In The Midst of a Horrendous Culture War

The current effort to corrupt and replace the traditional views and practices of our society has never been so persistent and intense. The capture of the minds of men by evil, if allowed to prevail, can be more devastating than an armed conflict and the loss of life.

From early on in the human race there has been conflict between the elements in society which strive for better things and those which would bring about evil. The degree of support for good and for evil has been variable, but the conflict has persisted. The main lesson in the Book of Revelation is that of a conflict between good and evil, with good winning out by “overcoming” evil. While the conflict in Revelation is between the true servants of God and those of the dragon, the Devil, the present conflict in this Culture War is between those in society who believe in traditional values based on God’s moral standards and those who would remove virtually every vestige of God’s influence from our society. At stake is the way of life that we have known in many years gone by. To help clarify the conflict of which we speak, a definition of a couple words, as we will be using them, is needed.

The Devil. When we use the term “Devil” we have in mind the personification of evil. As John wrote, the Devil “was once a spirit of light, but has become the god of this world” (2 Co 4:4). The Devil “is the god of this world” (1Jo 5:19).

CULTURE. By this we mean what people in society believe and think about morality and how they live. One of Webster’s definitions is: “The behavior and belief of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.” We are using the word as it applies to our society in general.

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**FELLOW-HELPERS**

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<td>Martha E. Lewey</td>
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*Total April – July Contribution: $3,585.87*

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**SPECIAL NOTE:** We had prepared the financial statement for the July issue of BOT, but somehow lost it in our transmission to our Assistant Editor, Alan Adams, who formats BOT in order for me to print the plates which are used to print the paper. Therefore, we added the month of July to this Financial Statement.

*We continue to be encouraged by our brethren who support our efforts in behalf of the truth. Without them we could not carry on.*

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**READERS’ RESPONSE**

We regret that we somehow lost the Readers’ Response carried in the July issue of BOT. Since we had discarded the information it will be impossible to include them in this issue.

*“I've been passing Banner of Truth on to... She had desired to have her name added to our mailing list...” – Faye Bullington, TN.*

*“Thanks for the May-June issue of Banner of Truth. I appreciate the article on the family. How sad it is to see what is happening to our country today, where the family is being undermined. No wonder the young of our nation are so confused and unaware about what God expects of them where marriage and raising a family is concerned. My generation has failed to teach our children the values God expects them to have. Too much money, too many good times, trying to satisfy our selfish desires has sent the wrong message to them. Maybe another depression or a few years of deep recession might bring us to start looking up to see where the blessings come from. We are like a hog rooting around for acorns, never looking up to see where they come from. Thanks again for the paper. It’s not on the mailing list please add my name. Brother Pigg I will be praying for your health.” – Wilson Remlett, AR.*

*“(Blue comments are simply right on course. You have “hit the nail square on the head!” I don’t know your age, but in my almost 80 years I’ve seen so much changed. In the early 1930s we had almost no money but our family stayed together. I agree with you, that a depression might indeed help people to come to their senses. Several years ago I spent a few months in India, where poverty was almost unbelievable, but the people’s interest in spiritual things would put many of us to shame. We’ll see that your name is added.” – Editor).*

*“Dear brethren. This contribution is being made in memory of Essie Johnson, who passed away February 2005.” – Sisters in Christ, Meri Gross, Wanda Hunt, Mary Grimmitt, TX.*

*“(Our sympathy goes out to those of you who lost a sister in Christ. She is also my sister and it is comforting to know that when our friends pass from this life they had made preparation.” – Editor).*

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**BANNER OF TRUTH**

Published by the Hickory Grove church of Christ
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Continued from Page 1

The absence of these values can only mean the further decay of our society and the ultimate ruin of a way of life which has made our country and our society a place to be desired by people from all over the world. A place where God can be worshipped by those who desire to do so.

**THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS WAR**

The likes of this current culture war is that which is “contrary to sound doctrine” and not in harmony with the “doctrine of Christ.”

In a carnal war people fear the enemy; not so in many cases in a culture war. In fact, the enemy may present himself as a friend, and conquer by friendship. This was an effective method employed by the Cross-roads movement within the church. It has also been used in many instances in which people were lured into something evil under the guise of good. Paul warns that “ Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light,” and goes on to say, “it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:14-15). The culture war offensive of today is being waged by ministers of Satan, whether they realize it or not. Those who would do away with God have to be of the Devil, and they may use his means to deceive.

