brief, due to the fact that we intend to understand Bible words or terms, even though they are recorded in God’s word. In most instances it is not good to take for granted that people fully respect and followed would rule out and do away with most of the worship which people to-
day engage. People must know these two things.

What is Worship? Before proceeding we need to give attention to the definition of worship of God as revealed in his word. In most instances it is not good to take for granted that people fully understand Bible words or terms, even though they may be quite commonly used. This is certainly true with regard to this important word. According to Vine’s, proskuneo is “the most frequent word rendered worship.” He defines it: “to make obeisance, do reverence to (from pros, to- wards, and kuneo, to kiss).” Thayer has a very similar definition. A common definition, which I believe is a very good one is, “acts of reverence paid to God by man.” There is no question that true worship involves the greatest degree of rever- ence and respect that man can of.

Offering him the kingdoms of the world and their glory, the Devil tempted Jesus saying, “fall down and worship me” (Matt 4:10). The Savior’s response shows where we are to worship: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord they God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt 4:10). He revealed how we are to worship when He said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Let us thank God that all who would worship acceptably have the divine instructions as to the who and the how of worship. This information, if respected and followed would rule out and do away with most of the worship which people to-
day engage. People must know these two things and we in the church also need to have a better understanding of them.

I. THE HISTORY OF WORSHIP
By The History of Worship we mean things which are recorded in God’s word and also some things which are a matter of uninspired history. This will be brief, due to the fact that we intend to give...
The Book of Zephaniah is almost hot to the touch. He opens hard and fast with words of judgment upon Judah. Unlike her sister to the north, Judah had known not only faithful prophets, but also great reformer kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah. It was in “the days of Josiah” Zephaniah proclaimed, “the day of Jehovah is at hand” (1:7), which theme thereafter dominates the book. Corruption, impurity, cruelty, and so on were so rampant as to have obscured Josiah’s valiant efforts and years’ long work at cleaning house. It’s a recurring biblical theme: “Spurned opportunity and advantage stoke the fire of the ‘fierce anger of Jehovah’” (2:2).

Having judged the “nations” (2:14), this pointed preacher now turns his attention to the sins of “the oppressing city,” Jerusalem (3:1). “Her princes…her judges…her prophets” (3:4-5); none, it seems, escaped censure. We are particularly concerned here with his description of her preachers, the prophets. They, he said, “are light and treacherous persons.” The word “light” translates the Hebrew word pachaz, which means, “to be wanton, reckless, be frothy.” It primarily is used to describe the rolling, bubbling motion of boiling water (Genesis, p. 671-2); which is why Jacob described his son Reuben as “boiling over as water” (Genesis 49:4): “unstable as water.” Inspiration’s chosen Hebrew word, and our translation “light” well describe a class of Old Testament preachers who were driven by their passions and desires, not truth; who were reckless in their application of God’s Word and in their choice of what they would and would not preach; who were frothy, air-headed and convictionless.

Lite preaching was a stench then, and is no less so today. We have so many lite preachers among us. They will say—or, not say—anything; they will perform, for a buck, like those Abimelech hired for seventy pieces of silver: “vain and light fellows” (Judg 9:4).

Our lite preachers are reckless with the Bible. They promote such puerile and false notions as; grace trumps out law, and law grace; preach the man, not the plan; unity in diversity; restoration of pure New Testament religion is only a goal to be pursued never achieved, and so on. These are they who, despite the fact that the Lord, “who has authority over all flesh” (John 17:2), has said “whosoever except…” with regard to divorce and remarriage, would apply His teaching to less than those to whom He applied it, or take exception to the Lord’s use of “except.” Such lite preachers are dangerous in that “they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed” (Isaiah 9:16). Our lite preachers are also frothy. In the absence of substance, they seek to impress their audiences with dramatic, theatrical, bombastic. Cappuccino comes to mind here. The pretentious name notwithstanding, and even if you sip with a protruding pinkie, it’s still just really strong coffee with a frothy milk head. Shooting steam into cool milk makes that milk head. Like our lite preachers, they spews and bubbles inside a nice little head. You can even sprinkled cinnamon on the froth for taste and looks. And, like our lite preachers, that head of froth is about 99% hot air. Rather than serious study and conviction, they’ve discovered it’s easier to pool up and dress up ignorance.

Our lite preachers are also the ones who spend their waking hours musing in the latest who is doing what to whom. They are pachaz, wanton, reckless, and frothy. These cappuccino heads spew, they froth and they swell. They give lip service to the “whole counsel of God” all the while limiting the concept to whatever happens to be their latest cause or team of preference. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees embracing one another, these lite ones can also easily embrace what was once outrageous and anathema. Lite people can seamlessly switch from confederate to enemy and back again. Lite preachers live by the fastest roster, rather than by personal study, conclusion and conviction.

Because we want health and vitality, we focus on lite varieties of foods and dishes. That may be all well and good for our physical health, but these lite preachers and their lite life and will ultimately destroy the congregations they influence. The “fierce anger of Jehovah” awaits the lite.
The Revelations of Time and Space

We often cite Genesis 1:1 pointing out the incidental reference to the five fundamentals of reality: Time ("beginning"); Force ("God"); Energy ("created"); Space ("heavens"); Matter ("earth"). Two on the list frequently remind us of our limitations: time and space.

Here and there: not a day passes that we do not make choices about these two advers. Given the nature of here and there and my inherent limitations, when I choose one, I exclude the other. And, when I choose one to the exclusion of the other, this implies that I have my reasons—obligation, pleasure/displeasure, profit, and so on—in counting one superior to the other, or vice versa. James, albeit from a different perspective, talked about superior here as opposed to inferior there. This is in his comments about sinful respect of persons whereby one might say to one visitor, “sit thou here,” and to another “stand thou there” (Jam 2:3). In another words, their prejudices implied that “here” in such a case was superior to “there.” This is not the only instance in which we imply our prejudices.

When the church—the local church of which you and I are a member—meets or gathers at it regular times for Bible study or worship, for gospel meetings; VBS; lectureships; work days; door-knocking, each of us

religion in the world and also in the U.S. They worship a god that teaches them to kill those who are not of their religion. The Tibetans have their “prayer wheels” by which they send up prayers. We have some from many pagan religions here in our country. The Roman Catholics revere so-called “saints,” have images, “holy water,” and a great many things which are not according to "truth" as set forth in John 4:24. People have sacrificed children and other humans to false gods. All of this has to do with worship that is false and unacceptable to God.

It is not our purpose to spend much time on the subject of pagan religions and their worship. Since God’s word reveals to us the truth concerning worship, we do not wish to call attention to another matter concerning worship.

