

IS THE CHURCH AN ORGANIZATION OR AN ORGANISM?

b. The fundamental idea of the above scriptures is that the Church is an organism.

B. The term body focuses special attention to the Head.

1. The focal point of interest of the human body is the head.

2. Col. 1:18 . . . Man is not the head of the church nor even the center of the universe—man is the body and exists to give glory to the Head.

a. The primary reason for the creation of the Church was for the glory of God focused on the Lord Jesus Christ.

C. The body receives life from the Head.

He is the Vine, we the branches. . . . He is the Bread of Life.

D. The concept of the body is essentially spiritual.

The visible church contains dead members who do not belong to the living organism . . . tares and bad fish are in the visible church but not the invisible (Matt. 13).

II. The Analogy of the Human Body (I Cor. 12)

A. The body consists of many different members united in one organic whole, each necessary for the perfection and good of the whole and animated by one life principle, controlled by the head.

B. A body consists of many parts but there is in it an essential unity (the church).

1. Every member is important to the body.

2. The diversity of gifts contributes to the glory and usefulness of the body.

3. The analogy of the term body implies a far more intimate relationship between believers than members of an external ecclesiastical organization can ever attain!

a. WHEN ONE MEMBER SUFFERS, ALL MEMBERS SUFFER.

b. WHEN ONE MEMBER REJOICES, ALL REJOICE.

c. There is no cold, detached unconcern for suffering, but HEARTFELT CONCERN.

d. There is no envy over another's honor or joy.

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4. Even the Head is closely associated with the suffering and rejoicing of the body (Matt. 25).

NO HUMAN ORGANIZATION CAN MATCH THE ONENESS AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP THAT EXISTS WITHIN THE BODY OF CHRIST!!

- C. The scriptures stress that increase of the Body depends upon closer union with Christ (John 15).
 1. The ecumenists stress structural organization for increase of the body.
 - a. But mere organization cannot convert the human soul and give it victory over Satan.
 - b. THE GREAT AND PRIMARY EFFORT SHOULD BE TO INCORPORATE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH INTO CLOSER UNION WITH CHRIST!! TEACH, TEACH, TEACH.
 - c. Mere incorporation into external mergers for the sake of structural union is not fulfilling Christ's prayer in John 17!!

III. What Does All This Mean Practically?

- A. It means that mergers into structural world-church organizations are contrary to the revealed will of God in the New Testament for unity of believers.
- B. It means that "brotherhood" organizations, officers, offices, agencies, societies, secretaries are not necessary to the unity for which Christ prayed.
- C. It means that the truth (the One objective faith) cannot be compromised for the sake of superficial tranquility.
- D. It means that the Church in some instances has failed to rise to the challenge of perfecting the unity of believers and perfecting the church as an *organism*.

The Lord is not as impressed with our attendance craze and promotional madness as He is with patient, loving, diligent "feeding of the flock . . . the growing up together by a steady diet of the *meat of the gospel*. . . ."

WHY MUST THE SUCCESS OF PREACHERS OR CHURCHES BE MEASURED SOLELY BY ATTENDANCE FIGURES, DRIVES, CONTESTS AND SUPER-STRUCTURE OF ORGANIZATION?

IS THE CHURCH AN ORGANIZATION OR AN ORGANISM?

2. Let us never let the fires of evangelism be extinguished . . . God forbid!
 - a. But LET US STRIVE TO REACH THE ORGANIC UNITY EXPRESSED IN I Corinthians 12 and we will HAVE SPONTANEOUS EVANGELISM IN ALL THE MEMBERSHIP!
 - b. When we *truly become a body*, an organism, then will the world believe!
- E. The distinguishing mark of the Church is holiness, sanctification.

NOT ATTENDANCE, NOT NEW BUILDINGS, NOT EVEN ADDITIONS—BUT UNWORLDLINESS!!
- F. The distinguishing mark of the church is “speaking truth in love. . . .”
 1. NOT ORGANIZATION, NOT SOCIAL AFFAIRS, NOT POWER, NOT PRESTIGE (Rev. 2-3)
 2. WHY ARE WE GOING OVERBOARD FOR ATTENDANCE AND LETTING “BABES IN CHRIST” AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE BODY BECOME SPIRITUAL ILLITERATES, INACTIVE AND DEAD BY NEGLECT THROUGH FAILURE TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE CHURCH IS AN ORGANISM . . . NOT AN ORGANIZATION!

Chapter Thirteen

THE PROBLEM OF MAINTAINING LOVE IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY (Miraculous Gifts) (13:1-13)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why does Paul assume some of the Corinthians might not have love?
2. What is love? Who has authority to define love?
3. Why would the miraculous gifts “pass away”?
4. To whom does the analogy of childhood and manhood apply?
5. Why is love greater than faith and hope?

SECTION 1

Giftedness Without Love (13:1-3)

13 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all I have, and if I deliver my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

13:1 Is Heedless: Verse 31b of chapter 12 should be verse 1 of chapter 13. There the Greek word *hyperbole* (English *hyperbole*) is translated “more excellent.” Literally, the Greek word means “a throwing beyond—a surpassing.” Paul is going to show (in chapter 13) a way to unity in diversity that *surpasses* all other ways, and that way is agape-love. There are four words in the Greek language for love—*storge*, affection (e.g. familial love); *phileo*, friendship (e.g. fraternal); *eros*, passion, desire (e.g. sexual love); and *agape*, self-sacrificing, caring (God-like love). Only *phileo* and *agape* appear in the New Testament. Paul uses only *agape* in this chapter.

Agape-love is not only commanded, but motivated by God and Christ. “We love, because he first loved us . . .” (I John 4:19; see also I John 4:10). God created man with an intellect, a will and

emotions. Man has the ability or faculties to love. God demonstrated love in Christ and commands us to love, *but he will not force us to love.*

Love is the only thing man really has to give. Agape-love is a deliberate choice of the will. It is the absorption of every part of our being (intellect, will and emotions) in an obsession to care. It is definitely not physical or circumstantial. It is love which deliberately, by an act of will, chooses its object, and through all circumstances or in spite of them, goes on loving continually. C. S. Lewis, in *The Four Loves*, says it is a love that enables man "to love what is not naturally lovable; lepers, criminals, enemies, morons, the sulky, the superior and the sneering." It is a love that demands complete self-denial. It is always used when the will is involved. It is the word Jesus used when he commanded, "Thou shalt love thine enemy. . . ." Agape-love is the one thing that is completely indestructible; while other things pass away, love lasts. It is not dependent on anything outside itself; it is not affected by the worthiness or unworthiness of the one to be loved. If this love really grips our whole being, our Christian experience will be utterly revolutionized.

Professor Donald Nash, in the Kentucky Christian College bulletin's *Word Pictures*, has written this definition of Love:

Almost every Christian with a cursory knowledge of the Bible is cognizant of the fact that there are two Greek words for love in the New Testament, but few know their basic connotations. Valuable insights can be gained by delineating between them.

Agape is a love called out by a realization of the value of the object loved. It is not an emotion or passion, since it can be and is commanded in the scriptures. It has been defined as intelligent good will toward all men. Christianity took the word from pagan uses and enlarged, ennobled and inspired it. Because it is used of the love God had for the world in Christ it has something of the idea of sacrificial devotion to others in which self is forgotten.

Phileo is a love called out by an appreciation or pleasure in the object loved. This is an emotion. It suggests friendship and affection. It cannot be commanded and is not in the scriptures since it is spontaneous. It needs intercommunication between the lover and the object loved. It suggests love between two people with common interests.

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So, I am as a Christian to love all men with *agape* love, for I realize the intrinsic soul's value of everyone as God's creation. I should be willing to make sacrifices of personal desires and interests for all. But I am not commanded to love everyone *phileo*, since this is impossible. It comes from a common bond of fellowship.

For this reason Jesus is said to love the whole world *agape*. He recognized the worth of all and died for all (John 3:16). But he loves only Christians *phileo* (John 16:27), since only between Christians and the Father is the mutual bond of a common interest in righteousness, the common bond of prayer, and same spirit of friendship.

Sometimes it is said that *agape* is divine love and *phileo* human love; that *agape* is the higher love and *phileo* the lower. This is not exactly the case. God loves both ways, so one could not be human and the other divine. *Phileo* is actually the love of close, intimate relationship, and so Peter sought for Jesus to affirm this in him (John 21:15-19). I love the world *agape*, but my family and close friends *phileo*.

Agape is the higher, divine love only in the sense it calls for the type of sacrifice Christ manifested on the cross. It can only be truly produced in us by surrender to Christ and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22). It is demonstrated in those great virtues so beautifully and powerfully portrayed by Paul in I Cor. 13, which only the true Christian possesses in the Biblical sense.

The Corinthians were gauging holiness by possession of miraculous gifts (especially by possession of the more spectacular gifts such as speaking in languages), and not by the love expressed in practical living. No matter what gifts (miraculous or non-miraculous) a Christian has, the fruit of the Spirit lived out in his life—i.e., his spiritual character—is the real yardstick by which to measure his holiness. There is a direct relationship between one's sanctification and the love he expresses. There is *no* relation whatsoever between sanctification and the possession of miraculous or non-miraculous gifts. The proof is in these Corinthians! They had all the miraculous gifts available (1:7), but still they ended up as the most carnal church described in the New Testament. Gifts serve their purpose only when they are governed by *agape*-love.

It is character, not charisma that counts. It is goodness, not giftedness that really matters. God supplies gifts, talents, blessings to all

men and women (even to pagan unbelievers), but God has so made his creatures that they may *give* or *withhold* their love. Giftedness without love shrivels character and thwarts God's will for the possessor of such giftedness. God gives gifts to men for the building of character through the expression of love. But in the ultimate analysis, men are free to love God or despise him, and, in this sense, therefore, responsible for their own character. When time ends and Jesus comes again, men will go right on being in character what they have chosen to be, as John wrote in Revelation, "Let the evildoer still do evil . . . and the righteous still do right . . ." (Rev. 22:10-11).

Even if a Christian had supernatural power to talk in the language of angels, predict the future, know and understand everything there is to know, have miraculous power to remove all obstacles, give away all his earthly goods and become a martyr, but did *not* have agape-love, what would he be? He would be only a *noise* (Gr. *chalkos echon e kumbalon alazon*, brass sounding or cymbal tinkling). Eloquence, erudition and oratory may command admiration, but only love really communicates to the heart. Men with miraculous gifts but without love will embitter the lives of other people because without love there is the inevitable self-centeredness which produces exploitation, cruelty, envy, hatred, and fighting. Love is the tie that binds all other virtues of the human personality together in harmony and stability. The loveless person is a spiritually unbalanced person. The church at Ephesus (about 100 A.D.) was a shocking picture of busyness, patience, discernment, toil, endurance, but absolutely *without* the one thing that matters—agape love, (Rev. 2:2-4). Regardless of everything else the Ephesian church was, she was without the power to meet the "soon to come to pass" waves of persecution, tribulation, false teaching and carnality of the pagan Roman empire (100-300 A.D.).

13:2 Is Hollow: The Greek word *kumbalon*, cymbal, means, literally, "hollow." Giftedness without love is vain and empty. There really is no value in having any gift without having love. Without love life is lost! He that selfishly saves himself (love only himself) will *lose* his life for life has being only as it emanates agape-love (cf. Matt. 10:39; 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24). The man without agape-love is *nothing* (Gr. *outhen*, nil, not anything). He is lost!

13:3 Is Hellish: Man without agape-love is of *no profit* (Gr. *opheloumai*, no gain, profitless, useless). He is like saltless salt, fit only for the dung-heap. Without love a person does not gather with Christ but joins the devil in scattering (see Matt. 12:30). That is what

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these Corinthians, possessed of miraculous gifts without love, were doing. Someone has analyzed I Corinthians 13:1-3 as follows: "Thought, purpose, logic, industriousness, but without the radiance of love. Isn't that an accurate description of Satan?" Even the demons believed, and shuddered (James 2:19). They were "gifted" but they had no love.

What makes love so great? All gifts, sacrifices and services are hypocrisy without it (Matt. 6:1-18). Motivation is important. God is not interested in empty works of merit. He is evidently not impressed with our gifts as much as with the way we use them. Love is the one thing all men understand. Love may be communicated without language. Love never fails to glorify God. Love never fails to improve the character, both of the lover and the loved. Agape-love does not have to wait upon a feeling to be activated.

SECTION 2

Giftlessness With Love (13:4-7)

4 Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;
5 it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

13:4-6 Rejects: In these verses are listed the perversities of character with which love has nothing to do. Only agape-love has the power to restrain from doing what is wrong, hurtful and destructive (see II Cor. 5:14); (a) Love is not *impatient*. Love suffers and waits. Love refuses to give way to anger and vindictiveness. Love waits, hoping for repentance. Love is not resentful when treated unjustly. Love is David with Saul—Christ with the Pharisees. Love never gives up, never dies—it goes on and on; (b) Love is not *unkind*. Some patiently endure wrong out of sheer obstinacy, but to be kind to the person who has done the wrong is the victory of agape-love. Barclay says, "There is so much Christianity which is good but unkind." The Greek word translated "kind" is *chresteuetai* which means literally, "serviceable, good, useable." In other words, kindness means action, service, giving. The greatest good a Christian can ever do this side of heaven is to be *kind* to people (see Luke 10:29-37). William Penn said: "I expect to pass through life but once. If therefore

there is any kindness I can show or any good thing I can do to any fellow being let me do it now and not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again.” (c) Love is not *jealous*. Only agape-love can see all the inequalities of life and remain content with its own place. Paul had learned contentment in whatever state he found himself (Phil. 4:11-13). Where there is no love, there will inevitably be envy, jealousy and hatred. Absence of agape-love left Cain open to envy and produced the first murder in human history. In its baser form, jealousy not only desires what others have, but being unable to attain it, begrudges the good others have. It does not even care so much that it does not have these things as it wishes others had not gotten them. Agape-love rejoices when others have good fortune. (d) Love is not *boastful*. The Greek word here is *perpereutai* and is used only in this one place in the New Testament. In classical Greek it means, “wind-bag” or “braggart” and Moffatt has translated it, “*does not make a parade of itself*.” Love does not “show off.” Love is quiet, unassuming, and humble. When love does anything it does not do it for praise or the applause of others. Love is not conceited. (e) Love is not *arrogant*. The Greek word for arrogant is *phusioutai*, “puffed-up.” Love is not contemptuous of others. Love is not the Pharisee who thanks God he is not like publicans (Luke 18:9-14). Love is not obsessed with self-importance. Give a man a little earthly authority or position and one soon sees whether he has love or arrogance. (f) Love is not *rude*. The Greek words are *ouk aschemonei*, meaning literally, “does not act unbecomingly, or, without graciousness.” There is the type of Christian who thinks real loyalty to the Bible means one must act bluntly, candidly, without tact and charm, almost brutally. There may be candidness there, but there is no winsomeness. Love is courteous, tactful, polite, and respectful without compromising truth. Love applies the “Golden Rule.” Love makes it possible to be right without being rude. (g) Love *never insists on its own way*. The Greek reads: *ou zetei ta heautes*; love is willing to sacrifice its own interests for that of others. Love does not demand its own rights (even though it may have some) above those of others. Barclay writes: “In the last analysis, there are in this world only two kinds of people—those who are continually thinking of their rights and those who are continually thinking of their duties . . . those insisting on their privileges and those who are remembering their responsibilities. . . .” There can never be true love where there is the “Me first” attitude. (h) Love is not *irritable*, (Gr. *paroxunetai*, from

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which we get the English word *paroxysm*, which means, “a fit, an attack, a convulsion of emotion”). The Greek word means, literally, “hyper-sharp, or, intense sharpening.” The word *easily* in some versions, is not in the Greek text. Barclay translates, “Love never flies into a temper fit.” Having a paroxysm of exasperation is an indication of the absence of agape-love. The Jewish rabbis made four classifications of people dealing with provocation: (1) those easily provoked but hard to pacify—their loss is cancelled by their gain; (2) those hard to provoke but hard to pacify—their gain is cancelled by their loss; (3) those easily provoked and easily pacified—they are evil; (4) those hard to provoke and easily pacified—they are righteous. But agape-love is never bad-tempered. Love must be angry with sin, but never irritable with the sinner. Greatness is not in position, but in disposition! (i) Love is not *resentful*. The Greek phrase is, *ou logizetai to kakon*, literally, “does not keep books or an account-ledger of evil.” Love will always keep a record of the many kindnesses it receives, but never a record of wrongs done to it. Love does not nurse grudges; it makes a concerted effort to forget all wrongs done to it. (j) Love does *not rejoice at wrong*. The Greek word translated *wrong* is *adikia* and means, *injustice*. Moffatt translates, “Love is never glad when others go wrong; love is gladdened by goodness.” Love does not delight in exposing the weaknesses and sins of other people. Love will agonize over the sin and condemn the sin, but will always yearn to cover and protect the person who has fallen. Some people get a certain malicious pleasure in hearing about someone else’s fall or trouble. Love does not do that. Love wants the truth. Love is brave enough to face the truth. Love has nothing to conceal and so is glad when the truth prevails. But love always uses the truth to build up, never to destroy.

13:7 Reverse: Love respects and urges men to do that which is positive good. Love cherishes the righteousness that can only be done when agape-love of God is working through believers. (a) Love cherishes the *bearing of all things*. The Greek word is *stegai*. It means primarily, “to protect, or preserve by covering—to keep off something that threatens,” thus it came to mean “to endure.” Love would rather protect than attack. Love gets under the load of life and bears it to the limit. We must learn to bear offences done to us if we ever expect to be able to forgive. C.S. Lewis writes, “To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything, and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly be broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one, not even to an

animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. The alternative to tragedy, or at least to the risk of tragedy, is damnation. the only place outside Heaven where you can be perfectly safe from all the dangers and perturbations of love is Hell.” We must bear one another’s burdens if we wish to fulfill Christ’s law of love (Gal. 6:1-5). We must bear the distasteful task of attempting to restore wandering brethren (James 5:19-20). (b) Love wants to *believe all things*. Agape-love is not blind gullibility. It does not follow every kind of doctrine. Love speaks the truth (see Eph. 4:11-16). Love is discriminating and rejoices only in the truth. But love is not innately suspicious. Love strives to ascribe the best motives to others in their actions. Love looks for the best in everyone and everything. Love takes people at their word and always hopes in their trustworthiness, as long as it can, and then mourns over those who stumble and fall. (c) Love tries to find *hope in all things*. When love is disappointed in someone in whom it “believed” love will yet hope for better things. Love never despairs completely of anyone. Jesus never considered any man hopeless—he tried to the very end to reclaim Judas Iscariot. Hope does not, of course, try to persuade itself that a thief is honest or that the criminal is innocent, but it knows God is not willing that any man should perish. So love always hopes for repentance. (d) Love *endures all things*. The Greek word is *hupomenei*, literally, “remaining under.” This does not mean passive resignation, but the kind of spirit which conquers its setbacks, trials and circumstances by faith in God. It is the kind of “dogged constancy” which “hangs-in” in spite of hardships and obstacles. It is the enduring love shown by the patriarch Job, who said, “I know that my Redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon the earth.” It is the overcoming endurance of the apostle Paul who said, “For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions and calamities; for when I am weak, then I am strong” (II Cor. 12:10).

The Christians at Corinth were “eager for manifestations of the Spirit” (I Cor. 14:12) but they did not have agape-love. Paul admonished them to “strive to excel in building up the church” (I Cor. 14:12), but their passion for the spectacular miraculous gifts, to satisfy their egomania, was dividing and tearing down the church.

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In his attempt to stop this self-destruction, Paul inserts this parenthetical treatise on love and states emphatically that Christians would be much better off to have love whether they *ever* had a miraculous gift or not. He proves, in fact, that while Christians may get along without any miraculous gifts at all (13:8-13), they can never get along without agape-love. Love will more than make up for any lack of giftedness anyone may ever have, miraculous or otherwise. John the Baptist had no miraculous gifts, but he had love. The women who ministered to Jesus had no miraculous gifts such as the apostles had, but they had love. Dorcas had no miraculous gifts, but she had love. Love *surpasses* all other ways of edifying, or building the church. It surpasses all "gifts" of teaching, preaching, liberality, ruling, organizing, mercifulness, or whatever. Love is the supreme way. No Christian who really loves is inferior.

SECTION 3

Giftedness is Temporary, Love is Eternal (13:8-13)

8 Love never ends; as for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.
9 For our knowledge is imperfect and our prophecy is imperfect;
10 but when the perfect comes, the imperfect will pass away.
11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became a man, I gave up childish ways.
12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood.
13 So faith, hope, love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

13:8-9 The Passing: The text clearly states that these miraculous gifts would stop. They would fulfill their purpose and cease to exist. The question is; *when* were these gifts to stop? Again, this text clearly says the gifts were "imperfect" (Gr. *merous*, "in part"). Verse 11 of this chapter states the gifts were for an "infant" church (Gr. *nepios*, lit. "without the power of speech"—see Matt. 21:16; 11:25; Rom. 2:20; I Cor. 3:1; Heb. 5:13). If we are to believe the Bible, miraculous gifts were never intended to be universal or perpetuated beyond the lifetime of the apostles. Miraculous gifts were never given to all believers. They were never to heal all believers, edify or deliver all

believers. There are clear indications that Christians could be endowed with miraculous gifts only through the laying on of the hands of the apostles (see Acts 8:14-24).

The "infant" church had difficulty in two areas: (1) in believing that Jews and Gentiles were acceptable to God on the same terms (faith, repentance and immersion in water for the forgiveness of sins), without the Law of Moses. Judaizers constantly harassed the church insisting their message of circumcision and the Law was the true way to salvation. So the message of the gospel had to be confirmed by miracles before the church could ever be fully weaned from the infantilism of the Law to the manhood of the gospel (see Gal. 3:23—4:7; Eph. 4:11-16; Heb. 5:11—6:12). When the church finally shed its immaturity (and when God destroyed the threat of Judaism by destroying Jerusalem and the Jewish nation at the hands of the Romans in 70 A.D.) miracles were no longer needed; (2) distinguishing between true apostolic doctrine and false doctrine. Once the apostolic teaching was put on record (written in our New Testament books) and verified by miraculous manifestations, there was no longer any need for these miracles. Miracles evidently passed away as the generation of believers upon whom the apostles had laid their hands passed away, for there is no divine sanction for perpetuating miracles beyond the hands of the apostles.

Paul uses the Greek word *katargethesontai* to declare the gifts of prophecy and knowledge will be *abolished*. The Greek word literally means, "reduced to inactivity." When he says tongues will *cease* he uses the Greek word *pausontai*, meaning "to stop, to make an end." They are strong, unequivocal words, predicting the cessation of miraculous gifts.

13:10-12 The Perfect: The miraculous gifts were partial ("imperfect") and temporary ("will pass away"). When the *perfect thing* (Gr. *teleion*) came, the *partial thing* (Gr. *to ek merous*) was *abolished* (Gr. *katargethesetai*). The Greek word *teleion* is a noun in the *neuter* gender. It should not, therefore, be translated to mean, "when Christ comes again." The word *teleion* is *not* referring, either grammatically or contextually, to a person, but to some thing. The word *teleion* means, "that which has reached its goal; that which has matured or come to its fulfillment." It does not mean that which is sinless.

The *perfect thing* in this context is referring to the *mature* church; the church which no longer needs miraculous confirmation of the apostolic message. The perfected, matured church will have had enough

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miraculous confirmations and guidance to acknowledge that the Judaizers, Gnostics, Nicolaitans, and other aberrant religious teachings are false. The perfected, matured church will know that Gentiles or Jews do not need to keep the Law of Moses to be members of Christ's body. The church in its manhood will be able to eat and digest the strong "meat" of the final, complete, New Testament scriptures. The mature church will realize that agape-love is the surpassing way to sanctification and evangelism—and that possession of miraculous gifts is not the way.

When spiritual maturity came, from the completed, integrated church, from the completed apostolic revelation, from perfected, Christ-like love, the church *reasoned* or *reckoned* (Gr. *elogizomen*), or thought, like a man (Gr. *gegona aner*), *abolishing the things of the infant* (Gr. *katergeka ta tou nepiou*). As long as the church was spiritually immature, it *spoke like an infant* (Gr. *elaloun hos nepios*), it *thought like an infant* (Gr. *ephronoun hos nepios*), and it *reasoned like an infant* (Gr. *elogizomen hos nepios*). As long as the church was infantile, unable to distinguish between true and false without miraculous guidance, it was not seeing the whole picture of redemption and sanctification. Paul says in verse 12, the infant church was then seeing only a reflection (Gr. *esoptrou*, in a mirror) and that, dimly. The Greek word *ainigmati* is translated "darkly" in the KJV and "dimly" in the RSV, but it is the word from which the English word *enigma* comes. *Enigma* means, "puzzling, perplexing, questionably, or obscurely." As long as the infant church was eager for miraculous manifestations of the Spirit in preference to agape-love, the aim of the completed New Testament scriptures, they could never see themselves or circumstances as they really were.

Paul is saying that as soon as the completed apostolic revelation had been written down, the church would see the *whole scheme* of redemption and sanctification—it would no longer be enigmatic—and the church would grow and mature through agape-love, and the temporary, partial manifestations of the Spirit would cease to exist for the church. When the faith was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3) the church could distinguish true from false, good from evil, by the completed apostolic word (I John 4:1-6). God granted to the church in his word *all* things that pertain to life and godliness (II Peter 1:2-4). God has given in the completed scriptures everything the church needs to make the man of God *complete*, thoroughly furnished (equipped) for *every* good work (II Tim. 3:16-17). The

church in its mature manhood, without miraculous gifts of its infancy, may now look in the perfect law, the law of liberty, and persevere (James 1:22-25). The church may now see the whole picture of redemption and sanctification—in the New Testament scriptures it lacks nothing that pertains to life and godliness. The *aim* of the apostolic message and ministry is not miraculous manifestations of the Spirit, but *love* that issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and sincere faith (I Tim. 1:5).

13:13 The Perpetual: Love will never *fall* (Gr. *pipteĩ*), it will endure forever. Love never falls to the ground—there is nothing temporary about love. Love never loses its strength—it is inexhaustible. Love never leaves its place—it is unassuming and immovable.

Faith possesses the past by giving us a conviction of things not seen. Hope claims the future, and looks beyond to the glory not yet realized. But love is the *goal* God has for us. And faith and hope are the *means* to that end. Paul does not mean that love will outlast faith and hope. He does not mean that faith and hope will someday cease. Faith and hope and love will all go on as long as our relationship to Christ lasts—for eternity. We will trust, put our hope in, and love God in heaven, forever. But love is the *greatest*. Faith and hope serve to develop godliness, but *love is godliness*, for, “God is love” (I John 4:16).

