

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

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For A Conservative Anabaptist Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

GRACE – a word that has many applications according to a dictionary definition but for the Christian it has a very special meaning, it is the gift of God to humankind, it is His infinite love, mercy, favour and goodwill freely given to all irrespective of tribe, tongue or nation who acknowledge their sin through repentance and then live in the way that Jesus Christ, who made this Grace available to us through his sacrifice on the cross, teaches us in His word handed down to us by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in written form.

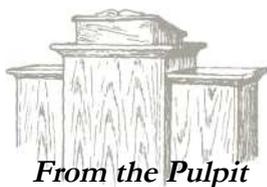
Recently I came across a book written by Michael Phillips, “The Eleventh Hour” about the persecution and annihilation of very large numbers of God’s people during those very dark days of World War II in Europe, one of his characters relates the words of Dietrich Bonhoeffer on Grace and says in his own words this:

“Cheap grace means grace alone does everything, and so everything can remain as it was before. Let the Christians live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world’s standards. Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field. It is the kingly rule of Christ. Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ, and it is grace because it gives man the only true life. Above all that Grace is costly because it cost God the life of his Son.” End quote.

I believe it would be well and beneficial for us no matter how long we have been a Christian, or how close we think our walk with our Saviour Jesus Christ is, to once again examine ourselves, not each other, as to how we view this Grace of God, this unmerited favour that He extends to all of mankind moment by moment on an individual basis. The Grace of God is a unlimited quantity, there is enough for each of us when we have a sufficiency for the moment to carry us through this day then there is still an unlimited quantity of Grace for anyone who desires to partake of it whether they be a saint many years or a sinner coming to the throne of Grace for the first time. May we appreciate his Grace daily – it is sufficient every day to lead us home.

J.v.L



Children of God
Paul Emerson
Calvary Mennonite Fellowship
2012

May we pray.

Heavenly Father we thank you for the opportunity that you have given us today to meet around your word, to share burdens, blessings, opportunities for service, we thank you for this congregation and for those who are visiting with us today. It is a blessing to be together in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Guide us now as we look to your word, help us to think well and rightly about it and not merely to think about it but to apply it to our understanding and to our lives as we go from this place.

We pray in Jesus name. Amen.

Please turn to 1st John chapter 3

Now let's get to the important business of the hour.

Brother Keith very helpfully introduced this passage during the assembly time which will make it easier for us and Brother Benjamin has directed our thoughts to the subject matter from another text and so in first John chapter 2 the last 2 verses and then reading through to verse 3 chapter 3.

[1 John 2:28-29](#) Now little children abide in Him that when He appears we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. ²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

[1 John 3:1-3](#) ¹Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God; therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. ²Beloved, now we are the children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

This message came forward to my heart in preparation for another message to be delivered this Saturday evening in the Bible conference, I have an assignment there on Saturday evening in terms of the Endurance of the Gospel and in that we will deal with the issue of security, a hotly debated and misunderstood subject, we plan to as a part of that message to study in this text and so I felt it would be good as an introduction, it is a standalone study but as an introduction let's look at these verses we read.

It does seem that in the doctrine of salvation the conservative Anabaptist world or many in the conservative Anabaptist world have turned toward the ditch in their understanding of that and that is to say turned toward error while at the other extreme those in evangelical world have turned toward an error called antinomianism or a certain libertine approach to these things neither of which is a right direction biblically and so we hope to be very strictly biblical and I don't think anyone will be disappointed as we consider these themes together and offer time for discussion and reflection.

That said I want us to look carefully at this text, the English does not carry the excitement that John under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit would have intended but is the exclamation at the beginning of verse 1, it is sort of this way - just take a look at this love!!! Followed by about 10 exclamation points. That is the sentiment here, Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us.

And this language reflects both a quantity of which we sang in "The Love Of God" just a few moments ago as well as a quality the deep quality of God's love in reaching out to us as sinners, hopeless sinners, as broken people not knowing our way, having no hope, the love that God gave us as a pure gift as John exclaims, Look at it, think about it, think about the fact that you have rebelled, that's what Adam became with Eve, rebels against God, enemies Romans says ([Romans 5:10](#)), enemies of God. Think about it.

God in his justice and holiness had no requirement to do anything about that, He could have simply allowed it and it would have been consistent with His person to allow the race to eternally die for ever and to be punished rightfully for their sin.

And so John says behold, look at the love of God, the love the Father has bestowed on us.

And then to give some quality to it he says that we should be called the children of God and actually again here the original is more forceful than our English.

We are called the children of God. And again that is not an exact translation but it carries the thrust of the exact translation, we are called God's children. Think about it, what we deserve and what we have by faith, we are called God's children. Just take a look at His love.