An Innate Desire to Worship. There is much evidence to suggest that God-created man with such a desire; that is, a “built-in” longing to worship some higher power. When Paul healed the impotent man the people said, “the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men, and that they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius…” (Acts 14:8-12). The first of the ten commandments was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). But biblical history records the fact that the people often violated this commandment. The Israelites went “a whoring after their gods” (Ex. 34:16). Idolatry constituted a serious problem with people from early on. That people have an innate desire to worship something is seen in the fact that history reveals that just about all people in the course of human history have worshipped something. But the tragic thing about this desire to worship is that the vast majority of people have most of the time worshiped something or someone other than the true God. Needless to say that this worship is false and therefore vain, or worthless. Not only is it worthless, it results in the eternal condemnation of those who engage in it.

Do you like the style of this writing? Is it clear and concise? Is it engaging and interesting? Is it well-organized and easy to follow? If you have any questions or need further clarification, feel free to ask.
these five acts of worship will focus primarily on our corporate worship and those who lead us in these acts.

II. THE TEACHING/HEARING OF GOD’S WORD

When God’s word is spoken to us and we thus hear God speaking to us, this is indeed an act of reverence paid to God by man. In this act of worship there should be a continued desire or yearning. The apostle Peter puts it this way: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (I Pet. 2:2). The supply of this “sincere milk” will never run dry for those who desire it. If the appetite wanes, so does the spiritual growth which is necessary for spiritual maturity.

There are a number of areas where improvement could be made in this act of worship. Opportunity implies responsibility, and this is true when it comes to teaching/hearing God’s word. Our Bible classes and worship assemblies afford great opportunities, yet there is evidence of an irresponsible lack of desire for God’s word. From the teaching perspective, our Bible classes to often reveal little time and interest in study; and, our preaching regularly caters to hearers who prefer pabulum to meat. From the teaching perspective, it is all too common to have Bible class teachers who are ill prepared or know little about what they are trying to teach; and, preachers often mount the podium with no focus, no point, and little Bible. Contributing to the general problem are elders who when they are not capable of feeding the flock or being able “by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). Compared to a few decades ago, there seems to be a dearth of serious Bible students.

A paramount concern of leaders is that the flock be fed unpolluted feed; that is, that which is not in harmony with the truth. In some instances error is preached or taught and not one word is heard by way of correction or refutation. In the case of teaching children, there is now more emphasis upon fun and games rather than actually learning meaningful things from God’s word. We see signs of this among adults as well. When God’s word is altered or perverted, teaching/hearing is no longer a true act of worship. Paul speaks of those who “would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7), and pronounces “anathema” upon those who pervert it (v. 8). Christ’s response to the Scribes and Pharisees who came questioning Him was, “in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). Another way by which the teaching/hearing of God’s word ceases to be true worship, is in the use of some of the modern versions, which do not actually set forth the truth accurately.

There are also efforts to reduce the important time spent in teaching/hearing God’s word. Vacation Bible Schools have been cut down to the point that some are even less than one day. Back when the church was growing, worship meetings were often a week or even more, but now are short or shorter. A meeting for a whole week is almost unheard of. In the Banner of Truth lectures here in Murray, where the seventh will be conducted this year, only a very few of the people who could attend will do so. Some congregations will not even have one person in attendance; yet, in four days some twenty-eight Bible lessons will be presented by about eighteen speakers. These speakers, many of whom started during a time when there was a continued learning from God’s word, represent well over a hundred years’ experience in preaching and teaching.

There is no doubt that teaching/hearing of God’s word is important; it is equally doubtless that we have much room for improvement in this area. We show disrespect for God’s word when we engage in distractions as God’s word is being read. Many think nothing of coming into the auditorium or classroom when God’s word is being read, apparently not stopping to think that when God’s word is being read, that is God speaking to us. There seems to be a tendency to divorce God from his word when he speaks. When God came down to speak with Moses on mount Sinai (Exodus 19) it was an awesome matter indeed. In our time, it is no less an awesome thing when God speaks to us through His word.

III. THE GIVING OF OUR MATERIAL MEANS

The first time the giving of material means is mentioned in God’s word is the case of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). Such giving is showing reverence to God. If one grows to give out of the abundance of God’s goodness and grace in his heart, so that he gives with effort, with joy, and with love, then he is giving with reverence to God. It is not only the amount given, but the spirit behind the gift. May we be more diligent in this matter, for “...the price is $99 in advance and $109 at the door for the past several years, there is little cause to be surprised at activities which are announced nowadays. —

Baptism and its Relationship to Salvation

We first need to define the terms baptism and salvation. This is due to the fact that there is so much misunderstanding relative to the use of these important words. Baptism, as it is used in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16:15,16), means a “burial” (Rom. 6:3-4), and is for those who are capable of “believing” (Mk. 16:16). It is also for those who have “repented” (Acts 2:38). Salvation, as we are using the word in this discussion, has reference to the forgiveness of sins (Acts 22:16, Acts 2:38) which were committed before baptism. After one has been “baptized into Christ” (Gal. 3:27), it is not needful to be baptized again in order to have the forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness of sins for the scripturally baptized believer is promised upon the confession of those sins (I John 1:7,9).

The only way to learn the relation of baptism to salvation is to go to the only source of truth on this subject, the word of God, by which we will be judged (John 12:48). It is imperative that we rely upon this divine truth rather than the teachings of men, which are varied and conflicting. We shall note only a few instances where the word of God is used in the New Testament, but let us point out that there is no difficulty in seeing the connection between baptism and salvation in these references, providing we accept what the Scriptures clearly say.

In the Great Commission as recorded by Mark (16:15-16), the relationship between baptism and salvation is stated plainly. “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved.” To say that belief is necessary to salvation but that baptism is not necessary, is to reject the Lord’s inspired word. In Acts 2:38, those asking, “what shall we do?” were told: “Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins…” To say that repentance is essential to having one’s sins forgiven, but that baptism is not essential, is to reject the inspired words of the apostle. Saul, later Paul, was told to go into the city and it would be told him what he “must do” (Acts 9:6). When there, he was told: “Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord” (Acts 22:16). That salvation is inseparably connect with baptism is shown from the fact that it is through baptism that one gets “into Christ.” Paul says plainly that one gets into Christ, where salvation is found. He says plainly that one is “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). He equally plainly tells us that salvation is “in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:10). If salvation is found in Christ (and it is), and if one gets into Christ through baptism (and one does), it is giving God’s word the lie to say that salvation may be had without scriptural baptism.