Another contributing factor to the seriousness of the culture war is the great number and variety of means by which it is supported. Few seem to be aware of this. We shall give attention to several of these later. For now we shall consider:

**CONDITIONS WHICH FAVOR THE CULTURE WAR OFFENSIVE**

**A Selfish View of Society.** Some people seem to look no farther than their yard fence when it comes to matters in society. The whole or overall view is not seen at all. A splendid example of this was seen...
Saving Time at Spiritual Expense

Much is said about time in God’s word. We are taught to use it wisely by “redeeming it” (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). One’s way says this means “buying up the opportunity.” Paul said he would not “spend” the time in “Asia,” since he wanted “to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost” (Acts 20:16). The “last time” is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament. In Revelation chapter ten, we learn that a “mighty angel” declared that “there should be time no longer” (v. 6). When eternity arrives, time will not exist.

During our lives we have seen great efforts put forth to save time. There has been great success in these efforts. I grew up on a little farm and have spent days plowing with a couple of mules hitched to a turning plow. Now, there are tractors which can plow more in a day than I could have plowed in more than a month; a great saving of time. There has been outstanding saving of time in transportation. I have left Taiwan on Friday and arrived in Washington state on Thursday. Relative to the food we eat, much time has been saved by the preparation of ready to eat meals. We could go on and on with examples where much time has been saved. This saving of time has been the pursuit of secular things rather than the spiritual.

The Saving Of Time In The Spiritual Realm. Our desire to save time has for quite some time been seen in the realm of the spiritual. But the saving of time in this area is not without a serious price to be paid, relative to spiritual growth and the carrying out of God’s will in many areas. We are going to set forth some examples of saving time in the spiritual realm. We will not exhaust them.

Gospel Meetings. How often do we now hear of a full week for a meeting? The norm is now for less time to be spent in this way. There are “weekend meetings, three-day meetings, even one-day meetings.” Just think, though, of the time we save. In Our Worship Services. There is evidence that the 18 to 20 minute sermon is the most popular kind now. Many seem to just “love it.” If a sermon lasts a full 40 minutes, there may be neck problems due to looking at the clock. For our TV service, we have all heard the expression, “About as likely as the third stanza in a four stanza song.” Two stanzas of a song are more common now. But, my, it does save time. We make the Lord’s Supper short, by saying nothing as to the purpose of it. One time I was preaching in the Philippines. The men serving at the Lord’s Table, took the “cup” and the collection plate to people at the same time. But just think how much time was saved, at least five minutes.

By cutting the time involved in our worship services, enough time may be saved to beat others at our favorite eating place, especially on Sunday. The Spiritual Price We Are Paying. The time we save in the spiritual realm is reflected in the lack of spiritual growth. The cost of this time saved is measured in spiritual loss. A serious question: “For what do we use this saved time?” Is it not used to satisfy our own secular wants and desires? How foolish it is to pay a spiritual price for the time we save. If we would act wisely rather than foolishly, we would be giving more of our time in the pursuit of spiritual things. We are living in “perilous times” and we must endeavor to stand strong, “always bounding in the work of the Lord” for our labor is not in vain there (I Cor. 15:58). When the Lord’s church became a reality, in a wicked world, the disciples “were continu ing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house…” (Acts 2:46). As we sing, “Heaven will surely be worth it all,” but we will not go there by saving time for our own personal use, rather than giving of our time in serving the Lord. In our time, we need to be giving much more time to the Lord rather than less.

The Study of God’s Word. When teaching a Bible class nowadays, one doesn’t have to ask the class who has studied their lesson. No. It is apparent that we are saving time in the study of God’s word. Yes, we are paying a great price spiritually, but just think of the time saved.

An Increase in the Attitude Of Indifference. There has been great success in these efforts. I grew up on a little farm and have spent days plowing with a couple of mules hitched to a turning plow. Now, there are tractors which can plow more in a day than I could have plowed in more than a month; a great saving of time. There has been outstanding saving of time in transportation. I have left Taiwan on Friday and arrived in Washington state on Thursday. Relative to the food we eat, much time has been saved by the preparation of ready to eat meals. We could go on and on with examples where much time has been saved. This saving of time has been the pursuit of secular things rather than the spiritual.

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— Editor
Prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us right things, prophecy deceits” (Isa. 30:10). Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, said, “Who being past feel- ing have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19).

Is there not a great similarity between the thinking of those described above and many people in our day? Are not many people think evil continually? Is it not a fact that many want to hear smooth things, which deceive people morally? Do not some engage in uncleanness with greediness?