And then the verse talks about our fellowship with God and the passage goes on in explanation of that fellowship, the fellowship of the Father with His children. It is that quality by which we are called God's children, we have fellowship with Him as the letter of first John emphasises.

We who deserve nothing but judgement, we who are in this life broken and not fixable we are broken, we are in a mess to put it in modern lingo and God extended His love toward us and as Paul wrote while we were yet sinners Christ died for us ([Romans 5:8](#))

While we were His enemies God extended his love toward us, just take a look at His love whereby we are called his children and we have fellowship with him as saints, just take a look at his love.

Now in the 2nd part of the verse we have a subject introduced that will carry on for a bit of the context, Therefore the world does not know us because it did not know Him.

We are children of God we're called children of God, we have out of God's love a new creature-hood and we struggle with that because we don't feel like new creatures a lot of the time, the old flesh reveals our messiness and our brokenness and yet travel with me through John's thoughts here as he writes empowered by the Holy Spirit, we're different to the measure that God's will is done in the life of true believers.

And so the concept here in this 2nd part of verse one is that we are utterly foreign to the world around us, we are pilgrims as Hebrews says ([Hebrews 11:13](#)), we are citizens of another country, we're strangers, we're foreigners in this world.

What this verse says is that the world does not know us, that world does not know what makes a true Christian tick, no idea what makes a true Christian tick and you will notice contrary to what this passage is sometimes taught it is a statement of fact.

We sometimes are exhorted to live like strangers and pilgrims and that exhortation is not a bad one but that is not what this is talking about, it is a clear statement that the world, that is the world system under the direction of the gods of this world, namely Satan and his cohorts, does not know us, does not know what makes us tick, and the reason is given since the world never knew God it does not know you because it did not know Him, has not known Him, does not know Him and does not know you.

The world has no conception of what we are – that is born of God by faith, regenerated, made new on the inside, the world has no conception of that because it did not and does not know God.

One writer has said about this passage, this exhortation, “Grieve not that the world does not know you, this is proof that you are God’s child.” And he goes on to say “Grieve if the world knows you, this is proof that you are not God’s child.”

And in this world today even among nominal Christians I’m not sure there is grieving in either spot, grieve not that the world doesn’t know you this is proof that you are God’s child.

We live in a day when those who claim to know Christ live like the world and think like the world and the world loves them. That is simply proof that they are not God’s children.

And so may we realise this truth, may we realise what the Bible is saying here, the world does not know us because it did not know Him.

This principle is taught by the Lord in the gospels as well, in the world you shall have tribulation, in the world you shall have persecution, if they persecuted me they shall persecute you, ([John 16:33](#), [John 15:20](#)) this truth is taught many ways in several dimensions.

So we need to ask ourselves since this is a statement of fact that God’s children are not going to be recognised by the world, where are we. I say where are we?

Since the world never knew God it does not know you.

Moving on to verse 2, we're not only called God's children as verse one says but we are God's children, Beloved now we are children of God and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like him for we shall see him as He is. [1 John 3:2](#).

We are now God's children but we do not have all of the blessings of being God's children yet, there is something coming and as I said before we struggle a bit with this because we would like some of these blessings now, I would and I suppose all of us would.

Wouldn't it be nice to have the full disposition of the Lord Jesus Christ?

We can only conjecture how this little boy, Jesus, would have been but since He had no sin and did no sin when Mary asked him to do something, his response: Yes Mamma.

As you think of how Jesus was I hope we look forward to the day when that is the way it is but we also recognise that it isn't that way now even amongst the most mature Christians in this room it isn't that way now, we have our streaks of rebellion, we have our failings, we do things we should not do, we don't do things we ought to, we procrastinate, we do all sorts of things worse than the things I have just mentioned and it would be God's will that we actually long for the day when that will be past and John picks up on that whole set of thoughts.

We are now the children of God but there is something better coming.

And the concept that I take from this compares, not equally but somewhat, to the life of our Lord Jesus Christ when He was here on the earth physically we commonly call it the humiliation of Christ from [Philippians 2](#), He humbled himself, took flesh, ([Philippians 2:8](#)) and so there was a glimpse of that glory on the Mount of Transfiguration but only a glimpse, it was as if the veil only dropped a bit and they saw a bit of that glory but for the rest of the time He walked as a man, He walked without sin compared to us and that is why it is not a full comparison, but He struggled, He had pain, He had suffering, inconvenience, and the book of Hebrews indicates that He even learned about us by virtue of all those things.

So He was in his humiliation.

And there is a comparative and I say it's not a perfect comparative because we are not sinless by any means but there is a sort of a comparison we in this day as Christians, if we are Christians, are living in the humiliation.