[This is a portion of an article from the Sunny View Reminder, August 1, 1981] — Editor

Lipscomb Continues Her Drift

An article in The Tennessean, Jan. 24, 07, is entitled: Lipscomb hosts father-daughter conference. The following are several selective, representative quotations—

On Saturday, Feb. 10, Lipscomb University will host a done-day conference for Nashville fathers and daughters.

The Father-Daughter Summit, held from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m., will feature worship, break-out sessions, talks by the founder of Promise Keepers, and activities for each father and daughter pair.

Lipscomb University’s Family and Consumer Sciences Department sponsors the summit, which is in its second year. So many people who came said to us, We hope you will do this again. And men who didn’t get a chance to go called me to say. What will the next one be held, John Conger, chair- man of the Lipscomb Family and Consumer Sciences Depart- ment and a minister at Hillbore Church of Christ, said in a recent news release.

Founding president of Promise Keepers Randy Phillips will speak, along with his 15-year-old daughter, Kimberly Phillips.

Other speakers include CEO of the National Center for Fathering, Carey Casey. Joanet Charles, who founded Di- vine Alternatives for Dads Services, or DADS; and Doug Webster, a minister who authored Dear Dad and Dear Mom, based on interviews with kids about their dads.

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If one has kept up with the happenings at Lipscomb for the past several years, there is little cause to be surprised at activities which are announced nowadays. —

so that is through baptism that one gets “into Christ.” Paul says plainly that one gets into Christ, where salvation is found. He says plainly that one are “baptized into Christ” (Rom. 6:3-4; Gal. 3:27). He equally plainly tells us that salvation is “in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 2:10). If salvation is found in Christ (and it is), and if one gets into Christ through baptism (and one does), it is giving God’s word the lie to say that salvation may be had without scriptural baptism.

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to God; it is thus an act of worship. We will focus primarily on giving as taught in the New Testament, but we first want to consider some things from the Old Testament. While we no longer live under the Old Testament, there are things we can learn from it, which may help us to be more appreciative of what is taught in the New Testament. Paul said, “For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning…” (Rom. 15:4). This would certainly include the subject of giving.

Under the Old Testament, God severely condemned people for failure to give as commanded. If such was the case then, it stands to reason that God would be displeased with our failure to give as commanded in our time. In Malachi chapter one, the Jews are bucked for their unacceptable offerings. Malachi asks: “And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil, and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil” (Mal. 1:8)? They viewed their worship as “a weariness” and brought before God that “which was torn, and the lame, and the sick” (v. 13).

Under the law of Moses, the sacrifices were to be the best rather than the worst or culs. The Passover lamb was to be the best. In principle, we are to follow the same rule under the Law of Christ. Though we are amenable to the laws of animal sacrifices and tithing, we are taught some important things about our giving. As to the amount we are to give, the Lord could not have been more understanding; we are to give as we have been prospered (I Cor. 16:1-2). Although we are not told what percentage of our incomes we are to give, our giving says something about us. In telling the Corinthians to abound in the grace of giving, Paul said it was to “prove the sincerity of your love” (2 Cor. 8:8). If we are truly sincere in our love, our giving will be greater than it would be if we are lukewarm and halfhearted.

Paul sets forth some important aspects relative to giving in 2 Corinthians 9. 7. We are not to give “grudgingly, or of necessity.” It is also interesting to note that we are to give as we “purpose” in our heart. He then tells us that “God loveth a cheerful giver.” Paul clearly teaches the need for planned or purposed giving. “Achan was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many” (v. 2). Our giving should be planned and proportionate to how we prosper. In other words, we personally plan to give a certain amount based upon our prospering a certain amount.

Unplanned or unpurposed giving is essentially hap-hazard giving. Having first taken care of what they deem most important, some seem to give on the basis of what is left over. Giving based on this principle is tantamount to shortchanging the Lord. Giving is either planned or unplanned. I doubt that there would be exceptions to the general rule that the amount of “planned giving” will be greater than the amount of “unplanned giving.”

Our worship by giving, has room for improvement. When compared with other religious groups, we are often pretty far down the list. What others give is not the way by which we determine what to give, but it does times show that those who uphold and practice error give more than those of us who have the truth. It is typically true that where a good amount of teaching is done on giving the contribution has shown a good increase. We need to be taught on this aspect of worship as well as on the others. Of course, we know that teaching doesn’t always bring desired results, but we have the responsibility to declare the whole counsel of God regardless of the results produced. I recall preaching on this sensitive subject of giving at a congregation forty years ago. A dollar was worth much more then than now. But one brother, who was serving at the Lord’s Table, made a comment about my lesson on giving. His comment was words of the following order: “Brother Pigg’s lesson on giving was good; and to show what it meant to me, I am doubling my contribution.” He then proceeded to stroke two one dollar bills and drop them in the collection plate.

Our giving is much better than it used to be, but there is room for improvement. And when if the “sincerity of our love,” improves, our giving will. In my early days of preaching, when I was still in school, I had an invitation to preach in a place perhaps a hundred miles from Henderson, TN. When I preached morning and evening, as I recall it, I was given the entire contribution for that day. To the best of my memory that was $4.35. It is true that I may not have been worth that, and even though that would have bought seventeen gallons of gas at that time, my family and I did not have much left over after expenses.
IV. PRAYER AS PUBLIC WORSHIP

In the Bible, the subject of prayer is extensive. There are many outstanding examples of prayer recorded in the Old Testament. One is that of Daniel, who in spite of the decree that forbade prayer, Daniel “went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:8-10).

This a great example of belief in prayer. Another one is that of Elias, who “prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (Jas. 5:17).

The New Testament is no less replete with examples. From Christ’s command to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44), prayer is mentioned and discussed many times. We know that it was and is an integral part of worship of the true and living God. As to the habit and routine of prayer, Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Speaking to God through prayer is indeed an act of reverence paid to God by man.

Christ sets forth the model prayer, often (and I think erroneously) referred to as “The Lord’s prayer” (Matt. 6:9-13). In Luke’s account it is said that a disciple said, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Lk. 11:1). That model prayer is a general pattern as to what our prayers should be. Another great prayer pattern, which may more aptly be called the Lord’s prayer, is recorded in John chapter seventeen.

