Menor, recreation, language? Perhaps if we are better, it is at covering up sin, or just generalizing about it.

Are we smarter than others? We act like we think so. We imply all other people are ignorant of the Bible. And some are, however, it is hard for them to out do the ignorance of some of our folks. Besides, some religious people are good Bible students, we know it. Examine our libraries filled with prized books which they wrote.

No difference then? Oh, no. There are great differences; they are just not the ones we expect.

We know some things, important things, necessary things, things essential to eternal salvation which many others do not know. In this, we are blessed. We know about Jesus; pagans do not. We know how to become a Christian which many do not know. We know things about how to worship God acceptably that some others do not. That’s not grounds for laugh- tiness, though. Other people know things we have yet to learn. Besides, what do we know that we were not taught? We did not invent truth.

We are not “better” than others, but we are surely “better off.”

In my estimation, this article by Joe Fitch is meaningfully provocative. I do not know him nor his address. I do appreciate his insight.

Listening, once, to a sermon that did a good job of painting a disgusting picture of the state of morals in our country, I came away frustrated at the fact that the sermon was not turned to bear upon the congregation itself. Much that was said about dress, recreation, et al surely needed to be applied to the church. I must agree with Joe Fitch that in this regard our betterness may well lie in our ability to “cover up” and/or “general[ize]” or, flat out ignore.

— A4

Mary — The Mother Of Jesus

Of the several Marys of the New Testament, none rank in importance with the virgin mother of Jesus. The annals of inspired history nowhere treat any other woman with the singularity accorded Mary as the mother of our Savior. No other woman “found favor with God,” or was “highly favored” as was Mary, as stated by the angel of the Lord, Gabriel. The great favor extended to Mary began to be realized or find fulfillment when Joseph and Mary left their home in Nazareth and journeyed to Bethlehem where the virgin Mary gave birth to Jesus, as the Messianic prophet had foretold. God’s plan of salvation, first alluded to in Genesis 3:15 where it was said the seed of woman would bruise the head of the serpent, was now becoming a reality. God’s promise, as brought forth through Abraham and the seed of woman as stated in Genesis 3:15.

The prophet Isaiah pointed to Mary’s special place in God’s plan when he said, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14). The inspired writer, Matthew, clearly identifies the fulfillment of this prophecy as that of the birth of Jesus by “a virgin” (Matt. 1:18-23).

The narratives of both Matthew and Luke deal with the birth of Jesus, giving a good picture. While Matthew emphasizes the more public aspects, Luke relates more of the private, personal feelings and experiences. Some valuable lessons can be learned from these inspired writers as they inform us about Mary.

It seems to me that we have been distracted in a general way from the good and profitable things which can be learned from a serious study of Mary, the mother of Jesus. I say this because I’m unaware of much being written or...
Mary, a virgin, was “espoused” to Joseph. Both were residents of Nazareth, a city considered by some as of somewhat ill repute. It was in Nazareth that the angel of the Lord, Gabriel, was sent by God to inform Mary that she had “founded favor with God.” This “favor” was that she would conceive in her womb and bring forth a son named “Jesus” (Lk. 1:26-31).

It appears that Mary and family spent much time in Nazareth and were generally known by the people. In response to the wisdom and mighty works of Jesus as demonstrated in “his own country,” the people asked: Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?” And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? And they were offended in him…(Matt. 13:55-57).

From this we learn that that Mary did have other children after the birth of Jesus, and did not remain a virgin as erroneously taught by many. Another fact brought out is that Joseph was carpenter. In Mark’s account it is indicated that Jesus was also a carpenter (Mk. 6:32). Both Matthew and Mark reveal that the people were “offended” in or at Jesus. Though nothing is said relative to Mary’s response to the people’s reaction toward her son, Jesus, it would be a common reaction of a mother to have a feeling of great disappointment from such. It appears that Joseph and Mary were poor people. Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, and when the days of Mary’s purification were finished, Joseph and Mary brought him to the temple and there offered a sacrifice… (Lk. 2:24). It is this sacrifice of baby Jesus being the offspring of a virgin Mary, that is the origin of Christmas. Mary and Joseph were not rich, although they were on the lower scale of life, so to speak. The angel’s words were “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy child shall be called the Son of God” (Lk. 1:35).