That's the concept of John here and he wants us to understand that the humiliation is not permanent, our lives of failure and suffering and persecution and not being known for who we really are is temporary, this world is not my hope I'm just passing through, this is temporary, it is humiliation compared to what we are in heart relationship with God., our present circumstances are revolting at times and things don't go well, in fact they go very badly at times and so here on the earth we will have tribulation and we will have persecution and things will not go perfectly, a long ways from perfectly and you know we have actually developed these little human rules that apply to that "If anything can go wrong it will" and all of the rest of that.

That's the way of this world in its brokenness it is the way we are, now it's no excuse for failure to follow God's will but it is the way of this world and so John stands in his humiliation as it were and he says, We are the children of God, the world doesn't know us, the world is going to be trouble, but there is something better coming and just as we look at the lowly Jesus, the humble Jesus as He took the select disciples upon the Mount and the veil was dropped a little and they saw just a bit of that glory that will be. So John here says it has not yet been revealed, we don't have any idea of the glory that is coming, we do not we can hardly conceptualise how it is going to be when the brokenness is gone.

When there is no more pain, no more suffering, no more death and no more trouble but he promises us that's how it is going to be.

We know that when He is revealed, when Jesus comes for us when He is revealed and there is no longer just a little drop of the veil but now He is unveiled in His fullness we know that we shall be like Him, for we shall see him as He is.

So that full veil will be removed.

And I may comment a moment on what this does not mean, this does not mean that we become God, it is not even insinuated, it does mean that we as the creature, creatures of God, we become for those who are truly in the faith we become what we were truly meant to be in all its fullness and that is reflected in these words, When we see him and his glory is fully revealed we also will be fully glorified.

So that it won't be just a glimpse which frail broken believers could see on the Mount but it will be the full array of the glory of Christ and we will be glorified so we can see Him as He is and we will be like him in the sense that we will be glorified and there will be no more of the struggle, the struggle will be over.

That is what being children of God implies.

The world will not know us and does not know us as to who we really are, we're strangers and pilgrims on a journey to be where is the very glory of God when there will be no more struggles, no more pain, no more suffering, no more sin, it will all be swallowed up in victory that is Christ.

So here on the earth right now we are in humiliation as Christ was, that should not surprise us but we do have the battle of the flesh.

In heaven we shall be in a glory similar to Christ we shall be like Him, we shall see him as He is.

So the closing question is: Are you God's child, do you in fact march to the beat of a different drummer? If so the world is not going to know how you tick what makes you tick and doesn't understand the beat of that drummer but we look not at the things which are but at the things that will be.

May we pray.

Heavenly Father these are glorious thoughts, and we know that if we are to go forward in the Christian life we must have these goals in place that we do not merely live for the present but we live for the day when we shall see Christ as He is in full glory for we shall be like him.

Guide us in our meditations and thoughts as we reflect upon this passage, we pray in Jesus name, Amen.



CONSCIOUSNESS OF RIGHT AND WRONG

A different perspective to the article published in the January edition

There are Scriptural passages that highlight the consequences of a deficient sense of right and wrong. These accounts are striking and should give one pause today, which in many ways is symptomatic of the conditions described:

"In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes" Judges 17:6; 21:25.

"And should not I spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand?" Jonah. 4:11.

In the early days of the Israelite nation following the death of Joshua and before the advent of the judges, there apparently was little moral (relating to issues of right and wrong and to how individual persons should behave) leadership. There was not a voice that spoke with clarity, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it" (Isaiah 30:21). Many of those people might have had hearts and minds that were sincere, and they wondered what the right thing to do was. In that setting, there was a diversity of ideas, causing frustration and finally ending in every person doing what seemed best to him. A positive moral leadership was greatly needed.

The condition of the people of Nineveh indicates a complete lack of an inward moral compass. Not discerning "their right hand from their left hand" eloquently and powerfully describes their lack of direction. But by their response to Jonah's preaching, one can think that at one time, they had knowledge of a holy God. That knowledge was now only a sparse intellectual matter and did not translate into heart-consciousness of what was pleasing or displeasing to the Almighty. Nineveh's reservoir of consciousness of right and wrong was completely empty.

The situation of Nineveh touched the heart of God. When the city did repent upon Jonah's preaching, God took him to task for not rejoicing for the great change. One doesn't know what the final or long range effects of the Nineveh revival were, but cords of heart and conscience that had long been still began to "vibrate once more." The depleted reservoir was being replenished; Nineveh was awakening to God-consciousness.

Solomon said that "the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly" (Proverbs 20:27). Man's spirit is the highest form of his existence, as indicated by the order in which the Scriptures list the composition of man: spirit first, then soul, and lastly, the body (1 Thessalonians 5:23). God, being a Spirit, communicates with man by the medium of man's spirit. Through the human spirit, God searches out the recesses of a man's heart and tries his thoughts and motives. The conscience resides in man's spirit.