We shall now set forth some conditions for acceptable prayer, and then some things which hinder God-approved prayer. By observing these things we trust that we may put forth an effort to make our worship in prayer more acceptable and in keeping with the teaching of Christ. We begin by suggesting:

**One must be a Christian.** The privilege of prayer is granted to those who are Christians. Whereas all Christians have the privilege of prayer, in corporate worship only men are to lead public prayers. The New Testament clearly teaches that those outside of Christ are not qualified to pray to the Father. Such people cannot truly address God as their “Father,” because He isn’t their Father. In addition to being a child of God, one is to be a righteous person. Peter says, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16). The understanding of the blind man, which was healed by Christ was: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, an doeth his will, him he heareth” (Jno. 9:31). This was not an inspired man speaking, but his expressed understanding was not refuted. Is this not what Peter said in what we noted above? Another bit of evidence that one must be a Christian to offer acceptable prayer, is the fact that prayer is a “spiritual blessing,” and “all spiritual blessings” are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

**Prayer must be in faith.** With regard to praying for wisdom, James said, “let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with wind and tossed...” (Jas. 1:5-7).

Prayer should be unfrothy. James said, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon lusts [pleasures]” (Jas. 4:3). We should not pray for that which in no way contributes to our spiritual well-being, rather to our hurt. Prayer is to be in harmony with God’s will. It is not in harmony with God’s will to pray for that which God opposes. For example, we should not pray for God to supply the needs of a person who is too lazy to work. God’s law is that if one will not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:10). In Christ’s agony in the garden, He prayed, “Oh my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Matt. 26:39). When He prayed the second time he prayed, “thy will be done.”

While Jesus’ words may be applicable to a child, they are not applicable to an adult who has chosen to walk his own path.

**Things Which May Hinder Acceptable Prayer.** Just as there are things which contribute to acceptable prayer as worship, there are things which hinder the same. These are things which, if we are truly engaging in prayer as worship, we will try to avoid. Talking to God is a most exalted privilege and we should be thankful for it and try to make it as acceptable as possible. Let us note the following—

**Failure to address God in prayer.** In the model prayer, God is first addressed and as “our Father.” Sometimes those who lead public prayer quit there and do not ask God to address us. In the context of Christ’s prayer, God is not asked to address the multitude (Jno. 1:1-3). The wise man of the Proverbs said, “Wine is a mocker and a beast exasperated, whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Prov. 23:29-35; Isa. 5:22).

**Doth God Approve of “Drinking in Moderation”**

Some, even Christians, approve of what they are wont to call “Drinking in Moderation.” By this, they mean that which is not excessive or excessive, notwithstanding the fact that these terms are relative. In the following discussion we shall respond to one who takes the following position: “Finally, I cannot say that Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation.” His effort to justify his position is set forth under the following heading which appeared in the Murray Ledger & Times (January 12, 2007, page 9A).

**What would Jesus say about drinking in today’s times?**

**By Richard Youngblood.**

Minister at University Church of Christ

Brother Youngblood sets forth a question followed by his answer, both of which are reproduced between the broken lines.

**Question:** Since Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast (John 2:1-11), does this mean that he would approve of drinking of alcoholic beverages?

**Answer:** Jesus had a strong inclination to answer with a simple and direct “No,” but I have to admit that the answer to this question is not that easy. Let’s first examine the Biblical evidence; then we can come to some conclusions.

Jesus well knew that throughout the Old Testament wine is both praised and condemned. At times it is an accepted part of life, a source of joy and blessing (Ecclesiastes 10:19; Isaiah 55:1; Genesis 14:18; Judges 19:19; 1 Samuel 16:20). At other times wine and other strong drinks are spoken against (Proverbs 23:29-35; Isaiah 28:7-8).

The wise man of the Proverbs said, “Wine is a mocker and a beast exasperated, whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Prov. 23:29-35; Isa. 28:7-8). The prophet Isaiah warned: “Wine to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night they are inflated with wine... Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks” (Isaiah 5:11 and 22).

Until well after the New Testament times and the life of Jesus on earth, there was little water that was completely safe to drink. Methods for preventing fermentation were not well known. Thus, the apostle warned, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23).

From the above, I conclude that under the circumstances in existence in the ancient world, wine taken in moderation was acceptable; but drunkenness was never acceptable (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:21). However conditions are very different in our modern world.

We do not have the same problems with impure water and fermentations as the people of the ancient world did. We have safe and healthy alternative beverages for social events as well as home use that do not have the potential for intoxication or addiction.

There is a great difference between driving a donkey cart and driving a modern high-powered machine under the influence of alcohol. Hundreds of thousands of lives are lost every year in America because of alcohol related accidents on our highways.

Finally, I cannot say that Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation; but in view of the above evidence, I do believe he would discourage it in our modern world. After all Jesus also taught his followers to be like salt that preserves the earth from the rotteness of decay, and he wanted them to be a shining light on a hill leading others to glorify God (Matthew 5:13-16).

We need to ask how does the use of alcoholic beverages in our world today bring glory to God? I don’t think it does. I pray that we will prayerfully consider what we have said here. I do not use alcoholic beverages socially or recreationally at any level, and I continue to discourage others from doing so.

I believe that is what Jesus would do.

Brother Youngblood’s article raises a number of serious questions; and we are concerned whether his “conclusions” are based on “Biblical evidence” as he suggests? Does God’s word and its authority actually change due to changes in the world? Will Richard’s position encourage some, who might not have done otherwise, to drink in which he calls “moderation”?

Our brother implies that whenever “wine” is mentioned it is intoxicating, it contains alcohol. Note that he says “wine and other strong drinks.” He errs greatly when he fails to point out the well-known fact that wine, as referred to in God’s word, is a generic term which includes both alcoholic and nonalcoholic types; the context is left to determine the difference.
by coming into the auditorium when the Supper is being observed, as well as at other inconvenient times.

**SOME CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

It would be easy to devote the entire issue of the paper to each of these acts of worship, but that is not our intention. We simply want to hit some high points, trusting that it will give us something to think about, in making our worship to God more acceptable. We have attempted to call attention our need to worship God in the most acceptable manner possible. It is my hope that the discussion will encourage more study as to what worship should be.

The opportunity to worship God is an awesome matter, for which we should ever be thankful. We should both be thankful that God has revealed to us the who and the how of worship. As in all manner of serving God we should aspire to be as pleasing as possible. We should be also be thankful that God has provided us with so much information to be successful in that endeavor.

I have over the years seen many encouraging things, but also seen some discouraging things. One thing that deeply disturbs me is the attitude toward worship exhibited by many. The serious attitude which should exist is often lacking. The very core of serving God acceptably involves worship. If we falter in our worship, we have faltered in serving God in general. There is a very noticeable tendency now in worship to focus more upon what is pleasing to man than what is pleasing to God. This can render our worship vain. It also accounts for the present drift into entertainment in lieu of worship. People often seem not to be pleased with what God wants, rather than what they want; and, the leadership often goes along and/or encourages this.

