something never intended. Accepting God's Word as it is, is simply an expression of accepting the Lordship of Christ.

Jesus promised His apostles they would be led into all truth (John 14:26, 16:13). The apostles recognized they were in fact preaching, teaching, and writing the word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13) and this truth has been once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).

We at the CRA, accept and humbly submit to the Lordship of Christ. Jesus, Himself, said, "But why do you call Me, 'Lord, Lord,' and not do the things which I say" (Luke 6:46)? When scripture says in Acts 2:38 to, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sin..." we humbly submit, do what it says, and immerse sinners into Christ for the forgiveness of their sins. On and on we could go. We encourage congregations and individuals to do just this — simply do as the Lord has commanded.

Christ is indeed Lord, and Paul writes that God has "put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church" (Ephesians 1:22). The Restoration Movement strives to restore the church to the divine pattern found in the New Testament. For this to be done, we must acknowledge that Christ is the one and only Lord.

The Christ — Special, Savior, Sovereign — a firm principle upon which we stand and build. ~RH

THE RESTORATION HERALD

Editor, John R. Mitchell

OUR PLATFORM

The Christ: The only begotten Son of God, man's only Savior and Lord.

The Bible: God's revelation to man, its authority and finality, man's only rule of faith and practice.

The Gospel: The power of God unto salvation, its proclamation and defense.

The Church: The true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

The Unity of Believers: In the "unity of the faith" as prescribed in the New Testament.

The Fellowship: Of brethren of "like precious faith," in the furtherance of the gospel and the building of churches of Christ according to the Bible pattern.

Website: www.thecra.org

Email address: theCRA@thecra.org

The Restoration Herald is published monthly by The Christian Restoration Association; USPS #462-960 ISSN: [0034-5830]. 7133 Central Parke Blvd, Mason, OH, 45040.

Editorial and General Offices: 7133 Central Parke Blvd, Mason, OH, 45040. Send all contributions and correspondence to The Christian Restoration Association at the Mason address. Phone: (513) 229-8000.

Subscription rates: \$15.00 a year, or three years for \$35.00. Senior citizens (65 or older) \$12.00 a year, or three years for \$30.00. In bundles of 10 or more to one address, \$12.00 each per year. Internet subscriptions (pdf form) are available for \$10.00 per year or three years for \$25.00 which also provides access to past issues that are posted on website.

Periodical postage paid at Mason, OH, and additional mailing offices. **Postmaster:** Send address changes to **The Restoration Herald**, 7133 Central Parke Blvd, Mason, OH, 45040.

Our P&H rates for mailing items purchased from our bookstore are actual postage plus \$1.00.

(Ohio residents, include 7% sales tax)

Lessons based on International Sunday School Lessons. The International Bible Lessons for Christian Teaching, copyright © 2020 by the Committee on the Uniform Series.

Feature Articles

1 God's Dress Code

Dr. Jack Cottrell

18 Commitment to RM Principles

Dustin Wells

Editor's Viewpoint

2 The Christ — Son of God, Savior, and Lord

John R. Mitchell

Ready to Give a Defense

7 In Defense of the Virgin Birth, Part 3

Richard Koffarnus

A Page from the Book

9 The Bond Between Faith and Freedom

Jim Book

Winnowing the Heart

11 The Plotter and the Pathfinder

Jennifer Bullard

First Things First

13 Cobbler, Ice Cream, and Humble Pie

Tony Sullivan

Lessons from the Past

14 Seeking Forgiveness for Ancestors' Sins

Michael Hines

A Millennial Moment

16 Swords and Plowshares, Part 1

Tim Jackson

Strangeness of the Month Club

20 Heresy of Statism

Kent B. True

Uniform Bible School Lessons

24 2 Samuel, Ezra, and Job

Michael Jackson

Churches Seeking Ministers

17 First Christian Church of Montoursville, PA

22 Christian Church of Anchorage, AL

God's Dress Code

By Dr. Jack Cottrell

Introduction

Most of us have had to abide by dress codes at one time or another, e.g., at work or at school. When I was a student at the Cincinnati Bible Seminary in the late 1950s, one aspect of the dress code was that the hems of women students' skirts and dresses could not be higher than the knees. This was later changed to say that the hems could be no higher than two inches above the knees.

Some dress codes have been more of a social expectation than an official decree. From my early youth I learned that you didn't wear just anything to a wedding or funeral; these events deserved your very best outfit.

In recent years, the whole idea of dress codes has been seriously challenged and considerably weakened (cf. "casual Fridays;" "Zoom" conferences). However, there is one dress code that has *never* changed and *never will* change, and that is GOD'S DRESS CODE! Has God laid down a dress code that we must follow? YES! But I am not talking about the outer material clothing that we wear here or there, especially to church. I am talking about the *spiritual* clothing with which we are dressed, especially that with which we are clothed on the *inside*, where only God can see.

Any person who hopes to be *welcome* in God's presence, and who hopes to *live* in God's presence for eternity (rather than in hell), MUST be *spiritually dressed* in the proper manner!

If you were invited to meet England's Queen Elizabeth personally, you would be *expected* to wear proper clothing. One summary from the internet puts it thus: "Opt for formal clothing—those with neutral tones and modest designs. ... Bright colors, unnecessary skin-showing or anything off-beat should be reserved for other occasions. Show respect to Her Royal Highness and dress in an elegant and sophisticated manner."

But here we are not talking about standing in the presence of some temporary and usually accidental earthly monarch. We are talking about being in the presence of *the eternal*

***"I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God;
for He has clothed me with the
garments of salvation;
He has covered me with the robe
of righteousness" — Isaiah 61:10***

and infinite KING OF THE UNIVERSE! What does He require us to wear in order to be accepted into His presence?

We can sum God's dress code up in one word: RIGHTEOUSNESS. We are required to wear *a garment of righteousness!* The following points show how this works out.

God Requires Us to Wear a Garment of Righteousness

The first point is that God *requires* us to wear a *garment of righteousness*. (Note that this is a requirement, not a suggestion.) It is crucial to understand the meaning of "righteousness." This idea is key. Specifically, "righteousness" before God means *being RIGHT with God's LAW* or *satisfying the requirements of His law*.

When you hear the word "law," what do you think of? You probably think first of *commandments* that God requires us to obey. Some might think of the Ten Commandments. That is appropriate, but extremely limited. In fact, the Bible is *filled* with divine commands that we must obey to be righteous. Even the Old Testament has many commands that are part of the Christian's law code, e.g., "Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling" (Psalm 2:11). "Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding" (Proverbs 3:5). The New Testament Scriptures are filled with both general and specific commandments on how to be righteous and holy. We all have access to God's law for us.

So here is how God's dress code works. To satisfy His dress code, we MUST wear a garment of righteousness, and to possess this righteousness we must obey the commandments of His law. To be more precise, we must obey these commands *one hundred percent*. Did I just say – 100%? YES! To be righteous before God we must obey ALL of the Biblical commandments that apply to us in this New Covenant age! And – we must obey them *perfectly*, both on the outside (where other human beings can see us) and on the inside, in the heart (where only God can see us).

This perfect obedience to God's law is what constitutes our required garment of righteousness, and God's dress code requires that we must wear this garment constantly, all our lives. Such a life consisting of our perfect obedience to God's law commands would look like a pure white robe.

I have said that we are *required* to wear this garment of righteousness. It is a *necessity*. WHY? Why is this the case? Because God's own nature is perfect holiness, and He cannot tolerate anything that contradicts His perfect nature.

Thus, we who hope to fellowship with the holy God MUST also be holy and righteous, otherwise – the HOLY GOD will *cast us into outer darkness* away from His holy presence!

Jesus warns us thus in His parable of the wedding feast in Matthew 22:1-14, which you should read. In this parable, the king prepares a wedding feast to which the first invited guests decline to come and are thus condemned (vv. 1-8). The king then sends his servants to invite anyone they can find, and a great crowd showed up (vv. 9-10).

“But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. And he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless. Then the king said to the attendants, ‘Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth!’” (vv. 11-13).

God’s dress code is serious business. Wear the garment of righteousness – perfect obedience to His laws – or else!

We Do Not Have this Required Garment of Righteousness

This leads to our second point. The truth is that *we do not have* the garment of righteousness that God’s dress code requires! Search all you can through your spiritual closet and you will not find it. We know this because of God’s fearsome judgment in Romans 3:10, 23, “None is righteous, no, not one’ For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Now, you may say, “Hey! Wait a minute! I do a LOT of good things! In fact, I obey *most* of God’s laws, at least *most* of the time!”

Maybe so, but you seem to be forgetting something. To be truly righteous before God, you cannot be just *partly* good and holy. True righteousness is not determined by a balance scale where good works are weighed against sins to determine which you have more of. No! To be truly righteous, you must be 100% good – wholly holy on the inside as well as on the outside!

The fact is we are all *worse* in God’s eyes than we think we are. See Isaiah 64:6, “We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment.” As the KJV familiarly puts it, “All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (literally, “as a menstruous cloth”). The scary part of this truth is that Isaiah is not saying that our *sins* are like filthy rags. He says that even our *righteous* deeds are like that polluted garment!

In terms of our personal efforts to live up to God’s dress code and to obey His laws, we can think of ourselves as wearing—NOT a pure white robe, but a *dirty black robe*.

So where are we, then, in terms of God’s dress code? Is our situation hopeless? Not if we submit ourselves to the third point below!

God Gives Us the Garment of Righteousness That He Requires!

We now come to the good news—the *gospel*, as that gospel is found in Isaiah 61:10: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD; my soul shall exult in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation; He has covered me with the robe of righteousness!” Good news! God has established the strictest possible dress code; and when we utterly fail to meet its requirements, He Himself *gives us the robe of righteousness that He requires!*

When He died as the propitiation for our sins, He was sewing together a garment of salvation — a ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS — as a gift for any sinner who will accept it by obeying the gospel!

What is this gift of a “robe of righteousness?” First, we must consider this: the righteousness that God gives us, and with which He covers all our sins, *is not some kind of righteousness that WE have produced!* It is not OUR righteousness but GOD’S OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS! As a child I used to sing the familiar hymn, “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and righteousness.” But in my mind, I was thinking it thus: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and MY righteousness.” I knew nothing about GOD’S righteousness, and this kept me from having any assurance of my salvation!

The Apostle Paul shows us that we must learn to sing the song this way: “My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood and JESUS’ righteousness!” He says in Romans 1:16-17, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for ... in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith!” In Romans 3:21-22 he adds, “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from ... law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it—the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe!”