Our “possessions” and “gifts” we leave behind us. Only godliness abides. At the gates of death we will lay down forever the various weapons and tools which God, in his marvelous grace, has put into our hands for this earthly pilgrimage. All our gifts and every other capacity designed for this temporary earthly existence we shall resign. But we will carry through the pearly gates the moral and spiritual character which the Holy Spirit, through the conflicts and testings of life, has developed within us through the word. Faith, hope and love abide—but the greatest is love. *Make love your aim* (I Cor. 14:1).

APPLICATIONS:

1. If God said he would grant *you* one wish, either the supernatural power to predict the future, or the trials and tribulations that would help you love your enemies like David or Jesus—which would you wish?
2. What do you think this chapter has to say to those today who insist the church, and Christians, need to have miraculous gifts of tongues, healing, prophecy, etc.?

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3. Do you really believe that just plain, old, Christian love is the most important thing for Christ's church today, or ever?
4. Do you think the church has it?
5. How do you think the church, or Christians, may get it?
6. Do you know people who believe that Christian love accepts all things—true and false, right and wrong?
7. Where do you think you might improve your agape-love-life?
8. Do you think the church today is more mature (less childlike) than the church of the first century? How?
9. Is love the most important virtue you wish to cultivate in your Christian experience?
10. May agape-love be cultivated? In what way?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What is agape-love? How is it different from other aspects of love?
2. Why are all Christian gifts and Christian actions hollow without love?
3. May a Christian do an act of love without feeling like it?
4. What is kindness?
5. What does courtesy have to do with Christian love?
6. Why were miraculous gifts destined to pass away?
7. When did miraculous gifts pass away?
8. What is the "perfect" that was to come?
9. When did the church see "in a mirror, dimly"?
10. When did the church see "face to face"?

Special Study

LOVE IS A MANY-SPLENDORED THING*

LOVE is a many-splendored thing. So says a popular song title. But no popular song can really plumb the depths of love's splendor.

But what is love? Love is not self-defining. This is the supreme fallacy of situation ethics, which says "do the most loving thing in every situation." We must go to the Word of God for precept and example. And I Corinthians 13 is not the only Biblical definition of love.

Some will say, "Love is concern," but how do you explain the many hungry people whom Jesus did not feed; the many lame He did not heal? Must a concerned love always be manifested according to our concept of concern?

Some will say, "Love is giving," but how do you explain Jesus' rebuke of Judas when he suggested that the precious ointment Mary had poured upon Jesus could have been sold and given to the poor? Must a giving love always be manifested in the way the world thinks?

Some will say, "Love is speaking pleasantly," but how do you explain the words Jesus spoke to the Pharisees, and sometimes to His disciples, which were harsh, demanding, and rebuking? Must love always be communicated in such a manner as to please the hearer?

Love is many-faceted. There is more to love than often meets the spiritual eye. I hope to present you three oft-unseen facets of the brilliance of God-like love, *agape* love. Love is discerning, demanding, deliberate.

Love is discerning—Love is discerning (discriminating; critical; judgmental; penetrating). In reality love is truth-oriented; truth-focused; truth-centered; love is something done but always in a *truth* frame-of-reference. *Agape* love makes every attempt to see things, issues, and persons as they are in reality for a purpose—a good purpose. *Agape* love could never reject truth in favor of falsehood—it could never be satisfied with only half-truth about issues or persons. "Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth" (I John 3:18).

The Christian loves truth (Ephesians 4:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:10), but he never cruelly or unsympathetically uses the truth in order to hurt. . . . The Christian is never false to the truth, but he always remembers that love and truth must go hand in hand . . . Christian love does not shut its eyes to the faults of others. Love is not blind. It will use rebuke and discipline when these

* A sermon from Hebrews 12:5-11, delivered at Ozark Bible College Chapel.

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are needed. The love which shuts its eyes to all faults, and which evades the unpleasantness of all discipline, is not real at all, for in the end it does nothing but harm to the loved one (Barclay, Wm., *More New Testament Words*, Harper & Row, p. 22).

“Love . . . does not rejoice in wrong, but rejoices in the right . . .” (I Corinthians 13:6). Would Jesus have shown love to Judas by concealing from Judas the truth about himself? Would Paul have shown love to all the churches to whom he wrote the epistles had he concealed from them the truth about themselves? In that penetrating, piercing confrontation between Jesus and the Jews, Jesus seemed almost astounded that they would seek to kill Him because He told them the truth about themselves (John 8:39-47). He did it because He loved them.

Paul wrote the Christians in Galatia, “Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth?” (Gal. 4:16). When God’s Word pierces our facade of sham and discerns us as we are and deals with us realistically—it is an expression of God’s love.

In relationships love is person-oriented; it deals with persons discerning, judging, estimating what they ought to be and can be with the help of God and Christian brethren. A person who, by experience and wisdom, knows something that would benefit me and keeps it from me does not love me. If I do not share with my children some truth that will help them, I do not love them.

There are some of you here this morning living in the joy of being better than you were because your teachers have dealt with you on the basis of their judgment of what you could become! It seemed distasteful to you at first—you disliked us and accused us of putting you down—but now you know we judged that you could be better than you were and we insisted on it. Love demands that those who have the advantage of experience and leadership relate to others on the basis of building up—not leaving others to go backward . . . or even to remain where they are!

In remedies, love is always seeking that which is practical—helpful. That which is the most helpful in a situation, may not always be the most glorious or win the most applause. But love seeks the long-range remedy. Love is never satisfied with superficialities or stopgap measures. (Read Heb. 12:11, 12.)

In an old book given to me by Seth Wilson, I found some ageless principles stated as well as I have ever seen them stated. One of those principles is:

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. . . If the moral powers (of man) are not employed on right objects and directed to a right end, there is not only perversion but deterioration. The more inactive they are the more they deteriorate. If, therefore, we would do the highest good to men we must seek, not only to perfect their powers, but to perfect the moral powers by directing them rightly. Our object must be to produce a change not merely in the condition, but in the state of men; and not merely in their intellectual state involving acquisitions and capacity, but in their moral state which involves, or rather which is, character (Hopkins, Mark, *The Law of Love and Love As a Law*, 1881, p. 199).

Loving, doing the highest good to men, means discernment!
Love is demanding—Love restrains.

Our love to God is shown in the keeping of His commandments (Exodus 20:6; 1 John 5:3; 2 John 6). Love is more than a mere affection or sentiment; it is something that manifests itself, not only in obedience to known divine commands, but also in protecting and defense of them, and a seeking to know more and more of the will of God in order to express love for God in further obedience (compare Deuteronomy 10:12). Those who love God will hate evil and all forms of worldliness, as expressed in the avoidance of the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life (Psalm 97:10; 1 John 2:15-17). Whatever there may be in his surroundings that would draw the soul away from God and righteousness, that the child of God will avoid (*International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. 3, p. 1933, article, "Love").

Love does not indulge. Dr. James Dobson, in his book, *Dare To Discipline*, says,

Perhaps the most common parental error during the past twenty-five years has been related to the wide-spread belief that "love is enough" in raising children . . . the greatest social disaster of this century is the belief that abundant love makes discipline unnecessary.

A New York psychologist, Peter Blos, is quoted in *Time*, November 29, 1971:

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. . . Parents should set limits, affirm their personal values, deny the "calm for grown-up status," and refuse to be intimidated by charges of authoritarianism.

Permissiveness, or indulgence, is no sign of love! Permissiveness can be the most unloving thing one person ever does to another! Jesus would not indulge Peter and the other disciples even in some actions that appeared correct (e.g., when they would forbid Him from going to Jerusalem and be killed, etc.). He would not indulge the rich young ruler to keep the riches which were strangling his loyalties.

Love refuses. It sometimes has to say "No!"

When we understand what *agape* means, it amply meets the objection that a society based on this love would be a paradise for criminals, and that it means simply letting the evildoer have his own way. If we seek nothing but a man's highest good, we may well have to do the hardest thing to him—for the good of his immortal soul. . . . In other words, *agape* means treating men as God treats them—and that does not mean allowing them unchecked to do as they like (Barclay, *More New Testament Words*, p. 16).

Curtis Dickinson, in the *Christian Standard*, January 25, 1958, "Love's Constraining Power," wrote,

It is easy to camouflage weakness and conformity under the disguise of love. . . . It is just because God loves you that He cannot overlook you. . . . It is precisely because we love our children that we cannot let them escape punishment. How ridiculous, if we said of a child, "I love her so much that no matter what she does I will consider it all right."

God said "No" to the perfect man in Eden, because He loved Adam! God said "No" to one of the greatest saints of all. Three times God said "No" to Paul, because God loved Paul! For a good mental and moral exercise why don't you personally run through your mind all the great men of the Old Testament to whom God said "No!" Now list mentally all the churches and people to whom the apostles wrote letters stating many emphatic "No's!" Add them all together!

Those whom the Holy Spirit has made overseers in the Lord's church are bound by their love for the Lord, for His church, and for

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its people, sometimes to say "No!" It is not something in which they take selfish, prideful pleasure—it is something for which they feel an obligation, and consider a privilege, because it gives them an opportunity to love for real!

Love reiterates and reinforces. Love does not give up with the first discernment or demand. Love repeats and repeats and repeats (read *The Hound of Heaven*, by Francis Thompson). Love hounds, stalks, trails. The immature tend to classify discerning, demanding love as nagging or harping, or nit-picking. Does the discerning, demanding love of God give us cause to accuse Him of nagging or harping? Were the Old Testament prophets nit-picking when they repeated and repeated God's message?

Continued reminders to you students to keep your dormitory room clean and orderly, continued reminders to pay your accounts, continued reminders to dress modestly, continued reminders to drive like a Christian, continued reminders to conduct your man-woman relationship with decorum—these are not nagging, nit-picking—these are fundamental issues of life and Christian witness . . . and the reminders are reiterations of love! It never ceases to amaze me that athletes and choir members, can so graciously accept all the repetition of practices and dress-alike uniformity; and then get all upset and accuse their deans of nagging and nit-picking when they reiterate and reinforce moral and spiritual values.

Love is deliberate—*It is real.* *Agape* love is sincere, genuine. J. B. Phillips translated Romans 12:9, "Let us have no imitation Christian love. Let us have a genuine break with evil and real devotion to good." *Agape* love will not stand for sham, superficiality, or unstable emotionalism. (Note: I said emotionalism. Love is part emotion but not all emotion.) *Agape* love is not the silly, selfish sentimentalism so often portrayed by the world.

This *agape*, this Christian love, is not merely an emotional experience which comes to us unbidden and unsought; it is a *deliberate* principle of the mind, and a deliberate conquest and achievement of the will. It is in fact the power to love the unlovable, to love people whom we do not like (Barclay).

Agape has to do with the *mind*: it is not simply an emotion which sweeps over us at intervals when we are in the right mood. It is a principle by which we deliberately live, every day, no matter what

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mood we're in or how we feel. It is a conquest, a victory, an achievement. No one ever naturally loved his enemies. *Agape* love demands the whole man; mind, will, and heart. There may be some of you students I know more intimately than others. But it does not mean that my *agape* love for any of you is any more or less than the other. *Agape* love does not depend upon circumstances! It is a real love! Many is the time we have been tempted to love some of you only according to how we feel, or by emotions alone, but that is not real love!

Love is reliable. It is decisive, dependable, firm, stable, consistent. Dennis Vath wrote in *Christian Standard*, November 5, 1966:

Jesus loved consistently. True *agape* love is consistent. It does not always compliment. It is not always manifested in a pat on the back, for this is not always in our best interests. *Agape* love does not always agree. Scripture tells us that the one God loves is the one He chastens. *Agape* on the human level does not allow itself to be dominated or abused, because it is not in a person's best interests to allow him to take advantage of anyone.

One mark of love often overlooked is that characteristic of being able to make a decision, a consistent decision, a stabilizing decision and then to stand firm in that decision. Could you honestly say you believed the leadership of this college loved you if it could not make a decision, consistently, and stand firm?

Love is risky. *Agape* love will never let a man be selfishly-safe. *Agape* love insists upon self-sacrifice. Eugene Nida writes in *God's Word in Man's Language*:

The Conob Indians of northern Guatemala . . . describes love as "my soul dies." A man who loves God according to the Conob idiom would say, "My soul dies for God." This not only describes the powerful emotion felt by the one who loves, but it should imply a related truth—namely, that in true love there is no room for self. . . . True love is of all emotions the most unselfish, for it does not look out for self but for others. False love seeks to possess; true love seeks to be possessed. False love leads to cancerous jealousy; true love leads to a life-giving ministry.

The person who will not risk being hurt or thought badly of—the person who is afraid to do what is best for another because he is afraid

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of that person's displeasure with him—that person does not know how to love! Beloved, it may seem to you that we deliberately set out at times to court your displeasure with us! We do! Because we want to love you with a real love, we are not primarily concerned with what you feel toward us at first. Because we know that almost always you will someday understand the love behind our counsel and love us in return! Any parent who so fears to risk his child's temporary displeasure that he fails to enforce some genuine, loving restraint, is not worthy to be a parent. And this applies in the family of God!

Conclusion—Love is a many-splendored thing. Love is like a many-faceted jewel; there are many sides to it and they all reflect the glory of God. I have tried in these moments to catch your spiritual eye with three of the more brilliant facets of this superb gem. I would invite you to take up the Word of God and make your own study of the nature of God, finding still other facets and reflections as you hold it in your gaze.

Our love for you is an attempt to reproduce in you this splendored thing. We are going to love you discerningly, demandingly, deliberately. We are going to love you with our mind and our will as well as our emotions. You may not be pleased with us always, but we are not going to let our love be directed by that. C. S. Lewis writes in *The Four Loves*:

To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will certainly be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact, you must give your heart to no one. . . . Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements; lock it up safe in the casket of your selfishness. But in that casket—safe, dark, motionless, airless—it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.

To you, my beloved brother or sister, I am vulnerable. I cannot lock myself up. Break my heart if you will, I will still love you discerningly, demandingly, deliberately. To appropriate a phrase from Isaiah, "Behold, I have graven you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

Special Study

THE CHRISTIAN SYNDROME

(John 15:1-17)

If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my life; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full (John 15:10, 11).

The word "syndrome" is a technical word used in the field of psychology, applied to a group of symptoms or signs that occur together and characterize a mental or physical state. The word "syndrome" is from two Greek words *syn* and *dramein* and literally means "run together." There are three fundamental elements (symptoms) which "run together" and form the joyful Christian syndrome. If any of these elements is missing, the syndromatic cycle is broken and the Christian life is unstable. Interestingly enough, all three elements in the Christian syndrome were present in man's experience in the Garden of Eden before man sinned. And the thrust of the redemptive plan of God through Christ is to restabilize man in this cycle of joy.

Liberty—Before a person can have joy, he must be free. The real hindrances to true freedom are not rules and regulations, but guilt, fear, and selfishness. The man who is free of guilt, fear, and himself is a truly liberated man no matter what his circumstances. Guilt, fear, and selfishness are the elements the devil uses to keep men in bondage (compare Heb. 2:5-18; John 8:31-36). Psychiatrists tell us that guilt and fear and selfishness are probably the most mentally and spiritually enslaving, unbalancing elements affecting men.

The real and only cure for this bondage—the only way to be set free—is simple, complete, unreserved faith in the substitutionary, atoning death of Christ. There is no way in this world or the next for man to punish himself enough, or do enough good works, or sacrifice enough to get rid of his guilt, fear, and selfishness. There is no way for man to psyche himself into good and positive feelings each day to get rid of his bondage. The only way for man to be absolutely certain he is not guilty is to believe God. God has said in His Word that Jesus Christ died your death for you. He suffered your guilt for you.

Many Christians today bring themselves into bondage by refusing to accept God's offer of liberty, gratis. They insist on atoning for their own guilt or trying to earn their own righteousness by competing, even in the Christian ministry, for success according to a

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carnal or worldly standard. Before the Christian life-style or ministry can ever become a joy the Christian must be freed of the guilt that comes from a sense of failing to meet worldly standards of success.

God's standard is faithfulness. We are going to be surprised when we get to heaven—Jesus says so in Matthew 25:31-46. God does not count success as the world does. He keeps a different set of statistics from those of worldly-minded, success-oriented, guilt-ridden men.

God has punished my guilt in Jesus Christ. His Word says it. I believe it. That settles it. I'm free. I don't have to earn my own absolution or succeed as the world measures success. I don't have to get rid of my own guilt—I couldn't if I tried! When Christ died, the guilty me died.

Love—Because God has objectively, judicially, and propositionally freed me, I love Him. Loving Him is not something I can produce without an adequate cause. "We love because he first loved us" (I John 4:19). Jesus commanded His disciples to love others as He had loved them. Perfect love has its origin in the divine Lover. Our love is a rebound—a reaction—a response.

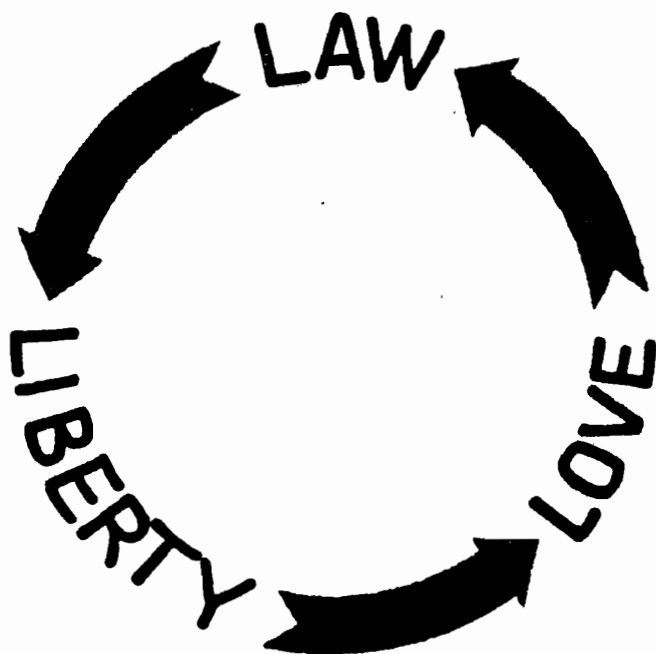
God motivates love in us. Love in us is the motivating factor in the syndrome. This is where the system of situation ethics falls into a fundamental fallacy. It makes love the standard rather than the motivation of Christian conduct.

Love can never of itself be a standard to determine what is right or wrong. I might love my country with all my heart but that love itself does not tell me how to express my feelings for my country. There must be laws to tell me what taxes to pay as my share in government and what rights and privileges my neighbor and I have in relation to each other. Without such laws it is obvious that anarchy would prevail (Donald A. Nash, "Situation Ethics or Social Ethics," *Christian Standard*, March 8, 1969).

Love moves me to want to do something. Love demands and insists that I seek an acceptable expression of the urge to do. Just doing will not satisfy love—doing what is pleasing is the only acceptable expression of love. Who is to say what is pleasing and edifying? Ultimately God alone can say!

Law—This is where law becomes a necessity in the syndrome of joy. Law defines love. Even before man sinned, God defined how Adam was to love his Creator. God gave Adam the command that he should not eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God also gave Adam

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the command to till the Garden of Eden. As long as Adam believed God and remained free of the bondage of selfishness, guilt, and fear, Adam loved God. But Adam's love did not of itself tell him *how* to love God. God told Adam how, by giving Adam commandments.

We do not even know how to love our fellowman properly without the divine commandments of God. Love does not indulge—it edifies. But who knows what is edifying for his fellowman? Who even knows what is edifying for himself? God, the master psychologist, knows. He made man. In Him man subsists (lives) and consists (holds together). Without Him, man comes apart.

Once for all, keeping the commandments of God is not legalism! Nor is the keeping of the rules and regulations of man necessarily legalism. Legalism is an attitude. If the laws are made, or kept, with the intent that in so doing one is justified before God in the keeping—this is legalism. If, on the other hand, the commandments are made in love and kept from a motivation of love—this is where true liberty is found!

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If commandments are given from a motivation of love they will be given only to assist the one obeying to reach the fullest potential for which he was created. If commandments are obeyed from a motivation of love they will become a way, a method, a tool both pleasing and profitable (certainly, not grievous) to reach toward that highest potential for which the obeyer was created.

This is truly liberating, maturing, perfecting. Now whether we make laws or keep laws in love depends on whether we are truly liberated in the grace of God.

The syndrome of Christian joy—liberty, love, law—one follows the other and they all run together in a never ending cycle.

Chapter Fourteen

THE PROBLEM OF EDIFICATION IN THE MIDST OF DIVERSITY (14:1-40)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Who is supposed to “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts”? Are we, today, to desire them?
2. In what way were the Corinthians apparently using “speaking in tongues” so that the tongues were unedifying?
3. What is the significance of the Old Testament prophecy from Isaiah in this context?
4. Why did Paul state, “. . . and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets”?
5. Is it really “shameful” for a woman to speak in church?

SECTION I

Preaching by Prophecy (14:1-12)

14 Make love your aim, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. ²For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. ³On the other hand, he who prophesies speaks to men for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. ⁴He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. ⁵Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than he who speaks in tongues, unless some one interprets, so that the church may be edified.

⁶Now, brethren, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how shall I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? ⁷If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will any one know what is played? ⁸And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? ⁹So with

yourselves; if you in a tongue utter speech that is not intelligible, how will any one know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. ¹⁰There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning; ¹¹but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I shall be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. ¹²So with yourselves; since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

14:1-5 Prophecy is Understandable: It will be profitable at the start of this chapter to reiterate the fundamental principles of Biblical hermeneutics. (1) The true interpretation is what the *author* intended to say; (2) The Bible is written in *human* language. If human language is to mean anything at all it must (granting differences in structure) *mean the same thing to all* human beings; (3) Each passage must be understood in the light of its *historical* background, its *grammatical* structure, and *parallel words* or passages; (4) Each word, paragraph, chapter, is to be understood according to its *context*; (5) And each passage is to be interpreted in the light of the *whole scheme of redemption* (the entire Bible). Remember, Paul *expected* the Corinthians to understand him and God expects *all* human beings to *understand* the Bible alike.

The teaching of this chapter was initially given to *promote unity* among Christians, in the first century, in Corinth. Unity could only result when all the Christians at Corinth understood and obeyed the will of God as expressed in this teaching. Understanding and obeying the will of God revealed in the scriptures is *still* the only basis for Christian unity. Let us exert every mental and spiritual effort possible to understand and obey the will of God in this chapter.

Miraculous gifts served their purpose (integration of cultural differences among believers and verification of apostolic doctrine) and ceased. But that does not mean the *generic* principles taught in chapter fourteen (which is, all things done to edify, and done decently, in order) are irrelevant to the believers today. God's principles are always true and never change. The *administration*, or application, of those principles may, due to time or culture, serve their purpose and cease. This was the case with miraculous gifts. Both miraculous gifts and love come from God. Paul expected the Corinthian church to practice both in the will of God. Chapter fourteen gives some practical way that love controls the use a person makes of his gifts.

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The Greek word *prophetes*, prophecy, is literally, “forth-speaking.” In this context it must mean more than just predicting the future, since all *teaching* in the first century church did not involve the necessity of predicting the future. The word *propheteian* in Romans 12:6 may not include the miraculous element at all since it is listed with the “functional” (Gr. *praxin*) gifts; it probably means simply, preaching. There was a “school of the prophets” in the Old Testament (also called “sons of the prophets” II Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1, 38). Prophets with the miraculous power to predict, did not have to go to school to learn how to predict! Evidently the title “prophet” could be applied to a person learning to “prophesy” in the sense of preaching.

Yet, in the context of I Corinthians, chapter 12-14, “prophecy” is clearly to be understood as a miraculous gift. Here it is more than merely preaching or teaching by natural faculties. Whether it was teaching and preaching, or predicting, or both, it was under the inerrant direction of the Holy Spirit in order to deliver to the first century church an infallible message from God.

The Greek text of 14:1, like the Greek of 12:1, says, *zeloute de ta pneumatika, mallon de hina propheteute*, literally, “be zealous for the spiritual things, and rather, in order that you may prophesy.” Once again, as in 12:1, the word “gifts” (Gr. *charismata*) is omitted. The most spiritual thing to want is the desire to edify others—that is done by teaching.

The apostle warns that speaking in a *tongue* (Gr. *glosse*, language) usually resulted in utterance of a non-understandable mystery. The Greek word *musterion*, mystery, means, “that which is unrevealed,” not that which is unknowable; it would be knowable if revealed, or interpreted. The word “unknown” (supplied in KJV) is not in any Greek text, and should not have been supplied since it is *not* stated anywhere in the New Testament that first century “tongues” were non-human, unknowable utterances. Of course, God knows all human languages, dialects, phonics or “tongues,” (see Rev. 5:9; 7:9; 9:11; 10:11; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6; 16:16; 17:15 where “tongue,” *glosson*, is used clearly to mean, human languages). When one of the Corinthian Christians spoke with “other tongues” (Gr. *heterais glossais*, Acts 2:4; and *heteroglossois*, I Cor. 14:21) he did not speak to his fellow Christians because he was speaking in a *foreign language*, but he did speak to God since God understands all languages. When a Christian in the Corinthian church spoke in a language they never learned, they did so from the supernatural gift God gave them. When

there was no interpreter present, they exercised that gift only for God's benefit (since it had not been translated, it was understood by no one else—not even the speaker). God gave the speaker words and information directly from heaven in a language the speaker had not studied or spoken natively. When there was no translator present, speaking in language foreign to the speaker resulted, for the speaker, in a purely *subjective* experience. Thus, the gift of tongues was experiential only for the speaker—and that only in a limited sense if he does not have the gift of interpretation. Paul is pointing, in this context, to the *superiority* of the gift of prophecy over the gift of tongues. Thus to speak only for personal experience is to abuse the gift.

Contrary to the very limited, often self-centered, profitableness of "tongues," the gift of prophecy, since spoken in the vernacular of the audience, speaks to all for edification, encouragement and consolation. Prophecy did not need a translator; it could be understood by all.

Paul was willing that tongues be practiced by all the Corinthian Christians as he would qualify their use in 14:6ff. However, the Greek word *thelo* (14:5) translated "I would," "I wish," or "I want" is a present active indicative verb and is better translated, "I am willing." He was "willing" that tongues be spoken *only* if interpreted; but he was "more" (Gr. *mallon*, "rather") willing that the gift of prophecy be exercised. The one who prophesied was *greater* than the one who spoke in an untranslated language, because prophecy edified everyone. If the untranslated language was translated, then the church was edified. And, we note, the words "some one" in the RSV are not in the Greek text. The one who speaks in the untranslated language is to interpret (Gr. *ektos ei me diermaneun*, "except unless *he* interprets"). The moment language was translated and understood by the whole church it became, in essence, a prophecy (a revelation, a teaching). What, then, was the need for speaking in foreign languages? As we shall see in another section, this gift was primarily and exclusively to be used as a *sign* for unbelievers and the spiritually immature.