Mary, the Mother of God, was a simple woman, and the Psalms are filled with her praises as God’s chosen mother. The Church has always regarded the Mother of God as “full of grace and favor.” The Church has always revered Mary as a woman whose conduct was without stain and whose works were always pleasing to God, a woman of such saintly holiness that her gentle and kind attitude made her a model for all Christian women. It is not just how she lived her life, but how she passed away. There is no record of the manner of her death. However, as the mystery of this earthly mother, who was a model of the Church on earth, we shall call her dead, and from the post of her death we shall call her a Saint. Mary is the Mother of God, the Mother of Christ, and our own mother. The Church of Christ will always hold her as a model of perfection in Christian conduct.

Some Thoughts on V. B. S. and Bible Classes

Vacation Bible school is a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde affair. On the one hand, vacation Bible school usually has a festive air. The daily meetings allow children to run, play, and otherwise do what children do best while adults enjoy their children’s enthusiasm and good conversation with fellow Christians. These are fine qualities and good traditions: we should enjoy one another’s company and we should enjoy meeting together to study the Bible. On the other hand, this festive spirit too often degenerates into loud, obnoxious misbehavior as children, encouraged by adults, scream out answers, scream out vapid songs, and otherwise misbehave with official sanction – and all the while the adults in the congregation look on with adoring eyes.

This ugly side of vacation Bible school teaches bad lessons. Children learn that they may do things in a religious setting that would earn them swift punishment if attempted at home or in school. Not only may they misbehave, but the authority figures in their lives, their parents and teachers, encourage them. The scenario never changes: a teacher asks the children a question and the child answer en masse; the teacher says, “I can’t hear you” and on cue, the children again shriek out the answer. Children see the tolerance adults show for misbehavior in a religious context – and the intolerance for such behavior in the secular context – and conclude that the study and worship of God is less important. Solomon advised that people should “fear God and keep His commandments” (Ex. 12:13); adults teach children the opposite when the activities they organize and endorse equate the worship of God with buffoonery and misbehavior.

The riotous side of vacation bible school also teaches children that “regular church” is a bore. On Sundays, one must sit quietly as the preacher drones on about ideas and beliefs that are not nearly so funny as an entertaining puppet show. On Sundays, one must sing hymns whose lyrics (usually) do not include such turns of poetry as “that’s why I am bananas for the Lord.” On Sundays, services never end with yet another rousing rendition of “Booster.” When adults teach children that learning about God revolves around entertainment rather than study, boisterousness instead of reverence, should they wonder when children grow older and find the sober tone of organized worship rather stuffy and dull? (Of course, some Christians sympathize with children who “just don’t have fun in church,” thus the degeneration of worship and Bible study into pep rallies and self-help sessions in many congregations of the church. Other more qualified writers have diagnosed this greater disease.)

Are We Better?

“The Pharisees clearly thought himself better than the publican (Lk. 18.10). We’ve read it. He’s not the last man to think “I am not like others.” We also are not like others, and furthermore, we are surely better than they are. Right? It bears some thought. Better in what way?”

Compare devotion with Mormons or Moslems? Are we different in this regard? Oh, yes. Are we better? Oh, no. Many other religious folks shame us with their devout use of their money, time, and abilities. We are not the most devoutly religious people in the world. Are we more righteous? One preacher boasted: “We don’t have worldly problems where I preach.” What planet is he from?, is he just plain blind?, does anyone believe that? We wrestle with the same weaknesses and sins as all other people trying to serve God. We sometimes do not put up such a good a fight. Don’t tell me we are more righteous than all others. It is not so. Are we more moral? Are we exempt from base sins like fornication? Do our ladies practice modesty? Put our young people together with some of the youngsters from some of the conservative denominations in town. Would you see a difference in dress,
entitled to protection. One view is: Totally.