See also 2 Corinthians 5:21 where Paul says that God the Father put Jesus in the place of sinners and treated Jesus as if He had *the sins of the world* upon Him in order that He might treat us as if we had the righteousness of God upon us! In Philippians 3:9, God inspires Paul, speaking of Jesus, to say that he wants to “be found in Him, not having a righ-

teousness of my own that comes from . . . law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.”

What is this righteousness that is produced by God, belongs to God, comes from God to us, and becomes an entire robe of righteousness that *covers* us? Specifically, it comes from something that Jesus—God the Son—did. I like to think of Jesus as coming into the world as a kind of tailor, for the specific purpose of sewing an unlimited number of these robes of righteousness to distribute to all sinners who will accept one by obeying the gospel!

What did Jesus do that has this effect? We will remember that righteousness means being right with God’s law or satisfying the requirements of His law. So far, we have seen that this law has life-governing commands that God requires us to obey. Did Jesus produce this kind of righteousness? Yes indeed! He is the only human person who has obeyed the commands that applied to Him *perfectly, sinlessly, 100%*. But this is not a kind of righteousness He can share with anyone else; as a human being, He was required to obey the law’s *commands* for Himself.

Thus, the robe of righteousness that God gives us is not sewn from the deeds of Jesus’ perfect LIFE—Jesus did not prepare this robe from His perfect obedience to the law’s *commands*.

Where does this leave us, then? Well, the fact is that COMMANDS to be obeyed are only ONE PART of any law code and are just one part of God’s law. What is the other part? The other part of God’s law is the PENALTY required to be paid when those commands are not obeyed! The righteous nature of God must and will see to it that this penalty of His law is paid in full! When His law is broken, the penalty *must* be paid!

Here is where Jesus comes into the picture. By His perfect *life* He satisfied the law’s commands for Himself, but also *by His perfect DEATH He suffered and paid the law’s PENALTY for US in our place!* When He died as the propitiation for our sins (Romans 3:25), He was sewing together a garment of salvation—a ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS—as a gift for any sinner who will accept it by obeying the gospel! Jesus’ payment of sin’s penalty in our place is the robe of righteousness with which God covers our sins!

If you (the reader) are a Christian who is sincerely believing in Jesus Christ right now, you are wearing this robe of righteousness and are therefore satisfying God’s dress code!

This is how we are RIGHT—i.e., RIGHTEOUS—before God: not because He sees us as having perfect character or perfect obedience to the law’s commands but because He sees us as having *paid the penalty* that His law requires for our sins! He sees us like that because JESUS paid that

penalty for ALL our sins and has applied that payment to our account! “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”—no penalty, no punishment, no retribution (Romans 8:1)!

Notice: this text says we are “IN Christ Jesus.” We are *wearing* Him like a garment! This garment is the robe of Jesus’ own righteous payment of the penalty for our sins. It is called a ROBE of righteousness because it is big enough to COVER everything else we are wearing, i.e., all our “filthy rags.” We should think of this as a RED robe of righteousness, i.e., red for the blood of Jesus Christ!

Here is a crucial point to understand. As a Christian, you are wearing this red robe of righteousness *right now, all the time, 24/7* – as long as you are believing in and trusting Jesus as your Redeemer. You began wearing this robe in your baptism, where you received it as “the free gift of righteousness” (Romans 5:17). We know it happened in baptism because of what Galatians 3:27 says, namely, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” You went into the water of baptism with only filthy rags showing; you came up out of the water with only the red robe of righteousness showing and covering all of those rags!

The crucial point is that because of your continuing faith in Jesus, this robe of righteousness has been and is *constantly covering your sins*—not just your *past* sins but the sins that keep cropping up in your Christian life. Here is a point so often misunderstood: YOU DO NOT LOSE THIS ROBE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS EVERY TIME YOU SIN! This robe is “the righteousness that comes by faith” (Hebrews 11:7), not by how well you obey the law’s commands. It COMES to you in baptism by your faith in Jesus, and it STAYS with you by faith as long as that faith continues.

If you had to give up your robe of righteousness every time you committed a sin, its whole point as a *cover for your sins* would be lost! (This would be like saying you have been given a coat to keep you warm, but you have to give it back every time you go outside into the cold!)

I will close by citing the key stanzas from the hymn mentioned earlier about JESUS’ righteousness:

*My hope is built on nothing less than Jesus’ blood
and [Jesus’] righteousness! I dare not trust the
sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus’ name.*

*When He shall come with trumpet sound, O may I
then in Him be found; Dressed in HIS righteousness
ALONE, faultless to stand before the throne!*

*On Christ the solid rock I stand; all other ground is
sinking sand.* ~RH

Dr. Jack Cottrell is a retired seminary professor. He is the author of many books. He may be reached by email: jackbarbcot@juno.com.



In Defense of the Virgin Birth

Part 3

5. The historical argument

Similar to the argument from silence, the historical argument claims that the virgin birth was rarely mentioned in the first three centuries of the church's existence. Therefore, the argument goes, it is unlikely that the church was aware of it or considered it an important doctrine.



Richard Koffarnus

Actually, we have a number of references to the virgin birth in the writings of early Christians. For example:

Ignatius (A.D. 35-117), the third Bishop and Patriarch of Antioch, wrote this in a letter to the church at Smyrna:

“Regarding our Lord, you are absolutely convinced that on the human side he was actually sprung from David’s line, Son of God according to God’s will and power, actually born of a virgin,

baptized by John, that ‘all righteousness might be fulfilled by him,’ and actually crucified for us in the flesh, under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch.”¹

Aristides of Athens (c. A.D. 125) was a Greek philosopher who converted to Christianity. When the Emperor Hadrian visited Athens around 124-125, Aristides presented him with an “Apology” to explain and defend the Christian faith, which was undergoing persecution. He writes:

“The Christians, then, trace the beginning of their religion from Jesus the Messiah; and he is named the Son of God Most High. And it is said that God came down from heaven, and from a Hebrew virgin assumed and clothed himself with flesh; and the Son of God lived in a daughter of man.”²

Justin Martyr (100-165), an early Christian Apologist from Samaria, in his “Dialogue with Trypho,” a Jew, argues that Isaiah 7:14 must refer to the virgin birth of Christ:

“But you (Jews) and your teachers venture to claim that in the prophecy of Isaiah it is not said, ‘Behold the virgin will conceive,’ but, ‘Behold, the young woman will conceive, and bear a son.’ Furthermore, you explain the prophecy as if (it referred) to Hezekiah, who was your king. Therefore,

I will endeavor to soon discuss this point in opposition to you.”³

Irenaeus (c. 125-202) was bishop of Lugdunum in Gaul (modern day Lyons, France). Irenaeus was born in Smyrna, Asia Minor where he studied under bishop Polycarp, who had been a disciple of the Apostle John. Irenaeus wrote an important response to the heretical sects of Gnosticism and Marcionism, entitled, “Against Heresies.” He wrote, “Christ Jesus, the Son of God, because of His surpassing love towards His creation, humbled Himself to be born of the virgin. Thereby, He united man through Himself to God.”⁴

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150 - c. 215), was a Christian theologian and headmaster of a Christian school in Alexandria, Egypt. In one of his works, Clement refers to “... Jesus, whom of the lightening flash of Divinity the virgin bore.”⁵

Tertullian (c. 155 - c. 220), was an important Christian Apologist and is considered by some to be the father of Latin Christianity. In his *Apology*, he writes, “This ray of God, then, as it was always foretold in ancient time, descended into a certain virgin, and He was made flesh in her womb. So, in His birth, God and man were united.”⁶

Origen (c. 185 - c. 254), like Clement, was an Alexandrian. He was also a prolific writer of theology and Christian apologetics. In his treatise against the attacks on Christianity by the pagan philosopher Celsus, Origen writes, “A sign has been given to the house of David. For the virgin conceived, was pregnant, and brought forth a son.”⁷

Finally, remember that only a small percentage of all the writings of antiquity have survived to modern times. That means there may have been many more references to the virgin birth in Christian writings which we simply don’t have. Nevertheless, Machen concludes:

“There can be no doubt, then, that at the close of the second century the virgin birth of Christ was regarded as an absolutely essential part of Christian belief by the Christian Church in all parts of the known world.”⁸

6. The linguistic argument

The most prevalent argument today is also one of the oldest, dating back to Justin Martyr’s “Dialogue with Trypho” (see #5 above). The Hebrew language has a specific word for “virgin.” The feminine form is *bethulah*. However, there is a second Hebrew noun, *almah*, which usually refers to a young unmarried woman, but sometimes is also used of

a virgin. The Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 has ‘*almah* rather than *bethulah*. Critics argue that Isaiah never claimed that a *virgin* would miraculously conceive a divine son, but only that a *young woman* would bear a son as a sign for the king. So, how did the “virgin birth” interpretation get into the New Testament (Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:26-35) and into our English translations of the Old Testament?

Critics claim the error resulted because Matthew and Luke used a faulty Greek translation of Isaiah 7:14, which translated ‘*almah* with the Greek, *parthenos*, “virgin.” This Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, or LXX) was completed over a hundred years before the birth of Christ to provide an Old Testament for Jews who could not read Hebrew. The theory goes that with the LXX in hand, Matthew and Luke either made up the story of the virgin birth or shaped it according to their misunderstanding.

In order to respond to the linguistic argument, some observations are in order. The word ‘*almah* is used only nine times in the Old Testament. Two of those are inconsequential to our discussion. Scripture references to the other seven are: Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalms 68:25; Proverbs 30:19; Song of Solomon 1:3, 6:8; and Isaiah 7:14. The LXX consistently translates ‘*almah*, with the Greek *neanis* (young woman), except in Genesis 24:43 and Isaiah 7:14, where it uses *parthenos*. This fact suggests that the translations were not *faulty*, but were guided by the context of the verses. In any language, most words admit of several possible definitions. The specific meaning of a word in any sentence is then determined by its context.