Now that we have given attention to some condi- tions which are favorable to the evil culture war, we shall consider several areas in which there is clear evi- dence of the culture war offensive. We will not attempt to exhaust the evidences, but we believe a serious con- sideration of those we shall consider will be enough to help our readers realize the severity of the danger we are facing. Not only as citizens of our society, but more importantly, those who are trying to live a life of submission to God’s will, and who care about others and their spiritual well-being. We believe a good place to start is with:

THE JUDGES AND COURTS OF OUR LAND

Our American Constitution was not set forth by God and few are they who would say that it is “perfect.” But who can deny that it is a great extent based upon principles set forth by God? Belief in God has been an integral part of many laws that have been made to serve our country. Our Constitution has served our country so well that our land has been the envy of other countries. Why change that which has served us so well? But great change has come about, and not for the better.

It used to be that for the most part judges were ex- pected to make decisions based upon our Constitu- tion. Their job was to adjudicate, or make decisions, rather than legislate, or make laws. However, the activ- ity of judges, from the Supreme Court down, has changed drastically. Judges are now making laws rather than deciding matters on the basis of our Constitution. The results of this change are being seen in many areas of our society, and the present prospects are for even greater changes to come.

The system of civil government has God’s approval (Rom. 13), but that doesn’t mean that God uphold anything and everything that may be done by a government. If we would have God’s approval, we must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). More and more our courts and judges are making decisions which are opposed to God’s rules for living, rather than upholding such. Just a few examples should suffice to prove that point —

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the phrase “Under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance should be removed.

The Massachusetts Supreme Court ordered the Massachusetts legislature to legalize same-sex mar- riage, a slap in God’s face relative to the institution of the home and the great part it plays in society.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a Texas suit, ruled that it is unconstitutional to prohibit any kind of sexual be- havior, sordomy or whatever. This was an overruling of a previous ruling about 20 years ago. See the change, and how God’s law is ignored?

The U.S. Supreme Court made a most infamous de- cision in 1973, which allowed the wanton murder of innocent and unwanted children by abortion. This served as a bench mark decision in the denial of the sanctity of life. When human life, created in the image of God, becomes meaningless, why would virtually anything else matter?

Just about anything having to do with God is now outlawed in schools, but that which is morally corrupt is often allowed. It is clear that God is out and evil is in. Too few people protest.

Another concern about our courts is the looking to other countries and their laws as an example for us to follow. At least three of our Supreme Court Justices have made statements that show they are looking to other countries in making their decisions. A good ques- tion is, “What do the other countries have that is an improvement over our own country? And why try to place them by following their examples?” From the standpoint of God’s influence in society, the following of other countries will move us farther away from God. As sad as it is, that is the very thing much of our present society seems to want. As citizens who be- lieve in God we should oppose with all our ability the activists judges of the far left. 2

“intended” meaning: whereas, the latter uses the word to refer to the Holy Spirit. As far as I can tell, “spirit” (Gr., pneuma) is not used in the New Testament in the sense of the “meaning of words,” whether “real” or “intended,” or “strict” or “literal,” unless, as with “letter,” one makes such the aforementioned assumption.


The great J.W. McGarvey understand and fought against this presumed Spirit ↔ Letter antagonism: Just once in the course of his writings Paul makes the declaration that “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2Cor 3:7); and no remark that he ever made has been an greater number of un- licensed ways. If a man insists upon preserving some ordinance in the very form of its original ap- pointment, such an ordinance as baptism or the Lord’s Supper, for example, he is accused of con- tending for the letter that killeth, while the man who makes in God’s way, and who to a great extent ordi- nance, claims that he is following the spirit that giveth life. All of that large class of writers who make free with the Scriptures while claiming to rev- erence their authority, employ this device to ex- clude their departures from the word of God, while those who renounce with them for their license are denounced as literalists, or sticklers for the letter that killeth. In all these instances it seems to be claimed that that if you stick close to the ordi- nance as Christ gave it, you will kill somebody.

The last example that attracted my attention was in connection with the number of elders that should be appointed in a church. The last example that attracted my attention was in connection with the number of elders that should be appointed in a church. But which, in this case, is the “letter” or the “spirit?” AA], or of a rite” (V. IV, p. 63).

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Just about anything having to do with God is now outlawed in schools, but that which is morally corrupt is often allowed. It is clear that God is out and evil is in. Too few people protest.

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But what does Paul mean by the statement in question? We have only to glance at the connec- tion in which it occurs to see. He says: “God made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.” But if the minis- tration of death, written and engraved in stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face, which glory was passing away; how shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory?” Here it is perfectly clear that by the letter that killeth he means the law of Moses, which, as he had abundantly argued elsewhere, could not give life, but brought under condemna- tion those that were under it; and that by the Spirit he means the new covenant in Christ, which alone can give life. Men who are teachers in Israel ought to know this, and they ought to govern themselves accordingly. They ought to at once abandon the habit of perverting by misapplication of this lan- guage of the apostle. [Biblical Criticism, April 3, 1887].