Another view: Not all. In between there is the view that what began as a tomato after six months or so becomes more human than vegetable and only then entitled to protection.

Clearly, the most illogical of the three positions is the third; that being, that the "tomato," as it were, becomes human after six months or so becomes more human than vegetable and only then entitled to protection.

One of the most heinous forms of abortion is called the "partial-birth-abortion." An infant, up to any point prior to a natural birth is extracted from the birth canal of his mother only far enough to allow the doctor to make an opening in the back of his skull from whence his brains are literally sucked out. Both Houses of the US Congress passed a bill outlawing such a procedure; President Clinton vetoed that bill; President Bush signed it. Frankly, I am sick and tired of weasels saying, "You shouldn’t mix religion with politics." If politics happens to conflict with the Bible, I just don’t see that a Christian has any choice but to use any and every legitimate means to defeat that which is anti-biblical.

I eschew this use of the word "choice." Besides the woman, there is the man, the baby, and, there is also the One who "gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Ac 17:25). Does one party have the right to make a "choice" when three other parties to the "choice," have no voice in the decision?

As for the "woman’s right over her own body." She fully exercised that right when she chose to engage in the activity that resulted in the conception of a human being. Even if she didn’t so choose (e.g. rape which comprises less than 1% of all abortions), there is still the fact of another human life. Does it make any sense to anyone that our courts have declared that capital punishment for rape is "cruel and unusual," but to summarily execute the baby produced by the rape is not?

Let us resist this sin against the innocent; and likewise the sin against language which is being kidnapped and perverted to uphold ungodliness.

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“the throne of David.” Though Mary obviously believed in God, how could she have a son when she had never known man, that is, had never had sexual relations with a man? This is explained by the angel: the Holy Ghost would come upon her, and the child would be called “the Son of God.”

As if to strengthen Mary, the angel relates the unusual conception by her cousin Elizabeth who had been “called barren.” In response to Elizabeth’s statement that “with God nothing shall be impossible,” Mary’s commendable and submissive reply was: “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.”

Mary’s willingness to be used in accordance with the will of God, reminds us of the attitude which characterized the “Now therefore are we all before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

What a change, what a great blessing it would be, if the brethren who make up the Lord’s church today had the same disposition of total submission to the will of God as did Mary. The seat of so many of the problems which are wreaking such havoc within the church is a lack of willingness to submit to God’s will. More and more of our brethren are becoming “enemies of the cross of Christ” (Phil. 3:18) as they help build up the religions among men and encourage thoughtless and unlearned brethren to turn away from the church for which our Savior died. Not a single one of the man-made churches, the denominations, are blood-bought or Christ-built. They never have nor will they ever have God’s approval. Who could believe that God would have favored Mary as He did had she had the mind of so many of our brethren? God knew the mind of Mary, and let it not be forgotten that He knows the mind of those today who are unwilling to submit to him and let it be “according to thy word.” Serving God was a serious matter for the mother of Jesus and so it should be with us.

III. MARY’S VISIT WITH ELIZABETH

When Mary learned from the angel that Elizabeth, “in her old age,” would have a son and she herself would have a son, she visits her cousin Elizabeth: And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Judah;

And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass, that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost; and she spake out with a loud voice, and said, blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And when is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. And blessed is she that hath believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord (Lk. 1:39-45).

The words of Elizabeth to Mary that there would be a performance of the things which were told her from the Lord must have had a great influence. Mary breaks forth in what is doubtless an inspired song of great praise to the Lord and Savior:

And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord. And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name. And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation. He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts, and exalted them of low degree. He hath filled hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away. He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy; As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever.

Mary’s willingness to be used in accordance with the will of God, reminds us of the attitude which characterized the Cornelius: “Now therefore are we all before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33).