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**June 25-28, 2007**

**Theme: The Urgent Need for and Basis of Optimism within the Lord’s Church**

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**Place:** The third floor theater of the Curris Center on the Murray State University Campus in Murray, Kentucky.

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Having discussed three acts of worship, let us consider a fourth.

V. WORSHIP IN SONG

Singing, when in harmony with God’s word is indeed an act of worship. As in the other acts of worship, there is room for improvement in singing. We are thankful that we do not have to be exceptionally good singers for it to be acceptable. Singing is to a degree a matter of natural ability. Some are more gifted than others with the ability to sing; but it is reasonable to assume that some of us can learn to sing better if we really wish to do so. That being the case, should we not make an effort to improve?

The New Testament clearly teaches that singing is authorized worship. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Paul makes a very similar statement in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

It is a matter of fact that New Testament teaches a cappella singing; there is no biblical authority for the use of a mechanical instrument of music in worship. From Ephesians 5:19 and Colossians 3:16, we note two things: 1) making melody in our hearts to the Lord, and 2) teaching and admonishing one another. This act of worship involves mutuality, since teaching and admonishing one another is involved. The teaching and admonishing, of course, must be that which God’s approves and not just something which pleases man.

In more recent years there has been a tendency to direct our singing in the direction of what people want to hear, rather than that which pleases God and encourages one another in their true worship of God.
Let us consider some things which contribute to acceptable singing. We can improve in our participa-
tion in each of these acts; singing is no exception. Some of these improvement are pointed out in God’s word; and, some things fall into the category of judg-
ment, albeit reasonable judgment.

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given us the truth and the ability to compose script-
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Song leaders should prepare. Since singing is an act
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singing should do the best job possible. A failure to
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The timing and pitch of a song should be proper.
If there is anything which tends to dampen the spirits
of worship, it is songs which are too slow and too
low. My dad used to use an expression: “Like dead
delicacies falling off a mule.” I think he meant by that
the mule was dead, and the delicacies couldn’t survive. Songs,
even if they are written to be sung slowly, can and
should be sung with some life in them. We sometimes
sing the song, “In the Morning of Joy,” as if it were
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Song should be sung as written. Unless there is
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do not want to appear to be showing off. Outside of
coming up with a better one and having good reason
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judgment, but in my judgment many of the songs we
use are not conducive to a spirit of worship; they rather
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“Praise teams,” “Singing groups,” such as A Cappella
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Much more could be said about singing as an act of
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VI. THE LORD’S SUPPER AS WORSHIP

This act of worship has been left until the last, not
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About forty years, a brother who lived two or three miles
from the church building said he would,

if necessary, crawl to the building to take the Lord’s Supper.
He would not, however, ride, walk or crawl to attend the evening worship services. His excuse was
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Christians, though generally recognizing it as wor-
ship, do not always treat the Lord’s Supper with the
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“Take: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do
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“For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this
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Surely the Lord’s Supper will touch our hearts.
We should focus on what it is all about. There has never been such an example of love and sacrifice
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our Lord when he gave his all for man. Observing the
Lord’s Supper should be a most solemn and serious
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Christians is seen in the fact that they observed it upon
the first day of every week, every week

Our minds should be directed to the importance of
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It is my belief that efforts should be made to draw the minds of the worshippers to what is taking place in the observance of the Supper. I can remember the first place I preached more than once, and how one of the brethren at the observance of the Lord’s Supper, stood up and said, “All who want to take of this stand up. We know what this is for.” Though perhaps a bit blunt, he did at least call attention to the Lord’s supper.

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Singing, when in harmony with God’s word is indeed an act of worship. As in the other acts of worship, there is room for improvement in singing. We are thankful that we do not have to be exceptionally good singers for it to be acceptable. Singing is to a degree a matter of natural ability. Some are more gifted than others with the ability to sing; but it is reasonable to assume that some of us can learn to sing better if we really wish to do so. That being the case, should we not make an effort to improve?

The New Testament clearly teaches that singing is authorized worship. “Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord” (Eph. 5:19). Paul makes a very similar statement in Colossians 3:16: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

It is a matter of fact that New Testament teaches a cappella singing; there is no biblical authority for the use of a mechanical instrument of music in worship. As faith comes from hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17), one may not “by faith” worship God with instruments since teaching and admonishing one another is involved. The teaching and admonishing, of course, must be that which God’s approved and not just something which pleases man. In more recent years there has been a tendency to direct our services in the direction of what people want to hear, rather than that which pleases God and encourages one another in their true worship of God.
IV. PRAYER AS PUBLIC WORSHIP

In the Bible, the subject of prayer is extensive. There are many outstanding examples of prayer recorded in the Old Testament. One is that of Daniel, who in spite of the decree that forbade prayer, Daniel “went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime” (Dan. 6:8-10).

This a great example of belief in prayer. Another one is that of Elias, who “prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (Jas. 5:17).

The New Testament is no less replete with examples. From Christ’s command to pray for our enemies (Matt. 5:44), prayer is mentioned and discussed many times. We know that it was and is an integral part of worship of the true and living God. As to the habit and routine of prayer, Paul said, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17). Speaking to God through prayer is indeed an act of reverence paid to God by man.

Christ sets forth the model prayer, often (and I think erroneously) referred to as “The Lord’s prayer” (Matt. 6:9-13). In Luke’s account it is said that a disciple said, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples” (Lk. 11:1). That model prayer is a general pattern as to what our prayers should be. Another great prayer pattern, which may more aptly be called the Lord’s prayer, is recorded in John chapter seventeen.

We shall now set forth some conditions for acceptable prayer, and then some things which hinder God-approved prayer. By observing these things we trust that we may put forth an effort to make our worship in prayer more acceptable and in keeping with the teaching of Christ. We begin by suggesting:

One must be a Christian. The privilege of prayer is granted to those who are Christians. Whereas all Christians have the privilege of prayer, in corporate worship only men are to lead public prayers. The New Testament clearly teaches that those outside of Christ are not qualified to pray to the Father. Such people cannot truly address God as their “Father”, because He isn’t their Father. In addition to being a child of God, one is to be a righteous person. Peter says, “For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil” (1 Pet. 3:12). “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16). The understanding of the blind man, which was healed by Christ was: “Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshipper of God, an doeth his will, him he heareth” (John 9:31). This was not an inspired man speaking, but his expressed understanding was not refuted. Is this not what Peter said in what we noted above? Another bit of evidence that one must be a Christian to offer acceptable prayer, is the fact that prayer is a “spiritual blessing,” and “all spiritual blessings” are in Christ (Eph. 1:3).