In Genesis 24:43, the NASB describes Rebekah as a “young unmarried woman,” while the LXX and the ESV both identify her as a “virgin.” Why? Earlier in the chapter, in verse 16, Rebekah is described as “a virgin (*bethulah*), and no man had had relations with her” (NASB). Clearly, the LXX and ESV translators felt that *parthenos* (“virgin”) was the right translation in verse 43, given that context. Moreover, Machen observes:

“The use of the Greek word for ‘virgin’ to translate the Hebrew word ‘*almah* in a clearly non-Messianic passage [Genesis 24:43] does seem to show that in the minds of translators like the translators of the different parts of the Septuagint there was an affinity between these two words. It shows, at least, that when ‘*almah* was translated by “virgin” at Isaiah 7:14, that was no such crass offence against linguistic usage as would necessarily need to be explained in some special way.”⁹

Thus, James Smith makes a simple, logical argument for translating ‘*almah* “virgin” in Isaiah 7:14:

“The word ‘*almah* is never used of a married woman. Strictly speaking, the word means a young woman of marriageable age. Logic demands one of two options. The ‘*almah* must be either (1) an unmarried immoral woman; or (2) a virgin. The birth of a child by an unmarried woman is so common it could not be a ‘sign.’ For this reason, the Greek translators, long before the time of Christ, correctly determined that only the word *parthenos* (virgin) was a suitable translation for ‘*almah* in this context.”¹⁰

When we come to the New Testament nativity accounts, we find they harmonize perfectly with the LXX’s understanding of Isaiah 7:14. Mary is not just an unmarried woman of marriageable age; she is betrothed to Joseph (Matthew 1:18; Luke 1:27), yet they have not had sexual relations. Despite still being a virgin (Luke 1:34), she has conceived a son by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20; Luke 1:31, 35), yet she would remain a virgin until the birth of her child (Matthew 1:25). Her son is to be “Immanuel,” “God with us” (Matthew 1:23), and she would name Him “Jesus,” for He would “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:31, 2:30). Far from being a fanciful myth based on a false translation, Matthew and Luke’s nativity accounts are precise explanations of how God fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy by bringing His Son into the world.

At the same time, the two accounts also indicate the great significance of the virgin birth: it reveals both the true identity of Christ and its essential relationship to His work as Savior of the world. Jack Cottrell observes, “To perform the great saving works of atonement and resurrection, the Redeemer must be a sinless human being who is also God. The virgin birth is the means by which such a person has come into being.”¹¹

~RH

(Endnotes)

- 1 Ignatius, “*Letter to the Smyrnaeans*,” (c. 103), Translated by Cyril Richardson.
- 2 Aristides, “*Apology*” (c. 125), Chapter II.
- 3 Justin Martyr, “*Dialogue with Trypho*” (c. 155), Chapter LXXXIV.
- 4 Irenaeus, “*Against Heresies*,” (c. 180).
- 5 Clement of Alexandria, *Paedagogus* (Tutor), Book I, (c. 195).
- 6 Tertullian, *Apology*, Chapter XXI, (c. 197).
- 7 Origen, *Against Celsus*, Book I, (c. 225).
- 8 J. G. Machen, *The Virgin Birth of Christ* (NY: Harper & Brothers, 1930), 3.
- 9 Machen, 297.
- 10 James E. Smith, *The Major Prophets* (Joplin: College Press, 1992), 46. For a more detailed development of his argument, see James E. Smith, *What the Bible Teaches about the Promised Messiah* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1993), 251-255.
- 11 Jack Cottrell, *The Faith Once for All* (Joplin: College Press, 2002), 253.

Richard Koffarnus is retired Emeritus Professor of History and Theology at Central Christian College of the Bible, Moberly, MO. He can be reached by email: koffarnus@sbcglobal.net.



JIM BOOK

The Bond Between Faith and Freedom in America

Sterling Lacy writes in his book, *Valley of Decision*, these words which are profound, especially considering the minimizing of religion in America:



Jim Book

“It is not a question of whether politics and religion will be mixed. It’s a question of which religion will be mixed with American politics. Will it be a religion that worships God, or a religion that worships man? And it is not a question of whether morality can or should be legislated. It is a question of which religious guidelines will undergird the legislation: religious guidelines that deify God, or religious guidelines that deify man?”

Ok, so there you have it. Those points make a lot of people feel uncomfortable, considering the term that is used frequently by the left, “Separation of Church and State.” Mr. Lacy does make a valid point. The void in society, government, and schools of higher education will be filled by an ideology either coming from the source of all truth, which is Scripture, or Secularism.

It should not be surprising that Satan would view America as a prize to destroy. Our Forefathers intricately wove within the fabric of this great Republic an uncompromising respect and appreciation for faith in God, His word, and our treasured freedom. It should not come as a surprise that the “sons of disobedience” are working hard to erode the spiritual foundation of our nation. Benjamin Franklin, who played such a key role in writing the Constitution, stated, “God governs in the affairs of men.” Washington, the first President of the United States, penned these words, “Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grate-

ful for His benefits, and humbly implore His protection and favor.” You can begin to see how futile it was then and how irresponsible it is today for our leaders to think for a moment that our freedoms and liberties can continue without something to sustain them. Our past leaders understood that individual freedom and a profound respect for God and the Bible went hand-in-hand.

Now, let’s be very clear that we are not calling for what Oswald Guinness refers to as “the politicization” of the church. These are folks who act, as he states, “As if politics in general, and Washington in particular, were the be-all and end-all of Christian obedience.” So how do we find balance in America? How do we ensure we Christians make a clear distinction between the power that has been invested in the Kingdom by God Himself through His Son and our responsibility as Christians to biblically steward the nation that I believe has been gifted to us by God? Abraham Kuyper said, expressing the Protagonist Principle, “There is not an inch of any sphere of life of which Jesus Christ the Lord does not say, ‘MINE.’” Every inch of society needs the message of the Redeemer.

If we can conclude that America is a religious country by understanding the term “religion,” we come back to Lacy’s question: Which religion will dominate the landscape of America? Humanism or Christianity? If you follow “mainstream news,” or pay any attention to the talk coming out of the entertainment industry, or if you observe the political climate in America, you will see and hear a humanistic, individualistic attitude and tone. Bill Donahue, in his book, *The New Freedom*, states:

“Most disturbing to American culture is the extent to which those with little or no religion have seen their idea of moral neutrality infuse the law, especially First Amendment law. Together, these people have worked to limit the role of religion in American public life. This belief holds that nothing is more central to liberty than the right of the individual to be totally unaffected by religious thought or observance.”

Did you get that? A quest for individual autonomy is the narrative from the left. In their minds, society can better appreciate life, liberty, and pursue the joys of life without the constraints that come from morality. So, how is that working for contemporary culture? Star Parker, a syndicated columnist writes:

“The Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress produced some shocking statistics in 2020. In 1960, less than 1% of couples living together were not married. Today, it is over 12%. The percentage of births to unmarried women has risen from 5% in 1960 to 40% in 2018. In 1970, 85% of kids lived

with two parents. By 2019 this was down to 70%. For those whose concerns are more secular, the collapse of marriage is of concern because the practical results are not good.”

The costs to taxpayers to foot the bill for the increase in crime and drug addiction is directly attached to the crumbling family in America. The deteriorating family can be directly tied to the moral famine in our country, which can be linked to a lack of solid, sound biblical truth being modeled and preached.

For those who wanted a society devoid of faith and biblical authority, congratulations. This is what a society looks like when the hunger for freedom and liberty is not balanced with an equal passion for faith. ~RH

James C. Book ministers with the Kissimmee Christian Church of Kissimmee, FL. Contact him at Jim.book@kissimmeechristianchurch.org.



Chris Mulpas is a minister of the Gospel who, after a twenty year preaching ministry in the local church, is now traveling full-time to churches all over the country. He is available for concerts, revivals, supply preaching, and seminars.

Please contact him at 330-401-3708, chrismulpas@gmail.com, or www.chrismulpas.com.

The CRA gratefully acknowledges the following special gifts:

In memory of
Jean Falconer
by Beverly Holden

In honor of
Billy Bob Cox
by James C. Royse

He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation."

Available from the CRA Bookstore at www.theCRA.org for \$9.50 plus (s/h)



EQUIPPING SERVANT LEADERS FROM COAST TO COAST SINCE 1945!

WE VALUE...

SCHOLARSHIP: Expand your mind
HUMILITY: Imitate Jesus

COMMUNITY: Serve your neighbor
INNOVATION: Change the world

WWW.BOISEBIBLE.EDU





The Plotter and the Pathfinder

Matthew Fontaine Maury knew the truth; he just had to prove it. He joined the Navy in 1825 at age 19 as a midshipman aboard the frigate *Brandywine* where he indulged his appetite for studying, mapping, and charting navigation methods. He devoured the records of shipmasters pertaining to the effects of adverse winds and drift currents and lamented over the fact these logbooks, though diligently kept by sea captains, were typically filed away and never referenced again. These records were disclosing seafarers' experiences as they sailed great distances across the ocean.



Jennifer Bullard

These vessels were in no way able to sail in a direct route even if they wanted to, yet the information logged of natural influences at sea were low priority if the voyage was considered successful. Maury's fascination with these records was unlike any other, but his access to sea logs was disrupted when a serious injury at age 33 precluded him from managing the physical demands of sailor life any longer.

No matter. Maury found new avenues to examine oceanography as his passions for such studies could not be deterred. By learning everything he could any way he could, he became known as an expert in ocean plotting. Rewards followed such commitment to his scholarship when he was appointed the first superintendent of the United States Naval Observatory in 1842. Maury spent the next 20 years making contributions the nautical world relies on still. It was his charge to care for Navy chronometers, charts, and navigation equipment. Far more intriguing, however, was his discovery of storage trunks at the observatory containing thousands of old ships' logs and charts spanning back to the establishment of the U.S. Navy. That's right. The very kinds of records he once grieved as disregarded were now at his fingertips. He had years of documentation describing

winds, calms, and currents for all seas and from all seasons. Assimilating this data with his own scientific research led him to assertions ranging from whales having migration patterns to advocacy of a northwest passage through the Arctic Ocean, all substantiated today.

Where did it all begin? While he, himself, was a much-published fellow, there was no publication quite so consequential to Matthew Fontaine Maury as the Word of God. The grandson of a preacher, Maury grew up educated in the Scripture and persuaded of its truth. His devout conviction to its inerrancy and the disclosures therein positioned him to simply reveal that which God had already clarified.

A plaque celebrating Maury's achievements on display in his home state of Virginia reads "Pathfinder of the Seas; the genius who first snatched from ocean and atmosphere the secret of their laws." On the same monument, a personal address to Maury reads, "Every mariner for countless ages as he takes his chart to shape his course across the sea will think of thee." Finally, the memorial concludes, "His inspiration: Holy Writ Psalm 8:8 and 107:23-24 and Ecclesiastes 1:7."

Let us read from Holy Writ what Matthew Fontaine Maury read that grounded him in his convictions.

"All the rivers flow into the sea, yet the sea is never full; To the place from which the streams come, there again they flow (Ecclesiastes 1:7).

"Others went out to sea in ships, conducting trade on the mighty waters. They saw the works of the Lord, and His wonders in the deep" (Psalm 107:23-24).