The faculty of the conscience is God given and unerringly approves or disapproves of a person's intentions, thoughts, and actions according to the knowledge he has. The conscience is not the Holy Spirit, but it is employed by Him inasmuch as the conscience has true knowledge and sound teaching. The apostle Paul mentions "charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned" almost as one entity (1 Timothy 1:5). That chapter ends with Paul reminding Timothy to hold to "faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck" (v. 19). While the conscience cannot give inspiration or comfort, it is not to be despised and ignored.

Society has, or is, moving to an amoral position, meaning that it is abandoning the fundamental concept that some behaviour is right and other behaviour is wrong. Man's conscience then reproves him less and less for wrongdoing. In such a decadent atmosphere, Christians will need to keep their hearts "with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life" (Proverbs 4:23). Pastors, parents, and mature believers must teach and live in such a way that a clear path is established in the young generation's minds and consciences. Again and again it has been noted that the attitudes, spirits, and trends in the world exert insistent pressure on the kingdom of God, and the idea that right and wrong is a fluid and abstract matter is no exception.

It is easy to point out the decay of moral consciousness, but the challenge of mounting a Holy Ghost-inspired countermeasure is difficult. One possible reason for this is that the people of God may have already been somewhat affected. What is the answer to the condition and spirit that demands, "What's wrong with it?" When the moral moorings (not issues in themselves) begin to give way in the hearts of people, then it must be asked as David did, "What can the righteous do?" (Psalm 11:3). History and experience have shown that solely "laying down the law" is not all the answer, even though that may have its time and place. The answer is in regaining a keener sense of God-consciousness, and faithfully and spiritually judging, by the Scriptures, pride, self-love, the love of money, impurity, and resistance (Ecclesiastes 8:11).

God said through Isaiah, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him" (Isaiah 59:19). Is there something "like a flood" coming in today? But any standard raised up must have its essence and authority in Christ Jesus. He is the Standard. His manner of life, His teaching, and His Spirit and, finally, His suffering,

death, and resurrection are the ultimate basis of the consciousness of right and wrong.

One cannot come and stay at the foot of the cross without becoming conscious of sin and righteousness. It's all about sin and redemption, therefore conviction of right and wrong is never sharper than in the shadow of the cross; it is the work of the Holy Spirit. If one wants to know whether he or she is at the foot of the cross, there is a simple test, but it requires honesty: does he hate sinning and shrink from it? Is he impelled to forsake the world and all its lusts? Does he have a keen awareness of right and wrong? If so, that person is "down at the cross" where his Saviour died for him. On the other hand, if sin is rather an abstract consideration that relates only to gross immorality, and he has little burden for walking circumspectly and only a slight consciousness of right and wrong, it is to be feared that such a one is distanced from the cross. Christ Jesus crucified was all about sin—about right and wrong.

Many people know by rote from their mother's knee that God is holy, almighty, and sovereign. However, to know that in the mind but not have an experiential knowledge in the heart is two different things. That difference is a large part of the divide between a dull and vague sense of being called out of the world unto a life of holiness, or keeping oneself "unspotted from the world" and separated unto God (James 1:27). Unless one knows God and is exercised by desire to know Him (Philippians 3:10) and His worthiness to receive honour, praise, and utmost respect, he will have a flawed moral compass. A great part of replenishing the reservoir of consciousness of right and wrong will be found in teaching, preaching, and exemplifying the sovereignty and worthiness of God in Christ. The believer who knows God intimately in this way will have an inward behoving to walk "as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27).

The apostle Paul penned one of the most familiar portions of Scripture pertaining to the Christian walk. He said, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). On what moral ground does the Holy Ghost ask believers to present their very bodies a living sacrifice? And this sacrifice is only a "reasonable service," not unjust, unfair, or overmuch. The justification for such a request is that the worthiness of God in Christ validates it. Christ is worthy of all devotion, He deserves all one's loyalty and all one's love. All the sac-

rifice and all the suffering that accompanies being a disciple of Christ is fully covered and made reasonable by His love, majesty, glory, and high station. When the vision of His worthiness is dim and not heartfelt, the matter of right and wrong becomes less and less relevant to Christian professors.

On what grounds could the Lord Jesus command, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23-24)? It is not in the nature of God to ask of His followers anything for which He will not more than fairly compensate. Neither does He ask that which is beyond the power of His enabling grace. The Bank of Heaven's "line of credit" to a believer far exceeds the need (Romans 8:32; Ephesians 3:20). Again, it must be deeply imprinted on believing hearts that to "lose" one's life for His sake is not trading a lot for only a little in return. Bearing the cross of suffering to the flesh because of one's loyalty to the gospel cause is more than justified by Christ's worthiness. Following in His footsteps (His life and teaching), thus redressing the wounds that He suffered for one's sins, is but a little that one can do when he sees Christ as worthy and sovereign.