Prayer must be in faith. With regard to praying for wisdom, James said, “let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth with a double wavering is not in the will of God” (Jas. 1:5-7).

Prayer should not be selfish. James said, “Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon lusts” (pleasures) (Jas. 4:3). We should not pray for that which in no way contributes to our spiritual well-being, rather to our hurt.

Prayer is to be in harmony with God’s will. It is not in harmony with God’s will to pray for that which God opposes. For example, we should not pray for God to supply the needs of a person who is too lazy to work. God’s law is that if one will not work, neither should he eat (2 Thess. 3:10). In Christ’s agony in the garden, He prayed, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt” (Mat. 26:39). When He prayed the second time he prayed, “thy will be done.”

Things Which May Hinder Acceptable Prayer. Just as there are things which contribute to acceptable prayer as worship, there are things which hinder the same. These are things which, if we are truly engaging in prayer as worship, we will try to avoid. Talking to God is a most exalted privilege and we should be thankful for it and try to make it as acceptable as possible. Let us note the following—

Failure to address God in prayer. In the model prayer, God is first addressed and as “our Father.” Sometimes those who lead public prayer quit

Does Christ Approve of “Drinking in Moderation”?

Some, even christians, approve of what they are wont to call “Drinking in Moderation.” By this, they mean that which is not extreme or excessive, notwithstanding the fact that these terms are relative. In the following discussion we shall respond to one who takes the following position: “Finally, I cannot say that Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation.”

His effort to justify his position is set forth under the following heading which appeared in the Murray Ledge & Times (January 12, 2007, page 9A)—

What would Jesus say about drinking in today’s times?

By Richard Youngblood.

Minister at University Church of Christ

Brother Youngblood sets forth a question followed by his answer, both of which are reproduced between the broken lines.

Question: Since Jesus changed water into wine at the wedding feast (John 2:1-11), does this mean that he would approve of drinking of alcoholic beverages?

Answer: John has a strong inclination to answer to a simple and direct “No,” I have to admit that the answer to this question is not that easy. Let’s first examine the Biblical evidence, then we can draw some conclusions.

Jesus well knew that throughout the Old Testament wine is both praised and condemned. At times it is an accepted part of life, a source of joy and blessing. (Ecclesiastes 10:19; Isaiah 55:1; Genesis 14:18; Judges 19:19; I Samuel 16:20). At other times wine and other strong drinks are spoken against (Proverbs 23:29-35; Isaiah 28:7-8).

The wise man of the Proverbs said, “Wine is a mocker and a beer a teaser, whoever is led astray by them is not wise” (Proverbs 20:1).

The prophet Isaiah warned: “Wine to those who rise early in the morning to run after their drinks, who stay up late at night they are inflamed with wine……Woe to those who are heroes at drinking wine and champions at mixing drinks” (Isaiah 5:11 and 22).

Until well after New Testament times and the life of Jesus on earth, there was little water that was completely safe to drink. Methods for preventing fermentation were not well known. Thus, the apostle warned, “Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and frequent illnesses” (1 Timothy 5:23).

From the above, I conclude that under the circumstances in existence in the ancient world, wine taken in moderation was acceptable; but drunkenness was never acceptable (Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:20). However conditions are very different in our modern world.

We do not have the same problems with impure water and fermentations as the people of the ancient world did. We have safe and healthy alternative beverages for social events as well as home use that do not have the potential for intoxication or addiction.

There is a great difference between driving a donkey cart and driving a modern high-powered machine under the influence of alcohol. Hundreds of thousands of lives are lost every year in America because of alcohol related accidents on an off our highways.

Finally, I cannot say that Jesus would condemn drinking wine in moderation; but in view of the above evidence, I do believe he would discourage it in our modern world. After all Jesus also taught his followers to be like salt that preserves the earth from the rottenness of decay, and he wanted them to be a shining light on a hill leading others to glorify God (Matthew 5:13-16).

We need to ask how does the use of alcoholic beverages in our world today bring glory to God? I don’t think it does.

I pray that we will prayerfully consider what we have said here. I do not use alcoholic beverages socially or recreationally at any level, and continue to discourage others from doing so.

I believe that is what Jesus would do.

Brother Youngblood’s article raises a number of serious questions; and we are concerned whether his “conclusions” are based on “Biblical evidence” as he suggests? Does God’s word and its authority actually change due to changes in the world? Will Richard’s position encourage some, who might not have done otherwise, to drink in what he calls “moderation”?

Our brother implies that whenever “wine” is mentioned it is intoxicating, it contains alcohol. Note that he says “wine and other strong drinks.” He errs greatly when he fails to point out the well-known fact that wine, as referred to in God’s word, is a generic term which includes both alcoholic and nonalcoholic types; the context is left to determine the difference. →
to God; it is thus an act of worship. We will focus primarily on giving as taught in the New Testament, but we first want to consider some things from the Old Testament. While we no longer live under the Old Testament, there are things we can learn from it, which may help us to be more appreciative of what is taught in the New Testament. Paul said, "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning..." (Rom. 15:4). This would certainly include the subject of giving.

Under the Old Testament, God severely condemned people for failure to give as commanded. If such was the case then, it stands to reason that God would be displeased with our failure to give as commanded in our time. In Malachi chapter one, the Jews are bidden for their unacceptable offerings. Malachi asks, "And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil, and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil?" (Mal. 1:8?). They viewed their worship as "a weariness" and brought before God that "which was torn, and the lame, and the sick" (v. 13).

Under the law of Moses, the sacrifices were to be the best rather than the worst or culls. The Passover lamb was to be the best. In principle, we are to follow God's will in every way. Our giving is much better than it used to be, but there are many who think we can get away with giving less than God would like. Our worship by giving, has room for improvement.

Unplanned or unpurposed giving is essentially haphazard giving. Having first taken care of what they deem most important, some seem to give on the basis of what is left over. Giving based on this principle is tantamount to shortchanging the Lord. Giving is either planned or unplanned. I doubt that there would be exceptions to the general rule that the amount of "planned giving" will be greater than the amount of "unplanned giving."