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A One Party Choice in a Three — Four — Party Situation

In debating moral/social issues, the maxim seems to be: Whosoever shall capture the language winneth. Thus, Sodomy becomes Sexual Orientation; Drunkenness becomes Alcoholism; Fornication becomes Making Love; Nakedness becomes Fashion; Slothfulness becomes Welfare; and Abortion becomes Pro-Choice. Language is more than a mere convenience; it is a tool to be used, or misused. Unthinking people can be subtly lead to accept false, even damnable beliefs, on the basis of failure to analyze the carefully crafted words of others.

The role of government is to protect human rights. The great controversy today reduces quite simply to the question whether there is a third party after conception, effected by the man in the womb of the woman causing gestation of the child which the first two parties have conceived. What of the third party? As Buckley said, the second party, the man “effect[s] [something]... in the womb of the woman which caus[es] the gestation of — what?” Herein lies the real issue. Truly, that which gestates, thrives and grows within the body of a female is either a “human” or it is “a tomato.”

This is what finally brought the institution of slavery down; the recognition that Negroes are human beings, and as such accorded full rights under our Constitution, which states in its preamble: All men are created equal and are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights... Again, note Buckley.

As a percentage of the population, the abolitionists were fewer than those who now believe that fetuses are human beings. That does not mean that there will be a parallel development in thought and that a half-century from now an American Supreme Court is going to pronounce an Emancipation Proclamation for all fetuses. It does mean that, arguing back then with an abolitionist, it wouldn’t have furthered intelligent discussion simply to say that Negroes were tomatoes, so what role has government to play.

Oh, that all debate and disagreement could be so focused and pointed to the issue at hand. Roe vs. Wade would never have happened if the cowardly justices involved in that decision had dealt with the question, Human or Tomato? Rather than, A Woman’s Right Over Her Body. It is true that that sentiment, respiring, moving thing within the womb of a pregnant female is of no greater, or lesser value than a tomato? Buckley once again precisely pins the point.

Buckley, Jr. penned a column entitled “Las Vegas Fever.” He tells of a debate between himself and liberal activist, John Kenneth Galbraith, which occurred 15 years ago on the campus of the University of Las Vegas. Buckley, a conservative, had argued the “usual case against government expansion and government intrusion, and government taxation...” Galbraith responded, “I can’t understand how someone who claims to object to government action should encourage government to get in the way of a woman’s right over her own body.” Notice how the crafty Galbraith attempts to define the issue of abortion under the heading “a woman’s right over her own body.” Buckley would have none of it. He responded:

Notice how Mary attributes greatness to the Lord — a woman who claims to object to government action should encourage government to get in the way of a woman’s right over her own body.

The role of government is to protect human rights. The great controversy today reduces quite simply to the question whether there is a third party after conception, effected by the man in the womb of the woman causing gestation of — what? That is the question. To quote from a letter printed in these pages only a few weeks ago, either it is a fetus en route to birth — a human organism — or it is a tomato.

Buckley rightly recognizes and differentiates between, on the one hand, talking about “a woman’s right over her own [that is, one] body;” and, on the other hand, a situation which involves at least three bodies, or parties: The woman, the man by whom the woman is impregnated, and last, but certainly not least, the child which the first two parties have conceived.

What astonishes pro-life advocates is the refusal of so many, e.g., Professor Galbraith, to be guided by the hypotheticals in the discussion. If there are three parties, as biological objectivity would appear to certify, then the argument focuses on the extent to which the third party is J...
Grayness With An Attitude

So many folks are experts from the negative perspective. They know what’s not right and are not a bit thin in pontificating their points of view. But, they generally evade telling us what is right. This kind of people finds offensive, even threatening, any person who speaks in objective, authoritative terms; that is, they abhor any person who talks or acts like he knows what he is doing and of that which he speaks.