With this said, whatever compliments and honours the name of Christ is right, and a true Spirit-filled Christian loves what is right. On the other side of the ledger, whatsoever is a shadow on the blessed Saviour, His doctrine, and the name of being a Christian, is wrong. A true believer shuns the wrong.



DOES GOD EXIST? AND IS THE BIBLE TRUE?

Has there ever been a time in your life when you looked out into the universe and wondered, "Is there really a God out there?" In April 2001, through a series of strange circumstances, a certain man found himself speaking at an atheist convention. The audience of 250 was reasonably polite until he made the statement that the Bible was filled with scientific and medical facts, written several thousands of years before man discovered them. The reaction was one of immediate and unified mockery.

Their response was understandable. That the Bible is of divine origin is not a pleasant thought for a professing atheist. This, however, is not all bad news for the unbeliever. If the Bible proves itself to be the word of the One who created all things, it would make sense to search its pages. After all, time will take each of us to the grave, and if there is one chance in one million that the Bible's promise of immortality and the threat of damnation are true, we owe it to our good sense to at least look into it.

The Bible does not attempt to defend its inspiration. The opening words of Genesis include, "God said." These words are repeated nine times in the first chapter. The phrase "The Lord spoke," is used 560 times in the first five books of the Bible and at least 3,800 times in the Old Testament. Other religions have what they consider their sacred writings, but the elements of proven prophecy is absent in them. Neither do any other books in any of the world's religions contain scientific truth. In fact, they contain statements that are clearly unscientific.

Many years ago at the end of a child's care function, the teacher told about one hundred children to line up for some candy. There was an immediate rush, and the line sorted itself into what he saw as being a line of greed from the bigger, selfish children who were at the front to the timid, younger ones at the back. He then did something that drove a point home. He told the children to turn about-face, and then told them to stay in position. He went to the other end of the line and gave candy to the smaller, timid children first.

We live in a world where the rich get richer and the poor are oppressed. Those who do not believe in the existence of God should know that this is what the Bible says. We are informed by the Bible that God has gone to the other end of the line with the message of everlasting life.

The preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. Or, as it is written, "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent ... But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence" (1 Corinthians 1:18-19,27-29).

The man speaking to that group of atheists had the following questions: "Do you believe that the following Biblical accounts actually happened? Adam and Eve, Noah's ark, Jonah and the great fish, Joshua and the walls of Jericho, Samson and his long hair, Moses and the Red Sea, and Daniel in the Lions' den." If you are an atheist, of course you don't believe these things. To believe in such fantastic stories would mean that you surrender your point of view. Who in his right mind would ever do that? The answer is simply that those believe understand by faith that God has chosen foolish, weak, base, and despised things to confound those who think they are wise.

Imagine that you are looking at a luxury liner moving through calm waters. To your amazement, about a dozen people jump off the ship and cling to a lifeboat. You watch as the rest of the passengers stand on the ship and laugh at them. You can understand their reaction. What those few people did was foolish. It made no sense. Suddenly the ship hits an unseen iceberg and sinks, taking with it all who stayed on board. Now you see that those who seemed like fools were wise, but those who stayed on the ship, seemingly wise, were fools. We have in the Bible a command to jump off the luxury liner of this world. Before one laughs at seemingly unwise Christians, he should ask himself if there is any proof that the Bible's claims are true.

Following are some examples that show the Bible is true:

—At a time when it was believed that the earth sat on a large animal or giant (1500 B.C.) the Bible spoke of the earth's free float in space: "He stretcheth out the north over the empty place, and hangeth the earth upon nothing" (Job 26:7). Science did not discover that the earth hangs upon nothing until 1650.

—The Scriptures speak of an invisible structure. Only in recent years has science discovered that everything we see is composed of things that we cannot see: invisible atoms. Hebrews 11:3, written two thousand years ago, tells us that the "things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

—The Bible reveals that the earth is round. "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth" (Isaiah 40:22). The Hebrew word for "circle" suggests circuit or compass. That is, it indicates something spherical, rounded, or arched, not something that is flat or square. Isaiah wrote it sometime between 740 and 680 B.C. That is at least three hundred years before it was

suggested that the earth might be a sphere. It was another two thousand years, at a time when science still believed that the earth was flat, that the Scriptures inspired Christopher Columbus to sail around the world.

—The Bible and ship dimensions: In Genesis 6, God gave Noah the dimensions of the 1.5 million cubic foot ark he was to build. In 1609, in Holland, a ship was built after the same pattern, revolutionizing shipbuilding. By 1900, every large ship on the high sea was inclined toward the proportions of the ark (verified by "Lloyd's Register of Shipping" in the World Almanac).