14:6-12 Prophecy is Upbuilding: To read this section, one might think Paul's main subject is tongues—but it is the superiority of prophecy. In these verses the apostle illustrates and explains further the inferiority of tongues to prophecy. Some Bible students forget the main issue here and assume the emphasis is on tongues.

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Paul could have spoken to the Corinthians, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in a multitude of foreign languages (see I Cor. 14:18). Evidently, he did not have the power to translate these "tongues." Even though he could speak in more tongues than any of them, he would have benefited no one except himself, subjectively, and God, unless the tongues could have been translated into a revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching.

Imagine a Japanese Army bugle call being blown by an American soldier at an American Army camp! The call would be an *enigma* (remember, Paul used this word *enigma* in 13:12 to characterize these miraculous gifts). Musical instruments which do not give distinct, recognizable *notes* (Gr. *phthongois*) and bugles which do not give recognizable *calls* (Gr. *phonen*, phonetics) are not only useless, they are confusing. Paul uses the Greek word *diastolen*, distinct, to characterize the function of musical instruments. It is the word from which we get the English word *stole*, and means literally, "a vestment worn by someone to distinguish them from others." He uses the word *adelon* to characterize misuse of a bugle and the word means, "Indistinct, not obvious, uncertain." Musical instruments and, especially bugles, are intended to communicate messages. If they do not they are useless and confusing.

In verse 9 the suggestion is that those with the gift of "tongues" not speak in the public assembly unless they may specifically speak *a clear word* (Gr. *eusemon logon*, literally, "a word that well-signifies"). Foreign languages without interpretation are not clear signals—they are undistinguishable sounds.

In 14:10 Paul says there are multitudinous "kinds" (Gr. *gene*, *geneses*, families) of *phonetics* (Gr. *phonon*) in the *world* (Gr. *kosmos*) and not one without *meaning* (Gr. *aphonon*, literally, "without its own phonetics"). Yet, if one of these "phonetics" is sounded or spoken and *not* translated, and a listener does not happen to know the language being spoken miraculously, he would be a *foreigner* (Gr. *barbaros*, barbarian) and the speaker would be a *foreigner* (Gr. *barbaros*). Paul is using the term *barbaros* literally, and not figuratively. Those who do not understand one another's human language are foreigners to one another. It is clear that Paul is speaking of *actual* human languages when he says "tongues" and *not* of the modern phenomena called *glossolalia* (a word not found in that form in the New Testament at all). The modern, alleged, "speaking in tongues" has been thoroughly analyzed by linguistics and philologists

and their conclusions repudiate it as being any form of language at all (see *The Psychology of Speaking In Tongues*, by John P. Kildahl, pub. Harper and Row, 1972). Dr. Kildahl also documents cases where actual human language, spoken in an audience where the language was not understood except by the speaker, received a so-called miraculous interpretation and it was not at all what the speaker said. Modern glossolalia is pseudo-miraculous!

Paul repeats, in 14:12, the overriding, central principle of these three chapters (I Corinthians 12-13-14) again. That principle is, strive to *excel* (Gr. *perisseuete*, abound, fully) in building up the church. So the teaching thus far is that teaching by revelation ("prophecy") builds up the church, while miraculous speaking in foreign tongues which are not translated or interpreted does not build up the church.

SECTION 2

Proving by Tongues (14:13-25)

13 Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to interpret. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. 15 What am I to do? I will pray with the spirit and I will pray with the mind also; I will sing with the spirit and I will sing with the mind also. 16 Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can any one in the position of an outsider say the "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? 17 For you may give thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than you all; 19 nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind, in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; be babes in evil, but in thinking be mature. 21 In the law it is written, "By men of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." 22 Thus, tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 If, therefore, the whole church assembles and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are mad? 24 But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account

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by all, ²⁵the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

14:13-19 Intelligibility Abdicated: Those Corinthian Christians who clamored for the gift of tongues because it was spectacular were abdicating the only means of building Christ's church—intelligible communication. The Greek word here for "tongues" is *glossa*; the Greek word for "speaking" is *lalon*. Modern charismatics have combined the two words into one, *glossolalia*, to denote modern, alleged, "tongues-speaking." But, we repeat, the word *glossolalia* is not found in the New Testament. There is a distinct difference, literally, between the Greek New Testament words *ho lalon glosse* and the modern word *glossolalia*, and there is also a difference in the connotations implied. Needless to say, then, there is a distinct difference between what was practiced in the first century and today.

In the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, or LXX), the word *glossa* is used for (a) the human *organ* known as the tongue, and; (b) the language of a known people, but *never* for some ecstatic, esoteric babble. The same is true of the New Testament. In Acts 2:8, when Peter and the other apostles spoke in *other glossa*, men from all over the world heard in their own *dialect* (the Greek word *dialekto* is used in Acts 2:8).

The Greek word *gene* refers to a "family" or genre (genealogy) of *glossa*, (see 14:10). This indicates that the tongues being spoken by the Corinthians were clearly distinguishable one from another and, were not unknowable, but one family or genre of human language or another.

The Greek word *hermeneuo* (14:5, 13, 26, 27, etc.) is not used in the Bible to mean the interpretation of an unknowable language into a known language. The word *hermeneuo* always means to translate words from one knowable language into another knowable language (cf. John 1:38, 42; 9:7; see also Ezra 4:7) so that there may be an understanding; (see also Matt. 1:23; Mark 5:41; 15:22, 34; Acts 9:36; 13:8; Heb. 7:2; II Peter 1:20). When *hermeneuo* is translated, "translate," we see clearly that Paul is talking about *knowable* languages being translated into other knowable languages, and not about "unknown" and unknowable gibberish. Paul warns, "Therefore, he who speaks in a tongue should pray for the power to translate."

Reasons the modern phenomenon called *glossolalia* is *not* the miraculous speaking in “tongues” of the first century church:

- a. Scriptural reasons cited above.
- b. Today’s phenomenon is not received by the laying on of the hands of an apostle.
- c. Ecstatic, esoteric glossolalia similar to Christian glossolalia has been practiced, and is being practiced, by pagans in ancient and modern times (Hittites, Phoenicians, Egyptians, Greeks, East Africans, Islamics, American Indians, Caribbean voodoo practitioners, and many others).
- d. Ecstatic gibberish has been practiced by a multitude of different religious groups who have *fundamental doctrinal aberrations* when compared with the Bible (Roman Catholics, Mormons, Jews, cultists of all varieties). The Spirit of God would not *contradict* his apostolic word, nor would he give credence by miraculous manifestations to these *apostate* religious groups.
- e. Writings of the early church “fathers” (immediately after the first century) indicate Biblical “tongues” were not manifested in their time (Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, Augustine of Hippo; see Kildahl, op. cit., pp. 14-15).
- f. In the history of modern, so-called, tongues there are no scientifically confirmed recordings of anyone speaking in a foreign language which he had never learned (Kildahl, p. 39).
- g. Dr. Kildahl, in order to investigate “interpretations” played a taped example of tongues-speech privately for several different “interpreters.” In no instance was there any similarity in the several “interpretations” (Kildahl, p. 63).
- h. Kildahl writes of a man raised in Africa, of missionary parents, who decided to test the “interpretation of tongues.” He attended a tongues-speaking meeting where he was a complete stranger. At the appropriate moment, he rose and spoke the Lord’s Prayer in the African dialect he had learned in his youth. When he sat down, an “interpreter of tongues” at once offered the meaning of what he had said. He interpreted it as a message about the imminent second coming of Christ (Kildahl, p. 63).
- i. Personal friends of mine, of the so-called charismatic persuasion, and books in my personal library from charismatic practitioners,

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offer instruction on how one may *learn*, by *human* means, the act of tongues-speaking. How does one learn that which is miraculous?

- j. Much modern, so-called, tongues-speaking is allegedly *not* under conscious control of the person who allegedly speaks and yet this very chapter (I Cor. 14) says *it must be* (I Cor. 14:26-33), so that they can determine who is to speak and when they are to speak.
- k. According to one former member of a tongues-speaking denomination, 85% of modern, so-called tongues-speaking is done in the public assemblies, by women. Yet, Paul directs (14:33-36) that women should be silent in the public assemblies.

Paul explains that even the bona fide speaking in tongues by miraculous gift is unfruitful as far as intelligent communication is concerned, unless there is a translator present. When a Corinthian Christian prayed in a foreign language he did not know, his spirit might receive some emotional, subjective, excitation, but there would be nothing by which his *mental*, spiritual growth (edification) could proceed. Speaking in a tongue without a translator did not bring the mind into play, and anything said would bear no edifying fruit to the congregation. The same principle is true of all singing in congregational worship. Singing is a means of instructing the congregation unto edification (see Eph. 5:19). If the singing is unintelligible, for any reason, it is foolish to say, "Amen," because no instruction or edification has taken place. *Edification cannot take place without instruction!*

Although Paul was probably writing about singing done in Corinth by Christians with the miraculous gift of tongues—and therefore, singing in a foreign language—a great amount of today's so-called religious music is neither Christian nor intelligible. In some cases, the words of today's songs, when distinguishable, are actually anti-scriptural. The twentieth century church needs to restore the New Testament teaching about music. Too many "Christian musicians" have succumbed to the "performer mentality," and, at the same time, many congregations have adopted the "audience-mentality" toward music. The New Testament concept of music in the worship assembly gives no credence to the modern mania for "the beat," "performance-mentality," and unintelligible, imprecise, vague generalizations. The desire to "show-off" as a "performer" is precisely the attitude that was destroying the Corinthian congregation. It is the issue to which

the apostle Paul addresses as much as half of this epistle! It is still relevant!

Speaking, praying or singing in a foreign language (tongue) had to be translated and made understandable if done at all in the worship services, otherwise the “outsider” could not be edified. The Greek word *idiotes* (14:16, 23, 24) (from which the English word *idiot* comes) meant someone excluded, for one reason or another, from any specific group of people, e.g. the civilian as opposed to the soldier, the uneducated man as opposed to the scholar, the private citizen as opposed to the public official. Paul is clearly using the word *idiotes* to denominate those in attendance at Christian worship services at Corinth who were unskilled in foreign languages, and had no miraculous way of translating the tongues. They could neither speak in foreign languages or translate. Thus they were the same as foreigners or “outsiders.” Some commentators classify the “outsider” as one who is neither an “unbeliever” or a Christian, but a proselyte or a catechumen (learner). But the “outsider” is expected to be able to say “Amen” to any translated speech in a foreign tongue (14:16). Thus, it would appear, the “outsider” is a Christian, not ignorant, but outside the select group of Christians in the Corinthian congregation who had received special, miraculous gifts.

Any use of gifts that did not produce understanding for the whole congregation, might serve some selfish purpose for the gifted person but others are not edified. It would appear Paul disapproved of “private” use of speaking in tongues for the Corinthians. Such “private” use was selfish, childish, and, if indiscriminately used, produced the aura of insanity and foolishness. Speaking miraculously in a foreign language must communicate to the *minds* (Gr. *nous*, mind) of all present in the assembly, including the speaker, both the ungifted and the unbeliever. The tongues were to be translated into the languages of those present in the service.

The apostle had the miraculous gift of tongues in greater capacity than all the Corinthians together, but his counsel was (and his counsel would be apostolic doctrine) that five words spoken in a language all hearers could understand with their minds were worth more than ten thousand words unintelligible to the hearers, although spoken by direct miracle from God. The Greek word *katecheso* is translated “instruct” and is the word from which we get the English word *catechism*; it generally means “instruction in the fundamentals of

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a subject.” God gave the infant church gifts for the sole purpose of instruction and edification (Eph. 4:11-16).

14:20-25 Immaturity Accentuated: Not only did the obsession for the spectacular gift of tongues-speaking (untranslated) show these Corinthians would abdicate intelligent communication, it also accentuated their spiritual immaturity (see I Cor. 3:1ff.). To speak in a language without translating, only for the speaker’s glory, and to elevate egotism over “line upon line, precept upon precept” processes of instruction is not only immature, it is a sign of unbelief.

So Paul starts this paragraph with an admonition for the Corinthian Christians to “grow up”! They were not to have a child’s “show-off” mentality. He *did* want them to be “infant-like” (Gr. *nepiazete*) in evil, but he wanted them at the same time, to be “mature” (Gr. *teleioi*, perfected, complete, matured, reach the goal) in *phresin*, mentality.

It is interesting that Paul quotes from the prophet Isaiah (14:21) and calls it “the law.” He is emphasizing that prophecy in the Old Testament was just as authoritative as the law of Moses. But the significance of Isaiah’s prophecy here is the context from which this prophecy came. Isaiah 28:11-12 comes from the prophet’s reproach of his Hebrew contemporaries (750-700 B.C.) who *kept asking* for miraculous signs that Jehovah was going to deal with them in judgment as the prophets kept insisting he was. They were “unbelievers.” The covenant people would not (except for a small remnant) accept the “line upon line, precept upon precept” teaching of the prophets. They scoffed at that kind of instruction as fit for babies. And they were angry that the prophets inferred they were babies. They considered themselves sophisticated and mature. God said, however, “You are wrong; line upon line, precept upon precept is not for babies, but for the mature. The spectacular is for babies, and I am going to show you something spectacular since that is the only way some of you will believe. I am going to deliver you into captivity and you will hear foreign languages. Your hearing foreign language will be evidence that the teachings of the prophets were for spiritual maturation.” Isaiah was talking to “inside unbelievers” when he wrote to the Jews and that is precisely why Paul quotes Isaiah here. Isaiah was talking about spiritual maturity as opposed to childish “unbelief,” and that is the very purpose Paul had in quoting it here to these childish, unbelieving Corinthian Christians.

There were two kinds of people in the Corinthian church. There were the believers who welcomed “line upon line” teaching. They

believed the messages of the “prophets” and did not need continual miracles to remain steadfast in the faith. Then there were the “unbelievers” who had to have miracles at every public worship or they did not think they could maintain their faith. God was displeased even with the Old Dispensation people who put him to the test beyond what they should have (see I Cor. 10:9 and Exod. 17:7). Jesus called the Jews who kept on asking for miraculous signs, “an evil and adulterous generation” (see Matt. 12:39; 16:4). So, “tongues” were a *sign* for the immature, the “unbelievers,” even the “unbelievers” within the membership of the church, as well as for unbelievers outside the membership. “Tongues” served as signs that there was a divine presence, that the one, true God was speaking to the world through the apostle’s doctrine and the messengers of Christ’s church.

But, if the whole church did nothing but speak in tongues, that would be as far as outsiders and unbelievers would get. *They would not be instructed*—only amazed. And, if the whole church did nothing but speak in tongues the outsider and unbeliever would probably say the tongues-speakers were all “out of their minds” (Gr. *mainesthe*, insane, out of control mentally). The outsiders and unbelievers would not be caused to worship God if the whole assembly spoke in tongues. Not even the miraculous really *converts* unbelievers without extensive, logical, direct, communication of the teachings of God. “Prophecy” makes believers out of unbelievers and edifies immature believers. Tongues were merely to signal the divine presence; “prophecy” (teaching) was for “outsiders” and “unbelievers” to convict them and cause them to humbly worship God and acknowledge God’s presence in the church. The Corinthian church needed a lot less of the tongues (and these were miraculous tongues), and a lot more of the prophecy.

SECTION 3

Pefecting With Decorum and Decency (14:26-40)

26 What then, brethren? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification. 27 If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn; and let one interpret. 28 But if there is no one to interpret,

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let each of them keep silence in church and speak to himself and to God. ²⁹Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. ³⁰If a revelation is made to another sitting by, let the first be silent. ³¹For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged; ³²and the spirits of prophets are subjects to prophets. ³³For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, ³⁴the women should keep silence in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as even the law says. ³⁵If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. ³⁶What! Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?

³⁷ If any one thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that what I am writing to you is a command of the Lord. ³⁸If any one does not recognize this, he is not recognized. ³⁹So, my brethren, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues; ⁴⁰but all things should be done decently and in order.

14:26-33a Decorum: If the Corinthian church (or any church in any age) was to ever reach maturity, or perfection (reach the goal God had for it), it would have to bring order out of the confusion caused by the childish attitudes and practices with miraculous gifts. Paul sets forth specific “rules” of conduct to be followed for this problem of the Corinthian church of the first century. These are not, specifically, rules for the church today since miraculous gifts no longer exist. However, the principle teaching, that *all* things should be done decently and in order in the church, still applies. Therefore, there is much for us to learn from this section.

The idiomatic phrase, “What then, brethren?” is much like the modern phrase in English, “How about it, then, folks?” Paul is saying, “This, then, is the way it is to be when you meet in your Christian assemblies.” He recognized that there would be a multitude of people with gifts all at the same gathering. He also realized that a person with a miraculous gift could hardly be asked *never* to use it. After all, God would not give any gift, miraculous or non-miraculous, and forbid its use. God would certainly want it to be used. But the controlling principle for use of all gifts was, “Let *all* things be done for edification.” These are the apostolic rules:

1. If any are to speak miraculously, in a foreign language, there must be only two, or at most three, *and each in turn* (Gr. *kai ana meros*, the word *meros*, means, to divide up, to allot, to distribute). One at a time!
2. Those with the gift of “tongues” were permitted to speak *only* if they knew there was a *translator* (Gr. *hermeneuto*) present. If there was no translator present, they were to keep silent! Any so-called “private” exercise would be misuse.
3. If any prophesied, only two or three were to prophesy. And, they were told, prophesying would be each in turn—one at a time, (14:30-31).
4. Those with the gift of “prophecy” were to exercise their gift only when there were “others” present to *discern* (Gr. *diakrinetosan*, the word from which the English words, critique, criticize, critic, meaning, “to judge, to discriminate, to decide”). The “discerners” had the miraculous power to *decide* (not interpret) whether a prophet spoke from God or not.
5. Evidently, no one prophet had all the truth to proclaim. One by one they were to teach at each corporate assembly of the church. And *all*, even those who taught, were to do some learning at one time or another (14:31).
6. All gifts were to be kept under these controls, for the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets (and so were the spirits of the language-speakers). Every apostolic command here by Paul presupposes that these gifts could be, and were to be, exercised under their *control*. Paul would not have insisted on the gifts being exercised by only two or three, and one at a time, had they not been controllable. No tongues-speaker, or prophet, was to jump up and begin to exercise a gift when another was doing so. No one was to claim he could not help himself—that it was the Holy Spirit forcing him to exercise his gift. *These gifts were not exercised spontaneously!*

God would never produce disorder and confusion! God brings order out of chaos. God does not produce fragmentation—he creates wholeness. The Greek word *akatastasia*, translated, *confusion*, means, “instability, anarchy, revolution,” and from it we get the English words, *catastasis*, *catastrofhe*, and *catatonia*.

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The church today, though not possessing miraculous gifts, will do well to learn a lesson from the fundamental principle Paul teaches here. The principle is decorum, orderliness. Worship does not, in fact should not, have to be *spontaneous*, to be worship! Of course, worship must come from the heart. And, simply following a regimen of worship ceremonies does not insure that worship is being done. But neither does spontaneity! Paul is saying to these Corinthians (and to all Christians) that God is not pleased with any worship service that is disorderly and confusing. The worship of God must be intelligent, instructive, maturing, and orderly (according to a design, with regularity). If spontaneity must suffer, then let it suffer. This is true of "youth sessions" as much, or more, than "adult sessions." How can Christians learn to "order" their lives if they are taught that the worship of God is some exercise in spontaneity, impulsiveness, and confusion?

14:33b-40 Decency: Is it indecent for a woman to speak in church? The instruction concerning women in the public assembly, in this context, must have involved the misuse of miraculous gifts. We really do not know what the problem was, specifically, but it was probably one of the following situations:

- a. either some women had miraculous gifts and were using them publicly which, in that culture especially, was an indecent usurpation of male leadership in the public assemblies; the dignity of man and woman is preserved only if the place God has ordained for each is maintained (see our comments in I Cor. 11:1ff.).
- b. or, some women, who did not have miraculous gifts, were prodding and agitating their husbands or others who did have gifts to use them contrary to the apostolic guidelines; this also was indecent behavior for women.
- c. or, some women who did not have miraculous gifts were insisting they were going to teach in the public assemblies without gifts.

The *point* is, even had there been women in the Corinthian church with miraculous gifts, they were not to exercise them in the public assemblies. This certainly is *not* the case with most of the so-called "charismatic" assemblies in modern times.

The apostle reiterates a teaching he has made in other places in the New Testament. He says, "... women should be subordinate, as even the law says." The Greek same word *hupotassesthosan* (be subject, subordinate) is used in Ephesians 5:21ff. and in Colossians 3:18.

The woman was created by God *subordinate* to her husband. Male chauvinism has nothing to do with it—it is divinely ordained.

Paul anticipated there would be those who would not agree with his teaching about women in the public assembly, but he reminded them that the word of God did not originate with them, nor did it come to them alone. Actually, Paul says, “Did the word of God *go forth from you . . .* or are you the only people who have and know the word of God?” The Greek word is *exelthen*, “go forth.” In other words, the word of God is not subject to the whims of the Corinthians—the Corinthians are to be subject to the word of God.

Furthermore, Paul speaks the word of God. Any member of the Corinthian church who would disobey the apostle’s instructions about the use and misuse of miraculous gifts in this letter is not possessed of God’s truth, nor is he spiritually-minded. This warning is as relevant for the church today as it was for the first century church.

When all is said and done, it comes down to this: “Earnestly desire to prophesy,” because that is what converts and edifies. “But do not forbid anyone who has the miraculous gift of speaking in a foreign language to do so” for God had a purpose for the exercise of all the miraculous gifts. “But let *all* things be done decently and in order.” The word *decently* is a translation of the Greek word *euschemonos*, and means literally, “well-schematized,” or, “with good schematics.” Any worship of God that does not follow God’s schematic (plan, blueprint, order, arrangement) is *not decent*! The words *in order* are translated from the Greek words, *kata taxin*; the word *taxin* is related to the Greek word *tagma*, and both are used to signify “to arrange something in order, especially in a military order.” It would not, therefore, be altogether unscriptural to say that the worship of God in the church’s corporate assemblies, should be *regimented*!

We believe the apostolic doctrine concerning miraculous gifts is clearly set forth in these three chapters (I Cor. 12-13-14). We believe all Christians, using accepted hermeneutical rules, should understand this teaching alike. But we also acknowledge that as long as some accept what they believe they have experienced in the place of understanding what Paul teaches here, there will continue to be division among Christians, just as there was nearly two thousand years ago, when Paul wrote to the brethren at Corinth.

A quotation from Seth Wilson, Dean Emeritus of Ozark Bible College, is in order here. Dean Wilson has spent nearly fifty years researching this subject and counseling individuals and congregations who are “plagued by this problem.”

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The tongues-speaker (modern-day) who says, "You cannot understand or give any true judgment about a gift from God which you have not experienced and do not believe in," is saying, in effect, that it is not subject to critical examination in the light of Scripture. An error which grows out of this is the belief that one cannot understand the Bible unless he has been "baptized in the Holy Spirit." To say that only the believer in the tongues experience is qualified to comment on it begs the question, supposes that it is always from God, and puts the subjective (inward and personal feeling) above the Scripture as a source of truth. This takes the attitude that tongues speaking is something that is beyond the realm of reasonable evidence or factual investigation.

—from an unpublished essay on the Holy Spirit by Seth Wilson

APPLICATIONS:

1. The attitude of the Corinthians toward miraculous gifts shows conclusively that possession of miraculous powers, *per se*, does not produce holiness or Christian maturity.
2. It is possible to have a miraculous gift and be carnally-minded.
3. Teaching the word of God (in Corinth, by "prophecy" since there was as yet no completed New Testament scripture) in understandable human language is to be preferred above every other exercise in the church.
4. Edification, maturation, is the goal of everything God does through members of the body of Christ.
5. God wants Christians to be mature in their thinking and reasoning.
6. Self-glorification is childish and forbidden in Christians.
7. God demands order and planning in the corporate assembly of the Church—and in private worship, too, we might add.
8. No personal experience, miraculous or non-miraculous, can be a substitute for obedience to the apostolic word.
9. A thorough study of this chapter (using proper hermeneutical principles) shows conclusively that modern, pseudo-miraculous gifts, do not fit the apostolic revelation concerning miraculous gifts.

APPREHENSIONS:

1. Is the word "gifts" in 14:1? What does its absence probably indicate?
2. Why did Paul emphasize seeking the gift of prophecy?
3. Does it not seem in 14:4 Paul is rebuking (mildly) some of the Corinthians for seeking to "edify" only themselves by using the gift of tongues without interpretation? Why would we reach that conclusion?
4. Why would using a miraculous gift only for oneself be wrong?
5. How do we know Paul is talking about human languages, knowable languages, when he says "tongues"? (14:10)
6. Why were the gifts given to the Corinthians? (12:7; 14:5; 14:12; 14:19; 14:26)
7. Did the possession of a miraculous gift mean the possessor's own abilities to think and reason were suspended in the exercise of the gift? (14:13-19)
8. Are Christians supposed to think? Like mature adults? (14:20)
9. Why does Paul quote from Isaiah 28:11-12 in this discussion of "tongues"?
10. Who is the "outsider"? Who is the "unbeliever" in Corinth?
11. Which was better for the outsider and unbeliever to experience in the congregation at Corinth—"tongues" or "prophecy"? Why?
12. Did Paul give "rules" for the use of miraculous gifts? Name the rules!
13. Why did Paul address the subject of women speaking in the church here? What does he say about it in chapter 11?
14. What is the Greek word which is translated "decency"?
15. Is Paul's emphatic statement about the church's need to follow planned, regimented worship relevant for the church today? How? or why?

Chapter Fifteen

THE PROBLEM OF THE RESURRECTION

(15:1-58)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. In accordance with what “scripture” did Christ die and arise from the dead?
2. When did the resurrected Christ appear to five hundred brethren at once?
3. Is it the death of Christ, or the resurrection of Christ, that takes away sin?
4. Are there different “orders” of being resurrected from the dead?
5. What is “being baptized on behalf of the dead”?
6. What kind of body will believers have after the resurrection?

SECTION 1

Its Historicity (15:1-11)

Now I would remind you brethren, in what terms I **15** preached to you the gospel, which you received, in which also you stand, ²by which also you are saved, if you hold it fast—unless you believed in vain.

³For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, ⁴that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures, ⁵and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. ⁷Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. ⁸Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God which is with me. ¹¹Whether then it was I or they, so we preach and so you believed.

15:1-2 Existentialism: This chapter clearly shows that some of the Corinthians were dealing with the gospel existentially. Some of them

had gotten the idea (perhaps from some Gnostics) that the source of the gospel was in *their* feelings, opinions and decisions. Paul warned them in 14:36, "Did the word of God originate with you, or are you the only ones it has reached?" They were looking upon the gospel *not* as a *revelation* of the truth they had *received* (15:1-2), *not* as something that had *objectivity* in itself outside of them, but as something they could invent or decide to suit their own carnal desires. There were some who were teaching (see comments 15:33) there was no resurrection of the dead (15:12) and that Christianity was for this world only, just like other religions.