Come to think of it, Jesus was hated and ultimately crucified, not because he was too kind and humble, nor because he was “mean-spirited” (the favorite ad hominem buzz-word of liberals). Rather, the ultimate cause of His being rejected was just that He was precise, clear and absolute in His teaching. For example, early on in His preaching work the Bible says He had gone “into the synagogue, and taught.” And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes (Mk 1.21-22). As He expounded and applied the Scriptures He left the clear impression that this is what the Bible says, and only what the Bible says. While this was like a breath of fresh air to some people, it was offensive and threatening to others. When the Lord spoke, no one had trouble understanding as to what and to whom he spoke. This did not always endear Him with his audience as in, “when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them” (Matt 21:45).

Someone with “an attitude” refers to one who is skillful, but who struts and is conceited about his own abilities and even condescending toward the skills of others. “Grayness” refers to lack of clarity of precision, not absolute. “Grayness” is the opposite of “black and white.” When it comes to questions of moral values and their social implications, many people say, “Color my world mousy gray.” Ironically, some of the most militanty arrogant people around are those who admittedly “don’t know,” but they are absolutely, positively sure that no one else knows; or, they are sure that what anyone else knows is simply stupid.

Of course, let us be humble in our knowledge of God’s will. Let us also speak, “as the oracles of God” and live our lives so as to speak with moral clarity and conviction.

That God had done unto Mary “great things” did not lessen her humility but rather increased her reverence for Him. Her display of humility is something which we would do well to emulate. Mary’s son, the Savior, would later have much to say about the importance of humility as evidence of greatness. One of His classic statements is: “And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted” (Matt. 23:12). We some times paraphrase, “The way up is down.” Humility is noticeably lacking among brethren in our day. Even some preachers have an ego problem. A haughty spirit is common in some of our preaching brethren who have gone out into left field in their pursuit of liberal ways. It is as if they were afflicted with a bit of gnosticism, feeling themselves to far excel the more faithful brethren who still believe we should walk in “the old paths” of which Jeremiah spoke (Jer. 6:16). Such arrogant people often resort to casting aspersions upon those who believe in standing fast in the faith, as stated by Paul and Jude (I Cor. 16:13; Jude 3).

Come to think of it. This feeling of superiority is not all that uncommon in “sound” brethren.

IV. JOSEPH LEARNS THAT MARY IS WITH CHILD

At exactly what point Joseph learns that Mary is with child we cannot be certain. It may have been after the three month visit by Mary with her cousin Elizabeth. Matthew reveals some interesting details about the matter:

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto the Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. The Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he call his name JESUS (Matt. 1:20-25).

It is hard to imagine the stress and humiliation felt by Mary. Though she knew the cause of her condition of being with child, seemingly others did not know. According to Jewish law she could not only be “put away,” she could have been put to death. It is fortunate that Joseph, though a "just man," nonetheless for his love sought to put her away "privily." Not acting in haste he was informed by the angel as to the cause of Mary’s condition. Joseph was not of the mind of some today as to what Isaiah foretold long ago (Isa. 7:14). He accepted what the angel of the Lord said and immediately took Mary as his wife. Joseph "knew her not" [Mary] until Jesus was born. This implies that he "knew her" after the birth of Jesus. Had it not been for the erroneous teaching of Catholicism, no one would ever have thought Mary did not have other children.

V. LUKE RECORDS THE BIRTH OF JESUS

As is often the case, each of the Gospels has a different perspective. Some say, "Color my world mousy gray." Ironically, some of the most militanty arrogant people around may contain additional information about a particular event. For this reason we call attention to the birth of Jesus as recorded by Luke:

Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. The Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he call his name JESUS (Matt. 12:18-25).

Come to think of it, Jesus was hated and ultimately crucified, not because he was too kind and humble, nor because he was “mean-spirited” (the favorite ad hominem buzz-word of liberals). Rather, the ultimate cause of His being rejected was just that He was precise, clear and absolute in His teaching. For example, early on in His preaching work the Bible says He had gone “into the synagogue, and taught.” And they were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one that had authority, and not as the scribes (Mk 1.21-22). As He expounded and applied the Scriptures He left the clear impression that this is what the Bible says, and only what the Bible says. While this was like a breath of fresh air to some people, it was offensive and threatening to others. When the Lord spoke, no one had trouble understanding as to what and to whom he spoke. This did not always endear Him with his audience as in, “when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them” (Matt 21:45).