Our worship by giving, has room for improvement. When compared with other religious groups, we are often pretty far down the list. What others give is not the way by which we determine what to give, but it does sometimes show that those who uphold and practice error give more than those of us who have the truth. It is typically true that where a good amount of teaching is done on giving the contribution has shown a good increase. We need to be taught on this aspect of worship as well as on the others. Of course, we know that teaching doesn't always bring desired results, but we have the responsibility to declare the whole counsel of God regardless of the results produced. I recall teaching on this sensitive subject of giving at a congregation forty years ago. A dollar was worth much more then than now. But one brother, who was serving at the Lord's Table, made a comment about my lesson on giving. His comment was words of the following order, "Brother Pig's lesson on giving was good; and to show what it meant to me, I'm doubling my contribution." He then proceeded to stroke two one dollar bills and drop them in the collection plate. Our giving is much better than it used to be, but there is room for improvement. And when if the "sincerity of our love," improves, our giving will. In my early days of teaching, when I was still in school, I had an invitation to preach in a place perhaps a hundred miles from Henderson, TN. When I preached morning and evening, as I recall, it, I was given the entire contribution for that day. To the best of my memory that was $4.35. It is true that I may not have been worth that, and even though that I would have bought seven gallons of gas at that time, my family and I did not have much left over after expenses.
these five acts of worship will focus primarily on our corporate worship and those who lead us in these acts.

II. THE TEACHING/HEARING OF GOD’S WORD

When God’s word is spoken to us and we thus hear God speaking to us, this is indeed an act of reverence paid to God by man. In this act of worship there should be a continued desire or yearning. The apostle Peter puts it this way: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). The supply of this “sincere milk” will never run dry for those who desire it. If the appetite wanes, so does the spiritual growth which is necessary for spiritual maturity.

There are a number of areas where improvement could be made in this act of worship. Opportunity implies responsibility, and this is true when it comes to teaching/hearing God’s word. Our Bible classes and worship assemblies afford great opportunities, yet there is evidence of an irresponsible lack of desire for God’s word. From the teaching perspective, our Bible classes to often reveal little time and interest in study; and, our preachers regularly cater to hearers who prefer pabulum to meat. From the teaching perspective, it is all too common to have Bible class teachers who are ill prepared or know little about what they are trying to teach; and, preachers often mount the pulpit with no focus, no point, and little Bible. Contributing to the general problem are elders when they are not capable of feeding the flock or being able “by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers” (Tit. 1:9). Compared to a few decades ago, there seems to be a dearth of serious Bible students.

A paramount concern of leaders is that the flock be fed unprofitably; feed that is, that which is not in harmony with the truth. In some instances error is preached or taught and not one word is heard by way of correction or refutation. In the case of teaching children, there is now more emphasis upon fun and games rather than actually learning meaningful things from God’s word. We see signs of this among adults as well.

When God’s word is altered or perverted, teaching/hearing is no longer a true act of worship. Paul speaks of those who “would pervert the gospel of Christ” (Gal. 1:7), and pronounces “anathema” upon those who pervert it (v. 8). Christ’s response to the Scribes and Pharisees who came questioning Him was, “in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Matt. 15:9). An other way by which the teaching/hearing of God’s word ceases to be true worship, is in the use of some of the modern versions, which do not actually set forth the truth accurately.

There are also efforts to reduce the important time spent in teaching/hearing God’s word. Vacation Bible Schools have been cut down to the point that some are even less than one day. Back when the church was growing, gospel meetings were often a week or even more, but now are short or shorter. A meeting for a whole week is almost unheard of. In the Banner of Truth lectures here in Murray, where the seventh will be conducted this year, only a very few of the people who could attend will do so. Some congregations will not even have one person in attendance; yet, in four days some twenty-eight Bible lessons will be presented by about eighteen speakers. These speakers, many of whom started during a time when there was a continued learning from God’s word, represent well over a hundred years’ experience in preaching and teaching.

There is no doubt that teaching/hearing of God’s word is important; it is equally doubtful that we have much room for improvement in this area. We show disrespect for God’s word when we engage in distractions as God’s word is being read. Many think nothing of coming into the auditorium or classroom when God’s word is being read, apparently not stopping to think that when God’s word is being read, that is God speaking to us. There seems to be a tendency to divide God’s word from his word when he speaks. When God came down to speak with Moses on mount Sinai (Exodus 19) it was an awesome matter indeed. In our time, it is no less an awesome thing when God speaks to us through His word.

III. THE GIVING OF OUR MATERIAL MEANS

The first time the giving of material means is mentioned in God’s word is the case of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4). Such giving is showing reverence...
One of the first things to catch my attention in the article was the announced speakers. Of the several speakers mentioned, nothing is said as to their religious affiliations. Doug Webster is said to be “a minister.” Carey Casey, in other information about the event, is said to have “worked years as a pastor in the inner city of Chicago.” It doesn’t appear that these speakers are New Testament Christians. Being a “minister” and a “pastor” doesn’t mean being a true Christian. We do know something about Randy Phillips, the founder of Promise Keepers. The Promise Keepers are a religious group consisting of a conglomerate of denominational people, who support a wide variety of error. A few years back some of our brethren went after this error in a big way. The organization was a promoter of error in its beginning, and if anything has changed, I haven’t heard about.

It is not a highly uncommon thing now for our brethren to join up in fellowship with denominational people, even to the extent of having those people teach our church. This has happened at a number of places, as if those people have truth that we don’t know about and need to be taught by those in error.

A friend from Nashville summarized the Lipscomb event in an excellent way:

What gets me is that “Christian Parents” are sending their children to these schools (ids of false teaching) and the kids go home thinking all is well because they learned at the feet of scholars. The Promise Keepers believe all are equal, that there is no order set forth in the New Testament. They worship a god that teaches them to kill those who are not of their religion. The Tibetans have their “prayer wheels” by which they send up prayers. They have some from many pagan religions here in our country. The Roman Catholics revere so-called “saints,” have images, “holy water,” and a great many things which are not according to “truth” as set forth in John 4:24. People have sacrificed children and other humans to false gods. All of this has to do with worship that is false and unacceptable to God.

It is not our purpose to spend much time on the subject of pagan religions and their worship. Since God’s people are going bankrupt in the spiritual realm, it will have an adverse effect upon worship.

The worship of many of the man-made religions has gone farther and farther from the divine pattern. Even religions which claim to be of the “Christian Religion,” are now teaching and practicing many things which have never had nor ever will have God’s approval. As the affinity for these religions increases with many of our brethren, their influence within the church will be seen as well. “Ignorant worship” is as much with us today as it was in the time of Paul. Speaking to the Athenians, who “spent their time in nothing else but, either to tell, or hear some new thing” (Acts 17:21), he said, “I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship… (Acts 14:18).” The first of the ten commandments was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). But biblical history records the fact that the people often violated this commandment. The Israelites went “a whoring after their gods” (Ex. 34:16). Idolatry constituted a serious problem with the people from early on.