Existentialism is a philosophical revolt against objectivity. It is rooted in introspection, subjectivism, and focuses entirely on the experiential. It determines the worth of knowledge not in relation to objective fact and revealed truth, but according to the value determined by the autonomous (self-ruled) consciousness of the individual human being. In other words, everything is valuable only in relation to what each individual feels or decides about it. And the individual's decision is based on that individual's feelings. Feelings are the only criteria for decision. Existentialism is the ultimate relativism. Each individual is his or her own "absolute." One individual must never let another individual decide for him, nor must he use another individual's feelings for his choice. Truth, for the existentialist, "becomes" at any given moment whatever he decides it is to him. It is in this self-sovereign determination of truth that the individual allegedly finds his existence. Existentialism is a philosophy as old as man. Centuries before Christ, Greek philosophers were expounding forms of existentialism. It is also as common as "Main Street, America." It is the philosophy of the masses, whether they know it or not, and is expressed in such phrases as, "Whatever turns you on!" or "Everybody ought to do their own thing," or "I know what I feel, regardless of what the Bible says." The existential theologian usually approaches Christianity with an "orthodox" vocabulary, but his terms have meanings different than what would be expected. Since, for the existentialist, nothing can be true unless he has personally felt it, experienced it, and decided it, he says: (a) God could not be God and be human, so God is "wholly other" and, therefore, a divine-incarnation could not have actually occurred. Since the supernatural cannot be incarnated, wherever the Gospels say Jesus did something miraculous, we must understand it as a Christian accommodation of pagan mythology; (b) there is Christian resurrection, but this is merely

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a subjective resurrection of the Jesus-faith in my feelings, and only when I decide it has happened; (c) Heaven is something I feel in my personal Christian experience; it is not an objective place.

It will be apparent as we study this chapter that the Corinthians had been taught a somewhat existential approach to the resurrection of the dead. Paul wants them to understand clearly that the Gospel was something which he *delivered* to them; they did not have it within themselves. The origin of the Gospel had nothing to do with their feelings or autonomous decisions. While they would be responsible to decide for themselves what to *do* about the logical, spiritual and moral demands of the Gospel, their decisions would not determine whether the events had happened or not. The gospel is a fact whether men decide it is, or not. The gospel originated in a Person (Christ) and in deeds he did which were prophesied long before in "the scriptures." There are *clues* all the way through this epistle to substantiate the proposition that the Corinthians were taking an existential approach to the gospel: (1) their decision to follow certain teachers based on their own feelings, chapter 1; (2) their toying with the idea that the doctrine of the "cross" was foolishness; (3) their inability to accept the idea of "revelation" in human words, chapter 2; (4) their constant infatuation with the spectacular, ego-inflating miraculous gifts, chapters 12-14; (5) their humanistic skepticism concerning the nature of a resurrected body, chapter 15:35ff.

Paul is going to remind them (in chapter 15) of the "gospel which he gospelized" (Gr. *euangelion ho euangelisamen humin*) to them. He is going to remind them "with what word" (Gr. *tini logo*), or "in what form," or "in what terms" he had preached the gospel to them. They had *received* the gospel on the terms (or, "in the form") of its *historicity*. But now they were doubting. Now they were approaching it existentially, subjectively. Their steadfastness in the faith, indeed, their salvation, is conditioned upon their holding fast (Gr. *ei katechete*, if you hold fast) the gospel in the precise terms it was preached to them. Those terms were its *empirical historicity*. Paul reflects that the Corinthians might have believed his initial message of the gospel to them in a haphazard way. The Greek word *eike* is translated "in vain"; it does not mean "without cause" but "without due consideration, rashly, superficially." Did the Corinthians first believe the gospel by some shallow enthusiasm or through some passing fancy for a new thing? Did they not give serious thought when they embraced the gospel? There are people today whose allegiance to Christ has been made without regard to "the terms" or the

form of the gospel. One's emotional attachment to Jesus must be preceded by and controlled by a constant reception of the gospel, mentally, in both its form and its substance. A hasty experiential and existential attachment to Jesus is vulnerable to the vacillation of feelings and circumstances. Such an attachment cannot produce steadfastness nor can it save. It is important to take note of the word "if" in 15:2. Salvation is free—but salvation is conditioned upon man's holding to the gospel in its apostolic form. The Greek word *katechete* means, "to have and to hold as in marriage," "to be affected by, subjected to, to seize, to possess." Man's response to the free gift of salvation demands more than a superficial fancy or whim. It is a life and death commitment; an eternal allegiance.

15:3-4 Empirical: Paul delivered to the Corinthians the *fundamental essence* (Gr. *protois*, "first things") of the gospel. That fundamental essence is the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He wants the Corinthians to remember he preached, and they believed, that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a matter of empirical history. At Corinth Paul "persuaded" and "taught" the gospel a year and a half (Acts 18:1-11). His proof of the gospel was empirical, logical, and historical. This is where the gospel begins. This is its basis. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ happened whether men wish it had or not, whether men decide it has or not. Christ arose whether men love it or despise it, and nothing can ever erase it from history. Men may accept or reject its moral imperatives, but they cannot "feel" it or "decide" it out of existence. In the same way, men "deliberately ignore the fact" of a world-wide flood (II Peter 3:3-7), but they cannot ignore the fossil evidence out of existence.

Our faith in Jesus Christ rests solely on the historicity of his resurrection, for if that is not an empirical fact, everything else he claimed, and is claimed for him, is open to suspicion of deliberate fraud or ignorant mythology. And, whether he rose from the dead or not rests solely upon the authenticity, credibility, and accuracy of the texts of the Bible. The gospel is not true because it works; *it works because it is true!*

Simon Greenleaf (1783-1853), one of the greatest legal minds in U.S. history, former head of the Harvard Law School, set forth the following rules of evidence in his book, *The Testimony of The Evangelists*, pub. Baker Book House, pp. 1-54:

1. The foundation of Christianity is based on facts. These facts are testified to as having occurred within the personal knowledge

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of the Gospel writers. Christianity, then, rests upon the credibility of these witnesses.

2. A proposition of fact is proved, when its truth is established by competent and satisfactory evidence beyond reasonable doubt.
3. In the absence of circumstances which generate suspicion, every witness is to be presumed to be credible, until the contrary is shown . . . The burden of impeaching his credibility lies upon the objector.
4. All witnesses are entitled to the benefit of the axiom that men ordinarily speak the truth (are honest) when they have no prevailing motive or inducement to the contrary.
5. The ability of a witness to speak the truth depends on the opportunities he has had for observing the facts, the accuracy of his powers of observing and the trustworthiness of his memory. The authors of the Gospels can be granted at least the abilities of most human witnesses until the contrary is shown.
6. There must be enough disparity in the number and consistency of the witnesses to show there is no room for collusion, yet enough agreement to show they were independent recorders of the same events.
7. The testimony of the witnesses must conform in general with the experiences of others concerning similar circumstances or subject matter.

The four Gospels are accurate records. Any honest researcher should declare their compliance with the accepted "rules of evidence" unimpeachable. As authentic, competent, credible works of history, the four Gospels are impeccable.

Paul's reference to Christ's death, burial and resurrection, "in accordance with the scriptures" is significant. He means that the fundamental facts of the gospel, the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, were predicted in the Old Testament scriptures. That is a presentation of evidence which can be tested scientifically, or legally, at any time, by anyone who is honest enough to forego personal presuppositions. Prophecies made centuries before their fulfillment, the fulfillment of which is documented in minute detail, and in which factors of their fulfillment is beyond the power of human planning or manipulation, are sufficient evidence to prove the proposition that Jesus is the Christ, or no proposition can ever be proved! Blaise

Pascal, one of the greatest scientific minds of all time, wrote these meaningful words: "The greatest of the proofs of Jesus Christ are the prophecies. They are also what God has most provided for, for the event which has fulfilled them is a miracle of God." The betrayal and trial of Jesus of Nazareth is predicted in Isaiah 53:7; Zech. 11:12-13; 13:7. His death is predicted in Isa. 53:4-9; Zech. 12:10; Ps. 22:16). Even his dying words were foretold (Ps. 22:1ff.; 31:5). His burial in a rich man's tomb was predicted (Isa. 53:9). His resurrection was predicted (see Isa. 53:10-12; Ps. 16:10-11; Acts 2:25-32; 13:33-35). There are over 300 prophecies concerning the Messiah, including the exact village of his birth, the exact year of his birth, the miraculous nature of his birth, all the main events of his life and ministry. If these were not fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth, in whom were they fulfilled?—Alexander the Great? Julius Caesar? Winston Churchill? Most of these prophecies about the Messiah were not fulfilled by the friends of Jesus, nor even by Jesus himself, but by his enemies or disinterested parties! There was no collusion between Jesus and his friends to fulfill these prophecies. The Old Testament canon of scripture was already set and well known by the Jews hundreds of years before Jesus was born and for any man to have changed them or altered them to fit the life of Jesus, after the fact, would have required so many things out of the ordinary in the way of favorable circumstances, miracles would have been demanded. To fulfill these prophecies without supernatural ability to anticipate human behavior and natural circumstances would be impossible! The apostle Peter declares that the fulfillment of prophecy is a surer proof of the deity of Christ and the infallibility of the scriptures than what he had witnessed with his own eyes! (cf. II Peter 1:16-19). This may be why Paul introduced prophetic evidence of Jesus' resurrection before introducing the evidence of eyewitnesses! Jesus expected prophetic evidence to take precedence over what people saw with their eyes (see Luke 24:25ff.)!

15:5-11 Eyewitnessed: Paul appeals to eyewitnessed testimony to establish the fact of the resurrection of Christ. "To establish the historicity of the facts of Christianity, nothing more is demanded than is readily conceded to every branch of human science. Christianity does not profess to convince the perverse and headstrong, to bring irresistible evidence, to vanquish every question. All it professes is to propose such evidence as may satisfy the disciplined, teachable, honest, serious searcher." Simon Greenleaf, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

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The question, therefore, before the Corinthians was, could they believe the testimony of the eyewitnesses named by the apostle Paul: (1) were those people Paul named competent witnesses—were they capable of having seen Jesus crucified, buried, and risen from the dead? were they in a position to have known the facts? were they so credulous they would have believed anything? Their records (the Gospels) candidly portray one another as incredulous, “of little faith,” “unbelieving,” even skeptical; (2) were the eyewitnesses people who would lie? were they honest or dishonest? did they have anything to gain by lying about the events they said they witnessed? did they have anything to gain by fabricating the events recorded in the Gospels? The gospel, in the form they proclaimed it, brought them no power, no riches, no accolades from the mighty—only persecution, slander, poverty and death—yet they went to their death insisting on its historicity; (3) were the eyewitnesses so few as to give reasonable doubt to their testimony? There were the women, the eleven apostles in a group, ten apostles in a group, Peter and James individually, over five hundred brethren at one time, and the guards at the tomb and their superiors (Matt. 28:11-15); (4) was there any empirical, historical, scientific evidence to the contrary? has any evidence come to light for the last two thousand years to contradict the Gospels? did anyone present the dead body of Jesus to prove he had not arisen? did anyone show his dead body in the tomb after the third day of his burial? The surest way for the enemies of Christianity to have destroyed it would have been to present the dead body of Jesus at the time the apostles began to preach his resurrection (Acts 2:1ff.). The only record we have of the response made to the preaching of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (Acts and Epistles of the New Testament) is that the enemies of Christianity slandered, persecuted and killed its proclaimers. The enemies offered not one iota of scientific, historical evidence to refute the gospel. There have been many *theories* over the centuries, suggesting alternatives to accepting Christ’s resurrection as a fact; *but there has been no evidence!* The reader is here urged to add to this a thorough study of *The Gospel of Luke*, by Paul T. Butler, College Press Publishing Company, pp. 476-605.

Finally, Paul lists *himself* as an eyewitness to the fact of Jesus’ resurrection (15:8-11). He was not with the other eleven apostles during the forty days Jesus appeared to them in his resurrected body (Acts 1:3). But Paul *saw* the Lord (Acts 9:27; 26:16, 19; I Cor. 9:1). Jesus appeared to him some years later as he journeyed on

the road to Damascus. If ever there was a person set against the proposition that Jesus of Nazareth arose from the dead it would be Paul (formerly called, Saul of Tarsus)! If ever there was a person who would have demanded visible, empirical evidence before becoming a believer in Jesus, it would have been Paul! He was thoroughly convinced to do everything he could to oppose Jesus of Nazareth and Christianity (see Acts 22:3-5; 26:9-11). In all good conscience, he actually believed he was serving God by opposing Christ and executing Christ's followers (see I Tim. 1:13). If ever there was a person with the best opportunities and capabilities to *prove* that Jesus of Nazareth had *not* arisen from the tomb, it would be Paul! So, how do we account for the greatest enemy Jesus and the Church ever had, becoming the greatest apostle, persuader of others, and missionary the Church ever had? And the list of enemies converted does not stop with Saul of Tarsus (Paul). Three thousand Jews on the Day of Pentecost, some of whom had probably been at Passover, crying, "Crucify him, crucify him," were converted (Acts 2:1ff.). A great company of Hebrew priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7). Some of Caesar's Praetorian Guard probably became Christians (Phil. 1:13) and some of Caesar's own "household" were converted (Phil. 4:22)! If there had been any good evidence to contradict the resurrection of Jesus Christ, some of these people would have *known* it and would have *brought it forward* for the whole world of that day to acknowledge.

Any person today who says Jesus of Nazareth was not raised from the dead is obligated to produce proof. It is the burden of the unbeliever to produce evidence. It must be historical, empirical, scientific evidence. He must produce authentic, accurate, credible eyewitnesses with evidence. Theories will not do! Christians believe on the basis of the written documents of those who saw, heard and touched the resurrected Jesus (I John 1:1-4). The argument is not *whether* a resurrection *could* or *could not* occur. The case in point is, *did* a resurrection occur or *did it not*. The case is not to be resolved philosophically, but historically, legally, on the basis of evidence and testimony. The answer is, YES! beyond any reasonable doubt!

SECTION 2

Its Holiness (15:12-34)

12 Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?

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¹³But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied.

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. ²¹For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. ²²For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall we be made alive. ²³But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ. ²⁴Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom of God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. ²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷"For God has put all things in subjection under his feet." But when it says, "All things are put in subjection under him," it is plain that he is excepted who put all things under him. ²⁸When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things under him, that God may be everything to every one.

²⁹Otherwise, what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized on their behalf? ³⁰Why am I in peril every hour? ³¹I protest, brethren, by my pride in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die every day! ³²What do I gain if, humanly speaking, I fought with beasts at Ephesus? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." ³³Do not be deceived: "Bad company ruins good morals." ³⁴Come to your right mind, and sin no more. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

15:12-19 Cleanses From Defilement: Paul asks, "If I am preaching Christ as raised from the dead, what do some of you expect to gain by saying there is no resurrection for believers?" He proceeds to

answer his own rhetorical question by saying, in essence, "You can't have the hope if you don't have the history!" If Christ was not raised from the dead, then hoping in him for anything else is vain. If Christ is not raised, and if there is no resurrection for those who trust in Christ, then the whole Christian religion is in vain.

First, apostolic preaching would be vain if there is no resurrection. All Christian preaching for two hundred centuries would be vain if Christ is not historically, actually, factually raised from the dead. Why, then, do men who do not believe the historical resurrection of Christ preach the Christian religion? For money (Jesus predicted there would be hirelings, John 10:10-13; Paul predicted there would be some from among the "Christian" religion who would exploit it, Acts 20:29-30); for position or fame—there are those who love the praise of men more than the praise of God. There are some who do not want the moral implications which the historical resurrection of Jesus would force upon them, but they want the "Christian religion" to try to *soften* by euphemistic (but useless) verbiage the cruel, stark, reality of injustices never to be righted, of tribulations and sacrifices never to be repaid or vindicated, to soften the utter defeat of human death. An existential philosopher said, and without the resurrection he is correct, "Life is never more absurd than at the grave." But, hallelujah, because of the fact of the resurrection life is never absurd!

Second, all faith would be void without the resurrection. Faith in God, Christ, the Bible, faith that truth is better than falsehood, faith that goodness and love is to be preferred over evil and hate, faith in today and tomorrow, faith that life is worth living—all is useless if there is no life beyond the grave, no heaven, no eternity, no truth, no God. The apostles were false witnesses, the most despicable charlatans or ignorant dupes who ever lived, if the resurrection of Christ is not historically valid. But are we to believe they have gotten by with such a monstrous hoax, having duped millions of the best minds for almost two millennia? Could what their testimony produced for all these centuries have been produced by the cruelest, most preposterous lie ever perpetrated upon the human race?

Third, and *most crucial*, if Christ has not been raised, those who have believed in him are not forgiven—they are still *in* their sins. The cross, the vicarious, substitutionary atonement of Christ's death, is invalid without the resurrection. The only hope we have that Christ did what he promised to do by the cross is his resurrection (see II Cor.

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1:20; I Peter 1:3-5; Luke 24:44-48). If Christ's promise of atonement for man's sin is not validated by his resurrection from the dead, he is simply another crucified Jew, and his death has not as much efficacy to atone for my sins as an animal sacrifice. Study the sermons of the apostles and evangelists in the book of Acts. They did not wait until the "annual Easter services" to proclaim the resurrection. They never preached the death of Christ without preaching his resurrection! Too much modern preaching is depending upon the sentimentalism aroused by portraying the shocking violence of Jesus' death. The mental decisiveness brought about by the persuading evidence of the resurrection, without which there is no true conversion, is seldom made the focus of either edificatory or evangelistic proclamation. If we are going to restore the church of the New Testament, we must restore the *gospel* of the New Testament!

If Christ is not raised, then those who have "fallen asleep" (died) have *perished*. Are we to believe that all the millions of Christians who have poured out their lives upon the altars of love, usefulness and goodness have *perished* and will not be raised from the dead? That includes some of my very dear ones, and yours! Will faith, and love, and goodness perish, and wickedness, falsehood and dissolution win, after all? Is there no wiping out of defilement? No forgiveness of sin? No vindication of faith? Without the resurrection there is none!

If a man's hope in Christ and his teachings is to be restricted to this life on earth only, he is, of all men, most pitiful. The word *eleeinoterioi*, from the Greek word *eleos* (mercy, pity), is translated in the KJV as "miserable." It means, "to be pitied." If this life is all there is, Christians are pitiful fools to be hoping in Christ. They would be better off to abandon the teachings of Jesus which insist on "counting others better than self," or "turning the other cheek," or "not pleasing oneself, but pleasing one's neighbor, for his good," or giving up one's liberty and rights for the sake of others. If this life is all there is, people would be better off following Buddha or Mohammed, or Darwin or Marx, or no one! Certainly, if there is no resurrection, and Christ is not who he claims he is, and this is all the life there is, those who still maintain allegiance to the Christian faith are either "putting us on" or self-deceived, living in a dream world of their own creation; see Special Study entitled, "On Cloud Nine."

15:20-28 Conquers Dissolution: This is *not* the only life there is! Christ has, in fact, been raised from the dead. He is the "firstfruit" of resurrection from the dead. The Bible record documents the fact

that there were persons resurrected from death, chronologically, before Jesus. In fact, Jesus raised three people (Jairus' daughter; the widow's son at Nain; and Lazarus) before his own resurrection took place. But Paul is not speaking chronologically here, unless he is denoting the uniqueness of Christ's resurrection over those preceding his. All others resurrected from death died again. Their bodies have suffered the same decay and dissolution all other human bodies suffer. But when Jesus rose from the grave, he did not die again. He ascended, after forty days, to heaven in the body which came out of the tomb. The apostles were eye witnesses to this ascension (Acts 1:9-11). From heaven Jesus has appeared to some (Paul, John). But Paul's figure of speech "firstfruit" (Gr. *aparche*, akin to *aparchomai* which means, "to make a beginning") is from Old Testament times. In the Law of Moses the first portion of the harvest was to be given to the Lord as an indication the worshiper understood that *all* the harvest was, in reality, the Lord's (Deut. 26:2-11). Whatever "firstfruit" was, the rest of the harvest was. Christ's resurrection was "firstfruit" of all the dead. Adam was, because of his sin, "firstfruit" of the death of humanity; Christ was, because of his sinlessness, "firstfruit" of the resurrection of humanity. All mankind dies bodily because of Adam's sin; all mankind is to be resurrected bodily because of Christ's victory over sin. That is all Paul is saying here. He is not teaching "original sin" and "total depravity," and he is not teaching "universal salvation." All creation, man and matter, belongs to God. He will resurrect it all. Temporarily, God has subjected all his creation to futility, hoping it will hope, and one day be set free from its bondage to decay (Rom. 8:18-25). But only those who trust Christ as their "firstfruit" will be adopted as sons. *All* of dead humanity will be resurrected, but only those who have trusted Christ will be given eternal life; those who have not trusted Christ will be imprisoned forever in torment (see John 5:25-28; Luke 16:19-31; Rev. 14:9-13; Rev. 20:11-22:5).

"Each in his own order" does not mean there are going to be two or three increments to the resurrection of humanity, separated by time. Paul clears up any misunderstanding about that in his epistle to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 4:13-5:3). When Jesus comes again to resurrect humanity, it will be one complete, final resurrection. No segment of humanity, physically alive or dead, will "precede" the other. Paul uses the Greek word *tagmati* in 15:23 and it is translated "order." *Tagma* is a Greek military term meaning "a rank, a company,

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a group." Paul explains what he means by "order" in the last half of verse 23. Christ's resurrection *rank*s first and is "firstfruit"—then, at his second coming, the *second ranking* resurrection of the whole harvest of humanity, including those who belong to him. It is *rank* of resurrection emphasized, not chronology, to *prove* there will be a second rank because there was a first.

At Christ's coming is the end. The KJV italicizes the word *cometh* in verse 24, indicating it is a supplied word. And that is more to be desired than the RSV translation which is: "Then comes the end. . . ." The Greek text is: *eita to telos*, literally, "then, the end." Christ's second coming and the end are *simultaneous*. God's redemptive program will find its *telos*, its goal, its completion, when Jesus comes to resurrect all the dead. Then will come to an end this world and all its powers. There will be no more pretending powers, no more powers temporarily granted by God to human beings. God alone will exercise sovereignty. All others will be willing servants, or banished, incarcerated enemies. In the meantime the Son reigns until he has established all that God has spoken by the mouths of his prophets (see Acts 3:17-26), both Old and New Testament prophets. The Bible clearly teaches that no human being is going to know when Christ is coming back (see our comments, *The Gospel of Luke*, College Press Publishing Company, pp. 467-519). How long Christ will take to "put all his enemies under his feet," and who those "enemies" are, we do not know. But the fact of his resurrection makes it *certain* that day will come (see Acts 17:30-31). The last "enemy" is death (cf. Rev. 20:9-15). Death will be *abolished* (Gr. *katargeitai*, "destroyed")—it will not exist anymore.

God has subjected this world and all creation to the Son (Christ) (John 5:19-29) in order that the Son might carry out his redemptive and mediatorial work. This work began with his incarnation and continues through his high priesthood (cf. the book of Hebrews). But when the Son finishes this work and returns to consummate redemption and judgment, there will be no more need for mediation. The person of Son will be the person of eternal Father, that God may be everything to every one.

15:29-34 Conserves Decency: Only by the power of faith in the resurrection will man be able to preserve moral goodness. Only those who hope to be welcomed to heaven and become as Jesus is will have the power to desire holiness (I John 3:1-3).

The discussion of the purifying power of the hope of resurrection is begun by questioning the Corinthians on their reason for having

been baptized. The RSV translates: "Otherwise what do people mean by being baptized on behalf of the dead?" The Greek preposition, *hyper*, may be translated either "on behalf of" or "with reference to." In the light of the context, and the following evidence, we believe the second translation is the correct one. The Corinthian Christians were being asked, "If the dead are not actually raised, why are people still becoming Christians and being baptized *with reference to* the resurrection from the dead?"

Some commentators think this verse (15:29) is a reference to an ancient practice among Christians where the living is baptized as a "proxy" on behalf of someone who has already died. Such a ritual is practiced in modern times by a large religious sect. The context is clear that Paul is focusing on the *foolishness* of engaging in any rite or activity that pretends faith in a bodily resurrection which the pretender disbelieved. Second, there is *no documented* practice such as this among Christians of the first century. It would be unlikely that *only Paul* would mention, in *only this one place*, such a radical practice if it were settled doctrine. Third, the most natural understanding of Paul's question would be to associate it with the initial baptism of a Christian believer. A fundamental rule of hermeneutics is to always interpret a passage according to its most natural meaning. Baptism is the action of a believer which confirms his trust in the vicarious death of Christ and the vicarious resurrection of Christ to new life (see Rom. 6:3-5; Gal. 3:26-27; Col. 2:12-13). In faithfulness to Christ's command to be baptized, the believer receives the forgiveness of sins (cf. Acts 22:16; Acts 2:38; I Peter 3:21). If Christ is not raised, and there is no resurrection for those who believe in Christ, baptism as to form and purpose is meaningless. What is the point in being baptized (immersed) "in reference to being dead in sin" if there is no resurrection? Fourth, the Bible teaches that each man is responsible for his own faith and obedience to Christ (cf. Ezek. 18:1-24; 33:1-20; Luke 16:19-31; II Kings 14:6; Deut. 24:16; Jer. 31:30; Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 20:12). The Roman Catholic Church teaches that works of "proxy" may be done by the living for the dead (masses for the dead, prayers for the dead, etc.), but such teaching has no basis in scripture and is rejected by all evangelical Christendom. It is absurd to think that the spiritual, moral choices of one human being would be accepted by God as willingly made by another human being when the second person made no such choices. Fifth, there is only one mediator between God and man, and that

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mediator is Jesus Christ (I Tim. 2:5). Only *he* could accomplish a redemptive deed vicariously (for someone else). To think that this passage teaches the possibility of one human being baptized "by proxy" for another human being, dead or alive, is to fly in the face of the exclusive mediatorship of Jesus Christ. Sixth, to take verse 29 to refer to vicarious baptism being practiced at Corinth but stating that Paul would not have approved of it, is dodging the issue of all five propositions above. To think the practice was going on and that Paul would not renounce such a *crucial contradiction* of apostolic revelation is naive. Baptism by proxy strikes at the very heart of the gospel: "... *you* will die in *your* sins unless *you* believe that I am he" (John 8:24); "... but unless *you* repent *you* will all likewise perish . . ." (Luke 13:3, 4). Had proxy-baptism been a practice at Corinth, Paul would have devoted more than two questions to the issue! If proxy-baptism was widely practiced in the first century church, why is there total silence about it in the writings of the apostle John (John's Gospel, his epistles, and Revelation, were all written near the end of the first century, circa. 95-100 A.D.)?