Someone with “an attitude” refers to one who is skillful, but who struts and is conceited about his own abilities and even condescending toward the skills of others. “Grayness” refers to lack of clarity of precision, not absolute. “Grayness” is the opposite of “black and white.” When it comes to questions of moral values and their social implications, many people say, “Color my world mousy gray.” Ironically, some of the most militanty arrogant people around are those who admittedly “don’t know,” but they are absolutely, positively sure that no one else knows; or, they are sure that what anyone else knows is simply stupid.

Of course, let us be humble in our knowledge of God’s will. Let us also speak, “as the oracles of God” and live our lives so as to speak with moral clarity and conviction.
In giving birth to Jesus, Mary has played a very significant part in God’s plan of salvation of man, the greatest blessing to which one can avail himself while on earth. How sad that so many spurn the gospel invitation, or disavow their commitment after having responded to the call of the gospel.

It is understandable that the angel of the Lord would announce “good tidings of great joy” to the shepherds in the field, that a Savior, Christ the Lord, was born in the city of David. That heaven was pleased by this great happening was indicated by the angel and a heavenly host, “praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will to men!” (Luke 2:14).

After Mary had fulfilled her part in God’s plan by giving birth to Jesus, for which she had been favored by God, attention is focused more upon Jesus and less upon Mary. We shall note briefly some references to Mary after the birth of Jesus, her greatest part in God’s plan of salvation having already been played. Though Mary was highly favored by God in giving birth to the Savior, it is significant that there is no evidence that she was exalted to state of the Divine. She, like other great characters of the Bible, was not worshipped or given a place as a mediator between God and men.

REFERENCES TO MARY

Shepherds come to see Jesus. “And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.” The shepherds spread the news of Jesus’ birth, land those who heard “wondered” at the news. “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:16-19).

SHEPHERDS COME TO SEE JESUS.

Jesus presented in the temple. In connection with the purification of Mary, the “just” and “devout” man Simeon had been directed to the temple by the Holy Spirit. Note what was said about Simeon and his words also:

Mary with Jesus at Cana of Galilee. Mary said to Jesus, “They have no wine.” Jesus responded, “Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come. His mother saith unto the servants, whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (John 2:1-5).

Mary at the cross. John records the last words that Mary heard spoken unto her by his son Jesus before his death: “Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore said his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son. Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother. And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:25-27).

Mary in the upper room. It is said of the apostles, when they had come together in an upper room: “These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren.” (Acts 1:13-14). Mary continues as a disciple of Jesus with the faithfulness and expediency that should never be allowed to divide the body of Christ. One can stand on solid ground when it comes to the truth but possess the wrong attitude and lose his soul. Attitude matters, it shows, and it is contagious.

Brethren are to worship “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). At judgment, both attitude and truth will matter. Let us make sure we always strive to do the right thing in the right way for the right reason.

—515 Liberty Grove Rd., Rowlett, TX 75030

Personal Notes:

PLEASE EXCUSE OUR MISTAKE. Perhaps you noticed that the pages of the May-June issue of Banner of Truth were not in order. All 16 pages are there but not arranged as they should have been. It is my fault that I did not make sure I was printing the pages in the order they should have been. When I discovered the mistake I realized that I would have to print four sides of sheets over, and that would have taken more than a day. Since I was so far behind in my work, I decided to just let it go. This will teach me to make sure what I’m doing the next time I go to print.

MY PHYSICAL CONDITION. In the last issue of BOT I mentioned the fact that I had been sick for two months. My lung doctor believes I have pulmonary fibrosis, an incurable disease. I am scheduled to see a doctor in Nashville August 12, who is a specialist in the field of pulmonary fibrosis. At present I am feeling much better and able to do a great deal of my work, though I do still have some problems. Many people have inquired as to my condition and have been praying in my behalf. This is appreciated more than words can say. We will reach four-score years next month but feel that I should have several more years in which to carry on the work I’m now doing. Much more work goes into the printing and publishing of the paper than many realize. We appreciate so much those who help us, but some times we really need more help. A great blessing to the Lord’s work we are trying to do would be the moving of some couple into our area who could devote some of their time to getting Banner of Truth out to the thousands who appreciate it and profit from its contents. Your continued prayers will be greatly appreciated.