"You made man ruler of the works of Your hands; You have placed everything under his feet: all sheep and oxen, and even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is Your name in all the earth" (Psalm 8:6-8).

Honestly, how could one not be moved by these words! It is no wonder Maury was captivated by them. They are true...no, more than true. They are Truth. Maury learned,

believed, affirmed. Maury's affirmations of these inspired words from the scripture elevated the knowledge of truth for everyone and is now relied upon by the Navy and all other seafarers out there.

Here is what bolsters Maury's certainties:

"From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for instruction, for conviction, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:15-17).

To the end, Maury was identified not just as a highly accomplished scientist but as a scientist who understood the earth through the lens of the Holy Word of God.

Shortly before Jesus faced His betrayal in the garden, He poured out a prayer to the Father to protect the spiritual wellness of the Disciples once Jesus was no longer with them in the flesh. Their lives were already threatened yet Christ's earnest prayer at this prelude to His crucifixion was to protect them spiritually. John 17:17 says, "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth." *Make them holy by Your Word.* THIS was the plea of Jesus. We know now what was coming for the Disciples as nearly all died vicious deaths at the hands of persecutors. Jesus knew that steadfastness in the Word was sufficient. That's how powerful steadfastness in the Word of God is. It is hard to know what obstacles of resistance Maury faced as a Scientist with a biblical world view, but he stood strong and lived to see the Truth accepted by science, at least regarding oceanography.

When Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica, he commended them saying:

"And we continually thank God because, when you received the word of God that you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as the true word of God—the word which is now at work in you who believe" (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Word was at work in Maury as well. We must self-examine...is the Word at work in us? Do we stand firm on the unrelenting certainty of its authority and navigate through this world resolved?

The word was at work in Maury as well. We must self-examine...is the word at work in us? Do we stand firm on the unrelenting certainty of its authority and navigate through this world resolved?

There are tremendous challenges to the church today to bend, flex, tolerate, and justify. Your resolution in the Truth may not be highlighted so dynamically as Matthew Fontaine Maury's was, but, for certain, resolution in the Truth affirms God always. Your resolve to remain steadfast to the Holy Word of God sanctifies you (John 17:17); it is *at work* in you (1 Thessalonians 2:13). Absent of the Truth, one would be lost at sea. Who defines the truth for you if not God?

In his time, Maury was nicknamed "Pathfinder of the Seas." He knew the paths were out there because he already knew the Truth; he just had to prove it. Cited in the writings by Dan Graves as one of the 48 great Scientists of Faith, it was said of him, "Maury lived by the Scriptures; he fully and unconditionally believed in what the Holy Scriptures stated, he hardly ever spoke or wrote without the inclusion of scriptural references; he prayed every day."

Here's what I understand about Matthew Fontaine Maury, if nothing else: he knew from the beginning God Himself recorded the logbook that mattered most. He knew the scripture was the ultimate compass. Maury may have been known as the Pathfinder, but the Pathfinder believed the words and knew the works of the Plotter, and he spent his life affirming Him. ~RH

Jennifer Bullard is a self-employed landscape photographer from Rush County, Indiana. She can be contacted by email at jenniferbullard@weatheredfencepost.com.

"Christian homes for America's abused and neglected children"



SHILOH

Christian Children's Ranch

601 North Center Street
Shelbina, MO 63468
Phone: (573) 588-2191 www.shilohranch.org

WRITTEN ABOUT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES
ON FILE WITH THE ST. LOUIS BETTER BUSINESS BUREAU

FIRST THINGS FIRST



COBBLER, ICE CREAM, AND HUMBLE PIE

Have you ever noticed when we think more of ourselves than we should, God has a way of bringing us back down to earth?

I told you last year about an embarrassing situation I got myself into when I announced a member of our congregation had died, only to find out later he was very much alive. This month I want to share with you another “embarrassing” moment from my otherwise dull life.



Tony Sullivan

Once again, for my own safety, I have changed the names of the people and the location of the “traumatizing” event. Other than that, it is all true.

Some time ago I was invited to speak at a Men’s Retreat in Kentucky and was extremely excited to accept the invitation given; I looked forward to “exhorting the brethren.” (Remember I have changed all the names and places to protect the innocent.) I had been to lots of Men’s Retreats in my life and speaking at this one was HIGH on my bucket list.

Because this one was well-known in the brotherhood and very well attended, I was especially looking forward to it. By speaking at this retreat, I would be following in the footsteps of some great preachers of that era. I may as well confess to you now that I was indeed a “little” lifted up by pride. (Yes, I know that is wrong and I have repented.)

It was the custom of those who planned the program to have a speaker from out of the area and a speaker from among the local preachers. I knew the local preacher and was happy to be sharing the program with him. He was well-known and I thought, “Look who I’m sharing the program with! I have made the ‘big time.’” (Again, I know that was wrong, and, again, I have repented.)

Friday night was the opening night. We had that wonderfully enthusiastic singing you only get at a men’s retreat. Then Brother Charles got up and spoke. I really cannot remember his message, but I know it was a good one.

After Brother Charles’ message, the men sang a few songs and then it was my turn. I have no memory of what I

preached that night, but hopefully it was a decent message.

When the evening was over, the preacher who was presiding said he had an announcement to make. He said, “When you leave the pole barn tonight, we’d like for you to go over to the kitchen. The cooks have prepared a peach cobbler for us, and we have ice cream to go with the cobbler. We would like for you to go to the kitchen, get yourself a big bowl of peach cobbler and ice cream, and have a seat. Then we will have a question-and-answer session so you can ask Tony or Charles any question you would like for them to answer. I know some of you may have a situation in your congregation you are dealing with and maybe Tony and Charles can help you.”

“Wow! They are going to ask *me* questions. They will be coming to *me* for advice.” (Yes, I know it is wrong, but that *is* what I thought.) Was I ever wrong!

Charles and I waited in the pole barn for only one or two minutes. Then we walked over to the kitchen to get our bowls of cobbler and ice cream and start answering the questions.

When we walked into the kitchen, the first thing we noticed was that there was little cobbler and ice cream left. However, cobbler and ice cream were not the only things in short supply. Not one man, not *one* man, stayed to ask any questions. No one. Not even the men in charge of the retreat. No one. Not even the man who had come with me was there.

They had all come, received their bedtime snack, and had retired to their camp sites.

For me to say this is needless, but both of us were a little embarrassed. I cannot speak for Brother Charles, but I was a little hurt as well. God, once again, had “taken me down” a few notches. Yes, I was humbled.

I learned some important things that night. I learned that I needed to be humbled, more of a humble servant. I learned that I am not as special as my parents thought, nor as I thought that I was. I learned that not everyone hangs onto my every word as though they were “apples of gold in settings of silver.”

The most important thing I learned (and something you need to know too): if you want some cobbler and ice cream, you need to get to the kitchen early. ~RH

Tony Sullivan is the Evangelist with the Lester Road Christian Church in Fairburn, GA. He is also an associate evangelist with the CRA. He can be reached by email: Tonycra@att.net.

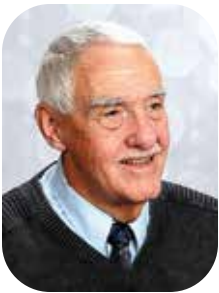


LESSONS FROM THE PAST

MICHAEL HINES

Seeking Forgiveness for Ancestors' Sins

In August of 2020, KTSA News in San Antonio, Texas reported, “A local pastor and well-known author is apologizing for racist acts of his ancestors. Max Lucado got down on his knees and begged forgiveness during a drive-in prayer service Sunday evening outside Freeman coliseum.”¹



Michael Hines

According to the article, nothing Lucado said was untrue. He accurately described the actions of 19th-century slavers as “wrong when they bought and sold human beings. When they claimed superiority over Blacks, that was wrong.” Lucado also correctly labeled refusal to share water fountains,

restaurants, and city buses with Blacks as sinful behavior. He also observed how church members and leaders broke God’s heart when favoring one skin color over another.²

God hates sin! As we look over the past, the sinful attitudes and behaviors of our ancestors are evident. We can’t escape them. They reside in the past as an indictment of human sinfulness and corruption.

At the same time, it is easy to see the sins of others and neglect our own sins. This, I fear, is the danger of such public displays of “repentance.” Although Lucado may at times have spoken unkindly of others, including Blacks and Hispanics, it is unlikely he ever enslaved them, overtly oppressed them, or purposefully excluded them from the church where he preached.

As I see it, public repentance for ancestors’ sins is a modern form of Pharisaic behavior designed to counter current labels of white supremacy and racism. In our contemporary culture, social justice warriors lay the blame for minority plight on systemic racism and oppression. Despite the fact of near universal slavery in human history, proponents of Critical Race Theory (CRT) call the “peculiar institution”

America’s “original sin.” Ibram X, Kendi, Derrick Bell, Kimberle Crenshaw, Jemar Tisby, and Robin DiAngelo demand contrition and repentance from *all* Caucasian Americans because *all*, they say, are complicit.

A week or so after his public apology, veteran news anchor Randy Beamer interviewed Lucado on his Anchor podcast.³ While I did not listen to Lucado’s entire interview, I easily recognized his language as coming from Ibram Kendi’s *How to Be an Antiracist* and other authors comprising the CRT canon.

Listen, no one wants to deny our nation’s awful legacy of slavery, Jim Crow laws, and discrimination. In all my years in the classroom teaching American History or History of Christianity in America, I never neglected to teach our nation’s full history - warts and all. It is important to teach a balanced view of humanity’s past, good and bad. Scripture never glosses over human corruption, and neither should we. However, there is something harmful about *insisting* on or demanding contrition for sins we did not commit. Are there biblical examples of godly leaders calling Israel to repentance? A cursory reading of the Old Testament prophets reveals God often called for repentance. However, there are dangers to avoid when considering such repentance.