Already in Paul's day, Christians were being arrested for sedition against the Roman empire and thrown into arenas to be slaughtered by wild beasts. The "fourth seal" opened in the Revelation written by the apostle John predicts the fact that great numbers of human beings would be killed "by wild beasts of the earth" in the struggle between Christ's church and the Roman empire (Rev. 6:7-8). Paul now says (15:30-32), "If there is no resurrection from death, why do I allow myself to be imperiled almost every hour of my life?" Some circumstances of life Paul could not control, of course, but those threats, persecutions and murderous attacks upon his person because he was a Christian missionary (cf. II Cor. 1:8-10; 4:11; 11:23-29) he could have foregone by simply renouncing Christ and the resurrection. Did Paul fight with beasts? This may be simply a figurative expression describing his struggles with "beastly" human beings when he was at Ephesus (cf. Acts 19:23-30). Had Paul literally fought with beasts in the Roman arena it is probable that he would have listed the experience in II Corinthians 11:23-29. It would not be unusual to speak of the enemies of God as "beasts." The prophet Daniel did; John the apostle did (Revelation). John even categorizes all idolatrous heathen who worshiped the Roman emperor as "those with the mark of the beast."

The only logical *alternative* to believing the bodily resurrection and practicing Biblical Christianity is *hedonism*. The religious person who

repudiates the historicity of Christ's bodily resurrection but advocates (and is even willing to endure suffering for) trying to practice the teachings of Jesus is a *fool*! He is either a gullible moron or a masochist! Paul is scrupulously honest in saying, "If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (15:32).

The bodily resurrection from death is *the absolutely crucial doctrine* of Christian faith. Christian theology, Christian evangelism, and Christian ethics are vain without it. Liberal "Christian" theology repudiates the bodily resurrection. As a result liberalism is insipid, powerless and useless (see Special Studies, "On Cloud Nine," and "The Existential/Neo-Orthodox Philosophy of History"). Frighteningly, even some "evangelical" Christianity (the existential-feelings-first kind) dismisses the critical necessity of the bodily resurrection in its proclamation and practice. One of the "new Christian songs" is a classic example. In a popular song by Andrae Crouch, entitled, *If Heaven Never Was Promised to Me*, these are the lyrics:

You may ask me why I serve the Lord,
Is it just for heaven's gain,
Or to walk those mighty streets of gold
and to hear the angels sing?
Is it just to drink from the fountain
That never shall run dry,
Or just to live forever and ever
In that sweet old by and by?

But if heaven never was promised to me,
Neither God's promise to live eternally,
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life,
Livin' in a world of darkness,
He brought me the light.

If there were never any streets of gold,
Neither a land where we'll never grow old;
It's been worth just having the Lord in my life,
Livin' in a world of darkness,
He brought me the light.

Dear reader, this may have a lovely tune, it may have "soul," it may have "the beat," and pragmatically, it may draw crowds of people to a religious concert, but its lyrics deny the very cardinal, focal, fundamental issue Paul addresses in I Corinthians 15! If heaven never was promised to *you*, neither God's promise to live eternally, then *you* are, of all men, most to be pitied if you are practicing the Christian gospel. You should eat and drink, for tomorrow you will die and perish, if there is no resurrection and no heaven. If my hope is "just having the Lord in my life" here, in this existence, I am a fool for thinking I walk in "light"!

If there is no bodily resurrection and heaven, we should be writing "Christian" songs with lyrics like these:

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- a. Brief and powerless is man's life; on him and on his race the slow sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for man condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that enoble his little days. . . .

—Bertrand Russell

- b. Life has become in that total perspective which is philosophy, a fitful pullulation of human insects on the earth, a planetary eczema that may soon be cured; nothing is certain in it except defeat and death—a sleep from which, it seems, there is no awakening. . . .

—Will Durant

- c. In spite of all my desperation to a brave looking optimism, I perceive that now the universe is bored with him (man), is turning a hard face to him, and I see him being carried less and less intelligently and more and more rapidly, suffering as every ill-adapted creature must suffer in gross and detail, along the stream of fate to degradation, suffering and death.

—H.G. Wells

Verses 33 and 34 confirm our comments on 15:12-19. The moral muscle of the gospel rests ultimately in the preaching of the historicity of the bodily resurrection. Paul quotes the Greek poet, Meander. The KJV translates it, “. . . evil communications corrupt good manners.” The RSV translates it, “. . . Bad company ruins good morals.” The Greek word *homiliai*, is the word from which the English words *homiletics* and *homily* come. The word is most often used to mean, “communication, conversation, discourse, talk.” Certainly in this context Paul is talking about some of the Corinthian Christians who were “saying that there is no resurrection.” Evil *preaching* and *teaching* corrupts good morals. And teaching that there is no bodily resurrection is *evil teaching*. The entire second epistle of Peter is a treatise on the fact that false teaching about the Lord Jesus and his deity is the source of the corruption of morality. When Paul wrote “good” morals, he did not use the most common Greek word for “good” which is *agathos*; he used the word *chresta*. *Chresta* means “good” in the sense of “that which is right because it produces good”—practical or useful goodness. The word *chresta* is used by Matthew

in recording Jesus' great invitation, ". . . for my yoke is *easy* (*chresta*, usefully-good)" (Matt. 11:30). Paul says in 15:33, evil, anti-resurrection, preaching is morally impractical. Liberalism is not only philosophically dishonest, it is ethically useless. It is worse than that, it is ethically corrupting! The fundamental cause of human immorality is the repudiation of the gospel facts—specifically, the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the essence of Paul's statement in 15:33-34. Anyone who aspires to search for, defend, and lead mankind to the *truth* must surrender to this! Philosophers, scientists, educators, preachers, lawyers, politicians and artists are under obligation to learn, believe and proclaim the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ as the source of all morality and goodness. Paul called the philosophers at Athens to moral conversion and repentance by the power of the resurrection of Jesus (see Acts 17:30-31).

To sin, in light of the historicity of the resurrection, is insane. Essentially that is what Paul meant by his statement, "Come to your right mind, and sin no more." The Greek word Paul uses is *eknepsate*, is literally, "sober up." He is using it here to exhort the Corinthians to shake off the seductive moral stupor into which they have fallen by believing those who are saying there is no resurrection. False teaching about the resurrection has confounded their mental abilities like drunkenness confounds the brain. They are not thinking *right* (Gr. *dikaïos*, rightly, correctly, truly). First, they are *philosophic schizoprenics*. They are not facing reality. They are repudiating the resurrection and at the same time pretending the Christian faith is valuable. Second, since the resurrection is true, as Paul has logically demonstrated, no matter how much they deny it they are going to face the judgment of God in the next life and to sin in light of this is insanity! Paul has appealed to incontrovertible evidence and irrefutable logic throughout this treatise on the resurrection. Now he *commands* (Gr. *eknepsate* is in the imperative mood) the Corinthians to start thinking as they should. Faulty thinking is a sin! Christians are not permitted the insanity of deliberately ignoring facts (see John 8:31-32; 8:43, 45, 46, 47; II Thess. 2:9-12; II Peter 3:5). Christians must constantly guard against the tendency to subvert clear, logical thinking by the selfish desire to follow feelings and urges of the flesh. Christians are continually urged by the scriptures to set their *minds* on God's word (Rom. 8:5-8; Col. 3:1-4; and Peter urges Christians to "gird up" or put-to-work their "minds" I Peter 1:13). To choose to be a Christian is to choose to apply one's mental processes in conformity to the

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sovereign word of God. To choose to be a Christian is to allow one's every thought to be brought into captivity to obedience of Christ (II Cor. 10:3-4). To choose to be a Christian is to choose to see nothing any more from a human point of view but through the perspective of Christ's constraining love (II Cor. 5:14-21). There is only one hope for changing men's morals into that classified "good" (useful) by God, and that is to persuade them to believe the bodily resurrection.

"For shame to you I am speaking" says Paul (literally, in Greek). They were listening to "some" of those within the congregation who were saying there is no resurrection. Paul is apparently pointing to the anti-resurrectionists when he says, "some" are ignorant of God. Denial of the resurrection, especially by those posing to be Christians, is worse than a shame, it is a tragedy, a spiritual catastrophe!

SECTION 3

Its Heavenliness (15:35-57)

35 But some one will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" 36 You foolish man! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. 38 But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body. 39 For not all flesh is alike, but there is one kind for men, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. 40 There are celestial bodies and there are terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. 41 There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory.

42 So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. 43 It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. 44 It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 Thus it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. 46 But it is not the spiritual which is first but the physical, and then the spiritual. 47 The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. 48 As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the

dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven. ⁵⁰I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

⁵¹Lo! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, ⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. ⁵³For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. ⁵⁴When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

⁵⁵“O death, where is thy victory?

O death, where is thy sting?”

⁵⁶The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. ⁵⁷But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

15:35-41 It Is Manageable: Questions about the mechanics of bodily resurrection have been raised throughout the history of mankind. Alleged absence of observed demonstration of such mechanics has been put forward repeatedly as proof that bodily resurrection is impossible. People want to know how human bodies that have died and returned to dust, have been consumed by fire, or have been eaten by animals or sea-life, which in turn have died and dissolved, may be raised from the dead. How can this be possible?

First, we must accept the revelation of God that he can manage it. “When God reveals, by special enlightenment through his Spirit, things which eye has not seen . . . (I Cor. 2:6-16), it is folly and irreverence to try to prove whether God told the truth. It is unreasonable to expect the scope of human experience and reason to provide the proof of things reaching so far beyond both reason and experience. . . . No method of science or of philosophy can prove some statements which are of central importance in the Bible. . . . These . . . must be accepted upon the authority or reliability of the one who says it is so. . . . The demand that all Bible statements must be discovered by scientific method, proved by rational processes, or confirmed by results in practice, before they can be regarded as authoritative or established truth, is simply a demand that God must not be greater

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than man and must not reveal anything man could not find out for himself with his own closely limited, earthbound senses." (Seth Wilson, in, "Reflections" *Christian Standard*, June 17, 1984).

Second, in the light of all the evidence of resurrection in the "natural" creation surrounding him, it is *foolish* for man to question the manageability of it. Paul uses the Greek word *aphron*, literally, "mindless, without sense." Those who cannot believe in a resurrection of the human body because it dissolves back into dust after death are *not very observant*. The miracle of resurrection occurs every time a seed falls into the ground, dissolves, and produces a new green plant. It is no accident that the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ took place in the Spring season of the earth.

There are two important lessons about resurrection taught in nature. (1) Death is necessary. It is not an obstacle to resurrection. In fact, if there is no death, there will be no resurrection. That which does not die shall never be resurrected (John 12:24-26). Any farmer or gardener knows a seed must "die," rot and dissolve (and yet it is the seed which has the "life" in it) before the new and completely different form of life can be "raised up." (2) The new life from the dead seed is different in form, much more grand, and actually the fulfillment of the purpose of the dormant seed itself. Put a bean seed into the ground and what comes up is a green plant. The plant is from the seed, and inseparably linked to it, but much better and alive, producing. It is significant that Jesus, in the parable of the growing seed (Mark 4:26-29), said that when a farmer plants a seed it produces a plant *of itself* (Gr. *automate*, automatically). The seed is planted in the earth and those two elements together *automate* the new life. If we had never seen the seed-to-earth-to-death-to-different-life process before, and someone said it happens, we would have our doubts. But since God has made it possible for us to see it over, and over, and over again, for us to say we do not believe a resurrection after death is manageable is foolish. We might as well say now, we do not believe a bean plant will grow from a bean seed because it is dead when it is put into the earth. Which of us fully understands the process of bean seed—to bean plant? If God has resurrected plants for centuries, "Why should it be thought a thing incredible that God should raise the dead?" (Acts 26:8)

Third, God is not locked into managing only one kind of body. God has created, as nature well attests, many different kinds of bodies. Scientists know there is such a difference they are able to

tell whether a single cell comes from a human, an animal, a bird, or a fish! How did Paul know this before modern science “discovered” it? Paul knew it directly from the Creator, by revelation. Furthermore, God is not limited to just four or four-million kinds of bodies. He “gives it a body as he has chosen, and to *each kind* of seed its own body.” There is a correspondence between what the body looks like and what the entity inside is like. If we trust God, we will be satisfied with what we look like!

Fourth, there are two major divisions of bodies; there are celestial (heavenly) bodies, and terrestrial (earthly) bodies. Celestial bodies have a different glory, a different purpose, than terrestrial ones. God managed to create and managed to sustain bodies as different in time, space, size and function as the human mind is able to imagine. Since Paul has already listed the terrestrial bodies (15:39), he now delineates the celestial as sun, moon and stars. And each of the celestial bodies are different! And how many stars are there? And God manages each of them! Assuredly, then, God can manage the resurrection of human bodies and even give each human a different body if he wishes!

It is breathtaking to contemplate. God makes bodies to fit the multitudinous differences in the entities inhabiting them! No two snowflakes are alike—no two entities are the same. So is the resurrection of the body. The differences that exist in human personalities here will exist forever in glory. Human personality is not wiped out by disaster and the grave. Human personality goes on in all its uniqueness, even if the earthly body goes back to dust. And, wonder of wonders, God has promised to give that unique human personality a new, different, body to *fit it*, different from all other bodies, but eternal. We *will* know one another in heaven!

We have seen this demonstrated in the Lord Jesus Christ himself, “the firstfruit” of the resurrection from the dead. He was in a different body after his resurrection; yet it was similar to the old body that had died and been buried. It retained some of its old essence while also having new attributes. In its new form it was not subject to the old limitations of time and space—not touched by exhaustion and pain. But he was the same pure, true, loving Jesus. And they recognized him. But bodily he could go through walls of a building, materialize and dematerialize.

15:42-50 It is Mandatory: The destiny of humankind is immortality. The transformation (or, recreation) of a body fitted for

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eternality is, therefore, mandatory. Once again, even the natural order of things tells us the body of this life is *perishable* (Gr. *phthora*, corruptible, decomposable). As the physical body ages, it slows down, weakens, deteriorates. Eventually, and inevitably, it must die and disintegrate. Just like the bean seed, it must rot and decay, *but* one day it will become a new plant, gloriously designed for its eternal existence, imperishable. It is "planted" in the earth in *dishonor* (Gr. *atimia*, valueless, worth nothing) because we have sinned and perverted its created glory. Whatever is good or to be desired in the body of this existence inevitably decays and becomes valueless. God has subjected it to futility and the bondage of decay (Rom. 8:19-23), he brings the whole creation to dishonor, for a purpose. He wants it to "groan" for redemption, (see Gen. 3:17-19; 5:29; Eccl. 1:2ff.). The physical body is "planted" in *weakness* (Gr. *astheneia*, without strength) and will be raised in *power* (Gr. *dunamei*, dynamically, "dynamite"). Men like to boast of the strength of their bodies, yet a tiny, almost invisible, microbe can devastate it and even kill it. The physical limitations of our present bodies are frustrating. But the body God raises after this one is planted will never be ravaged by disease, sickness, pain, time, space, or decomposition. It will suffer no weaknesses!

The human body of this existence is *physical* (Gr. *psuchikon*, natural, "soulish," or psychical). Ray C. Stedman calls it his "earth suit, or time suit."

But this "earth suit" is designed only for this life. It is not designed for anything else. It works fairly well in this life, but something could happen to this "earth suit" while I am talking or walking around. I could fall over and somebody would come along and say, "He's dead!" But it would not be so. I would not be dead. The "earth suit" would have died, but I would be as much alive as I have ever been, and already enjoying the new body, the "heaven suit," the "eternity suit." Paul's argument is, there is a body designed for the heavens, as well as one for the earth. What the apostle is saying throughout this whole chapter is that there is a definite link between the two.

(*Expository Studies in I Corinthians*, by Ray C. Stedman, pub. Word, p. 315)

Man has his "earth suit" from the *first* Adam (the word *Adam*, in Hebrew, means, "man"). Man may have his "heaven suit" from the *last* Adam, Jesus Christ, if man believes him and obeys him. There

are only two Adams; the first Adam and the last Adam, Jesus. The only other person beside Adam to become the *father* of a race is Jesus. Human beings are all sons of the first Adam by physical "soul-ish" procreation; human beings may be sons of the last Adam by spiritual regeneration. Adam, the first man, was made from the *dust* (Gr. *chiokos*, from *cheo*, lit. "to pour," hence, "loose earth or dust"). The first Adam became a living *soul* (Gr. *psuchen*, psyche), the last Adam became a *life-giving spirit* (Gr. *pneuma zoopoion*). What is the difference between soul-life and spirit-life? There must be a difference as Paul is thinking of it here. Soul-life is the animating life. Animals are said to have souls (see Gen. 1:20 where the Hebrew word *nephesh*, "soul" is used for animal life; and Gen. 2:7 where man became a live-soul, *nephesh*). Evidently, the difference between *soul* and *spirit* is that the soul is not an entity which exists apart from the body.

Stedman explains that when God breathed into Adam's body of clay the divine Spirit, the "joining together of spirit and body produced another phenomenon called the 'soul,' the personality." The soul animates the body and allows that body to function. When man sins, and all men sin, God's *Spirit* is quenched and he withdraws and that "soul" and body is condemned to eternal death. That is the destiny of all who have sinned *like* the *first* Adam (and all men have). But, all praise to God, the *last* Adam, Jesus Christ, *became*, by living a perfect, sinless life in the flesh (Rom. 8:1-8; Heb. 2:14-18, etc.) a *life-giving spirit*. Any human being who wants, may now be reborn a spiritual being, by faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. That is what Peter means in I Peter 1:3-9; what Paul means in II Corinthians 5:1-21. Without Christ's vicarious atonement, without his conquest of sin and death, in the flesh, without his resurrection as "first fruit" from the dead, there would be no resurrection for any man for there would be no *spiritual rebirth* possible. This passage casts great light upon all that is taught in the scriptures about the necessity of the new birth and indwelling presence of the Spirit of Christ (the Holy Spirit). Do not fail to notice that Paul calls Jesus the *last* (Gr. *eschatos*) Adam. There is no redeemer of mankind yet to come. Those who do not join the "race" fathered by Jesus Christ, by being born again, will not see eternal life. They will be resurrected to eternal death as offspring *only* of the *first* Adam.

In man's experience it is the *physical*, natural order (Gr. *psuchikon* "soul-ish" body) first, and the *spiritual* (Gr. *pneumatikon*, spiritual

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body) afterward (Gr. *epeita*). The destiny of soul will also be the destiny of body (I Thess. 5:23-24). If the soul of man has been sanctified by the recreation of God's Spirit within him, then the spirit and soul and body will be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ!

The soul-spirit is separated from the body for a little while at the time of physical death. The soul-spirit returns to God who gave it and the body returns to the dust of the earth (Eccl. 12:7). But the nature of your soul-spirit determines what the nature of your resurrected body will be. The corruptible body is put aside in the grave, but it will be raised incorruptible if it has, in the course of this life, been the temporary residence of a Spirit that is incorruptible—the Spirit of Christ. If, therefore, you would like one day to bear the *image* (Gr. *eikona*, icon) of the heavenly body, you must possess the heavenly life now. What must be happening is the will of God being lived out in your life now, on earth, as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10).

All of the foregoing Paul has said to substantiate the divine fiat, “. . . Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of heaven!” Beyond the grave, only that which is spiritual (heavenly) can enter heaven. What is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15). All the trappings of this life, fame, money, physical beauty, self-righteousness, can never survive the grave. They rot along with the physical body. God does not want them—will not have them! He has something far better for those who trust him. Nothing in this world has any value, in itself, in the sight of God. Only as it enobles the spiritual in man is it to last beyond our funerals. Flesh and blood cannot do anything of value in the kingdom of God. This is what shocked Nicodemus when Jesus told him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, (or from above), he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5). All those descended from the first Adam, who have sinned as he did (and all have), must start all over again. They must be *born* again. They must be born of water (baptism, an expression of our penitent, receiving, faith) and the Spirit (the grace of God shed abroad in our hearts), (John 3:5).

15:51-57 It is The Mark (Goal): The “mystery” (actually, the gospel is very often called the “mystery” Eph. 1:7-10; Col. 1:24-27) is *not* that “we shall not all sleep,” but that “we shall all be changed.” He goes ahead and explains, the “mystery” is the dead being raised “imperishable.” The Greek word used here for “changed” is not *metamorphou* (or, metamorphosis, transformation), but *allagesometha*

from *allasso*, meaning, "made to be *other* than it is." The change will be complete. The word is also used of the final change of the material creation (Heb. 1:12). This is the goal of God for all who believe in his Son, Jesus Christ.

This change, upon the bodily form of all humanity occurs at Christ's second coming—"at the last trumpet." Some will not "be asleep" (dead) at that time—some will still be living in this existence. It is to occur *in a moment* (Gr. *en atomo*, English, *atomic*, minute); in the "twinkling of an eye" (Gr. *en hripe*, in a glance) refers to the twinkle of light that occurs when you blink. It is one of the fastest speeds known to human observation. It will be instantaneous—it will be a miracle. God will be in a hurry to give his saints what Christ has earned for them and that for which they have "kept the faith."

The Greek word *dei*, beginning the sentence in verse 53, emphasizes that this change *must* occur. This mortal nature *must* put on immortality because "Death is swallowed up in victory!" Those who have believed that Christ has defeated death must not be imprisoned again in a state of corruption, held bondage by the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). They must not have their abiding place any more in a body that is dying, afraid of death, and testifies of death. Death and Hades are to be thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, forever banished from the believer's presence (Rev. 20:14). There is a sting to death. The very nature of our physical life (its nature that is doomed to destruction) makes death sting. Even in full view of Christ's victory over death, we still wince at it. We shudder at its appearance because it is an unknowable quotient. It is something over which we have no control—it is inexorable, inevitable. We fear it because of our sin in the light of God's absolute law. But the glad tidings, coming from the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ, are, *the power of sin is broken*. It no longer has dominion over us (Rom. 6:14; 8:2; 7:6; 5:17, 19). Thanks be to God who *is giving* (Gr. *didonti*, present tense verb, "continuing to give") us the victory over our corruptible "man" through our Lord Jesus Christ. There is nothing more precious in the whole scheme of redemption than this promise that every day the Christian can lay hold afresh of the *grace* of Jesus Christ. Every day, though reminded of the weakness and mortality of the flesh by his faults and failures, the Christian can grasp by faith, again, the renewing and refreshing power of his immortality imputed to him by Christ. The victorious life is God's goal or mark for all men. Sin is the life of defeat. Sin is missing God's mark because the life

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of sin bears the image of the man of dust, doomed to corruption and eternal death.

SECTION 4

Its Helpfulness (15:58)

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

15:58a In Steadfastness: What a helpful, practical, glorious conclusion. Who said Christianity is impractical? Why else would anyone have any desire to be steadfast and immovable in this life? What other philosophy would produce stability in this life? Only the perspective based on the historical resurrection of Jesus Christ will do that! Paul uses the Greek words *hedraioi* and *ametakineto*; they are translated, "steadfast" and "immovable," respectively. *Hedraioi* means "seated, settled-in, fixed"; it is used to form one of our English suffixes e.g. "tetra*hedron*" denoting a crystal having a specific number of facets or surfaces. It also forms the second half of the English word "cathedral" which also means, "seated above." Christians have the power of the resurrection to help them live stable, fixed, settled lives. *Ametakineto* means "motionless, unexcitable, not given to passion." Part of the word, *kineto*, is the word from which the English words *kinetic*, *kinematics*, *kinescope* come. These English words all have to do with "motion." The alpha-privative and the prepositional-prefix, *ameta*, would cause the word to be translated, "absolutely, completely, immovable." The only way to be steadfast and immovable in this world of dissolution and mortality is to believe the resurrection! The resurrection is the key-stone of the arch supporting moral immovability in the storm of temptation.

15:58b In Service: The resurrection is the impetus for *abounding* in the *work* of the Lord. Preaching is work! Evangelism is work! Shepherding the flock is work! Teaching the saints is work! Learning God's Word is work! Loving is work! Being a "good Samaritan" is work! Believing is work (John 6:29); repenting is work (Rev. 2:5). To be a Christian a person must exhaust himself, his talents, his resources, his time, his soul and his body in the work of the Lord, (see Eph. 4:12; II Thess. 1:11; II Tim. 4:5; John 9:4). Let's face it,

there are times when the devil will tempt us to perceive doing the will of God is a *chore*, or worse, *repressive* and *futile*. Even Jesus cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." But Jesus, in his moments of temptation to depression "offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him out of death, and he was heard for his godly fear" (Heb. 5:7). Jesus did the work of God through the power of trusting in the resurrection!

15:58c In Security: There is nothing which will bring to the human soul the feeling of security and satisfaction as completely as the knowledge that one's *labor is not in vain!* So very much of everything written, painted, built, said, done, applauded, acquired, attained in this world is doomed to disappear. Only that which has been done in the name of Christ will be transferable (in different form) into the kingdom of God to come (heaven). Everything else has perished, is perishing, or shall perish. "Vanity of vanity, all is vanity" (Eccl. 1:2). The Christian whose hope is in the resurrection is the only person in this world who can find true, complete, abiding satisfaction and fulfillment. His labor is not in vain in the Lord. When he passes from this life to the next, his works follow with him (Rev. 14:13). If a man believes in God and his Son, his prayers and alms go up before God as a "memorial" (Acts 10:4). Every act of kindness in the name of Jesus and for his sake (even a cup of cold water) is remembered and will be rewarded by the Lord (Matt. 25:31-46). So, let us lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21) where they are eternally secure and fulfilling.

APPLICATIONS:

1. The gospel gives salvation only to those who "hold it fast"—God's offer of salvation is free, but conditioned on loyalty.
2. The *facts* of the gospel are important *first*—even *before* what we feel about it, or before its usefulness.
3. The *terms* in which the gospel is to be preached are objective, not subjective. It is history not autonomous human decisiveness.
4. Proof of the historicity of Christ's resurrection follows all the canons of legal, scientific evidence—can you name them?
5. There is significance to Paul's listing of himself as a witness to the bodily resurrection of Christ—what is it? Does it convince you? Would it convince others? A Jew?
6. What do you think of the moral honesty of those who deny the

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bodily resurrection of Christ and still want to practice Christianity? Would you?

7. What kind of life would you live if you did not believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead? Why?
8. Would you like to be baptized for someone who is dead? Would you be able to trust a God who allowed righteousness "by proxy"?
9. How often is the resurrection of Christ preached and taught at your congregation?
10. Do you see liberalism and modernism (now, it is neo-orthodoxy) as "corrupting good morals"?
11. Are you resigned to the fact, as nature teaches, that there is no new life unless death comes first? Has it been easy to be reconciled to the inevitability of death?
12. What kind of body do you think you will have in eternity?
13. Do you expect to recognize in eternity people you have known here? Why? How?
14. What of this life are you expecting to take with you to heaven?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What was the "form" of the apostolic gospel proclamation?
2. Why does Paul say Christ died, was buried and arose, all *according to* the scriptures? What scriptures?
3. What evidence is offered by those who deny the resurrection of Christ? How do they explain the gospel accounts of it?
4. How many "enemies" of early Christianity became advocates of it? Why?
5. Why are we still in our sins if Christ has not been raised from the dead?
6. Why are men to be pitied if they have hoped in Christ only for this life?
7. Isn't there some value in practicing Christianity even if Christ was never raised from the dead?
8. Why is Christ "firstfruit" of the dead? Which dead?
9. What is "baptism for the dead"? Is it practiced today—by whom?
10. Why are people who are sinning *not* in their right minds?
11. Why do men say, "How are the dead raised"?
12. What is the answer?
13. What is the difference between the *first* Adam and the *last* Adam?
14. Why can't flesh and blood inherit the kingdom of God?
15. What difference does believing in the resurrection make in how we feel about Christian works?