What makes this matter Spirit ↔ Letter thing even more frustrating is this old misinterpretation has virtu- ally become a proverbial maxim in the English language. In sporting events, at home, on the road, we commonly here someone cry, “Yes, that may be the letter of the law, but it’s not the spirit of the law.” Then, people find the words “spirit” and “law” in scriptural juxtaposition and they assume that’s the origin of the whole idea.

This isn’t complicated.

God’s revelation comes to us in “words…which the Spirit teacheth” (1Co 2:13). We “read” and “under- stand” those “words” (Eph 3:3,4), and we “obey” those words (cf. 2Th 3:14). It’s not complicated.

[more to come]—Alan Adams
Spirit of the Law Versus Letter of the Law (I)

Periodically we work at sweeping out the “chimney corner scriptures”; that is, things often quoted and attributed to the Bible when in reality they are not. There are not a few: The forbidden apple; lost ten tribes; wise men; Jesus born on Dec. 25th, and such like. How these things get started it’s sometimes difficult to say; but they surely do seem to take on a life of their own, and they do not readily disappear from parlance.

I have a years’ long habit of writing “chimney cor-ner” ideas on 3x5s and putting them in my little file box. Several cards are in that box quoting folks using some variation of the old saw: “The Spirit of the Law Vi. The Letter of the Law.” (Hereinafter, Spirit ↔ Letter). Several reasons prompt us to examine this popular, two-tiered, hierarchical view of law; especially, Divine Law: (1) It’s not in the Bible, yet it is certainly cited as though it were; (2) it implies subjective relativism: that is, the so-called “spirit” of the law varies with each person; (3) it creates a false dichotomy of, and antipas-thy between, doctrinal strictness on the one hand, and attitude or spirituality on the other; and (4) it comes out of a failure to abide by certain fundamental rules of hermeneutics in the interpreting of two or three pas-sages of Scripture.

Thus, by our study it is hoped that: (1) We can disabuse ourselves of this catchly, but unbiblical, cliché; (2) we can be reconfirmed in the fact that one can (in fact, must be) both loving in mind and lawful in behavior and deed; and (3) we can enjoy the practice of cor-rectly applying some principles of biblical interpreta-tion.

We consider these file box samplings each which uses Spirit ↔ Letter: (1) “We can be so concerned about the ‘letter of the law,’ that we forget about ‘the spirit of the law’—2, “The Pharisees emphasized the ‘letter of the law,’ over ‘the spirit of the law’—3, “Paul...tells the Corinthians that there is a very big difference be-tween God’s Word acting alone and God’s Spirit—the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life...it is not just the Word. The Word is of critical importance, but by itself it only kills.”

We shall ascertain the “spirit” of these quotes from, shall we say, their “letter” (words)?

Webster gives as one definition of letter: “Strict interpretation of the literal meaning, or the literal mean-ing itself; exact wording,” and, of spirit: “Real meaning, true intention.” #1 and #2 seem to be follow-ing Webster. But, anybody who has tried to teach on the subject of “baptism” has encountered the problem of allowing Mr. Webster to define Bible terms.

First, if one granted Webster’s definitions as ap-plied to Spirit ↔ Letter, we would still be compelled to ask, “How precisely do you go about knowing the ‘real meaning’ or ‘true intention’ of God apart from knowing the ‘literal meaning’ of His words?”

We’re not talking about “literal” as opposed to “figu-rative;” rather, in the sense of “real, or actual.” The fact is, even “figurative” language has a “literal” (i.e., real, or actual) meaning. This kind of like the person who once said, “I’m not interested in what the Bible meant to people 2,000 years ago; I’m interested in how it applies to me.” You just have to ask, “Apart from knowing what it meant to the people to whom it was specifi-cally written, how would you know just how it is to apply to you?”

#3 uses “Spirit” with a capital “S,” and uses the Spirit ↔ Letter thing to claim that a person who dedi-cates himself to living solely by the “words” of Jesus—which words are “spirit and life” (Jn 6:63)—is going to somehow be “killed” by those “words” alone. This view essentially says, “Man shall not live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God—which word alone killeth—rather those ‘words of God’ must be quickened by an immediately/in/me indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”

Sure we should look at “letter” & “spirit” in the New Testament before we freely “use” them. #1, 2, and 3 all use “letter” to refer to God’s Word in general. #1 and 2 also use it to refer to the “strict” meaning of God’s Word as opposed to its “real” or “intended” meaning. This usage of the word “letter” is simply not found in the New Testament. It is assumed that Ro-mans 2:27-29 uses it in this manner, but we shall later show that this is just that, an assumption.