—The Bible and the water cycle: The Scriptures inform us, "All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come, thither they return again" (Ecclesiastes 1:7). This statement alone may not seem profound. But when considered with other Biblical passages, it becomes more remarkable. For example, the Mississippi River dumps approximately 518 billion gallons of water every twenty-four hours into the Gulf of Mexico. Where does all the water go? And that's just one of the thousands of rivers. The answer lies in the water cycles, so well brought out in the Bible. Ecclesiastes 11:3 states that "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth." Look at the Bible's concise words in Amos 9:6: "He that called for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth." The idea of a complete water cycle was not fully understood by science until the seventeenth century, and more than two thousand years prior to the discoveries of scientists and others, the Scripture clearly spoke of a water cycle.

—The Bible on using the earth's resources: Three different places in the Bible (Isaiah 51:6; Psalm 102:25; and Hebrews 1:11) indicate that the earth is wearing out. This is what the second law of thermodynamics states, that all physical processes, every ordered system, over time tends to become disorderly. Everything is running down and wearing out; energy is becoming less and less available for use. The earth is truly "waxing old." This was not discovered by science until recently, but the Bible states it in concise terms.

When I went to school, I remember the upper-grade teacher in science class telling us that in a few million years, the time would come when the sun would finally be all burned up. He said that when the sun goes out, light will rapidly diminish, also, because there will be no more sun. The animals and humans, plants or anything that lives will die. Nature will de-

stroy itself. Then he said, "But man will destroy himself long before nature does." It could be added that God will probably destroy the earth before man destroys himself. Then again, man may be instrumental in bringing about the end of the world!

—The Bible and the laws of hygiene: In 1845, a young doctor was horrified at the terrible death rate of women who gave birth in hospitals. As many as 30 percent died after giving birth. He noted that doctors would examine the bodies of patients who died, then without washing their hands, go straight to the next ward and examine expectant mothers. This was the normal practice, because the presence of microscopic diseases was not known. He insisted that doctors wash their hands before each examination, and the death rate immediately dropped. Look at the specific instructions God gave several thousands of years ago to His people when they would encounter disease: "And when the one with a discharge is cleansed of his discharge, then he shall count for himself seven days for his cleansing, and wash his clothes. And he shall bathe his body in fresh water and shall be clean." (Leviticus 15:13 ESV). Until recent years, doctors washed their hands in a bowl of water, leaving invisible germs on their hands. However, the Bible says specifically to wash under "running water."

—The big bang theory and Genesis: Try to think of any explosion that has produced order. Does a terrorist bomb create harmony? The big bang theory suggests that perhaps something on the order of a tornado could go through a scrap yard, and a new airplane would appear. Or the tornado could go through the woods, and a nice new barn would appear. None of the above scenarios would be possible; neither is the big bang theory possible.

So how did it all begin? Why is there not just one big void of blackness with nothing in it? It is easy to believe that God created the world and the universe. But where did God begin? The Bible supports the thought that God has always been, He never had a start, and He will never have an ending.

The fact that God never began totally defies our comprehension. In life as we know it, all things have a beginning, and all things have an end. We must accept in faith that God has always existed. Eternity also is incomprehensible, but we do believe that God and the souls He created are eternal, without end.

Brother Eli: Courtesy of the Messenger of Truth Gospel Publishers Kansas.

THEORY, HYPOTHESIS, FALLACY

"People despise Christian faith. They hate it and are afraid that it may be true" (Blaise Pascal, 1623 - 1662, French physicist and philosopher).

Pascal wrote these words at the beginning of the scientific era. All attempts made during succeeding years to disprove Christianity by scientific means have been motivated by this fear. For, if Christianity is true, if there really is a God who created everything according to a divine plan we are in trouble. How can we reconcile our egocentric life with His plan for our lives?

The public has been conditioned to have faith in science to the point of accepting without question any statement purporting to be scientific, while scoffing at any statement purporting to be Christian or Biblical truth. It must be admitted that much nonsense has been spoken in the name of Christianity, giving the public some foundation for scepticism. Discernment needs to be exercised in both domains. This article deals with statements that purport to be scientific fact.

The first step in scientific thinking is to observe a group of events and devise a possible explanation that can be tested by further observation or experimentation. This possible explanation is called a hypothesis. If further observation and experimentation support the hypothesis, it then becomes a theory. If the theory then can be shown to hold true in every possible circumstance, it is considered to be a proven scientific fact.

Unfortunately, the public wants so much to put their faith in science that there is no distinction made between theory, hypothesis, fact, and fallacy. The big bang is a theory that can never be proven scientifically, because there were no human observers at the time the universe seemingly burst into existence. It is generally accepted as a valid explanation of facts that are observable today. However, the time frames that are generally associated with the big bang theory are only hypotheses. The estimates of the time involved vary widely, with no evidence for any of the estimates.