Special Study

ON CLOUD NINE

“Man, you are really out there on cloud nine!” This is one of the favorite “slanguage” expressions used by some to categorize ideas which they believe to be unrealistic, unreasonable and irrational. Over the years liberal theologians and liberal preachers have built up and bowled over their straw-men of conservative-Christianity. They have relegated all fundamental, historical views of the Bible, God, Christ, man, conversion and the church to “cloud nine.” Conservative Christianity, they say, is too much concerned with doctrines to be realistic or relevant.

We believe that the opposite is true. We believe that liberalism (even in its latest form—Neo-orthodoxy) is “out there on cloud nine.” We believe that history, reason, experience and revelation all combine to prove that liberal theology is unrealistic and irrelevant.

Both the apostles Peter and Jude state unequivocally that any theology which denies that the written record contained in the Bible is a God-breathed, historically infallible, revelation of the supernatural redemption in Christ is “cloud nineism.” Any such theology is like a cloud without water . . . it is unrealistic and irrelevant. II Peter 2:17-21, “These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved. For, uttering great swelling words of vanity, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by lasciviousness, those who are just escaping from them that live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the last state is become worse with them than the first. For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” Jude 11-13, “Woe unto them! for they went in the way of Cain, and ran riotously in the error of Balaam for hire, and perished in the gainsaying of Korah. These are they who are hidden rocks in your love-feasts when they feast with you, shepherds that without fear feed themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds, autumn trees without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the root; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever.”

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It is unrealistic to attempt a complete rebuttal of liberalism in so brief an essay. Nevertheless, the following outline will hopefully produce enough light to show the irrelevancies and irreparable weaknesses of an unrealistic liberal theology.

Antecedents of Liberalism

1. *Rationalism*: Rationalism had its modern birth as reaction against the extreme dogmatism, anti-intellectualism and authoritarianism of the medieval Roman Catholic Church. This philosophical revolution brought about the Renaissance with its extreme swing to rationalism and freedom from all authority. This resulted in the "autonomous man." Man's ability to reason became the sole criteria of judging a thing to be true or valuable. All that is non-conceptual, or empirically non-repeatable is untrue, according to rationalism.

2. *Materialism or Empiricism*: Materialism or Empiricism says that all we can know is sensory knowledge or all that is, is matter. It denies the supernatural . . . it denies miracles and arbitrarily assigns them to the realm of superstition; it denies spirit. Man becomes a creature and captive of environmental influences and may be conditioned or manipulated by empirical stimuli. This philosophy is far from being dead. Behavioristic psychology is founded upon it. It is being taught in the majority of our state colleges and universities.

3. *Evolutionism*: All life originated by chemical processes . . . that which is organic came from inorganic. This is the only recourse for man in explaining his being and the universe when he refuses to have God in his knowledge—he can only worship the creature and the created if he rejects the Creator. Evolution is irrational, unscientific, unrealistic. It creates hundreds of unanswerable questions, problems and inconsistencies. Evolution solves no real problems and answers no real questions! Evolutionism did not start with Charles Darwin. It started as far back as the ancient Greeks, Aristotle, Democritus and perhaps even earlier (cf. Romans 1).

4. *Scientism*: "It seemed that science was always proved right and religion wrong. The idea began to arise that science could solve all of man's problems, that it was only ignorance and inertia, particularly the ignorance and inertia of the Churches, which were holding back the forward march of science, the new savior."¹

1. *A Layman's Guide to Protestant Theology*, by Wm. Hordern, p. 47.

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This is scientism, the worship of science. Science became the sacred cow! Natural law (which is only man's description of what he has observed) became God!

Nietzsche, the German philosopher, said, "God is dead!" With such a "philosophical annihilation" of God came the death of all moral standards and out of Nietzsche's teachings came Nazi Germany under his most infamous disciple—Adolf Hitler.

5. *Humanism*: "Scientific Humanism is the doctrine that men, through the use of intelligence, directing the institutions of democratic government, can create for themselves, without aid from supernatural powers, a rational civilization in which each person enjoys security and finds cultural outlets for whatever normal human capacities and creative energies he possesses."² Without a supernatural standard just who is going to decide what are the "normal human capacities" and the "creative energies," who is going to decide what "security" is and who is going to decide between "cultural outlets" and non-cultural outlets? With only relativistic standards society must ultimately either become completely subjected to dictatorship of the most powerful or it must end in chaotic anarchism.

Humanism is an unrealistic "optimism in man's ability to provide for himself all that is needed to have a life that is consistent with his being." All this actually results in determinism and mechanistic materialism or anarchism, and neither determinism nor anarchism is freedom!

6. *Subjectivism*: Some humanistic theologians found such strict materialistic and animalistic views to be inconsistent with man's real nature. Materialism led only to an incoherent, unrealistic outlook and practice of life. So the theologians, acceding to the so-called scientific destruction of the historical accuracy of the Bible, attempted to base religion on subjective feeling alone . . . value and truth was to be felt and not arrived at from the facts.

They said science knows that the Bible is untrue, but that has nothing to do with truth . . . for truth or value has to be felt! And although the Bible is inaccurate and full of superstition, God can speak to us through it.

"In Schleiermacher religion found an answer to many of the problems of his age. For one thing religion was made independent of

2. *Living Issues of Philosophy*, by H. H. Titus, p. 216.

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philosophy and science. Religion, based on the individual's personal experience, had a realm of its own; it was its own proof; it bore its own validity. Furthermore, the center of religion is shifted from the Bible to the heart of the believer. Biblical criticism cannot harm Christianity, for the heart of the Bible message is that which it speaks to the individual, and it speaks even more clearly because the critics have enabled us to understand it."³ Could there be any philosophy more unrealistic, unscientific, unreasonable?!

And so, modern liberalism in the form of existential neo-orthodoxy, seeking to reconcile "lies" as truth, seeking to get answers from a book they admit is full of error, is more unrealistic and incoherent than all its predecessors!

Results

1. *Agnosticism*: Unbelief—no eternal verities or values. Truth is "becoming" . . . man is making truth as he experiments. Truth is created pragmatically. That is, if an action works it is true; if not, false.

But again, who's to be the judge as to its workability? What's workable for one may not be for all, or, what's workable today may not be tomorrow.

If man is the result of accidental inorganic chemical clashes, if God is dead, if there is no truth except what is rational and empirical, then there is nothing eternal and nothing valuable but animalistic satisfaction of the flesh!

2. *Socialism*: The governments of men become the Beneficent Father . . . the Savior of the race. Men's philosophies (outlook on life) permeate every avenue of their existence. Religious philosophy and political philosophy cannot be separated. You cannot compartmentalize life! All that you think affects your whole life. Religious liberalism has brought on political liberalism and socialism. It has placed *worshipful* emphasis on material results in the assumption that a particular standard of living brings "salvation" and governmental paternalism brings the "kingdom of God" upon earth. Statement after statement by the liberals to this effect may be found in the little book, so vehemently denounced by the religious liberals themselves, *None Dare Call It Treason*.

3. Hordern, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

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All the evils of immorality, greed, kick-back, favoritism, paternalism, waste, exploitation in big government are a direct result of the religious philosophy of liberalism which says man himself and his material well-being . . . is heaven: the philosophical or political method of bringing this about is their "God."

3. *Immorality*: If there are no eternal values, no God, no hereafter, how can there be any morality? All good is relative only to individual desires or the desires of one who can, by force, control thoughts and deeds through fear or brain-washing. This is why we have "sun, suds and sex" on the Florida beaches. This is why we have cheating on television quiz shows. This is why we have more divorce and adultery than ever before. A liberalism which says there is no God, no true Bible, no heaven, no hell, that a great society may be built without them is "cloud nineism"! Such a philosophy is unrealistic, irresponsible, demonical!

4. *War*: The liberal theological schools of Germany taught philosophies which spawned Marx, Lenin, Hitler and many of the present and past leaders of American education and politics. When there is no God and when the Bible is renounced as merely the invention of ignorant, fallible men, then all values are relative. The values of a man like Hitler become relative to building the Third Reich. Marx's values were relative to the glorification of the State. Liberal theology breeds greed, lust for power, prejudice, exploitation of humanity, and war.

5. *Eclecticism*: Syncretism in religion, ecumenism of the World Council of Churches, one world governmentalism is another result. Liberalism reduces Christ to a mere human in whom may be found the highest human attainment of what is good and right. Christ becomes a mere teacher of ethics . . . simply another religious philosopher or prophet like Mohammed, Buddha, or Confucius. Such a religious philosophy absorbs all which is supposed to be good and valuable from each of the "great" world religions. How can truth, *absolute truth* (that is what Christianity claims to be), absorb that which is not true either historically or pragmatically? Christianity and all other religions are diametrically opposed.

It is totally unrealistic to build one's religious beliefs and philosophy of life upon a conglomeration of teachings which are contradictory! Pessimism or a schizophrenic fear and anxiety follows from such a "mixed up" religion.

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This pessimism and anxiety is not only evident by the living of many people today, but it is stated in our songs, art, literature, and contemporary philosophers.

History and reason demonstrate that liberalism, anti-supernaturalism and unbelief are responsible for our sensual, schizophrenic, suicidal society!

Peace, joy and fruitfulness which are absolutely necessary for a balanced life are all based upon trust and faith and a coherent philosophy of life. The only coherent philosophy of life is one that is centered on and saturated with the love of God demonstrated in history in Christ (God Incarnate) and experienced by a personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit as He lives in men through His Word!

Yes, liberal theology is unrealistic. It is worse than that! It is ungodly, impotent and damning!

Answers

1. *Know the truth:* Every Christian must know why and what he believes. The study of evidences for belief in Christ must not be reserved for only a few of the so-called "theologians." The apostles and Christians of the first century made this the bed-rock basis of all they believed, taught and practiced. Every sermon recorded in Acts is built upon historical evidence for the deity of Jesus Christ.

All of life's motivations have their origins in either truth or lie. If we desire to move men to live true to God's purpose for them we must know God's truth and why it is true, and be able to present it to others. Parents should be teaching their children NOW why they believe. Men and women should be steeping their own minds and hearts in evidences for belief.

2. *Preach the truth:* Let the church and Christians be more concerned with revealed truth than with programs. Let the church be more concerned with regenerating the hearts of individuals by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Word rather than with social reform or raising living standards, and the slums will disappear. Let the church and Christian people have the courage to preach the truth with their lives. Let them live up to what they teach in their Sunday School classes on Sunday, letting Christ live His life in them, and racial injustice will cease.

3. *Pray daily:* We do not really believe in prayer per se as the psychologists do for a "release" but we believe in the Lord Jesus who

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promised to answer prayer. But we really do not act like we believe in the Lord who promised or we would pray more! It is the Lord's will that truth be victorious over lie . . . liberalism is a lie, pray that it may be defeated on every hand.

4. *Send laborers*: Support colleges and churches which train men and women to declare the truth. I never cease to be amazed at parents who look down their noses at the Bible Colleges. They act as if life consists in just a living. And of course, in order to learn how to make a living one must go to a college where atheistic, Communistic, immoral teachers teach infidelic philosophies. God have mercy upon us.

5. *Warn people*: Romans 16 tells us to "mark those who cause divisions and disputings among us." The Scriptures are emphatic in their exhortations to warn people, to point out *by name and doctrine* those who are contrary to revealed truth. John says that the only way we know the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error is to compare all that is taught with what the apostles recorded in the New Testament.

LIBERALISM IS CLOUD NINEISM. IT IS UNREALISTIC IN:

1. *Its approach to or view of God*. Nature proves God exists. Men must deny reason to deny the *facts* connected with the revelation of God in Christ.

2. *Its view of man*. Man is more than flesh and bone. Man is a spirit . . . he is a person. But not if the liberal view is to be accepted.

3. *Its view of sin*. Sin is more than the unfortunate conditioning of an unfortunate environment. Sin is of the will, and of the heart regardless of ones environment.

4. *Its view or approach to salvation*. It has no supernatural power. Why strive for social improvement if there are no eternal verities, no Almighty Judge, etc.

5. *It is even unrealistic in its view of social reform*: Without divine power of regeneration there is no lasting social reform.

Any religion that does not answer the human predicament is worse than useless. Death, and the sin which causes it, is the human predicament. There have been many religious and metaphysical theories for its cure, but only one way of fact! This was when God entered history, time, and space, and said, "This is what I have done with sin and with death . . . I punish sin upon the cross in My Son . . . I conquer death in the resurrection of My Son from the tomb."

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Purposes

(Why bother with a polemic against Liberalism?)

1. *Men are lost in it.* There is futility and hopelessness in this life without Christ. There is no hope of eternal life in a Christless Liberalism.

2. *Men and women are seeking to be loosed from its tyranny.* Many people thirst for the historical Christianity. People are beginning to awake to the tyranny and hopelessness of Liberalism. Many unbelievers use the unrealistic and contradictory nature of Liberal Christianity to scoff at all religion. They do not know there is a real Christianity of fact and life in the Holy Spirit.

3. *We have the power.* What has been said before is sufficient to show that the battle is basically a battle of ideas. What we believe will ultimately control and direct what we do. Paul says, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh (for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but mighty before God to the casting down of strongholds); casting down imaginations, and every high thing that is exalted against the knowledge of God, and bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ"; (II Cor. 10:3-5). Peter points out that through a knowledge of Christ we have granted unto us the divine power of God which gives us all things that pertain to and are relevant for life and godliness, (II Peter 1:3-4).

Christianity is more than a way of life. It is the only coherent, consistent, realistic and relevant life possible! The divinely inspired Christianity of the New Testament in all its pristine purity is intensely practical. It is intensely relevant and contemporary to all men in every situation and forevermore. But it is all of this only if it is historically and infallibly true. It is true! Its truth makes all other philosophies of life inconsistent, irrelevant, powerless and untrue. The most insane, incoherent, schizophrenic existence that man can bring upon himself is to attempt to live a coherent life which is based upon an incoherent philosophy. Any philosophy of the universe and man's purpose and destiny which is bereft of divinely revealed truth is powerless and insane. Paul says that the power and relevance of Christianity is due to its divine truthfulness and this divine truthfulness was demonstrated when God intervened in time and space and history and by the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ showing that the supernatural is just as real, if not more real, than the natural.

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Hear, then, the conclusion: "Wherefore my beloved brethren be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord for ye know that your labors are not in vain in the Lord" (I Cor. 15:58).

Special Study

THE EXISTENTIAL / NEO-ORTHODOX PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

An attempt will be made, in this comparatively brief study, to focus on the Neo-Orthodox / Existential philosophy of history. To this end we shall endeavor to show a few of the antecedent influences leading to this particular view of history; a definition of this philosophy of history; results of this philosophy of history. Basic to an understanding of any aspect of the Existential theology (if indeed it may be called a theology) is recognition of its reactionism toward a religion that presents itself to man's reason for verification. The Crisis theology is also a reaction against what its adherents call, "immanentism." To them the orthodox theology of a God revealing Himself in the realm of the phenomenal (ordinary history) means an immanentistic, pantheistic theology and restricts God. It claims to be an enemy of rationalism but in our opinion it enthrones rationalism more authoritatively than any of the rationalists and restricts God as orthodoxy could never do. Their constant demand is for a "wholly Other" God—beyond the realm of reasonableness and human history and in so doing they make man's emotions the exclusive point of contact with a God that, by their own declaration, cannot be contacted.

By their arbitrary, authoritarian and dogmatic postulate that a revelation from God is not verifiable by the logical processes of man they have enthroned their "inability to know" which is really enthroning rationalism. Basically, Existentialism is nothing more than a modified agnosticism all dressed up in the robes of religious terminology.

We hope, in all fairness, that we have represented their position correctly. With our background of orthodoxy and ordinary view of history it has not been easy to follow their thinking to clear conclusions.

Antecedents

The antecedents of the existential philosophy of history may be traced back with certainty to Immanuel Kant and other rationalistic philosophers, and perhaps even further back into the age of Platonism. But we shall not go beyond Kant. We feel rather reluctant to criticize Kant; considering our very brief acquaintance with his work, but it is necessary to do so to see his influences upon modern theological

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trends. We therefore accept the interpretations of other writers concerning his epistemological and metaphysical presuppositions. The educational background of Barth (German school of rationalism) and the ethnic relationship of Barth and Kant (both German) lead us to believe that Kant had a strong influence upon Barth's theology.

There is no doubt that Kant's ideas concerning the way man arrives at and interprets his natural experiences contain some truth. But when it comes to the metaphysical (that which is beyond the natural) Kant becomes an agnostic. He maintains that metaphysical knowledge about the general characteristics of reality is *impossible* to attain. If we seek inside ourselves for what is the Cause (caps mine) of, or the basis of, our mental machinery of forms and categories, we are unable to discover anything. Similarly, when we try to move beyond the phenomenal world (ordinary history), to the realm of "things-in-themselves" (brute fact), we are again unable to discover the Cause.

Kant believes that "the difficulty which prevents us from developing any metaphysical knowledge is that we have no way of determining if our mental apparatus is applicable to anything beyond the world of possible experience, the phenomenal world. We possess no concepts, no forms of intuition, no logical schema, that we have any reason to believe apply to the Self, or to the 'things-in-themselves', the real objects that may exist beyond the world of appearance."¹ Thus Immanuel Kant arbitrarily decides that God, if there is a God, could not reveal Himself to man for man has no way of categorizing or understanding that which is beyond the phenomenal (brute fact). Either this or Kant believes that God has not the ability to communicate the noumenal (that is, non-empirical world) through the phenomenal.

Kant further posited that "our logical forms and our categories are organizing principles . . . which allow us to acquire *a priori* knowledge about the world of appearance," but ". . . cannot be extended to tell us about a possible transempirical world, unless we could discover some means of determining whether the metaphysical realm can and must be thought of in the same way as the phenomenal one."² In other words, our own reason becomes the criteria of judgment as to whether God is able to reveal Himself to man in man's own categories or not.

1. *Philosophy Made Simple*, Popkin & Stroll, Doubleday & Co., Inc., p. 97.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 98.

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There is that element of truth within Kant's philosophy that ought to be appreciated. It is true in a certain sense that man could not know God by reason alone nor through his experience with the world about him. But that does not preclude the possibility of God revealing Himself to man in man's categories to a degree sufficient for man to accept by faith what is unknowable but revealed. It appears that Kant has written revelation off as impossible simply by making his own reason the judge. And thus Kant gives to the existentialists the first faint echoes of the necessity for the "wholly Other" God and the autonomous man.

Dialecticism is the other important antecedent with the Crisis theologians. This form of rationalism had its beginnings in Plato but Hegel is responsible for organizing the dialectical philosophy into its influential position among philosophers. The dialectic proceeds: All change, especially historical change, takes place in accordance with the law of the dialectic: a thesis is produced, it develops an opposition (its antithesis), a conflict between them ensues, and the conflict is resolved into a synthesis which include both thesis and antithesis. "Hegel believed that in discovering the dialectic he had discovered a *necessary law* of nature."³ Men and nations are merely pawns of historical necessity—it is really the dialectic which controls the course of events. Hegel's philosophy is very near pure pantheism. His "Absolute Mind" (God) becomes the real universe, manifesting itself outwardly as world history, and inwardly as the rational dialectical process, "marching toward full self-realization."

For Hegel the historical process proceeds from level to level through the dialectic movement from thesis to antithesis to synthesis. All change, all thinking and all life proceed from affirmation to denial, or from claim to counter claim to a new integration which later develops a new opposition. Development takes place in "Waltz-time"—"One, two, three; one, two, three."

Hegel holds that fundamental principles of law, morality, and social institutions of art, religion, and philosophy are connecting stages in the logical evolution of the rational will. The dialectical movement of progress through conflict runs through everything he wrote. This dialectical movement is observable in things and in thought, in the human mind and in all history. His idea of conflict is very apparently carried over into the existential ideas of negation and

3. *Ibid.*, p. 65.

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crisis. To Hegel, the "Absolute" was the sum total of all things in their development—it was reason itself, it was Mind, and it was the metaphysical definition of God.

Kierkegaard, father of existentialism, was influenced by the Kantian epistemology and the Hegelian dialectic. Kierkegaard vehemently opposes Hegel's "System" and pretends to set off his forms of dialecticism in sharp distinction from those of Hegel. But SK is a dialecticist, nevertheless. Both Hegel and SK deny that all facts are under the control of the logic of an antecedent God. "With respect to the theologian's (SK's) concept of God as an eternal and unchanging Being, we can see that it would be logically impossible for God to be part of the historical world. By definition, no historical or temporal properties apply to God. If one believed that God existed in time, that God was able to act in human historical situations, one would be believing something that is logically absurd."⁴

God cannot make Himself known. Man cannot reach God from any point in history. Yet man must contact God. Thus we have the dialectical conflict and we must take the irrational leap trying to reach the synthesis. The Unknown is a torment to man—yet it is also an incitement. "God is the wholly Unknown, yet Reason may prepare for His coming."⁵ As one writer has said, Kierkegaard has "improved on Kant's concept of correlativity and Hegel's concept of mediation (both assumed that phenomenal logic and fact are independent of God) by making timeless logic more timeless, by making brute fact more brute, and by developing new speeds for the shuttle train service (SK's "Inwardness" and "Leap") between them,"⁶ (parentheses mine). Both SK and Hegel reject the Christian concept of a self-sufficient God—both reject the idea of the counsel of God, according to which history is simply, what it is. Such concepts to them destroy true "inwardness" and require men to accept that which is alien to them because it is above them. History as the Christian knows it petrifies subjectivity according to these theologians. Objective proof is taken to be an enemy of true faith because it claims to deal with certainties and finished quantities. But the true subjective thinker, the dialecticist, is constantly occupied in striving—seeking the conflict or arriving at the Crisis. Finality at any point must at all costs be

4. *Ibid.*, p. 188.

5. *The New Modernism*, by C. Van Til, Presbyterian & Reformed Pub. Co., Phila., Penna., p. 61.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 62

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avoided. "Dialecticism is irrationalistic in its assumption of "brute fact" and rationalistic in its virtual ascription of legislative power to the human mind over the whole field of possibility (dialectical process),"⁷ (parentheses mine).

In his commentary on Romans, Barth simply carries on where Kierkegaard left off in the dialectic. According to Barth, every attempt to come to God directly by means of ordinary history must be condemned. The relation of man to God must be dialectical subjectivity. Truth is to be found by "inwardness." Unable to find universality (reality) by means of external history, Barth's Individual finds it in himself by means of "inwardness." The Individual is said to be dependent on nothing outside himself. The Individual which disowns all rationality and universality outside himself claims to have these qualities within himself. Barth says on one hand that faith cannot hold on to any content that comes to it from without itself and thus shows his irrationality. But when on the other hand he says, "faith is, as it were, creative of divinity," then he is relegating to man the ability to conjure up his God dialectically, and he shows his rationalism. This coincides with Kierkegaard's idea that truth exists solely in the subjective, personal certainty of the believer.

Thus the Crisis theologians have built their theology upon two assumptions of humanistic philosophy. First, the "wholly Other" God, the "Unknowable" realm of "brute fact" which is beyond rationality. Secondly, the autonomous Individual who finds truth subjectively—who comes to true "inwardness" and self-realization through the rational, dialectical process which leads to the conflict and the "leap." These assumptions directly affect the New-orthodox/Existential philosophy history.

Philosophy of History

Some philosophies of History:

Providential view of History: The Hebraic/Christian view - History and civilization are viewed as under the control and moving toward the purpose of the Divine Being, God.

Theory of world cycles: Seneca - believed that human life is periodically destroyed and that each new cycle begins with a

7. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

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golden age of innocence and simplicity. The arts, inventions and later the luxuries lead to vice and deterioration. Fate or, the fixed order of the universe, must be accepted with resignation.

Corrupting influence of Civilization: Rousseau - human nature is good, yet men and human society are evil. Mankind deteriorates as civilization advances. The soul of man is corrupted as the science and the arts become more perfect. Misery has increased as man has departed from the simpler, primitive conditions.

History as the expression of reason or spirit: Hegel - worked out an elaborate metaphysics of history in terms of monistic idealism. He believed that reality is spirit manifesting itself in nature, in human history and in the actions of man. History is the development of spirit which expresses itself through successive stages. When spirit reaches the stage of rational freedom, it is fully conscious. World history does not belong to the realm of matter but to the realm of spirit. Whereas the essence of matter is gravity, the essence of spirit is rational freedom. Reason in history, rather than providential interventions marks the transition from Augustine to Hegel.⁸

There are other philosophies of history which may have affected the Neo-orthodox philosophy of history:

Historical nihilists: Those who deny that there is any meaning, pattern or purpose in history.

Historical skeptics: Those who assert that we do not know whether or not there is a pattern or purpose in history.

Historical subjectivists: Those who claim that any pattern which seems to be present in historical development is not actually present in history but is merely a creation of human minds or imaginations.⁹

The foregoing philosophies of history are introduced merely to show that the Neo-orthodox concept of history is absolutely foreign to the Christian or Biblical concept of history. As we shall see the Neo-orthodox philosophy of history is more anti-historical, Kantian-critical, Hegelian-panteistic than anything else. Barth's usage of the

8. *Living Issues in Philosophy*, H.H. Titus, 2nd ed., American Book Co., 1953, pp. 457-459.

9. *Ibid.*, p. 456.

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idea of what he calls "primal history" has its origin in Kant. Barth's ideas of the Individual and of "primal history" are inseparable. The Individual, according to Barth, has true universality within himself. That is, he is not dependent upon anything external. God, therefore, does not speak to the Individual directly through history. If God is to appear to man in history (and He must, for even Barth is able to see that man cannot save himself), it must be in another sort of history. This other sort of history is called "primal history."

Kant's critical system begins with the assumption of the non-createdness of man. The Self is wholly free or autonomous. Human thought is creative in character. The world of history becomes the training ground of the Self. In history the Self attempts to make a never-ending progress toward its self-chosen or created Ideal. Of course, Kant is not speaking here of the "empirical-self." The empirical-self must be thought of as subject to nature and history. BUT THEN, THE EMPIRICAL-SELF IS NOT THE *REAL* SELF, according to Kant. The Autonomous-self is the *real* self. And to be the real self, it must be free.