C.S. Lewis says such repentance could easily give cover for our own current sins. While it appears as an outward act of devotion it is, in reality, something Pharisaical. In an essay printed in *The Guardian* in 1940, Lewis responded to the phenomena of young Britons apologizing for their elders’ sins which led to World War II. At the time, the Battle of Britain was underway, and many Britons realized the part their ancestors played in the unjust Versailles Treaty (1919) which contributed to the rise of Hitler. What follows is a portion of Lewis’ essay:

“When we speak of England’s actions we mean the actions of the British Government. The young man who is called upon to repent of England’s foreign policy is really being called upon to repent the acts of his neighbour; for a Foreign Secretary or a Cabinet Minister is certainly a neighbour. And repentance presupposes condemnation. The first and fatal charm of national repentance is, therefore, the encouragement it gives us to turn from the bitter task of repenting our own sins to the congenial one of bewailing but, first, of denouncing the conduct of others. If it were clear to the young that this is what he is doing, no doubt he would remember the law of charity. Unfortunately the very terms in which national repentance is recommended to him conceal its true nature. By a dangerous figure of speech, he calls the Government not ‘they’ but ‘we’. And since, as penitents, we are not encouraged to be



charitable to our own sins, nor to give ourselves the benefit of any doubt, a Government which is called ‘we’ is *ipso facto* placed beyond the sphere of charity or even justice. You can say anything you please about it. You can indulge in the popular vice of detraction without restraint, and yet feel all the time that you are practicing contrition. A group of such young penitents will say, ‘Let us repent our national sins;’ what they mean is, ‘Let us attribute to our neighbour (even our Christian neighbour) in the Cabinet, whenever we disagree with him, every abominable motive that Satan can suggest to our fancy.’”⁴

It does not take a rocket scientist to see the application to today’s woke culture!

Although there is no way to know, my guess is that Max Lucado felt smugly superior after his prayer of apology last August. After all, he got all the moral high ground that comes with confession, but he escaped nearly all the personal pain. Theodore Dalrymple calls this the “False Apology Syndrome” saying:

“The syndrome is dangerous because it allows us to *feel* good without having to *be* good. The habit of public apology for things for which one bears no personal responsibility changes the whole concept of a virtuous person, from one who exercises the discipline of virtue to one who expresses correct sentiment. The most virtuous person of all is he who expresses it the loudest and to the most people. The end result is likely to be self-satisfaction and ruthlessness accompanied by unctuous moralizing, rather than a determination to behave well.”

We get to feel grandiose for “our” guilt without actually having to change.

Since the 1960s and the Civil Rights Movement, many of us who lived through that era worked diligently to change our outlook on minorities. Martin Luther King Jr. was not the only one calling for racial reconciliation. Colorado Coach Bill McCartney and the “Promise Keepers Movement” led the way for racial harmony within evangelical Christianity. We have celebrated inter-racial and inter-cultural congregations such as Mosaic Church in Los Angeles. Numerous assemblies call together a multi-racial staff and do their best to welcome people from all cultural and racial heritages. Granted, problems still exist and there is a long way to go, but most Americans are taking steps to personally eradicate their prejudice and discrimination.

It is important to teach a balanced view of humanity’s past, good and bad. Scripture never glosses over human corruption, and neither should we. However, there is something harmful about *insisting* on or demanding contrition for sins we did not commit.

I am not saying here that America and the church have not gotten some things drastically wrong. I am suggesting that our sins of the past are not the things most Americans get wrong today. If Lewis were writing today, I think he would point out that the sins which ought to be confessed are the contempt for those with whom there are differences, self-righteous name calling and disrespect of others, destruction of property, violence in the streets, and general immoral behavior. Without that, any protestation of guilt on the part of others falls flat!

Did not Jesus speak to this in Matthew 7? Jesus told His hearers the same standard by which they judged others would turn back upon themselves (7:1,2). Further He asked why they so easily saw the sins of others but could not acknowledge their own (7:3,4). Jesus repeatedly saw such hypocrisy in the Pharisees who so blatantly “virtue signaled” their righteousness before others despite their own guilt. What, may I ask, courage or humility does it take for me to “apologize” for past wrongs when none of them are mine? All I would accomplish is to reveal my own disdain for other people’s sins, and it would change nothing! ~RH

Endnotes

1 <https://www.ktsa.com/pastor-begs-forgiveness-for-ancestors-racist-acts/>

2 Ibid

3 You can listen to the podcast at <https://anchor.fm/sanantoniosvoice/episodes/Max-Lucado-responds-to-racism-apology-criticism-ei5b94>

4 C.S. “Jack” Lewis, “Danger of National Repentance,” *The Guardian*, 15 March 1940. You can also find this cited in Lewis’ *God in the Dock* (Eerdmans’ 1970) p. 189.

Michael Hines is a professor of church history and now makes his home in Sun City, AZ. He can be contacted by email: professormike1943@gmail.com.



A MILLENNIAL MOMENT

Swords and Plowshares

Part 1

There's a poster of John Wayne taped to the inside door of my home office. He isn't visible to anyone but me. The Duke is dressed in full cavalry uniform. A tagline at the bottom reads, "Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway." As a red-blooded American dude, this poster hits all the right buttons for me.



Tim Jackson

The nice thing about John Wayne is that he's always the good guy. Sure, he can be crass and a little rough around the edges, but that just adds extra toughness to his persona. He's the good guy who shoots the bad guys out the saloon

windows. Good guys wear white hats, bad guys wear black hats (unless you're Tim McGraw, and then you can wear whatever hat you want). The point is you know that when you see John Wayne pop up on the screen, he's gonna do the right thing, shoot the right guy, get the girl, and deliver that classic one-liner right before the credits roll.

Here's the problem: most people aren't like John Wayne. Life is rarely as simple as good guys and bad guys. Sometimes the people you thought were bad guys have dreams and heartaches and families and kids they adore. All too often, the people you think are John Waynes turn out to be the bad guys.

Millennials struggle with the idea of bad guys, at least in the traditional sense. We are drawn to stories that push beyond good and bad to express the value in all human life. There's this sense that the people we traditionally label "bad" are just misunderstood. For the most part, we despise language and actions that denigrate other human beings. We've been raised to believe that the space between "us" and "them" isn't much space at all.

I realize this is controversial. Even reading through it my-

self, I can instantly think of all kinds of people that I could easily put in the "bad guy" category (Nazis, the Taliban, anyone who hurts children). I'm not here to defend the actions of terrible humans. God's justice cannot be mocked (Galatians 6:7). As with most ideologies, there is real danger in carrying this line of thinking to the extreme, but there's also a diamond of gospel truth buried here.

Listen to this from Paul:

For we are not fighting against flesh-and-blood enemies, but against evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against mighty powers in this dark world, and against evil spirits in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12, NLT).

Paul believes in bad guys. They're just not human. For Paul, the enemy is real and destructive and deserves every bit of our hatred. They are spiritual.¹

The enemy ruins marriages, destroys families, and kills souls. The enemy twists everything good from the Father into a trinket for self-worship. The enemy wages wars, revels in child starvation, delights in sexual abuse, and rejoices with lies. The only response to this kind of enemy, according to Paul, is to consistently arm yourself with truth and peace. This enemy takes no prisoners, and neither will we. Even when we're scared to death, we saddle up anyway.

I pray that the church owns this responsibility but if I'm honest, all too often it feels like we're waging war against flesh and blood. Our arrogant words are high caliber rounds pointed at the hearts of our fellow humans. Masked by the distance of social media and shielded by a cadre of those who expressly agree with us, we toss grenades and enjoy the fallout.

I get it. It feels good to have an enemy with a face. It's nice to be a part of "us" and blame lots of our problems on "them." However, this kind of thinking drives millennials bonkers. More importantly, when we turn humans made for the love of Christ into enemies we despise, we abandon the gospel.

I was convicted recently by the story of Peter cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave in the Garden. Too often in my own life, I'm more interested in protecting Jesus from people I think have the gospel wrong than I am in true healing. I wonder how often I unknowingly cut down those He wants to heal. I remind myself that our story is fundamentally about taking nails ourselves instead of drawing swords on someone else. Following Christ doesn't mean crusading for the Holy Land; it means dying alone outside Jerusalem, praying for the forgiveness of those who wound us.

I have quite a bit more to say about all this, and I'm hoping to develop some practical ideas to give these thoughts

life in the church in my next column. For now, suffice it to say that millennials like me are tired of fighting somebody all the time. If you want to be our generation's John Wayne, then teach us how to beat our swords into plowshares (Isaiah 2:1-4). ~RH

Endnotes

¹ I absolutely believe humans can be used by our real enemy to cause destruction and evil. But the story of Jesus healing the man possessed by Legion is instructive here (Luke 8:26-39). Jesus doesn't complain to his Twitter followers about this guy or start a podcast explaining why people like this are ruining Israel. He identifies the enemy and heals him. As we articulate movements of the enemy in the lives of those around us, may we not lose sight of the eternal souls at stake.

Tim Jackson is a 2016 graduate of Kentucky Christian University. He and his wife Kate are full-time campus ministers at Lock Haven University in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. They have one son, Judah.



Pennsylvania Church Seeks Minister

Montoursville, PA— The First Christian Church of Montoursville is seeking a full-time minister to serve its congregation located in north central Pennsylvania, within close proximity to the City of Williamsport. Candidates must possess a college degree from a Church of Christ/Christian Church college, be committed to Restoration Movement principles, and have a passion for reaching young individuals and families.

Salary is commensurate with experience and skills. The minister's benefits include a housing allowance in lieu of a parsonage.

Interested candidates may submit their resume by mail to: First Christian Church, Attention: Search Committee, 5329 Lycoming Mall Drive, Montoursville, PA, 17754 or, by email to: secretary_fccmontour@outlook.com.

Candidates should also include a one-page cover letter explaining their Christian worldview, an online sermon recording, and current background clearances.

For more information about First Christian Church of Montoursville, visit www.fccmontour.com.

“This investment is as wise as it is simple. We can easily take this plan with us wherever the Lord leads in life and ministry.”



christian churches
pension plan
STEWARDSHIP FOR YOUR FUTURE

Learn more online @ ccpension.org
email questions to admin@ccpension.org

Ross Najmon
Financial Associate
International Services
Team Expansion



Commitment to Restoration Movement Principles

By Dustin Wells

Several years ago, I visited a church one Sunday morning at the request of a friend. I had never been to the church before, and it had a sort of pleasant, generic, evangelical-sounding name. As I sat through the service, I could detect almost no difference between it and several of the Restoration Movement churches I had been involved with. The songs were similar, the communion service was similar, and the preaching was, once again, pleasant, evangelical, and generic. I still wondered, though—what kind of church is this? I decided to go to a place I thought would give me a clue: the church bulletin board. I was not disappointed. Posted on the board were various missionaries and ministries the church supported, and, by quickly looking through the information, I learned that I was visiting an Assemblies of God congregation.

It used to be very easy to identify a church by the institutions it supported. There was a time, in my area, when you could tell one of “our” churches, by walking up to the bulletin board or the literature rack and seeing the Christian Standard, a report from Lincoln Christian College, and a brochure for Prairie States Christian Service Camp. Churches were loyal to the movement and expressed that loyalty by showing loyalty to the institutions that were built to support the movement. Those days are fast passing, if not already gone.