Evolution, after all these years, is no more than an unproven hypothesis. Wishful thinking might be a more accurate term. There has never been a shred of evidence produced of one species evolving into another. It is not difficult to accept that a Chihuahua and a Newfoundland are both dogs and probably had a common ancestor, but there is zero evidence that a dog ever became a cow or any other type of creature. It is inconceivable that a fish could become a dry-land creature by means of the small incremental muta-

tions essential to evolution. A fish that developed legs would be asphyxiated out of water; a fish that developed lungs would drown in the water.

The DNA found in every cell of the body contains more information than the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Why is it that no one believes the Encyclopaedia Britannica could appear as a result of a series of unconnected, random events, but so many intelligent people believe that DNA developed that way? It must be that these people are afraid of the consequences of admitting that there was some intelligent force at work in creating the universe and the beings that populate the world.

In recent years, many highly skilled scientists have taken an honest look at the information provided by science and felt compelled to admit that the evidence shows that there must have been a designer. These scientists, who have become known as the Intelligent Design movement, did not start with certain religious prejudices and try to make the evidence before them fit these prejudices. They have simply expressed the only conclusion that seemed to fit the accumulated evidence.

Their opponents are found among those who are so fully committed to materialistic hypotheses that they feel compelled to twist and select evidence to make it fit their pre-established belief system. Such an attitude does not merit the label of "scientific." It is really a humanistic religion based on the supremacy of man rather than upon science. Unfortunately, our public education system, at all levels, is founded upon and infused with this religion. To put it simply, truth never contradicts truth. The Bible and science are not in conflict. Neither are there parallel truths so that we could accept materialistic explanations of our origins and Biblical explanations of our destiny.

The evidence of science shows that all that exists is of a level of complexity that can only be explained by the action of a Designer with intelligence far beyond our own. The Bible tells me who that Designer is. With the recognition of an Intelligent Designer, there comes inescapably the realization that this Designer must have a plan that includes me.

The Bible tells me what that plan is.

Article courtesy of the Messenger of Truth Gospel Publishers Kansas.



JESUS, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Light: "Something that makes vision possible." This is a literal definition, but it can have figurative and spiritual applications, as also does "spiritual illumination—something that enlightens or informs" (Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary).

In John 8:12, Jesus stated that He is the light of the world. Those who follow Jesus walk in the light, and those who are not following Him are walking in darkness. When we accept Jesus in our hearts, He lights our path, making it visible. He teaches us how we should walk according to God's will. In that chapter, verse 14 says, "Though I bear record of myself, yet my record is true: for I know whence I came, and whither I go." Our witness is valid when we walk in His light and help to illuminate the way for others, helping them to know this light that is in Jesus.

We reflect, or are a reflection, of God's light. Our daily communion with God helps to illuminate us better. Being illuminated is to obtain clarity and to be instructed and inspired in Christian life. Without God, this is impossible. Without Him, we are in darkness. Luke 11:35 admonishes us to "Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness." How can our light be darkness?

Our witness needs to be true. If we live a lukewarm life, we will be like twilight to other people, like that part of the day when it is neither completely light nor dark. Though we may feel justified by the blood of Christ, if we live this way and are not being totally obedient, little by little we will become dark until we finally lose the light. Our path will become darkness. Satan tries to attract us to a false light, placing shiny and attractive things in our path. If we allow these to take our eyes off Jesus, we will not see that these things are leading us into darkness. It is interesting how some insects are attracted by a light bulb, flying against the hot glass until they finally die. This is what the enemy wants to do to us, offering us such "shiny" things. But their end is to lead us to the lake of fire to burn with all those who followed the false light.

God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. If we walk with Him, His path is well lit and will lead us to heaven. His light warms us but does not burn us; it protects but does not bind. It warms and protects us so we can live a full life, an abundant life.

"The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" Psalm 119:130. Our words can also transmit the light of Jesus to

our fellowman. If the true light is shining on our path, it will illuminate our path for those walking in the darkness of this world.

May we be bold in declaring this light as Jesus declared that He is the Light of the world.



THE LAW OF LIFE AND DEATH

When Almighty God created the heavens and the earth, He made them to operate in an orderly and predictable way. To assure this order, He made His creation subject to natural and physical laws. He established the law of gravity, the law of day and night, and the law of the seasons. These rules, and many others, are built into the very nature of the universe. Indeed, our world could not operate without them. In everything we do, we acknowledge these laws; we order our work according to their forces.