#1 and 2 use the word “spirit” in a way different from #3; the former, in the sense of “real” or...
Editor

In the first place, the conversion of Cornelius candidly did the same thing. I did it because I heard others doing the same, or saw sermon outlines which took this position. I no longer do it because I have studied the matter more and am convinced that I failed to understand some things which are important in this matter.

In my early days of preaching I'm quite sure that I took the position that the conversion of Cornelius is to be equated with the state of and conversion of denominational people in the sense that they were saved by faith, and yet he is lost. Then they give the example of the conversion of Cornelius to prove their point.

For years I have heard gospel preachers take the conversion of Cornelius. This conversion is of greater importance than some others contained in Acts, in that this conversion was all, or nearly all, the gospel preaching for several years, it was preached only to the Jews. Cornelius had not had an opportunity to obey the gospel.

Acts, chapters 10 and 11, contain the record of the conversion of Cornelius. What About Cornelius?

It is hard to conceive of the fact that some members of the church, even elders, support the political party which opposes God's will in these matters, but it is a fact. Such people simply do not put God and His will first, as commanded in Matthew 6:33.

not their private preferences, and certainly not what they surmise to be “the Lord laying it on their heart.”

No, friends, true gospel preachers “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2), or as Jesus said, they, “preach the gospel” (Mark 16:15).

“So, you don’t think that preachers should preach with emotion?” Preachers ought to energetically and enthusiastically proclaim the Lord’s gospel. They, like the apostle Paul, should feel, “Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel” (1 Corinthians 9:16). But that is a far cry from saying that they ought to claim that “the Lord laid it on their heart.” Preaching WITH feeling is not the same as preaching which is totally based on feelings or pure emotionalism. For one to claim that he preaches “what the Lord lays on his heart” simply means that he is basing his message on his own personal speculation and what he feels is right. Jesus did not say, “Go and preach whatever you feel in your heart.” The Master said to preach “the gospel.” That should settle the matter for those who want to know the truth.

What About Cornelius?

Acts, chapters 10 and 11, contain the record of the conversion of Cornelius. This conversion is of greater importance than some others contained in Acts, in that this was the first time in which all people, not only Jewish, gave evidence that they were saved by faith. The gospel in our time is available and is for everyone, Jew or Gentile.

In Acts 11:14, Peter is recounting his vision by which he was made clear that Gentiles were to have access to the gospel of Christ. This was hard for Peter to accept, since it had not been this way before. The “spirit bade” Peter to tell Cornelius how to be saved: “Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved.”

From the above statement some people must conclude that Cornelius was in a lost condition even before he had a chance to obey the gospel. Now, there is no question but that when the gospel was presented to Cornelius it was then necessary for him to obey it in order to be saved. But what about Cornelius’ condition before the gospel was presented? Many take the position that he was lost. But what about the implications of that position? This question is often overlooked or not considered.

Let us note what is said of Cornelius before he had had access to the gospel. “A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway” (Acts 10:2). “And said Cornelius, the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God…” (Acts 10:2; 23:2). These words hardly describe a person in denominationalism, something which God has never approved. Do you agree?

Here is a question which deserves an answer with reference to Cornelius and his conversion. That question is: “If Cornelius was lost before he had an opportunity to obey the gospel, was not the Law of God made known to him? Was not the Law of God’s will for man? It is the case now that nearly everything from fast foods are using sexual displays to sell their products. Movies, magazines, and TV programs have a regular menu of sex. Clothing, or lack of it, has never been so provocative as it is now. So many young people, and some not so young, are attired in a manner which gives the “come on” look. Have you noticed that even news people on TV, when showing raunchy sexual scenes, often display their approval with a sheepish grin? Not a few seem oblivious that their children may be at risk.

The maintaining of sexual purity until marriage is being put down by some, and demonstrated by many. I noted an article in The Paducah Sun, June 10, 2005, which was encouraging. The article, by John Seewer of AP, discussed “Silver rings a reminder of teenagers’ pledge to purity.” The first paragraph reads:

In our two major political parties there are great differences with regard moral issues, especially that of abortion and homosexuality. There are no perfect political parties or politicians, but it cannot be denied that there is a great difference with regard to the two issues above.

Since abortion and homosexuality are clearly condemned in God’s word, those who support and encourage the party which stands for these two sinful practices, are bidding God speed to what which opposes God’s will. The support of these two evils is out front in the current culture war. These two things are links in the chain of opposition to God and His influence in our society. These two issues have a great deal to do with the winners in the last presidential election.