Many have written about the decline of institutions, both religious and secular, throughout our nation, but the Restoration Movement has gone through a lot, just in the last 10 years. When we consider the partition of Standard Publishing, the closure and merger of several Bible Colleges, and the end of the North American Christian Convention, it is hard to believe all these things have happened in such a short amount of time. Without the guiding hand of these organizations, some of the churches seem to have fallen by the wayside. Just recently I heard of a church that called a denominational man as their minister, and the vote to call was 100%. Things that would have seemed astonishing to us a generation ago are commonplace today.

So, what do we do?

Commit To Christ

We must realize that if our loyalty was ever to any institution, it was a misplaced loyalty. We should be thank-

ful to God for the conventions, Bible Colleges, and other ministries that have helped the Lord’s people over the years, but we need to realize — those things are not the church! Christ said He would build His church (Matthew 16:18). I am thankful to God to be part of the Restoration Movement, but if being in the movement simply means subscribing to a certain magazine or going to a certain college, I don’t want any part of it. I signed up to be part of a movement that calls people out of denominationalism and man-made institutions to unite with each other by taking a courageous stand on the scriptures and the scriptures alone. I signed up to be part of a movement that wants to, first and foremost, preach Christ to the world and in this way to fulfill the prayer of Christ in John 17. Institutions come and go, but the gates of Hades will never prevail against the Lord’s church.

Commit To Sound Doctrine

We need to get back to preaching doctrine. Most preachers I know truly don’t want to preach milquetoast, self-help, pop psychology sermons. On the other hand, they very rarely emphasize the distinctives of the Restoration Movement. I think they are afraid of majoring in the minors, but life teaches that when we let too many details lapse, the minors become majors. Sometimes we need to be the little Dutch boy, willing to stick his finger in the dike BEFORE the flood comes. Besides that, the distinctives of our movement aren’t really minors. Let’s preach on the nature of the church, why we don’t use human creeds, the Lord’s Supper, baptism into Christ for the remission of sins, the biblical eldership, and the role of men and women. Let’s explain to people that when they see “Church of Christ” written on the outside of our buildings, that’s not the name of a denomination; rather, it is a positive declaration: “We are Christ’s church, and we belong to Him and only Him.” Then we need to explain how that affects everything we do as a church and as Christians.

I acknowledge that all this amounts to swimming upstream in our current “anything goes” culture—a culture that has infiltrated the church. However, we need to see that even though institutions come and go, what we do as Preachers, as Elders, and as Christians, will have an impact for eternity.

~RH

Dustin Wells lives in rural Hoopeston, IL, and serves as Evangelist with the Prairie Green and Sheldon Churches of Christ.



The Christian Restoration Association

The Church in Bible and History

Six Part Lesson Series

BONUS: 50 Minute Overview



With Speaker
Harvey C. Bream, Jr.

Now available for instant streaming!

Includes printable study guide/outline download. Perfect for personal, small group or congregational viewing.

Only \$20 from the CRA Bookstore.

The CRA gratefully acknowledges the following special gifts for the Recycled Riches Fund:

In memory of

Ruth & Galen Leedy

by Marilyn & Ron Fisher



THE INDEX TO ALL ARTICLES IS NOW AVAILABLE FOR FREE AT WWW.THECRA.ORG

DID YOU KNOW?

ONLINE SUBSCRIBERS GET ACCESS TO THE RESTORATION HERALD ARCHIVES BACK TO 1922!

AN ONLINE SUBSCRIPTION IS ONLY \$10



You can help continue the work. Please remember the CRA in your estate plan.



LOW COSTS FOR...

Resident or Independent Study/Graduate & Undergraduate

FREE TUITION for Men Preaching/Training to Preach
Call for Details!

Summit Theological Seminary

2766 W. Airport Rd - Peru, IN 46970 / 765-472-4111 / www.summit1.org

Terry Carter – President George L. Faull – Founder





The Heresy of Statism

There is a legitimate function of government the Apostle Paul sets forth in Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-14. He called it a “ministry,” and it is clear government has a place in the Christian worldview. God has a job for government. In summary, it is to terrorize those who do wrong and “commend” those who do right. The kinds of wrongs here are those, from Romans 12:19, for which you might be tempted to “take your own revenge.” God desires governments take this revenge for everyone when justice demands it. However, this is designed to have a desirable side-effect: a society in which everyone can tend toward, “peaceful and quiet lives” (1 Timothy 2:2).



Kent B. True, aka Harold Orndorff

Notice government is *not* defined in scripture in terms of how it should be structured—that is left to the use of wisdom. What defines government is its assigned task. Sometimes we think of good government being mostly a matter of the form it takes. Our society has a near-reverence for democracy. We think if everyone can vote, anything government might do is acceptable. History and reason scream this is not the case.

Governments can go wrong in two general ways. One is to fail to accomplish the task God assigned them. When a government does not punish the guilty, it fails. When it punishes the innocent, it fails. Another way government can go wrong is to attempt to do things governments are not authorized to do. We will call this approach “Statism” (*Statism* and *State* will be capitalized to remind us of this).

There is something sometimes unseen behind these versions of government failure. Notice God has NOT given governments the authority to *determine or decree* what is right and wrong, just and unjust. When governments attempt to decree what is right, they have already gone wrong.

God declares what is right. The “right” and “wrong” of Romans 13:3-4 are outside the authority of governments. A government fulfilling its role recognizes this and works from there.

Another way governments go awry is when they attempt to do things outside the area of punishing evil. Governments have often illicitly assumed the role of provider. Today that provision is broad. The State attempts to ensure no one is poor. The State attempts to ensure no one is uninformed. The State attempts to ensure we are immune from the results of our bad personal decisions. The State attempts to guarantee no one is endangered, even by an individual’s decisions regarding his own life. Some of these goals are good, but they are not within the job description of government. They are, rather, within the job description of the church. They are not things that can be rightly imposed by force, which is government’s only tool.

The State of the 21st century attempts to ensure everything is “right” in every person’s life. Remember, governments are authorized to handle wrongs for which people might be tempted to “take their own revenge” from Romans 12:19. This can’t include things people do to themselves or in their minds. Many of these things are wrongs according to God, but they are not the wrongs governments are authorized to address.

Statism is a view that perverts government into something like God: all-knowing, all-benevolent, and all-powerful. While those things are a great combination in God, they are a deadly combination in Statists and their States.

Behind the ways governments go wrong is a theological assumption about governments. When governments attempt to take on the roles of defining good and evil, claiming the knowledge to decide the details of how every life should be lived, and providing everything the government sees as necessary for the good life, things have gone wrong. This kind of State has to claim the prerogatives of God, and, in doing so, becomes the embodiment of dangerous false doctrine. It is “having a god” who is not the Lord.

What starts out as a government sometimes becomes a State. While a government is an institution God has ordained and Christians should respect, a State is close to organized crime - gangsters, if you will. Like so many things



God has put into place, something good, when misused, becomes evil.

Most governments throughout history have tended toward Statism. Even worse, the church has too often not just ignored this but encouraged and attempted to use it. In the time following Constantine, there is an interesting story of the church intermingling itself with the government in ways that distort the purpose of both church and government. Constantine, who appeared to have mixed motives, wanted to intermingle the church and the government at least enough to help stabilize his empire. The church often approved of this and gladly became almost an arm of the State. During the middle ages, the church (such as it was by then) often claimed to be the supreme governing political authority in the world.

When the Reformation got underway, that Statist impulse of the Roman Catholic Church was usually adopted by the reformers. Calvin was known for his use of the state to enforce sound doctrine with (sometimes) even the death penalty. Little of the Reformation did much to reform the church in regard to its Statist tendencies. Instead, it shamefully employed the State to get what it wanted. When the Reformation came to North America, it brought its statist tendencies with it. We were well into the 19th century before some American states were rid of their state-established and supported churches.

Statism has remained popular with the church in North America through the 20th century and into the current century. The church has even urged the state to take on tasks belonging to church, not government. The church has generally given up enlisting the State illicitly to use violence to enforce sound doctrine, but that should not surprise us because the church today generally is not interested in sound doctrine.

We have become so accustomed to governments that have morphed into States we seldom notice it going on around us all the time. Try to think of some aspect of your life not controlled by a State. Can you come up with anything? Think carefully here. You might say, “Well, I make my own living.” While you might have a job, how you can do that, when you can do that, and how much you can do that is minutely controlled by the state. How about this one: control and care of your immediate family. The state doesn’t attempt to control any of that, does it? No, wait, it does—and in many ways.

Statism is a view that perverts government into something like God: all-knowing, all-benevolent, and all-powerful.

While government is an institution God has ordained and Christians should respect, a State is close to organized crime... Like so many things God has put into place, something good, when misused, becomes evil.

While those things are a great combination in God, they are a deadly combination in Statists and their States.

This theological problem is not the only one of Statism. The second problem is the denial of the doctrine of sin. James Madison elegantly stated this theological point about government:

“If men were angels, no government would be necessary. If angels were to govern men, neither external nor internal controls on government would be necessary. In framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself” (Federalist #51).

In other words, if the world was without sin, we would not need government. If government officials were not sinners, we wouldn’t have to fear them going awry. However, we are left with a difficult dilemma: we are all sinners so we need government, but all government officials are also sinners, so they cannot be trusted completely. Consequently, we are left with the task of devising a *form* of government that can do the God-ordained job of restraining those who want to do evil but also be structured in a way that restrains government officials from doing evil. It is not an easy job to guard against a government becoming a State.

The theological problem comes when those inhabiting the offices of government are seen as being somehow above the effects of sin. When people want governments to be like God, doing and providing everything, they have to trust those in positions of power not to be affected by the corruption of sin. This will tend to turn governments into States. When the church joins in with this idea, it is denying the doctrine of sin.

Sin is an equal-opportunity corruptor. If we should be wary of individuals who might steal, we must be equally



wary of government officials who might steal using the power of the State. If you fear your neighbor acting out of destructive selfish interest, you have to fear equally any executive acting in destructive selfish interest. To the extent it is reasonable not to trust just anyone with your personal business, it is equally reasonable not to trust an elected official with your personal business. The doctrine of sin requires we be just as wary of those in government as we would anyone else. Your neighbor can do some damage when he succumbs to sinful impulses, but when that same person holds an office within the State, those same sinful impulses can yield exponentially greater damage.

This is not an argument against the God-given role of government; it is an argument *for* keeping a careful watch on government. There can come a time when what was once a government is now a thug-like State. Need we mention characters like Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, and Mao, and that is just the short list.