It is with this notion of the *homo noumenon* that Kant approaches historic Christianity. Naturally he cannot accept historic Christianity as final—if he did the idea of the *homo noumenon* progressing toward its self-chosen Ideal would be lost. In historic Christianity it is God who creates nature and history; in Kant's critical philosophy it is the autonomous man that creates both. Kant accepts the accounts of historical Christianity as being merely figurative, symbolic pictures made by the free moral Self. "Christ is merely the archetype of man's disposition in all its ideal purity."¹⁰ Christ, for Kant, is not simply the revelation of God Incarnate affecting the "empirical self" of man. He is the Ideal which reason sets before itself. For Kant, no historical revelation, whether by word (Scripture) or by fact (Christ), can be taken at face value. Revelation is basically no more than a figure of speech by which reason (the autonomous man) goads itself toward its self-chosen Ideal. Because of the limits of the reach of reason, reason therefore must resort to what Kant calls the "schematism of analogy." It is this "schematism of analogy" that Kant finds in Scripture. Now it is quite incomprehensible how mankind should have set such a perfect Ideal for itself as Christ—therefore it is quite proper for the Bible to speak "analogically" of this Ideal as "coming down" to man.

10. *The New Modernism*, by C. Van Til, p. 85.

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We must look briefly at the philosophies of Franz Overbeck concerning history, for Barth urges his followers to listen to what Overbeck has to say on the idea of "primal history." Overbeck sees the realm of primal history as the realm of origins. It is the realm where the Individual is confronted with pure contingency (that is, where no distinctions are discernable between the universal and the particular). When the subject operates (through the subjective leap) in the field of primal history, he is said to stand outside of empirical history and to be functioning in the realm of pure contingency. Ordinary, empirical history is the realm of relativities and correlativities. If we are to have contact with the Absolute (God) it must be in non-historical or super-historical dimension. The true man in man is, according to Overbeck, above the passage of time and unaffected by an empirical historic Christianity. The true man (the real man, the soul) is, like Plato's man, a member of an ideal world. True Christianity, says Overbeck, appears in the realm of primal history. To seek true Christianity in the realm of empirical history is to make it subject to the manipulations of men, for in the realm of empirical history man is supreme. Here he makes his distinctions and differentiations relative to himself. It is the territory which he may call his own. He is lord in this realm because in it he merely deals with himself. All historical interpretation must be subjective because the relations of things as they appear to us in time (ordinary history) concern that side of things which belong to us and which are, in fact, our own creation. It is only when we turn to primal history that man can really meet God. These men simply deny that God influences the history of the world, as we know it, at all.

Empirical history, says Overbeck, tells no consistent tale. "It is full of sound and fury without intelligible meaning." The world simply is what it is without any reason in it that we can see. But man as a living organism is always subject to the ambiguities of the temporal, while man as the subject of thought (the real man) is able to transcend time itself and thus the ambiguities disappear. Man just thinks all the ambiguities of history away through the subjective process. To bring Christianity into alliance with empirical history is, to Overbeck, to admit that it is of this world and that it partakes of the ambiguities of this world. If history as a whole tells no intelligible tale, it follows that there can be no special turning-points in it that have particular meaning. Thus in Overbeck's system there is no sense in asking about the origin of temporal history or about the end of

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history, or about the Christ of history. For him, in history, nothing is ever finished.

Now let us see how these agnostic and rationalistic ideas are further developed in Barth. Barth's conception of primal history is very similar to that of Overbeck. Both negatively criticize ordinary, empirical history and follow with a "gospel" of hope through primal history. "But Barth gives far greater emphasis to the positive element than Overbeck did . . . as a traffic director he beckons vigorously, lest men go down the road of historical relativity."¹¹ Barth says of temporal history that "for all its competence it is not history, but photographed and analyzed chaos." To think of Christianity or salvation as apprehensible within historical relativities (ordinary history) would inevitably bring Christianity or truth to an ultimate death. In history we can never expect to meet God. At least, we shall never meet a God who is really other than ourselves. Barth argues that to think of God as creating the world in time is to "reduce God's transcendence to the level of a mere link in the chain of immanent causes."

"The gospel is not merely other and higher than history; it is the contradiction of history."¹² The righteousness manifested to the world in Christ-Ideal is timeless and transcendental and unambiguous; the history of relativities—of the world—is ambiguous. The Christ-Ideal through whom sin is removed from the world has no historical existence. Within history, Jesus as the Christ can be understood only as Myth, or as Kant would say, "schematic analogy."

It is just here that Barth's dialecticism begins to show itself. He believes that "it is the idea of pure contingency (primal history) as the correlative to the idea of absolutely comprehensive rationality (empirical history) that must do the saving work."¹³ In other words, there is no way to God from history by way of negation, and, on the other hand, the only way to God is the way of negation. The very meaninglessness of history constitutes its meaning. By the contradictory and ambiguous character of history, the Individual is driven to despair; just because he is driven to despair; he sees the exit, or, ". . . minus times minus equals plus," and we have the Crisis. "He beholds the marvelous fact that the contradictory (the nature of ordinary or phenomenal history) which held him encased in the mazes

11. *Ibid.*, p. 89.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 90.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 92.

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of correlativity is the power by which he breaks through to the realm of the incommensurable."¹⁴ Notice where the *power* is said to reside! The power unto salvation is in man's capacities to discern and reason (apart from a revelation of God). When the Individual has sensed the true meaninglessness of history and sought with passion the God of pure negation, he has also found the positive relation of God to the world.

When we have stressed the meaninglessness of history with all our power, we begin to understand that the positive relation between God and man, which is the absolutely paradoxical, exists. It is hopeless to reach the Christ by ordinary history. But we reach Him easily when, by faith(?), we are ready to leap into the void. "The true Christ, the Christ not subject to history, the Christ of paradox, is seen with the eye of faith alone . . . and faith deals with that which is beyond all the differentiations of history."¹⁵

The value of history lies beyond history, in primal history. It lies in the CRISIS within which all history stands, in the "sickness unto death." In primal history our relationship with Christ becomes contemporary. It is a relationship or contact with Him which lies beyond the scope of man's empirical self. Thus fundamentalists need not defend the historicity of the gospel narrative, and critics accomplish nothing by trying to destroy it; by faith we are always contemporary (face to face) with the Christ-Ideal by living within the Moment.

According to Barth, there may or may not have been a resurrection of Jesus in empirical or ordinary history. But he is not concerned with this primarily. It is the true resurrection (in the realm of primal history) that we must see. The true resurrection must be found in the subjective Moment. It is in the Moment—the subjective leap which Barth equates with faith—that we become contemporary with Christ's resurrection. As Van Til says, "by faith the believer (according to Barth) enters as it were into an airplane and by means of it transcends the mediation of history." But anyone, wherever he may be, can take to the air in this wholly subjective airplane. If no one is dependent upon any historically mediated gospel content, all men are equally unable and equally able to come to Christ in the airship Subjectivity.

"The oracles of God are the comprehensible signs of the incomprehensible truth that, though the world is incapable of redemption,

14. *Ibid.*, p. 94.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

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yet there is a redemption for the world.”¹⁶ Any man anywhere may hear these oracles through the Moment (subjective leap). These oracles of God are not dependent upon objective testimonial reporting. The truth reached through the “leap” can neither be taught nor handed down by testimony. The past is, as it were, dead, and has no message for us, for “the meaning of every epoch in history is directly related (or contemporary) to God.”

Notice how Barth’s philosophy of history contradicts orthodoxy’s concepts of history. According to Orthodoxy, nature and history reveal the mind of God; for Barth nature and history are the results of the creative mind of man. For Orthodoxy God reveals Himself directly in history; for Barth, history is primarily the revelation of the ambiguities of mankind. Orthodoxy believes the Scriptures contain the direct revelation of God and His will made known to sinners; for Barth, the Scriptures contain a necessarily mythological statement of the ideas of primal history. For the believer in historic Christianity, Adam was the first historical man who first truly knew and loved God and then forsook Him; for Barth, Adam is an idea by which every man may picture to himself his existence as it comes into being through the Moment. For Orthodoxy redemption was accomplished by Christ in history; for Barth, redemption is not a matter accomplished *for* man in history, but *by* man in utter freedom from history.

Barth’s adoption of the Kantian and Hegelian philosophies did not lead him to a really transcendent, wholly-Other God, but instead, his dialectical theology inevitably led him to a religion which was immanentistic and a God which was merely the self-chosen Ideal of the would-be autonomous man.

Barth contends that all history is, strictly speaking, no more than a promise. The apostles were no closer to the fulfillment of revelation than the prophets. The witnesses of the resurrection still deal with the promise only. To be a true witness of the resurrection is not to preach matters of historical tradition, but to point beyond history to primal history. A true faith will not build its house upon the quicksands of ordinary history. Since there is no objective revelation within phenomenal history, Barth contends, there is no historical subject that might receive such a revelation. The empirical man is not the real man. Barth contends whole heartedly for the distinction

16. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

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between the empirical, temporary self and the real Individual, the man within man. This is the Self that believes and obeys the revelation of God (which is reached in the Crisis—the Moment) and consequently this Self cannot be a historical self. Barth does not deny, of course, that there is such a thing as an empirical self. What he contends is that this empirical self or historical-consciousness has nothing to do with the Word of God. The empirical self turns about in this world of surface phenomena (relative History) as a rat in a maze.

Here is how Van Til explains Barth's dialectical philosophy of history:

It is in the realm of primal history that the dialectical union between God and man takes place. Revelation is primal history . . . this means that history (ordinary history) is not revelation. Primal history is a dimension that lies as it were between super-history and ordinary or surface history, while yet it impinges on both. Revelation is super-history in the sense that there is eternal happening in God Himself. On the other hand, revelation is also ordinary history. Yet it is neither in super-history nor in ordinary history that God meets man. It is in the tension between the two that revelation takes place, and it is this tension that constitutes the realm of primal history. It is here that God meets man in person. Ordinary history points to primal history and primal history constitutes the meaning of ordinary history. Primal history is the realm of meaning inasmuch as it is the realm of the Logos (what Barth does with John 1:1-18 must be neat). This realm is free from ordinary historical continuity; its unity is that of contemporaneity. It is history but it works directly on men of nearest and farthest times. Men become partners in primal history and, when they are such, they are members of the Church of Christ.¹⁷

And so the great rationalism of Barth stands out prominently in all that he says. Barth's Individual is after all saved by a revelation that is exclusively internal and subjective in character. His wholly-Other God proves not to be so wholly-Other as he would have us believe, but is contingent with the consciousness of the autonomous man.

17. Cornelius Van Til, *The New Modernism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1947), pp. 154-155.

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That Barth's successors maintain the same philosophy of history, may be established by a few quotations from Reinhold Niebuhr.

Theological literalism also corrupts the difficult eschatological symbols of the Christian faith. In these the fulfillment of life is rightly presented, not as a negation but as a transfiguration of historical reality. If they are regarded as descriptions of a particular end in time, the real point of the eschatological symbol is lost. It ceases to symbolize both the end and the fulfillment of time, or to point to both the limit and the significance of historical development as the bearer of the meaning of life.

In the same manner a symbolic historical event, such as the "fall" of man, loses its real meaning when taken as literal history. It symbolizes an inevitable and yet not a natural corruption of human freedom. It must not, therefore, be regarded either as a specific event with which evil begins in history nor yet as a symbol of the modern conception of evil as the lag of nature and finiteness.

In a similar fashion the affirmation of the Christian faith that the climax of the divine self-revelation is reached in a particular person and a particular drama of his life, in which these particular events become revelatory of the meaning of the whole of life, is falsely rationalized so that the Jesus of history who is known as the Christ by faith is interpreted as an inhuman and incredible personality with alleged powers of omniscience within the conditions of finiteness. In this way the ultimate truth about God and His relation to men, which can be appropriated only in repentance and faith, is made into a "fact" of history.

These errors of a literalistic orthodoxy tend to obscure the real issues between Christianity and modern culture as surely as the premature capitulation of liberal Christianity to modern culture. The Christian truth is presented as a "dated" bit of religious fantasy which is credible only to the credulous and which may be easily dismissed by modern man."¹⁸

The points of reference for the structure of the meaning of history in the Christian faith are obviously not found by an empirical analysis of the observable structures and coherences of

18. *Faith and History*, by Reinhold Niebuhr, Scribners, 1949, pp. 33, 34.

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history. They (the points of reference) are revelations apprehended by faith, of the character and purposes of God. The experience of faith by which they are apprehended is an experience at the ultimate limits of human knowledge; and it requires a condition of repentance which is a possibility for the individual, but only indirectly for nations and collectives.¹⁹

Niebuhr ridicules the faith that seeks to be founded upon the testimony of "revelatory facts" within ordinary history. He says of the resurrection that it was not empirical fact, but the subjective interpretation of the meaning behind the death of Jesus (cf. page 147-148 of "Faith and History" by Niebuhr). He says of the orthodox faith that it is a "faith not quite sure of itself," and ". . . always hopes to suppress its skepticism by establishing the revelatory depth of a fact through its miraculous character . . . this type of miracle is in opposition to true faith."²⁰

Some Results of the Existential Philosophy of History

This rationalistic theology has devastating effect on all aspects of historic Christianity. Hear what it has to say concerning the Christian hope!

The question of hope naturally involves our concept of the future and so the whole question of time and its meaning and the outcome of history is affected. Universalism finds its most striking expression in Barth's discussion of the Christian hope. Barth couches his theology in orthodox terms when he contends that our hope is to be fixed not on some Platonic idea but on solid historical fact. BUT WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED THAT BARTH CALLS A GENUINE HISTORICAL FACT? This is the all-important question. "Time and place are a matter of perfect indifference. Of what these eyes see it can really be equally well said that it was, is and will be, never and nowhere, and that it was, is and will be, always everywhere possible."²¹ Indeed a fact of history is, according to Barth, not genuinely such unless it is everywhere and always possible. It is this sort of fact that is everywhere and always happening. This is to say, the resurrection of Christ stands, in Barth's case, for the Idea of the general progress of the

19. *Ibid.*, p. 136.

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 147-148.

21. *The New Modernism*, p. 339.

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human race toward Ideal perfection—the resurrection is everywhere and always happening.

Barth claims that fundamentalism has, by means of its doctrine of the direct revelation of God in the Incarnation of Jesus, limited God. We have bound God to His own revelation; He is no longer free, or wholly-Other. Barth speaks of God as being *contingently* present with man and it is only when God is thought of as contingently present with us that God Himself may become true history in us and with us. BUT DOES THIS FREE GOD OR DOES IT LIMIT HIM MORE THAN THE ORTHODOX THEOLOGY? To Barth we do not really exist except to the extent that we are contemporaneous with God. With such a philosophy as this it must also be true that God does not really exist except to the extent that He is contemporaneous with us. God is not Object—He is Subject. A real historical fact, according to Barth, therefore takes place only as an event, as a process of contingent contemporaneity of God with man and of man with God and that, subjectively.

Barth argues that history as such “is dumb”; it speaks with a chaos of voices mutually contradictory of one another. The space/time world is a world of no meaningful significance. Kant reduced the teachings of historic Christianity one by one to the level of illustrations of “eternal truths,” truths of reason. Barth does virtually the same thing. If there is to be a genuine resurrection, a resurrection that shall be everywhere and always possible to all men, there must be a burial in which the God of orthodoxy is buried. THERE MUST BE NO ANTECEDENT BEING OF ANY SORT IN THE THEOLOGY OF CRISIS! A fact, to be a real fact for Barth as for Kant, must be ultimately constructed by the autonomous mind. Only then can it ever be reconstructed, ever re-experienced by the dialectic. Thus the antecedent God must be buried.

The resurrection as a genuine historical fact then is, according to Barth, a process and such a process as includes the whole race. Moreover, the process is only beginning. It has not been finished at any point, nor will it be finished at any point in the future. It must always be a contemporaneous fact. For Barth, any fact that may possibly be finished at some future time on the calendar is no true historical fact. It would be a fact that could be fully revealed without being at the same time fully hidden. This simply destroys the Christian hope of the Second Coming. The existentialist can never say “Maranatha” as we say it.

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Does not Barth wed the very rationalism and scientism that he professes to divorce? Scientism will recognize no facts as facts unless they are universally verifiable, unless they can be tested by experience at any time. Barth holds that facts are not allowed as facts unless so pronounced by would-be autonomous man after the principle of an exhaustive, rational, dialectical process.

In all his irrationalism and subjectivism, Barth, like his philosopher predecessors, has but cleared the ground for a rationalism in which all difference between God and man is finally removed. Barth's theology leaves us without hope and without God.

The existential theology has come full circle in Reinhold Niebuhr and Rudolph Bultmann from its original reaction against rationalism and liberalism to a liberalism all its own. It is clearest, perhaps, in Bultmann's "demythologization" of the Scriptures. In view of the pervading spirit of scientific realism of our age, it becomes necessary for us, says Bultmann, to interpret the Christian message in terms that are relevant. All pre-scientific myths must be cut away such as the myth of the pre-existent Lord, the myths of heaven, hell, angels, miracles, virgin birth and the empty tomb and resurrection.

The death of Jesus of Nazareth, according to Bultmann, is not to be understood as the expiatory death of a substitute. That an incarnate divine being should cancel out the sins of men through his blood is, to Bultmann, "primitive mythology." However, one can believe in the cross of Christ, says Bultmann. "Its decisive, history-shaping significance is made apparent by the fact that it is effectual as an eschatological event; that is, it is not an event of the past, to which one looks back, but it is an eschatological event in time and beyond time, so far as it is understood in its significance, and insofar as it is always present for faith."²²

Bultmann also denies that the resurrection of Christ is an actual event. For Bultmann the existentialist interpretation of the New Testament is entirely independent of historical factuality. One must make a sharp distinction between "historical facts" and "historic encounter." The Christian *kerygma* of God's salvation in Jesus Christ has nothing to do with facts which may have happened in Palestine between A.D. 1 and 30. The "kerygmatic Christ" calls men "here and now" to the decision of faith. Faith is not to be

22. "Dare We Follow Bultmann?" by J. Schneider, in *Christianity Today*, June 5, 1961.

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understood as faith in the personal Saviour but means "emancipation from the past" and to come to true self-realization, true individuality.

"The existentialism of Bultmann is nothing more than a modern variation of that anthropocentrism which, beginning with the Enlightenment, has continued to plague theology, and according to which the standard of validity is seen in existential significance."²³ In other words, Bultmann is merely a modern extension of the Kantian, Hegelian, Kierkegaardian and Barthian enthroning of the Individual or autonomous man.

To Bultmann the cross of Jesus is merely a sign for the fact that it is worthwhile to bear one's own suffering willingly. The resurrection is merely the knowledge of the "meaning of the cross." For him the Second Coming of Christ is "rationally inconceivable."

For Bultmann the name Jesus Christ represents not a personal living reality of God's saving revelation in the sphere of history but merely a concept, an ideogram, a symbol or a principle for the event of contemporary preaching."²⁴

Bultmann's theology is no theology at all, but rather a philosophical wisdom in Christian garb. His "revelation" of God becomes a synonymous concept for the attainment of a new self-consciousness or understanding; but in no way does it mean the reality of an actual intervention of God in the historical world of space and time.

He strips the New Testament of all its power and authority and then sets out to transform society with the "real Jesus," the "de-mythologized New Testament." His philosophy, like the philosophies of his predecessors, is able to offer only the ego-centric, autonomous, empirical-Self which may, through the subjective leap become contingent with the Christ-Ideal. This is essentially the same thing that Liberalism offered and which the world found hopeless and powerless to transform men. The existential philosophy is doomed to failure for it lacks the only enduring and all-sufficient foundation, Jesus Christ, who is both historic man and at the same time the resurrected and transcendent Lord. It lacks that which is basically fundamental to a transforming power—trust in a Divine Personality who reveals Himself to man within the historic relativities of man's dimensions. It lacks also that other essential element of transforming power—

23. "Dare We Follow Bultmann?" by W. Kunneth, in *Christianity Today*, October 13, 1961.

24. *Ibid.*

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authority resident and available in a Personality higher and wiser than man himself.

In their efforts to overcome the rationalism of 19th century European theologians with irrationalism, the existentialists have become neo-rationalists rather than neo-orthodox. They do not *openly* deny the existence of God. They simply swing the pendulum of theology to the opposite extreme of rationality and irrationally demand a wholly-Other God who, because He must remain non-phenomenal to remain free, cannot reveal Himself in phenomenal history. Therefore the real man must contact God through an irrational leap—wholly subjective faith. Man's contact with God therefore must stand dependent upon man's inherent capabilities. So we have the autonomous man "creating" faith through the dialectical process moving toward his "self-chosen" Ideal.

Jesus of Nazareth was not God Incarnate for these theologians, but a symbolical picture, a "schematic analogy," of the self-chosen Ideal. The existential theology is as much of the spirit of anti-Christ as modernism, liberalism, agnosticism or the Gnosticism which was contemporary with John, who wrote, "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but prove the spirits, whether they are of God, because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not Jesus is not of God and this is the spirit of the anti-christ, whereof ye have heard that it cometh; and now it is in the world already" (I John 4:1-3).

The existential theology is in direct contradiction to the New Testament witness concerning the Incarnation. "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). Any sensible exegesis of this passage will not allow for the existential philosophy of history.

The existential theologians, by implication, call the New Testament writers liars . . . "That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled, concerning the Word of life . . . declare we unto you . . ." (I John 1:1, 3).

Hopelessness is the progenitor of pessimism, epicureanism, materialism and all manner of sin while it goes about paralyzing any kind of transforming and enduring faith. Existentialism is father and mother of HOPELESSNESS!

Chapter Sixteen

THE PROBLEM OF AIDING CHRISTIAN BRETHREN (16:1-24)

IDEAS TO INVESTIGATE:

1. Why were the saints to “put something aside” each first day of the week if Paul would not pick it up until 6 months later?
2. What is “prospering”? What percentage of one’s “prosperity” should he give to the Lord’s work?
3. Did Paul expect the Christians at Corinth to help him financially with his missionary work?
4. Is there other aid, besides financial, called for in this chapter? What kind? Is that still relevant for the church today? How accomplished?
5. What is a “holy kiss”? Would it be good to practice that now?

SECTION 1

Endow (16:1-9)

16 Now concerning the contribution for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that contributions need not be made when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

⁵ I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, ⁶and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may speed me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷For I do not want to see you now just in passing; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

16:1-4 Ministering: The Corinthian Christians had a problem with giving. In an earlier communication with them Paul apparently mentioned the need for a contribution to relieve the suffering of their

brethren in Judea. Now he writes to set forth apostolic directions on how to best collect that contribution. Evidently, between this letter (I Corinthians) and the next (II Corinthians) (a period of 4 or 5 months—Spring to Fall of 57 A.D.), the Corinthians had some misunderstandings and misgivings about this collection for the saints in Jerusalem. In I Corinthians 16:1-4 Paul sounds as if he is *ordering* the people to give, whether they want to or not. Someone may have taken offense at his bluntness, so he wrote II Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9, to explain that all giving must be done willingly, as each man has purposed in his own heart, and not out of coercion. But it is a fact, that both of these are scriptural motives for Christian stewardship. Paul uses the Greek word *logeias* (lit. "something counted, a collection") to describe what he had "*directed*" (Gr. *dietaxa*, given orders for as in the military) to the churches of Galatia. Now he *commands* the church at Corinth (Gr. *poiesate*, 2nd, pl. 1 aor., imperative, "You do!") to take up offerings, and tells them how to do it. They started to do what he ordered (see II Cor. 8:10), but then they stopped. So he wrote later holding before them the example of the Macedonians and telling them they must not give as if it were an *exaction*. Jesus taught his stewardship lessons under the same two principles. First, Jesus is the Master, our King. He has every right to give his servants orders about the conduct of their stewardship. On the other hand, the obedience of the servant is to be done under an attitude of willingness and cheerfulness. If obedience has to be coerced and is resented, the servant of Christ is no better than the "elder brother" who stayed home but hated every minute of it, (see Luke 15:25-32).

This chapter is the crown of all the teaching of the first Corinthian letter. The epistle started with the reminder, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the *fellowship* (Gr. *koinonian*, "communion") of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord" (I Cor. 1:9). Because of that *fellowship* with Jesus Christ, Christians have been called into partnership or communion with the whole church of Christ everywhere in the world. The Corinthians needed to know that their relationship to Christ also involved brotherhood with the whole world-wide church whether in Corinth, Macedonia, Galatia or Jerusalem. They must be led to *share* in supplying material needs and spiritual needs of all the brethren "called unto" the same fellowship ("communion") as they—no matter where those brethren were. Perhaps Paul is *ordering* this lengthy and regular collection for benevolence as part of the therapy for their self-centeredness. Whoever would save his life shall

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lose it, but whoever would lose his life for Christ's sake and the Gospel's, shall secure it.

Giving is not optional for the Christian. Every place Paul established a congregation of believers he taught them they must give. Jesus taught that to be his followers a person must be willing to give when one has hardly anything at all (the poor widow with two mites, Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44) and to give all when one has everything (the rich young ruler, Luke 18:18-30; Matt. 19:16-22; Mark 10:17-22). Giving is the very essence and breath of Christianity.

There were two reasons the Christians in Judea were needing financial help. First, a famine (Acts 11:28) had devastated the area; second, many of the Jews who had become christian in Judea were being persecuted and their "goods were being plundered" (Heb. 10:34) by their Hebrew persecutors. It is instructive to note the different Greek words the apostle uses to describe this "contribution":

- a. *logeias* - "a thing that has been counted, a collection." (I Cor. 16:1)
- b. *charin* - "a gracious gift" (I Cor. 16:3)
- c. *koinonia* - "a taking part, a fellowship, a communion" (II Cor. 8:4; 9:13)
- d. *diakonia* - "a ministry, a deaconship" (II Cor. 8:4)
- e. *hadroteti* - "bountiful, abundance, liberal gift" (II Cor. 8:20)
- f. *eulogian* - "well-counted, blessed-counting" (II Cor. 9:5)
- g. *leitourgia* - "serviceable gift, a gift to serve, a liturgy" (II Cor. 9:12)
- h. *eleemosune* - "alms, gift of mercy, gift for the poor" (Acts 24:17)
- i. *prosphora* - "a sacrificial offering" (Acts 24:17)

From all these synonyms we get a picture of Christian giving as systematic, liberal, willing, and purposeful. Stedman (*op. cit.*) notices the following outline in Paul's instructions here:

1. Giving is to be a universal Christian practice - "as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do . . ."
2. Giving is in celebration of Christ's resurrection - "On the first day of the week . . ."
3. Giving is personal - ". . . *each* of you is to put something aside . . ."
4. Giving should be planned and with regularity - ". . . put something aside and store it up . . ."

5. Giving is not to be measured by amount but by motive - “. . . as he may prosper . . .”
6. Giving should be done without special pressure - “. . . so that contributions need not be made when I come . . .”
7. Giving should be applied faithfully to that for which it has been given - “. . . I will send those whom you accredit by letter . . .”