When God created man, He had a clear purpose. He wanted people to live harmoniously and with good will toward each other. He wanted them to conduct their lives in a way that would bring honour to Him. "For thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created" Revelation 4:11. He wanted men to understand His goodness and love Him for it. He knew that if men would live selfishly and according to natural passions, chaos and anarchy would soon claim His creation. Thus God made men, also, subject to divine laws. The human race was created to live by them. These laws preceded the Ten Commandments, for they have been in force since the creation. They are so integrated into God's plan for mankind that they can be ignored or disobeyed only at great loss.

These laws, by which God intends man to order his life, are many and varied. Perhaps it is better to say there is one law which has numerous applications. It is identified in the Word as the law of life and death.

God made Adam and Eve aware of this law soon after they were created. He told them of those things in the garden that would give life and of those that would lead to death. "Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" Genesis 2:16-17.

Many years before the Mosaic Law was given, God called Abraham to become the father of a nation that would fear Him and walk according to

His precepts. God said of Abraham, "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him". (Gen. 18:19). Abraham's adherence to God's standard of justice and judgment was a principal reason God chose him for this special work.

To Abraham's descendants, the children of Israel, God reiterated this law in these words: "I call heaven and earth to record against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God ... and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days" Deuteronomy 30:19-20.

The Apostle Paul summarized this foundational precept for the gospel era by saying, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23.

While the principles of this law are not defined in any one passage of Scripture, they are spoken of and referred to many times by Jesus and the apostles. The scriptures that follow illuminate some of its aspects.

"The soul that sinneth, it shall die. But if a man be just, and do that which is lawful and right, Hath walked in my statutes, and hath kept my judgments, to deal truly; he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God" Ezekiel 18:4-5,9.

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness" Proverbs 31:26.

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8.

"Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him" Hebrews 10:38.

"No man can serve two masters. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" Matthew 6:24.

"A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth" Luke 12:15.

"Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" Matthew 7:12.

"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap" Galatians 6:7.

These verses give us a glimpse into the mind of God. They reveal both the purposes and the boundaries God has set for the human race. They should not be viewed as warnings but, rather, as simple statements of how things are and how things will always be.

This law of life and death has not been given arbitrarily or haphazardly. Neither was it flung down to the human race to bring it into submission or to prove God's authority. It has been given for our well-being and safety. God knows that only by heeding this law will men be able to live purposefully and happily. Each individual will prosper or languish as he follows or disregards its truth. "Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee" Psalm 128:1-2. Nations who live by these precepts will live in peace. "Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord" Psalm 33:12. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" Proverbs 14:34.

Since the beginning, man has tried to improve upon God's plan for humanity. He has tried to devise a way by which he may evade the law of God and live according to his own mandates. He has, indeed, invented many circuitous ways, but each one has only led him into difficulties. Man is designed to live according to God's law. To do anything else leaves him frustrated and disillusioned. Jesus said, "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). He wanted us to understand that in living by God's law, we find fulfillment, happiness, and meaning in life.

Brother Richard



SIMPLICITY OF CHRIST

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ" 2 Corinthians 11:3. Even as the serpent beguiled Eve, he will endeavor to beguile us by playing on our intellect. We love to be able to figure out the meanings of scriptures for ourselves. It feels good to the flesh when we excel in interpreting scriptures that others find obscure and challenging. In an endeavor to justify self, this spirit may become very active, especially when we become resistant to dear, biblical teachings or teach-

ings based on conference decisions.

Elaborate, sophisticated teaching institutions have been established and are being staffed by educated personnel to prepare students for pastoral counseling and missionary work. This may not be all bad, but, on the other hand, what did the prophet mean when he said, "But it shall be for those: the wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein" Isaiah 35:8. The commentator, Matthew Henry, explains the highway thus: "The wayfaring men, who choose to travel in it, though fools, of weak capacity in other things, shall have such plain directions from the word and Spirit of God in this way that they shall not err therein."

There are many sects, creeds, and religions in the world today that go to great lengths in propounding and promoting what they believe. They use, and frequently wrest, scriptures out of context in support of their beliefs, drawing many followers after them. "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" Matthew 7:15. When such false, highly charismatic teachers find those who have become offended or resistant to the truth and disenchanted with the way the church is trying to help, they find receptive ears. Having been trained in the above-mentioned schools, they are clever in giving psychological help and support to those who are hurting because of perceived wrongs, thus easing the minds, salving consciences, and drawing disciples after themselves. Though a form of peace has been affected, for a short or longer period of time, confusion and deception are multiplied.

What happened to the "simplicity that is in Christ"? Did pride hinder the contrition of heart that would have brought a complete cleansing and a consequent joyful restoration into the household of faith? The dangers are increasing as Satan sees his time rapidly shortening. Christian, beware! The simple, uncomplicated way remains open to us all. Let us give up all of self, take up the cross, and follow the Savior, the One whose teaching is: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly of heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" Matthew 11:29-30. Though this way is hard for the flesh, it can be no simpler.

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