—Editor

Reflections on Islam

True, God-ordained religion, Christianity, is the greatest blessing of all to the human race. On the other hand, false religions can and have been some of the great causes of evil. The “Crusades” of the 11th, 12th, and 13th centuries wrought great havoc upon multitudes as the Catholic Church proceeded to retake the Holy Land from the Muslims. Much evil has been done by other false religions.

The greatest religious threats to world peace today is that of Islam. In spite of all the evidence, there seems to be a reluctance to face reality. Terrorism, which is becoming more widespread day by day, can be attributed almost entirely to Islam. Until this is recognized and measures taken accordingly, things will only get worse. Even the leaders in our country seem not to realize reality, or either they don’t want to speak the facts for political reasons.

We hear the expression, “radicalized Muslims.” The fact of the matter is that “true Muslims” are radical. This is what they are taught and believed and practiced. The god they worship is not the God which true Christians worship. Their god is a god of murder, and teaches those who serve him to kill those who are not Muslims. All one has to do to learn the facts is to read the Koran.

One noticeable thing which is seldom mentioned in the news, is that those who are supposed to be “good Muslims” are very quiet in their opposition to those who are supposed to be “radicals.” If they were very much opposed to the evil actions of the terrorists they would speak out and let it be known. The governments of those Muslim countries could do much, if they wanted to, to stem the tide of the growing evil of terrorism.

If one is of a mind to read from the history of Islam, it will be seen that the goal of this false religion is to rule the world. Islam is a great enemy of true Christianity.
The Holy Scriptures teach us that God has always been concerned with the attitude of man. Cain’s attitude toward God and Abel let to his infamous sin of murdering his brother (Gen. 4:6, 8). A Biblical attitude will keep us from committing sinful acts and horrible deeds.

Cain has many relatives today who desire to worship God according to their own whims and wishes. This is the downfall of those who give their allegiance to denominational churches. They believe that as long as they are pleased with their religion that God will likewise be pleased. Jesus addressed this very important matter in saying, “Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, This people honoreth me with their lips; But their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men” (Mt. 15:7-9). A proper attitude will always seek to do those things that glorify the Heavenly Father. Christians are to possess the mind of Christ. There is an urgent need to remind members of the Lord’s body throughout the land of this truth. Paul admonished, “Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5).

Those who have the attitude that they can glorify God by following man-made doctrine are wrong. They are so consumed with how “they feel” and what “they think” that their attitude will not allow them to submit to and follow God’s glorious truth. The Lord warns of this danger in answering the question of the offended religious leaders of His day. “The came the disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, when they heard this saying? But he answered and said, Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. They alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (Matt. 15:12-14).

A bad attitude toward the Scriptures keeps people from obeying the gospel. If one truly loves, honors and respects God as he should, then he is motivated to become an obedient son or daughter. One with a proper attitude toward God will not quibble with the Father’s commandments.

But what about those in the body of Christ who do not possess the mind of Christ? In other words, can a member of the Lord’s church bring shame and reproach upon the cause of Christ by possessing the wrong attitude? Since the answer is a resounding “yes,” we need to exercise great care that our attitude as a Christian is always that which promotes a Christ-like image of the Lord’s church.

Why do members of the Lord’s church want to act and live like those who are lost? Are the Lord’s people not to be different from the world? Do Christians not have the obligation to come out from among worldly people and be separate (2 Cor. 6:15)? Do Christians please the Father when they try and dress like, look like and act like those who wish to follow the Master? Surely not. Brethren at to be distinct, different, pure and holy in all they do. Children of God are to reformational points and not question marks.