Yet, the fact that those in support of these evils numbered only about three million less than those on the other side, is a sad reflection of just how far our society has gone in opposing God and His will for man. I can well remember the time when a politician with a plank of his platform assuring voters that he or she would do in wise oppose homosexuality and abortion would not have gotten to first base. Yet, it is now the case that some politicians are making this assurance one of their strongest appeals. Such politicians cannot have respect for God. They would change our culture to deny God’s will rather than uphold it. They can’t possibly believe that “righteousness exalteth a nation,” or else they simply don’t care. In some cases it may be both.

Those who boast of their approval of the wanton murder of innocent unborn children, and the sin of homosexuality, would have others to do the same, thereby increasing the enemies of God. In these two areas they are saying in effect, “I’m in favor of removing God from the picture.”

It is hard to conceive of the fact that some members of the church, even elders, support the political party which opposes God’s will in these matters, but it is a fact.
PREACHING WHAT THE LORD “LAYS ON YOUR HEART”
Roger D. Campbell

What message should preachers preach? Many of our denominational friends would say, “Just preach whatever the Lord lays on your heart.” Is that what the Bible says?

If one claims that he preaches “what the Lord lays on his heart,” how does he know that it is the Lord that “lays it on his heart,” and not Satan? How does he go about proving that it was more than his own personal gut feeling? There is no way that a person living today could ever prove that his decision to preach on a certain topic, or to deliver a lesson in a certain way, came directly from the Lord. One man that called himself a former youth pastor emphasized to me that a preacher just needs to preach whatever the Lord lays on his heart. Then, in the next breath he spoke of his support for women preachers in public assemblies, the use of mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship, and other un biblical concepts. This is, as we say, “par for the course,” Why? Because those that advocate preaching “what the Lord lays on your heart,” sooner or later always get a round to propagating unscriptural messages, showing that, alas, their message was not something that the Lord laid on their heart after all. Folks, if the message that they speak is not scriptural, then guess what? It did not come from the Lord, and people ought to stop accusing Him of being the source of their self-imagined doctrines.

Have you ever read in your Bible that the Lord told Christians that they should teach or preach “whatever He would lay on their heart”? Someone might say, “No, not in those exact words, but surely you would agree that there were inspired preachers.” Yes, and the key word here is “were,” “not, are.” THERE WERE inspired preachers, but there ARE NONE alive today. Inspired preachers were those that received God’s revelation in a miraculous way, being directly led by the Holy Spirit to speak forth God’s message. For instance, we read in Matthew 10:18-20 that Jesus told His apostles, “And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” That was a promise Jesus made to His apostles, not to people living in the 21st century. Later Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth and would cause them to remember all that Jesus had spoken to them (John 16:13; 14-26).

Again, those were special promises for the apostles, not you and me.

We further read in the New Testament that the mystery of God, which is the salvation of Jews and Gentiles through Jesus, through the gospel, and in the church, was “revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:4,5). The Holy Spirit miraculously revealed it to the apostles of the first century prophets, and they preached it to others. Those men were, indeed, inspired preachers. 

Observe this about inspired preachers. In the first century, inspired preachers also received from God the power to perform signs or miracles. What was the purpose of such signs? To confirm the message that they preached (Mark 16:20; Heb. 2:3,4). In other words, inspired men preached the gospel of God, and as they did so, by the Holy Spirit’s power they performed miracles to prove that what they were saying was from God, and thus it was true and should be accepted as authentic and authoritative.

Miracles were a temporary phenomena that ended in the first century. Thus, today there are no preachers that are performing genuine miracles. The Holy Spirit’s direct guidance of preachers was also a temporary phenomenon that came to an end in the first century. The Spirit now leads men through His truth, the word of God (John 16:13). Instead of having inspired preachers, we now have uninspired men that are obligated to prove their spirit-inspired gospel.

What is it that preachers are supposed to preach? Not their own feelings, not their personal hunches, _ but when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” That was a promise Jesus made to His apostles, not to people living in the 21st century. Later Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth and would cause them to remember all that Jesus had spoken to them (John 16:13; 14-26).

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“When Katie Chromik put a silver ring on her finger and promised at church to save sex for marriage, her junior high school friends giggled.” There were other critics, of course. “Critics say the message is too focused on abstinence alone, which is hard to maintain and, if broken can lead to unprotected sex and a higher risk of disease,” the article says. Even the ACLU weighed in as a critic. They “filed a lawsuit May 16 that accused the federal government of improperly using taxpayer money to fund religious activities in the program.” There you have it. There are critics of God’s method of abstinence until marriage. We know His method works, but more and more people are not going to respect His method, since they love darkness rather than the light of God’s truth.