The same is true with a church. The church has authority in some areas, and it has officials in the office of elder. Sadly, history has made it clear elders and churches can go far enough off God's path that they are elders and churches in name only. The respect and obedience due a congregation and its leaders change when they decide to give up God's assigned role for them and do whatever they like. That is not an argument against the church. It is an argument for being careful that what claims to be a church really is one.

The same situation applies to governments. At some point, when what used to be a government changes itself into a society of Statist thugs, it is time to recognize that and act accordingly. The failure to recognize this is not just a social failing—it is false doctrine. ~RH

** Kent B. True is the alter ego of Harold N. Orndorff, Jr., a retired campus minister who has taught college and seminary courses in the fields of apologetics, philosophy, ethics, and logic. Lately, he enjoys studying his grandchildren, who are very interesting one and all. Contact him, if you must, at hnoi@hotmail.com.*

“Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God. Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same. For he is God’s minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is God’s minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.” — Romans 13:1–4 NKJV

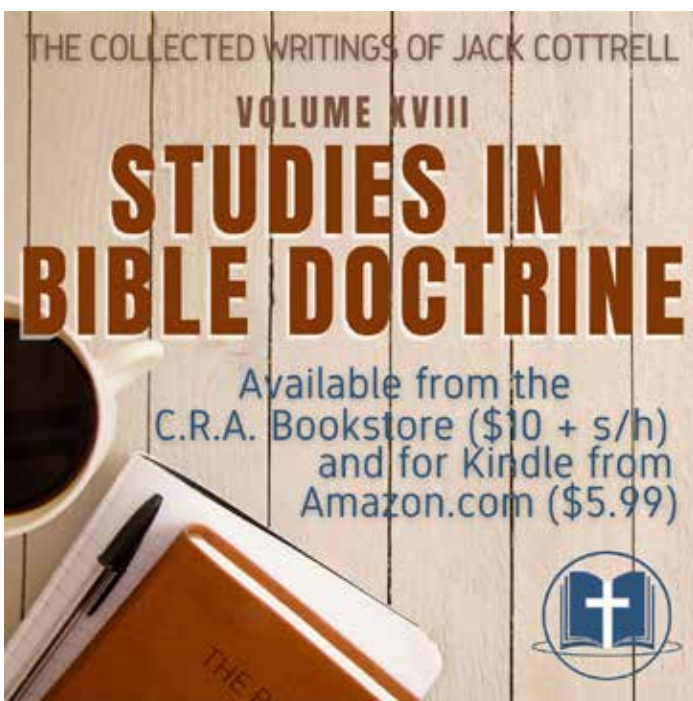
Alaska Church Seeking Minister

Anchorage, AK — The Christian Church of Anchorage is seeking a full-time Minister following the retirement of their minister of 40 years. The Christian Church of Anchorage is a congregation with a strong Restoration Movement heritage. Currently they have about 90-110 members in their church family.

Candidates should have either a college degree or ministry experience as a preaching minister.

Alaska is a beautiful and unique place. If you would like to serve the Lord in a wonderful location that is always just a step away from true wilderness, this might be the place for you.

Interested individuals should provide a resume via email to ccaoffice@gci.net. Additional information is available if requested from the same email address.



A Special Thank You from the Editor

As you can probably imagine, a great deal of effort goes into each issue of our *Restoration Herald*. Much of this effort is clearly visible — from the cover design to the graphic images to the meticulous research behind the various articles. However, one of the most critical aspects of every issue occurs completely behind-the-scenes, totally invisible to the reader. Just what is this crucial task? Proofreading.

This issue marks the end of an era. **Marilyn Abbott** has been proofreading every article for every issue for over twenty years! It is impossible to express how valuable Marilyn has been to the success and quality of *The Restoration Herald*.

Proofreading is hard, much harder than it looks. Proofreading requires an excellent knowledge of English grammar, use of punctuation, extensive vocabulary, and other skills. Over the years, Marilyn proved herself to be one of the best.

We, the staff of the CRA, thank Marilyn for her many years of dedicated service to *The Restoration Herald* and pray for God's continuing blessing upon her.

About Our Lesson Writer



Michael Jackson is a minister serving in Central Virginia for more than twenty-one years, the last ten with the Unionville Christian Church, Unionville, VA. He is blessed to have grown up in Restoration Movement Churches. There have been and are several Christian Church/Church of Christ ministers in his family including his father, brother, father-in-law, two brothers-in-law, a nephew, and a cousin.

Michael is also blessed to be married to Candi (Short) for over thirty-three years. They have two married sons, a granddaughter, a grandson, and are awaiting the arrival of twin granddaughters.

Enjoying the Restoration Herald?

Why not give a gift subscription to someone?

www.thecra.org



Louisville

B I B L E C O L L E G E

- LOW TUITION
- BIBLICALLY SOUND PROFESSORS
- CONVENIENT LOCATION
- COMMUTERS' SCHEDULE
- SHORT TERM COURSES AVAILABLE

"WE PREPARE PREACHERS"

Call us today at (502) 231-LBC1 (5221)
8212 Restoration Drive
Louisville, KY 40228
www.louisvillebible.net

Speaking Truth to Power

Background of Text

In 2 Samuel 11, King David was at home while his army was off to war. One evening, he was on his roof when he saw a beautiful woman bathing. In his position of power as the king, he inquired as to who this woman was and then sent messengers to bring her to him. Verse 4 says, “She came to him, and he slept with her.” David committed adultery with Bathsheba which resulted in her becoming pregnant.

When David learned that Bathsheba was pregnant, he came up with a plan to try to cover up his sin. He had Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, sent home from the war and tried to get him to go home and sleep with his wife. He even got Uriah drunk one night, hoping that in his inebriated state he would forget about his devotion to his fellow soldiers

and his duty as a soldier and go home to lie with his wife, but Uriah still did not go home.

Since David was not successful in deceiving Uriah in this way, in order to cover up what he had done, he sent him back to the war with a message to Joab, the commander of David’s army, to put Uriah on the front lines where the fighting was fiercest. Joab was to then withdraw from Uriah to ensure that he would be killed.

This plan was put into motion and Uriah was killed. Bathsheba mourned for her husband and “after the time of mourning was over, David had her brought to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.”

12:1-7 — Chapter 12 is a response to the events of chapter 11 and shows the result of God’s displeasure with what David had done. The Lord sent Nathan to David with a message. The first part of this message is a parable which, unbeknownst to David, retells what he did in chapter 11. David did not realize that Nathan is there, sent by God, to confront him about and rebuke him for his sin.

No one likes to be called out for doing something wrong. Confronting someone about their wrongdoing is not a pleasant task. You just don’t know how they might react when confronted or rebuked for something they have done. This can be magnified when it is someone in a position of power. There are accounts in the Old Testament of kings putting to death people that angered them. Proverbs 20:2 says, “A king’s wrath is like the roar of a lion; he who angers him forfeits his life.” In the story of Esther (Esther 4:11), she says that if someone “approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned” that they would be put to death if the king did not make an exception for them. Confronting a king

was dangerous. How would David react?

The parable Nathan told is of a rich man and a poor man. The rich man had a large number of sheep and cattle and the poor man had one little ewe lamb. When the rich man prepared a meal for a traveler, he took the poor man’s ewe lamb instead of taking from his own sheep or cattle. After hearing this story from Nathan, we see that David responded with righteous indignation. Verse 5 says that David “burned with anger” and said that the man in the story “deserves to die.”

Verse 7 is when David finds out that the story Nathan told him was about him. In general, it is meant as a compliment when someone says, “You da man” but not in this instance. Nathan said to David, “You are the man.” Nathan tells David that he is the man in the story, the one David was angry with and had said that he deserves to die.

For a couple of other Old Testament stories that share some similarities, read Genesis 38 about Judah and Tam-

ar, and read 1 Kings 20:35-43 about Ahab and a prophet of God.

12:7-15 — Nathan delivered to David the Lord’s words of rebuke. The Lord asked him why he would do what he has done after all that the Lord has done for him. Nathan told David that there will be consequences for his actions. David’s response to the Lord’s rebuke is admission in verse 13. David did not make excuses or try to justify it. He did not say like some do today, “God wants me to be happy.” He admits that he has sinned against the Lord, and the Lord forgave him. The Lord let him know there will still be consequences, and He followed through with those consequences.

It was no doubt a daunting task to confront and rebuke the powerful king of Israel for committing adultery and having someone murdered, but Nathan did so as the Lord directed him. Nathan was likely grateful that David responded with confession of his sin and not anger for being rebuked. No one is above the law and no one, not even the great King David, is above being obedient to God.

Restoring Law and Order

Background of Text — The Israelites were in Babylonian captivity for 70 years as prophesied. Cyrus, king of Persia, had captured Babylon so it was now under the control of Persia. Cyrus allowed Jews to return home and rebuild the temple at Jerusalem. Exiled Jews returned to Jerusalem, rebuilt the altar of God, and began rebuilding the temple.

Nearby peoples worked against the Israelites and tried to make them afraid to continue the rebuilding of the temple. Later opposition resulted in Artaxerxes, the king of Persia at the time, issuing an order to stop the rebuilding. Later the rebuilding began again, and the Jews were questioned about their authorization to undertake this rebuilding. In

response, they told of King Cyrus issuing a decree for the Jews to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. This prompted a letter to be written and sent to Darius, now the king of Persia, about the Jews efforts to rebuild the temple and whether or not Cyrus had actually issued this decree.

After searching the archives and discovering the decree from King Cyrus allowing the Jews to rebuild the temple, Darius decreed that the Jews could rebuild the temple, and he also decreed all expenses for the rebuilding should be paid. The temple was finished and dedicated, and Passover was celebrated, which brings us to our text. It was a number of years later when Ezra arrived in Jerusalem.

7:1-10 — The text begins with Ezra's lineage all the way back to Aaron, the first high priest and brother of Moses. This Ezra came to Jerusalem from Babylon. Verses 8-9 tell us that it took four months for him to make this journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.

What else does the text say about Ezra and his task? Verse 6 says, "he was a teacher well versed in the Law of Moses." This verse also clarifies that the Law of Moses was not from Moses, it was given by God. Verse 10 says, "Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the Lord and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel." Ezra was not only well versed in the Law, but was devoted to keeping the Law as well as to teaching the Law to the people of Israel.

Twice in these verses we are told that "the hand of God was on him." God was with Ezra in this task of restoring law and order to the Jews. Law and order matters to God. He had given the Israelites the Law for them to follow and they disobeyed time and time again. They worshiped false gods and idols, which God had warned them about. They were warned but continued to disobey God, so He punished them with captivity in Babylon, just as He said would happen.