Christians are to do “nothing through faction or through vainglory, but in lowliness of mind each counting other better than himself” (Phil. 2:3). This attitude would strike dead in their tracks many needless contentions among men. The faith must be defended and earnestly contended for ( Jude 3), but matters not of faith must not be allowed to cause harm to the Lord’s church.

Pride has always been the chief culprit in corrupting the attitude of man. Solomon reminds us of several great truths we would do well to remember regarding pride. “By pride cometh only contention, But with the well-advised is wisdom” (Prov. 13:10). And again, “A man’s pride shall bring him low; But he that is of a lowly spirit shall obtain honor” (Prov. 29:25). Perhaps the most remembered and least heeded warning is this: “Pride goeth before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall” (Prov. 16:18).

Pride keeps brethren who know better from admitting they are in error. Pride keeps brethren from admitting they made a mistake. Pride causes brethren to continue fanning the flames of a fire that should not be fanned. Pride causes brethren to be inconsistent as they condemn some brethren in sin and then refuse to call the hand of certain brethren for sin. Pride is a spiritual killer.

Doctrine must be defended and false teachers marked. That which falls wholly into the area of judgment.

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE DOCTRINE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION? By the Immaculate conception we mean that Mary was preserved from original sin from the very first moment of her conception, by a singular grace of God, though the merits of Jesus Christ. It also means that she remained sinless throughout her life.

Needless to say, this is completely without any basis from God’s word. The same could be said about many teachings of the Catholic Church and its many man-made doctrines.

WHAT IS MEANT BY THE PERPETUAL VIRGINITY OF MARY? By the perpetual virginity of Mary is meant that Mary remained a virgin before, during, and after the birth of Jesus.

Not only does this lack any biblical basis, it is an outright contradiction of what is said in Matthew 13:55-56. The inspired record also says of Joseph, “And he knew her not till she brought forth her firstborn son...” (Matt. 1:25).

WHAT DO WE MEAN BY THE ASSUMPTION OF MARY? By the assumption of Mary we mean that after her death, the body was assumed by Christ. Though she has given birth to Jesus, God’s Son, she has given him up on the cross to be the Savior of mankind. In giving up her fleshly son she has gained God’s Son, the Savior of the world. What a great honor.

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Another “Last Crusade” for Billy Graham

A few weeks ago in New York, Billy Graham preached what was billed by many as his “Last Crusade.” Within the past few years he has preached in a number of “last crusades,” but due to his age and physical condition it is almost certain that his “crusades” are about over.

Quite a bit of attention was given by the news media to this crusade. It was reported that in 60 years he has preached to 210 million people in 185 countries. This is quite an accomplishment, both in the number of people hearing him and the countries represented. This is most likely a record for a preacher in this respect.

A great many people have lauded Graham for the good they believe he has done. One statement made regarding the crusade was: “Many went to the front of the stage to receive Christ.” There is no doubt but that multitudes who have heard Billy Graham have come to the conclusion that they have received Christ and have been blessed with salvation.

In the news that I have heard concerning the crusade, there was a surprising amount of attention that it warrants a most serious examination. The salvation of souls is of such great importance, that they have been saved from their sins. Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved…” (Mark 16:16). Has anyone ever heard Billy Graham tell people to do what Christ said in this case? Ananias told Saul to “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). How great a testimony is this, when the hearers were told that they had by “wicked hands” crucified Jesus, who was both Lord and Christ, “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The inspired answer to their questions was, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of the Lord and Christ, “they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do?” (Acts 2:37). The inspired answer to their questions was, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins…” (v. 38).

Has Billy Graham ever one time given people this same answer when they desired to be saved from their sins? Christ said, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved…” (Mark 16:16). Has anyone ever heard Billy Graham tell people to do what Christ said in this case? Ananias told Saul to “arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). How great it would be if all the millions had heard God’s plan of salvation rather than that of Billy Graham. It is sad that many people have been left with a false hope, only to realize at the day of judgment that they will be judged by the words of Christ (John 12:48) and not by the words of man. It is the truth which will make men free.