TERRI SCHIAVO’S TRAGIC DEATH

The unilateral court-ordered starvation death of Terri Schiavo is a powerful example of how the evil side of the culture war is progressing. I use the word “unilateral” since this woman could not speak for herself. The implication of what happened in this case should sound a serious warning to us, especially those who may become unable to take care of themselves. And, this happens to many elderly people as well as some who are not elderly.

Let us consider the condition of Terri Schiavo when the court decided to order her to be starved to death. Some in our country oppose capital punishment on the grounds that it is “cruel and unusual punishment.” The court decided to order her to be starved to death. Some in our country oppose capital punishment on the grounds that it is “cruel and unusual punishment.” Yet, a court can starve a person to death, and that is not “cruel and unusual punishment.” Back to this woman’s condition. Though impaired physically, 1) she was not “brain-dead”; 2) she was not in a coma; 3) she was not on a respirator; 4) she was not near death; and, 5) her heart was not kept beating by artificial means.

Though impaired physically, 1) she was not “brain-dead”; 2) she was not in a coma; 3) she was not on a respirator; 4) she was not near death; and, 5) her heart was not kept beating by artificial means. Although some have tried to do so, it is impossible to equate the condition of this woman with one who is “brain-dead,” in a “coma,” or totally unconscious and with no possibility of possibly regaining a better state of life.

According to polls, more than 70 per cent of people were in favor of death by starvation for Terri Schiavo. Even some far-out liberals were not in favor of this death by starvation. But what bothers me so much is that if the polls were even half-way correct, the respect for human life in our so-called “Christian nation” has waned to a frightening degree. This means that a great many who claim to believe in God are in favor of taking one’s life when that person is so incapacitated that others have to feed and take care of them.

I’m almost 80 years old. There is a real possibility that I may become dependent upon others in order to live. I have no fear whatsoever that my children would, in such a case, decide to kill me by keeping necessary food from me, even if I couldn’t talk or take care of myself. But on the other hand, if I had children like Terri Schiavo’s rotten adulterous husband, my existence might well come to an end.

Millions of precious, innocent boys and girls are being murdered by abortion, because they are not wanted. And, because there is no respect for human life, which originated with God. Stop to think of it, if it is alright to kill the innocent while in the womb, why not kill the innocent and helpless outside the womb? This very thing is being done in some places already. They call it “euthanasia” instead of murder. It may sound better but it is no less evil. Under Hitler multitudes were eliminated (killed) because they were unwanted for some reason or other. In Holland people are being killed, when they are unwanted and not useful in society. What does the future hold for us here in America? When God is ruled out, anything can happen.

As a reminder of just how far some in our society have gone in disregarding the sanctity of God-given life we call attention to an article in the Paducah Sun, Aug. 6, 2005, by Maya Bell of The Orlando Sentinel. The article’s headline: “Schiavo receives honor for letting his wife die.” The facts were that he wanted her to be starved to death. Some in our country oppose capital punishment on the grounds that it is “cruel and unusual punishment.” Yet, a court can starve a person to death, and that is not “cruel and unusual punishment.” Back to this woman’s condition. Though impaired physically, 1) she was not “brain-dead”; 2) She was not in a coma; 3) she was not on a respirator; 4) She was not near death; and, 5) her heart was not kept beating by artificial means. Although some have tried to do so, it is impossible to equate the condition of this woman with one who is “brain-dead,” in a “coma,” or totally unconscious and with no possibility of possibly regaining a better state of life.

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who wanted to see her starved to death. This should serve as a serious warning to those of us who are alive and may face a time when our ability to live depends upon others, and when we cannot speak for ourselves. In some cases, some might even want to see us dead, as was the case with Terri Schiavo.

**EVOLUTION AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN (ID)**

Within the past few decades, as the efforts to remove every vestige of God’s influence from our society have increased, the pushing of evolution has increased. The adamant demands of the evolutionist, who doesn’t believe in God, is that only evolution be taught in schools, and any idea of “intelligent design” be forbidden. I can remember the time when evolution was a “theory” and not a “fact.” Now evolution is being pushed as a fact, not a theory. After more than 30 years of subscribing to The National Geographic, I cancelled my subscription when they started calling evolution a fact rather than a theory.

The discussion of Evolution and Intelligent Design gained national attention recently when President Bush let his views be known. In an article in The Punditcast Sun., Aug. 19, 2005, entitled “Scholars debate evolution lessons,” the subject is discussed. When the President was queried on the subject of Evolution and ID, he responded in the following way: “You’re asking me whether or not people ought to be exposed to different ideas and the answer is ‘Yes.’”