The Greek syntax of verse 2 is interesting: *kata mian sabbatou hekastos humon par heauto titheto thesaurizon ho ti ean euodotai . . .*, “Upon the first of the week each of you by himself is to deposit the things being stored up however he is prospered . . .” You see, they were storing up their offerings constantly—every day—then on Sunday they took their personal collection and *deposited* it in the congregational offering. In the culture of the first century, most people were paid at the end of every day for their labor (see Matt. 20:8). Every day they “stored up” part of their daily wages, according to how much they were paid, and deposited it on the Lord’s Day (first day of the week). This is clearly an assertion that in the first century church there was a time (first day of the week) and a responsible administering (deposit) for money given by Christians to the Lord’s work. It is also a clear indication that the early Christians met on the first day of the week to worship and share in the Lord’s work.

The Greek word *euodotai* is a combined word from *eu*, meaning “well or good,” and *hodos*, meaning “road or journey or path.” It is translated in verse 2, “prosper.” Christians are to give according to “the goodness of the road” they travel. If God has given a man a “hard row to hoe” (hard times, poverty) he should give whatever he is able to give. He must give something, but it may be very little compared to what others have to give. But that is all right with God. It does not need to be a tithe (10 percent) There is nowhere in the New Testament that tithing is commanded for the Christian. The Christian’s relationship is on a much higher level than tithing. The expectation for a Christian is loving, self-sacrificing, responsible stewardship of 100 percent of all with which he has been entrusted. He will give as he believes the Lord has given to him, and what he retains he will not consider his own but he will use it wisely and frugally to serve Christ in the best manner possible and bring glory to his name. We cannot give more than we have. God knows that (II Cor. 8:12), and accepts it. God is singularly interested in the “readiness” of mind and heart to give. With God, motive is all important (see Matt. 6:2, 3, 4, 19, 20, 21). Great sums of money may be given (see

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Luke 21:1-4; Mark 12:41-44) but if the motive is self-righteousness, it is an abomination with God, (see Isa. 1:10-17; Micah 6:6-8).

Paul anxiously guarded against exacting contributions for the Lord's work through special pressures. He said, "... so that contributions need not be made when I come . . ." He really said, in Greek, *hina me hotan eltho tote logeiai ginontai*, "lest whenever I come then collections there are." Why this instruction?

Because the apostle knew that when he was personally present he had a tremendous impact on people. He did not want their giving to be because they were moved by his preaching or by his stories of what God had done, or in any other way to be pressured. No professional fund raisers would have been permitted in the early churches. Paul says, in effect, "Do not bring out the thermometer; do not put on a three-ring circus, with people running down the aisle bringing pledges to meet a predetermined goal. I do not want that." Your giving is to come out of a heart that has been moved by the grace of God. God does not want giving on any terms other than those. Giving must be without special pressure.

(Ray C. Stedman, *op. cit.*, p. 327)

Finally, Paul advises the church at Corinth of its responsibility to insure that the collection for the needy gets to Judea as intended. The apostle offers to *help* deliver the money if he is needed, but he will let the Corinthian congregation decide who the messengers shall be.

These are principles, based on apostolic authority, the church will do well to follow closely in every age. They are never outdated or irrelevant. We have so much in America! We are so prosperous, in comparison with the rest of the world. God has certainly given Americans, considering our liberties as well as our material endowments, an "easier row to hoe" than the majority of the world's people. Of course, we do not expect unbelievers in America to give to the Lord's work as they have been prospered. But it is doubtful that most Christians in America give as they have been prospered. Let us repent, and do it!

16:5-9 Missions: If we did not know the humble nature of Paul, and did not know his passion for being self-supporting by plying his trade of tent-making, we would think him a bit presumptuous

to invite himself to be the guest of the Corinthians. Paul undoubtedly has another motive for inviting the Corinthians to support him in his intended missionary work. He would want to allow them the privilege of sharing in the fruits of his labors (see Phil. 4:17; II Cor. 11:7-11; 12:13).

Paul established the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1ff.) in A.D. 51 on his 2nd missionary journey. He remained there a year, and returned to Palestine via Syria (Acts 18:18-22). He began his third missionary journey in A.D. 54 going first through Galatia and Phrygia (Acts 18:23), then to Ephesus (Acts 18:24). During a three-year stay at Ephesus (Acts 18:24—19:41) he wrote I Corinthians. Leaving Asia Minor (Acts 20:1-4) he went to Macedonia. From Macedonia he wrote II Corinthians. Then he went on down into Greece where he spent three months, visiting Corinth again after about a six-year absence. While at Corinth, in 57 A.D., he wrote the epistle to the Romans. In our text here (I Cor. 16:5) Paul writes from Ephesus of his plan to visit Corinth "after passing through Macedonia."

Paul *intended* to stay with the Corinthians. He was "passing through" Macedonia *toward* (Gr. *pros*, preposition denoting direction) Corinth. He intended to stay at Corinth *in order that* (Gr. *hina*, conjunction denoting purpose, aim or goal) they might *speed him on his journey*, (Gr. *propempsete*, aorist imperative active verb, meaning, "you will furnish me with things necessary for a journey"—see Titus 3:13; III John 6). He did not want to see them "just in passing." He intended to spend some time with them, "if the Lord permits." He would need to be housed, fed, perhaps even given financial assistance (even though he usually earned his own living—Acts 20:33-35; I Cor. 4:9-18; II Cor. 11:7-12; 12:14-18; I Thess. 2:5-9; and he taught other Christians to do the same—I Thess. 4:9-12; II Thess. 3:6-15). There were certainly times when Paul did take financial aid (Phil. 4:15-19) and he said he had a right to take such aid in his ministry (I Cor. 9:1ff.). Some preachers, evangelists and missionaries, in this affluent twentieth century, are forced to surrender full-time ministries because of lack of financial support. Perhaps the major reason for insufficient financial pay to ministers of the gospel is that many Christian people do not believe a minister works hard enough to deserve pay equal to those who do manual labor, or equal to those professionals who have invested in years of training and apprenticeship. Most ministers of the gospel today are being paid a salary about equal to janitors and public school teachers—most of whom

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must take a "second job to make ends meet." Ministers with families have difficulty staying out of debt and conducting a full-time ministry on that kind of pay. Most preachers and missionaries never complain. They go right on struggling, feeling the psychological pressures of living each day on the edge of insolvency. They do it because they have a servant's heart. But even the ox (let alone the human servant) is worthy of his hire (I Cor. 9:8-12).

The apostle intended to stay at Corinth. He needed assistance. He was going to be put to the test in Ephesus. He would be run through the "psychological grinder" there. As he was writing he could see a "wide door for effective work" opening for him but there were many adversaries. It would be *hard work*, taxing every mental and emotional fiber of his being. The financial aid he might expect from Corinth would boost his spirit. But he would also be looking for some spiritual encouragement through his stay in Corinth. Even the greatest of the apostles needed human comfort. Some of the most pathos-filled words in all the Bible are those of Paul in the Roman prison awaiting death when he asked Timothy to "do your best to come to me soon" (II Tim. 4:9-18). Paul may have also had in mind the same reason he took financial aid from Philippi. He may have wanted Corinth to have the blessing of participating in the future "fruits" of his ministry (see Phil. 4:17). Whatever his reasoning, it appears he *did not* receive financial aid from Corinth. He apologizes (II Cor. 11:7-11; 12:13) for having done them a disservice for not having demanded it! Any group of Christians that *does not pay* its preacher sufficient wages to relieve him of financial anxiety, does not help him prepare for retirement, and does not encourage him by understanding how hard he labors, is *doing itself a disservice!* Such a church could never realize the satisfaction of sharing in the fruits of his labor.

SECTION 2

Endorse (16:10-18)

10 When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. 11 So let no one despise him. Speed him on his way in peace, that he may return to me; for I am expecting him with the brethren.

12 As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brethren, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

13 Be watchful, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong. ¹⁴Let all that you do be done in love.

15 Now, brethren, you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints; ¹⁶I urge you to be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. ¹⁷I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence; ¹⁸for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such men.

16:10-12 With Reassurance: Paul sent Timothy (and Erastus) from Ephesus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22) and thence to Corinth. After these two helpers had departed on their journey, news came from Corinth that was very disturbing. People from Chloe's household brought a letter and news by word of mouth that the church was struggling in the throes of schismatism, immorality, indifference, disorderliness, and false teaching. Paul knew how easy it would be for such behavior to *ruin* a young preacher by making him discouraged and cynical. The apostle charges the Corinthian church (Gr. *blepete*, imperative mood), "*See that you. . .*" give Timothy every reassurance possible for his ministry among you. Paul says, in Greek, *blepete hina aphobos genetai pros humas*, or, "See that you aim to make him be without fear among you." They are not to just let Timothy "shift for himself" in this matter of finding strength and assurance for his work. They are to make it their purpose to relieve him of all that would dishearten and depress him.

The Greek word *aphobos* is translated in RSV as "put him at ease" but is literally, "without fear or phobia." What would Timothy have to fear in Corinth? Pretended sophistication, intellectualism, Gentile cultural differences (shocking enough in themselves to a Jew), all in addition to the problems within the church itself. Paul hopes the Corinthians will conduct themselves toward Timothy according to the principles he has enumerated in chapters 8 through 10. Paul said, "Let no one despise him. . . ." The Greek word *exouthenese* means, literally, "to erase from an account-ledger," or, "to make of no account." Timothy was young, and a Jew. Timothy had no training in Greek literature as Paul had. Sophisticates from the great cities of Greece might tend to show contempt for a young Jewish lad like Timothy. But Timothy was "doing the work of the Lord" and he was important to Paul, so he directed the Corinthians not only to

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support him while he was there, but also to speed him on his way back to him.

Old and young can become close and intimate companions in the work of the gospel. The young person should be respectful and heedful of wise guidance (I Tim. 5:1-22; II Tim. 2:24-26), and the older person is not to think of youth as "of no account." Young people need to feel secure through being encouraged, strengthened, and built up.

Evidently, the Corinthians had requested Paul to insist that Apollos, an eloquent man, and a favorite teacher of the Corinthians, return for a visit. It is apparent the Corinthians thought Paul had not transmitted their request to Apollos. What did the Corinthians think—that Paul, out of jealousy of Apollos' superior oratorical ability and his popularity at Corinth, spitefully ignored their request? Paul replies, "I strongly urged (Gr. *parekalesa*, exhorted, encouraged) him to visit with the other brethren." But the more Paul urged, the more Apollos declined. The Greek would literally say, "And *altogether* it was not his will to come now." Apollos was spiritually-minded and loving enough to reject even something he most probably would have enjoyed rather than give any occasion, or appearance, of "competition" among Christian co-workers. Apollos did not wish his name or his abilities to be abused in support of schismatism or any of the other aberrations of the Corinthian church. He told Paul he would visit Corinth later, when a good opportunity offered itself to him. Whether he did or not, we do not know. His and Paul's actions in these circumstances are exemplary. Let all Christians "doing the work of the Lord" reassure one another in the same kind of conduct.

16:13-14 With Righteousness: All Christians should endorse the gospel and give aid to those who labor full-time in its proclamation by living righteously. That is the best endorsement and aid that may be given to those who work so hard and with little reward in this life. Paul said of the Christians at Thessalonica, "For you are our glory and joy" (I Thess. 2:17-20). He wanted these Corinthians to be "epistles of his, to be known and read by all men" (II Cor. 3:1-3).

He exhorts them to be *watchful* (Gr. *gregoreite*). It is in the imperative mood, thus a command. The male name, *Gregory*, is from this Greek word, and means "vigilant, alert, awake, on guard." The Christian cannot afford to be inept, unaware, careless, unmindful, mesmerized, hypnotized, manipulated and seduced! Paul was afraid for the Corinthians that "as the serpent deceived Eve by his cunning, their thoughts would be led astray from a sincere and pure devotion

to Christ" (II Cor. 11:3). What was happening to the church with all its problems (especially the false teaching about the resurrection) was not amusing or insignificant. It was evil, destructive, spiritual-insanity.

Next, Paul says, "Be standing in the faith." The Greek verb, *stekete*, is present tense, imperative mood. Once again, it is a command for them to continue their posture before the world in the faith. Paul used the definite article (Gr. *ἡ*, "the" faith), so he is not talking here about personal subjective faith as a virtue, but *the* faith as a body of doctrine. He wanted the Corinthians to take a constant stance upon a knowledge and practice of *the* revealed faith (the teachings and writings of the apostles). Standing fast in *the* faith or in the Lord is something which can be determined in an objective way. We can know whether we are keeping *the* faith if we are keeping Christ's (and the apostle's) word (I John 2:3-6; 2:24; 3:24, etc.). Standing in *the* faith gives unimaginable aid and encouragement to teachers of *the* faith. It is the kind of aid and reward that will never pass away.

Third, Paul says the Corinthians will give aid and comfort to their Christian allies (brethren) by being *courageous*. Actually, the Greek word is *andrizesthe*, and literally means, "act like a man." They are exhorted (the Greek verb is present tense, imperative mood) to continue maturing, growing up, behaving like adults who learn from experience. All marks of mature adulthood (self-control, caution, sensibility, courtesy, firmness, cool-headedness, consideration for another's opinions and trials, tenderness) is what Paul says will contribute to strengthening their fellow Christians. Mature men do not let peer-pressures or vanities of the world seduce them away from the truth. Mature men are able to endure persecution and tribulation without giving in to falsehood. Some of the Corinthians had behaved like immature babies (see I Cor. 3:1ff.). It goes without saying that the church today needs members who "act like men."

Fourth, they are ordered to *be strong* (Gr. *krataiousthe*, again, present imperative). The Greek word is from a root word which means "to be forceful, dominating, mighty." There is no place for any kind of weakness in the Christian life—neither intellectual, moral or spiritual. To be a Christian one must "swim against the tide" of human opinion and worldly lifestyle. To be a Christian one must endure a constant war between his flesh and the things of God's Spirit (Gal. 5:17; Rom. 7:13-25). All the world is on the side of the evil one. The Christian will get no help from the worldly-minded

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people in this world! Do not expect any. What may seem like help from the world is only deception and seduction. To be a Christian demands the best, the strongest, and the most mature. And the Christian who wishes to aid his brother must be forceful (not overbearing) in his support of the gospel.

Finally, Paul says, "Let all that you do be done in love." Love is the supreme virtue (see comments on ch. 13). Without it everything else is wrong. With it (true, agape-love) everything is right. It is that virtue which validates every other professed virtue. Love is the power that sculpts all talents, circumstances, and characteristics of the human personality into a monument reflecting and praising the glory of the Son of God. When all is done in love there is no problem with aiding Christian brethren, (see I Peter 4:8).

16:15-18 With Respect: When Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome he said, "Pay . . . respect to whom respect is due, honor to whom honor is due" (Rom. 13:7). He said the same to the Christians at Philippi (see Phil. 2:29) and Thessalonica (see I Thess. 5:12).

Paul deals first with the motive for respecting fellow-workers. The household of Stephanas, first converts in Achaia (Gr. *aparche*, lit. "firstfruit"), *devoted* (Gr. *etaxan* "addicted" KJV) themselves to the *service* (Gr. *diakonian*, deaconship) of the saints. Respectful attention to and emulation of such people is a strong Biblical theme (see Heb. 11:1—12:2; I Peter 5:1-5; II Tim. 1:13; 2:1-2; 3:10-17; Heb. 13:7, etc.). Respect in the service of the Lord is earned, not inherited.

Next, Paul says, "be subject to such men and to every fellow worker and laborer. . . ." The Greek word is *hupotassesthe*. This comes from the same root word (*tasso*) as the word *etaxan*, translated "addicted" or "devoted" in 16:15. The prepositional prefix, *hupo*, means "under." Thus, the word *hupotassesthe* means, literally, "be addicted or devoted under," or, "subjected to, subordinated to." It is the same word used by Paul in Ephesians 5:21 to deal with attitudes and behavior of husband and wife toward one another. The most practical spiritual help we can give to a Christian ally or brother is to subordinate ourselves in service to him. You will note that "subordination" is not just to a select few, but "to every fellow worker and laborer" (16:16). This substantiates Jesus' example and apostolic teaching throughout the New Testament (see Matt. 20:25-28; Luke 22:24-27; John 13:1-20; Gal. 5:13; Eph. 5:21; Phil. 2:3; I Peter 5:5). There is no "ruling class" in the kingdom of God. Christ is the only King—everyone else is a servant who is to subordinate himself to his brethren. We are to "outdo

one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). It is interesting that Paul uses the Greek conjunction, *hina* (“in order that”) to connect the *devotion* of Stephanas’ ministry with the *subordination* of the Corinthians to emulate his example. In other words, Stephanas devoted himself to ministry *in order that* the Corinthians might surrender to his guidance in living the Christian life! That is the way it must be with all “leaders” in the Church—wherever they wish others to follow, they must lead! They will never bring others to submit to their leadership unless they devote themselves (“become addicted to”) ministering!

Finally, Paul directs, “give recognition to such men.” The Greek word *epiginoskete* does *not* mean what we usually think of as “recognition” (applause, flattery, hero-worship). *Epiginoskete* means, “to know thoroughly; to recognize a thing to be what it really is, to be perceptive.” The element of expressing gratitude and encouragement is involved, but not braggadocio or adulation. All that is very dangerous to a person’s relationship to God. It was said of Jesus, “. . . you are true, and teach the way of God truthfully, and care for no man; for you do not regard the position of men” (Matt. 22:16). Jesus said of himself, “I do not receive glory from men” (John 5:41). We must be careful to be sincerely grateful for every brother in Christ, expressing it without setting any Christian above another by bragging about him or fawning over him. When Paul wrote this about his fellow laborers, he did not intend the Corinthians to call these fellows before the congregation and give them plaques or put their names in periodicals as if they were the *only* co-laborers who ever helped him. He simply wanted the Corinthian church to be hospitable, kind, *perceptive*, and appreciative. Christians should get acquainted with and *get to know thoroughly* such men as Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus; their devotion in service to Christ and his Church might “rub off on” those who get to know them.

SECTION 4

Embrace (16:19-23)

19 The churches of Asia send greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. 20 All the brethren send greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

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21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. 22 If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

16:19-20 Dearly: Paul wanted Christians in every nation, culture, race and language to acknowledge their common citizenship in the eternal kingdom of God. Wherever he went, whenever he wrote, he promoted Christian unity and fellowship. Christians *are* united. The fellowship or communion of believers is an accomplished work which took place in the redemption Christ finished. Unity *is* the Christian calling because Christ “created in himself one new man in place of the two. . . .” Christ broke down the dividing wall of hostility and reconciled all who will accept this reconciliation as *one* body, (Eph. 2:11-22). Now, it is the responsibility of Christians to “give diligence to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace . . .” (Eph. 4:1-16).

The oneness of the universal brotherhood in Christ was not dependent on material things. The first century church did not have church buildings but usually met in people’s houses for congregational worship. Aquila and Prisca had a church in their house. This does not mean, of course, that church buildings are not good. Anything in God’s creation which can be used to honestly and faithfully further the preaching of the Gospel should be used to its best advantage. But we must never think we have to have “things” to follow Christ. We must never think that one culture and people has to use the same methods or tools another one uses to follow Jesus.

Paul wanted the Corinthian church to know that the churches (Christians) of Asia Minor (“foreigners”) sent them *hearty* (Gr. *polla*, “much”) greetings in the Lord. Politically and socially, the people of Asia Minor and Greece were enemies, and had been for centuries. But Paul expects the power of Christ’s love to make them brothers, eager to love one another and eager to be “one body” in the Lord.

He orders them, “*You greet*” (Gr. *aspasasthe*, imperative mood, meaning, “salute, embrace”) one another with a *holy kiss* (Gr. *philemati hagio*). This is the kind of warm embrace brothers and sisters in the flesh often give one another. It is not the kiss of passionate lovers. It is an exhortation for Christians to break down the walls of formality and hypocrisy, to free themselves of prejudice and partiality, and *embrace* one another as brothers. We are to *receive*

one another as Christ has received us (Rom. 15:7); we are to be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgives us (Eph. 4:32); we are to have a *sincere* love of the brethren, loving one another from the heart, *fervently* (I Peter 1:22); we are to do good to all men, and *especially* to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). And a *proper* display of emotions toward Christian brethren is always in order! Telling and showing our love aids our Christian brethren.

16:21-24 Discreetly: This is an ominous way to close a letter! He writes, "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed." The Greek word is *anathema*, literally, "let him not stand"; the word came to mean, "let him be cursed or damned," (see Gal. 1:8-9; I Cor. 12:3; Acts 23:14; Mark 14:71; Acts 23:12, 21). Christians are to give aid to all men, especially the brotherhood, but with *discretion*. Paul does not pronounce this curse upon unbelievers, but upon those who *profess* to be Christians. It is interesting that Paul uses the Greek word *philei*, "affection, friendship" here instead of *agape* for *love*. *Phileo* is the word Jesus used to challenge Peter's profession of love for his Master (John 21:15ff.). It is the word to denote a love involving personal, emotional affection. Paul is challenging the reality of love professed but not expressed. Christianity is not merely a series of philosophies or doctrines to be taught and learned—it is a Person to know and love. If anyone knowing Christ, has not developed an affection for him, something is seriously wrong in his life. He is, in fact, on his way to being "damned." This was the damnation of the Pharisees. They professed a love for God but did not have it (cf. John 5:42; 8:39-47). Christian love is discerning. It will not aid hypocrisy or anti-christs. It will not condone apostasy or immorality. Christian love *will* give aid to honest seekers and those making honest errors, because that is what Christians, themselves, are.

In what appears to be a play on words, Paul follows the Greek word *anathema* with the Aramaic word *marana tha*. *Marana tha*, according to the *Didache* ("Teaching of the Twelve," written between 80 and 120 A.D., not written by the apostles, but held in high regard by the early church), was a word used in the early Christian observance of the Lord's Supper and meant, "Our Lord has come!" Thus, it would refer to the Lord's first advent, not his second coming. Anyone who has no affectionate love for Jesus Christ is damned because there is no other redemption to be offered. Redemption has already come in the person of Jesus Christ. Love him or be damned!

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And that is how Paul concludes this letter to Corinth. That is how he sums up all he has taught them. This is what he desires they remember above all else. "If any one has no love for the Lord, let him be damned!" It may seem rather an ugly tone with which to finish a letter, but how else can you interpret the impact of the Christian gospel? The unique feature of the Christian faith is that it requires a resolute adherence and a constant devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Merely to use a title, to call him "the Lord" and yet have no personal love or devotion, to show no regard for him in one's life, is the worst form of hypocrisy. When a man truly loves the Lord Jesus, his emotional attachment is always matched by readiness to obey Christ's revealed word. "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:21). Why do men call him "Lord, Lord," and do not the things which he says? (Luke 6:46).

So this is what Paul would underline: the secret of a happy life, a holy life, a victorious life, a Christian life, is a personal, real devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. If you do not have that, you have nothing, and you will stand condemned on the Judgment Day.

Not to love the Lord Jesus means that in one's heart he is in rebellion against the highest throne in all the universe. Not to love the Lord Jesus is to reject the loveliest character of all history. In Christ is every possible beauty; there is nothing lacking in him. Not to love the Lord Jesus is a refusal of the greatest Lover of one's soul. Not to love Jesus is to curse oneself and be under the curse of Almighty God.

There was another church, working hard, patiently enduring persecution, orthodox in doctrine, bearing up for Christ's name-sake, and not complaining. But it had abandoned the *love* it had at the first. It was threatened that its "lampstand" would be removed unless it repented (Rev. 2:1-7). That was Paul's warning also to the church at Corinth.

The apostle's last words of this letter to the saints in Corinth are "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. So be it!" The KJV italicizes the word *be*, to show it is supplied by the translators. In both sentences, the Greek preposition *meta* would literally be translated simply, "with." Could Paul not be inferring, "The grace of the Lord Jesus *is* with you; My love *is* with you all in Christ Jesus," instead of inferring he is wishing it to be so? The Christians at Corinth were having some serious problems; they had made serious errors; but they were mostly honest errors (not with a high-hand). Some of them were wanting apostolic guidance in

order to repent and correct their sins. So Paul addresses them as “the church of God . . . those sanctified . . . called to be saints” (I Cor. 1:2). The grace of the Lord Jesus *was* with them even when they were in error, so long as they did not deliberately continue in the error after the apostle gave them divine direction. The love of Paul *was* with them even though their immaturity, jealousy, ignorance, and indifference to immorality troubled his soul.

So closes the immortal letter of the apostle Paul to the church of God at Corinth. It analyzes most of the problems that plague the saints. Times and cultures may differ through the centuries, but human nature never does. Problems that plague the saints remain essentially the same; causes of the problems and manifestations of the problems remain practically the same. And, because this apostolic letter, sanctioned by the Holy Spirit, is the revealed word of God as to the source and implementation of principles which will resolve the problems, it is forever relevant. It is imperative that today’s church regularly study this epistle in its entirety. Christians must read this letter; preachers must feed their congregations through expository sermons from this book; congregations must put into practice the divine directions, because I Corinthians is a book in the imperative mood.

APPLICATIONS:

1. Do you “store up” *constantly*, either literally or mentally, what you intend to give to the Lord’s work?
2. Do you “deposit” regularly (weekly or monthly) what you have “stored up”?
3. What are the reasons for regular or systematic giving?
4. Does your congregation try to get contributions by pressure tactics? What tactics does it use?
5. Does it make any difference what methods are used to get offerings just so long as the church’s needs are met? Why?
6. Should the church be concerned about the administering of collections? How?
7. What does your congregation think about the preacher’s salary? How much should it be? Does he really work hard enough for it?
8. What other ways may a congregation support those who are doing the work of the Lord (elders, deacons, Sunday School teachers, communion preparers, janitors, etc.)? Does your congregation? What can you do about it?

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9. Have you ever considered righteous living as being an aid to those who labor in the Lord's work?
10. Do you think members of your church "act like men"? Why?
11. Do the "leaders" in your congregation "addict" themselves to ministering to the members? Do they have difficulty getting people to follow their lead? Why?
12. Do you agree with Paul, "If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be damned"? Why?

APPREHENSIONS:

1. What is a "contribution"?
2. How much should a Christian contribute?
3. Why did Paul say to deposit their contributions on the "first day of the week"?
4. Why were they sending the contribution to Jerusalem?
5. Why did Paul invite himself to spend the winter in Corinth?
6. Why did he insist they "speed him on his journey"?
7. What were the Christians at Corinth to do for Timothy?
8. What is "standing firm in the faith"?
9. What is "being courageous"?
10. Why should Christians be subject to men like Stephanas?
11. How should we give recognition to such men?
12. What is "greeting one another with a holy kiss"?
13. Do the problems of Corinth still exist in the church today? Are the solutions Paul directed to Corinth workable in today's technological age? Why?

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