The Bible is filled with stories showing how serious God is about doing what He says to do the way He says to do it. The story of Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10) is a good example of this. Another good example is Uzzah (2 Samuel 6). All three of these guys were put to death by God for things that don't really seem all that bad. Why did God do that? Because the things they did were in disobedience to God. There are many Bible stories that show how serious God is about obeying Him and doing things His way. This is at the heart of the Restoration Movement—doing things God's way according to His word.

Ezra was devoted to God's law and to teaching it. Sometime later (Nehemiah 8), we see Ezra reading the Book of the Law for hours to the people who had assembled. These people needed to know and adhere to the Law.

Ezra was to lead and to teach God's Law to the people so they could obey it. They should have known the Law if they had done as instructed over the generations since the Law was given. In Deuteronomy 6:6-9, the Israelites were instructed to remember the commands that the Lord had given to them and pass them on to their children. They were told to talk about them and

write them down in places to remind them so that they would not forget them. They were told to remember and obey the Law of God and God would protect them and provide for them.

7:23-26 — King Artaxerxes, in a letter to Ezra, ordered the treasurers of surrounding peoples to provide whatever Ezra asked of them. He also said that whatever God had prescribed should be done. He did not want God's wrath against him and his family.

Ezra was to appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to those that knew the law of God and to teach the law to any that did not know it. At the end of the letter, verse 26, King Artaxerxes says that those that do not obey the law "must be punished by death, banishment, confiscation of property, or imprisonment." Not obeying the law of God came with stiff penalties. Ezra was to teach God's law to the people so that in knowing it, they could obey it and not be punished for disobedience.

That is what the church and ministers seek to do today. We seek to help people learn God's word so that they can obey it and avoid punishment when we stand before the Lord on judgment day.

Enduring False Charges

Background of Text — Job was a man described in Job 1 as “blameless and upright; he feared God and shunned evil.” He had ten children, was wealthy, and had many servants. Job, a good man and a good father, would make sacrifices for his children in case they had “sinned and cursed God in their hearts.”

One day Satan came before the Lord, and the Lord asked him where he came from. Satan answered, “From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it.” 1 Peter 5:8 says, “Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.” Satan’s response makes it sound like he had been out prowling, looking for someone to devour. God said to Satan, “Have you considered My servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.”

Satan responded to God, basically saying that of course Job was faithful to God because God protected Job, his family, and everything he had — God blessed him. Satan said, “But stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face.” So, God gave Satan permission to try to make Job curse God by putting everything Job had in Satan’s hands, but he could

not touch Job himself. In Satan’s efforts to turn Job from God, he took his animals, most of his servants, and killed his ten children. Job’s response in his grief was, “The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised.” He “did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing.”

When Satan’s test with Job did not get the results he wanted, he came before the Lord again. This time he said, “stretch out Your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse You to Your face.” So, God gave Satan permission to try again but with the stipulation that “you must spare his life.” Satan “inflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head.” Job’s wife, seeing how he was physically suffering said to him that he should “Curse God and die!” Job’s response to his wife was, “Shall we accept good from God, and not trouble?” Throughout this trial, he “did not sin in what he said.”

Job’s three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar heard about all of Job’s troubles, so they decided to see Job to “sympathize with him and comfort him.” The three friends sat with Job for seven days, then Job spoke, cursing the day of his birth and wondering why he was still alive. Then his three friends began to speak.

Eliphaz gave his view of the situation, saying in chapter 4 that the innocent don’t suffer, only the guilty do. This line of thinking would mean Job must have done something wrong for all these bad things to be happening to him. In Job’s response, he asked what he had done, and he challenged his friends to tell him what sin he had committed.

8:1-10, 20-22 — Bildad began by rebuking Job, asking, “How long will you say such things?” He then asked, “Does God pervert justice?” His implication was that God does not pervert justice, and he said that Job’s children were punished for their sin. Bildad told Job that if he is blameless, then God will not reject him. His words, like Eliphaz, were saying Job must not be innocent—he must have done something to make all these bad things happen. People are sometimes falsely accused in the court of public opinion

based on incomplete evidence, but Job was being falsely accused by his own friends.

Job was tested by his wife, and by friends who didn’t believe him. Having false accusations made against you is a difficult situation, but Job stood firm in his declaration of innocence.

Satan was trying to turn Job against God by causing pain in his life, and Satan will do the same to us. Just because bad things happen in this life does not mean that we have done something wrong to cause it or that we somehow deserve it. Even Jesus’ disciples asked him a question about sin causing someone to be born blind in John 9:2. Bad things happen to people in this world. In John 16:33, Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” When bad things happen in life, we might not understand, but

Christians can be assured that the Lord is with us and has overcome the world. Job had a lot of trouble in his life, but that does not mean he caused it. We have the benefit of reading why these bad things happened to Job.

Bildad told Job he should plead with God. It sounds like Bildad was saying Job should repent, plead for mercy, and then God would restore him. He even told Job to learn from people of the past.

In Acts 6 & 7, Stephen had false accusations made against him which led to his being stoned to death. Jesus himself had false charges brought against Him which led Him going before Pilate. As prophesied in Isaiah 53, He remained silent and was crucified. Satan thought he had won when Jesus died, and he thought he would win with Job too. Admirably, Job endured and did not turn from God.

Hope for Justice

Background of Text

God had allowed Satan to put Job to the test to see if he would turn against God. The tests Satan put Job through were extremely difficult. In the first test, God gave Satan permission to test Job by putting everything Job had in Satan's hands, but he could not touch Job himself. Job "had seven sons and three daughters, and he owned seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred donkeys, and had a large number of servants." In one day, the sheep were burned up, the camels were stolen, the oxen and donkeys were stolen, and all but four of the servants were killed. On that same day Job's ten children were all killed when the house they were in collapsed on them. Job's response was, "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised." He "did not sin by charging God with wrongdoing."

In the second test, God gave Satan permission to do bodily harm with the stipulation that Job's life must be spared. So, Satan inflicted Job with painful sores all over his body from head to feet. Job's wife said he should "Curse God and die!" Job's response to his wife was, "Shall we accept

good from God, and not trouble?" Through it all, he "did not sin in what he said."

This brings us to what I call the third test, peer pressure. Job's wife had said he should "curse God and die!" Then Job's friends come to see him, and, as discussed in last week's lesson, they tried to tell him that he must have done something wrong to have caused all of his pain and suffering from these events. Neither Job, his wife, nor his friends had the benefit of knowing that God had allowed Satan to do these things to test Job. God told Satan that Job was "blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil," and Satan thought he could turn Job against God by causing him all of this pain and suffering.

Then Job's friends showed up and tried to convince him that all that has happened to him must be his fault. He did wonder and question why these things happened, but he maintained his innocence no matter how hard his friends tried to convince him otherwise. In Job 27:5-6, Job says, "I will never admit you are in the right; till I die, I will not deny my integrity. I will maintain my righteousness and never let go of it."

42:1-6, 10-17 — The last chapter of Job is a great lesson of hope amid suffering. How do we get through when life is difficult? Hope in the Lord is the answer. I will never understand how people get through this life without God. The tests that Satan put Job through caused him much pain and suffering, but he did not turn against God through it all. He passed the tests.

There are some great stories in the Bible of people who were faithful to God when faced with some extreme tests. Abraham was tested by God, and passed the test, when God told him to offer his son, Isaac, as a sacrifice, even though God had told him that he would be the father of a great nation through Isaac (Genesis 22; Hebrews 11:17-19). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were threatened with being thrown into a blazing furnace if they did not bow down to the image of gold as ordered by the king. They

told the king that God was able to rescue them if they were thrown into the furnace but even if God did not rescue them, they would not worship the king's image of gold. They were thrown into the furnace and God did rescue them (Daniel 3).

Job passed the tests that Satan put him through. In chapter 42, after all the discussion with his friends and then hearing from God, Job said, "Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know." He had questioned why these things had happened and why he was still alive and even cursed the day of his birth. Now he says, "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."

Verses 10-17 show the results of Job passing the tests and not turning against God. "The Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice

as much as he had before." His relatives and others came to visit and each person "gave him a piece of silver and a gold ring." The Lord blessed Job even more than He had previous to Job's troubles. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. He also had ten more children, seven sons and three daughters, and lived long enough to see his children and grandchildren to the fourth generation.

Job was tremendously blessed by God for his faithfulness through all that he endured. Christians can look forward to blessings greater than Job's when this life is over. We have hope in Jesus Christ of living forever with God in heaven. No matter how hard life gets or what difficulties we must endure, scripture says that if we are faithful to the Lord, we will receive a crown of life.

The Restoration Herald

Christian Restoration Association

7133 Central Parke Blvd

Mason, OH 45040

Address Service Requested

Periodicals

U.S. Postage

PAID

Christian Restoration
Association

**Please check the date on
the address label for your
subscription renewal date!**

**Moving? Before you move, please
send your new address to:
weborders@theCRA.org**

Calendar of Events

Events are added to the calendar as they are provided and at the Editor's discretion. Please keep us informed.

2022

Fairway's Men's Renewal.....March 3-4

The Villages, FL

Contact: FCCSerago@gmail.com

Fairway's Ladies RenewalMarch 24-25

The Villages, FL

Contact: FCCSerago@gmail.com

Person to Person Spring Clinic..... May 10-12

Hillsboro, OH

Contact: p2pm_office@yahoo.com

Rock Lake Family Camp May 18-21

Vestaburg, MI

Contact: Terryst710@gmail.com

Preaching in the MountainsJune 12-16

Hyndman, PA

Contact: tshaffer248@yahoo.com

Hillsboro Family Camp..... July 25-28

Hillsboro, OH

Contact: p2pm_office@yahoo.com

The CRA Today

Meet Our Trustees

Dave Jones became a CRA trustee in 2018.



Dave has served as an evangelist with the Millwood (OH) Church of Christ since 2006. During that time, he has continued the late

Gene Lilly's emphasis on training men for the ministry through internships and preacher training classes offered by the church. Besides Dave, four other Millwood Timothies are actively serving in preaching ministries, including the church's other evangelist, Zach Rayburn. Many men from Millwood supply preach in the area.

Besides his work with the CRA, Dave is active with Wakatomika Christian Service Camp, home of the GAP Youth Preaching Camp. He also serves on the boards of Hippo Valley Christian Mission and the Central Ohio Preachers Association.

Dave and his wife Andrea have three married daughters, two teenage sons, and a granddaughter.