The third paragraph of the article says: “The President’s remark prompted sharp criticism from intelligent design opponents. Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean said Sunday on the CBS program “Face the Nation” that Bush is “anti-science” and “there’s no factual evidence for intelligent design.”

We have noted a number of conditions which now upon us in a way we’ve never seen before. This is an offensive war designed to change the culture which was based upon what we call “Traditional Values.” It is a serious effort to remove God from society, and His influence in the way we live.

We have discussed the Culture War in which our society is now involved. To give some idea as to the power being exhibited by those waging the offensive war, consider if you will, the following: Howard Dean, as mentioned above, has been selected by a major political party to represent it as Party Chairman. The very fact that he affirms, “there’s no factual evidence for intelligent design,” exhibits his shallow thinking. In spite of his failure to think soundly, Howard Dean shows evidence of Intelligent Design. He has a mind. Did his mind, his ability to think, result from unintelligent design? He also has complex organs of his body. He is able to see, hear, digest food, speak, etc. Did this happen because of unintelligent design? The great complexity of the organs of his body defy the idea of “It just happened without a cause.” Can you imagine that there are powerful forces in our society which would have our young people believe such tomfoolery? If we care, if we believe in God, we had better open our to the reality of such.

We have not touched much more than the proverbial “hem of the garment” in this discussion. I

We have not given the attention to the subjects of abortion and homosexuality which they deserve. But due to space we are limiting our discussion, until a future time. We do want to sort of briefly re- view what we have written up to this point, trusting that it will help impress upon the minds of our readers the seriousness of what we have discussed.

**A CLOSING SUMMARY**

1. We have discussed the Culture War which is now upon us in a way we’ve never seen before. This is an offensive war designed to change the culture which was based upon what we call “Traditional Values.” It is a serious effort to remove God from society, and His influence in the way we live.

2. This War is more serious than a physical war. It is a war for the minds of people. It is so unlike a physical war in that the enemy is often not feared, since he may present himself as a friend, or “an angel of light.” It involves moral values in a wide area and the removal of God’s influence. When God is left out, anything goes, even the greatest evil.

3. We have noted a number of conditions which make the success of this evil war more likely:— (1) Indifference prevails as never before; many don’t seem to care what happens. (2) The dislike of a moral code of behavior; people who walk in darkness do not like the light of truth. (3) The betrayal of the truth of God by those who are religious and claim to believe in God. (4) More people are inclined toward doing evil rather than good; the thoughts of many are continually evil.

4. Several areas in which there is clear evidence of this offensive culture war have been noted— (1) The judges and courts of our land have in many cases substituted their own thinking or desires in making decisions, rather than conforming to the Constitution. (2) The American Civil Liberties Union is waging a persistent war against our traditional values. They constitute an enemy of America. (3) Failure of individuals to assume responsibility for their deeds. (4) The influence of liberal politicians. (5) The extent of sexual permissiveness is at an all-time high, and few seem to care. (6) The disregard for the sanctity of human life as exhibited by the court-ordered starvation death of Terri Schiavo. (7) The support of evolution and the severe criticism of “Intelligent Design” or (ID).

There has never been a time in our lives when there was a greater need to awaken to the reality of the battle in which we are now engaged, and which is almost certain to worsen. One thing which serves as a setback in the realization of the real danger involved in this war, is that the present generation is not nearly as aware of the changes in our culture which have already taken place, as are those who are much older. Many immoral things which are accepted as commonplace today would have been rare indeed in my growing up days.

Whatever affects our society in general will almost certainly reach over into the church. In my more than 50 years of preaching I’ve seen this happen as have others who have preached or have been members of the church for many years. What does this have to do with a Culture War, you may ask? A great deal. No, I don’t mean that members of the church are trying to completely do away with God’s influence, as many people are, but I do say that the respect for God within the church has decreased. How do I know this? The evidence is seen in various areas.

Years ago, most of us demanded a “thus saith the Lord,” before engaging in spiritual activities. We often said, “We speak where the Bible speaks and keep silent where it is silent.” Though God’s word has not changed, our beliefs and practices have change in a number of instances.

We used to contend that the word of the church involved three areas: evangelism, edification and benevolence. I suppose only the Lord knows just how many things are practiced within the church today which fall into neither of the three.

Doctrinally speaking, we took the position that the Lord’s church was distinctive, and that abiding in “the doctrine of Christ” was necessary to have the approval of the Father and the Son. Even the basic and fundamental teachings and practices, as approved of God, are now being ignored by too many. In this way, respect for God is lessening, and many seem to want it that way.

Unless I haven’t made my point that we are now in a serious Culture War—I’ll say no more. — Editor