That people have an innate desire to worship something is seen in the fact that history reveals that just about all people in the course of human history have worshipped something. But the tragic thing about this desire to worship is that the vast majority of people have most of the time worshiped something or someone other than the true God. Needless to say that this worship is false and therefore vain, or worthless. Not only is it worthless, it results in the eternal condemnation of those who engage in it.

The Revelations of Time and Space

We often cite Genesis 1:1 pointing out the incidental reference to the five fundamentals of reality: Time (“beginning”); Force (“God”); Energy (‘created’); Space (‘heavens’); Matter (‘earth’). Two on the list frequently remind us of our limitations: time and space.

There is much evidence to suggest that God created man with such a desire; that is, a “built-in” longing to worship something or someone other than the true God. Needless to say that this worship is false and unacceptable to God.

An Innate Desire to Worship. There is much evidence to suggest that God created man with such a desire; that is, a “built-in” longing to worship some higher power. When Paul healed the impotent man the people said, “the gods are come down to us in the likeness of men. And they called Barnabas, Jupiter; and Paul, Mercurius…” (Acts 14:8-12). The first of the ten commandments was, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me” (Ex. 20:3). But biblical history records the fact that the people often violated this commandment. The Israelites went “a whoring after their gods” (Ex. 34:16). Idolatry constituted a serious problem with the people from early on.

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This being said, we are now ready to begin a rather detailed study of the five acts of worship in which Christians are to engage. Those five acts are: 1) The teaching and or hearing of God’s word; 2) the giving of our material means, or contribution; 3) prayer; 4) a cappella singing; and; 5) the Lord’s Supper. We shall consider this list as given, though there is no order set forth in the New Testament. In my earlier years as a Christian, these items were generally accepted as God-approved worship; but with some, things have changed. Our study of →
Lite Preachers and Lite Preaching

The Book of Zephaniah is almost hot to the touch. He opens hard and fast with words of judgment upon Judah. Unlike her sister to the north, Judah had known not only faithful prophets, but also great reformer kings such as Hezekiah and Josiah. It was in “the days of Josiah” Zephaniah proclaimed, “the day of Jehovah is at hand” (1:7), which theme thereafter dominates the book. Corruption, impurity, cruelty, and so on were so rampant as to have obscured Josiah’s valiant efforts and years’ long work at cleaning house. It’s a recurring biblical theme: Spurned opportunity and advantage stoke the fire of the “fierce anger of Jehovah” (2:2).

Having judged the “nations” (2:14), this pointed preacher now turns his attention to the sins of “the oppressing city,” Jerusalem (3:1). “Her princes…her judges…her prophets” (3:4-5); none, it seems, escaped censure. We are particularly concerned here with his description of her preachers, the prophets. They, he said, “are light and treacherous persons.” The word “light” translates the Hebrew word pachath, which means, “to be wanton, reckless, be frothy.” It primarily is used to describe the rolling, bubbling motion of boiling water (Genesis, p. 671-2); which is why Jacob described his son Reuben as “boiling over as water” (Genesis 49:4; KJV “bubbling motion of boiling water”). Inspiration’s chosen Hebrew word, and our translation “light” well describe a class of Old Testament preachers who were driven by their passions and desires, not truth, who were reckless in their application of God’s Word and in their choice of what they would and would not preach; who were frothy, air-headed and convictionless. Lite preaching was a stench then, and is no less so today. We have so many lite preachers among us. They will say—or, not say—anything; they will perform, for a buck, like those Abimelech hired for seventy pieces of silver: “vain and light fellows” (Judg 9:4).

Lite preachers are reckless with the Bible. They promote such puerile and false notions as: grace exists out law, and law grace; preach the man, not the plan; unity in diversity; restoration of pure New Testament religion is only a goal to be pursued never achieved, and so on. These are they who, despite the fact that the Lord, “who has authority over all flesh” (John 17:2), has said “whosoever…except” with regard to divorce and remarriage, would apply His teaching to less than those to whom He applied it, or take exception to the Lord’s use of “except.” Such lite preachers are dangerous in that “they that lead this people cause them to err; and they that are led of them are destroyed” (Isaiah 9:16).

Our lite preachers are also frothy. In the absence of substance, they seek to impress their audiences with dramatic, theatrical bombast. Cappuccino comes to mind here. The pretentious name notwithstanding, and even if you sip with a protruding pinkie, it’s still just really strong coffee with a frothy milk head. Shooting steam into cool milk makes that milk head. Like our lite preachers, it spews and bubbles inside a nice little head. You can even sprinkle cinnamon on the froth for taste and looks. And, like our lite preachers, that head of froth is about 99% hot air. Rather than serious study and conviction, they’ve discovered it’s easier to poof up and dress up ignorance.

Our lite preachers are also the ones who spend their waking hours majoring in the latest who is doing what to whom. They are pachath: wanton, reckless, and frothy. These cappuccino heads spew, they froth and they swell. They give lip service to the “whole counsel of God” all the while limiting the concept to whatever happens to be their latest cause or team of preference. Like the Pharisees and Sadducees embracing one another, these lite ones can also easily embrace what was once outrageous and anathema. Lite people can seamlessly switch from confederate to enemy and back again. Lite preachers live by the latest roster, rather than by personal study, conclusion and conviction.

Because we want health and vitality, we focus on lite varieties of foods and dishes. That may be all well and good for our physical health, but these lite preachers and their lite religion will ultimately destroy the congregations they influence. The “fierce anger of Jehovah” awaits the lite. —AA

Continued from Page 1
A Medley of Matters about Worship

Offering him the kingdoms of the world and their glory, the Devil tempted Jesus saying, “fall down and worship me” (Matt 4:10). The Savior’s response shows whom we are to worship: “Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). He revealed how we are to worship when He said, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24).

Let us thank God that all who would worship acceptably have the divine instructions as to the who and the how of worship. This information, if respected and followed would rule out and do away with most of the worship which people today engage. People must know these two things and we in the church also need to have a better understanding of them.

What Is Worship? Before proceeding we need to give attention to the definition of worship of God as revealed in his word. In most instances it is not good to take for granted that people fully understand Bible words or terms, even though they may be quite commonly used. This is certainly true with regard to this important word.

According to Vine’s, προσκυνέω is “the most frequent word rendered worship.” He defines it: “to make obeisance, do reverence to (from kuneo, to kiss).” Thayer has a very similar definition. A common definition, which I believe is a very good one is, “acts of reverence paid to God by man.” There is no question that true worship involves the greatest degree of reverence and respect that man can ever give. We certainly are faced with this matter of words.

Our preference in favor of worship sometimes betrays a knife in the back given the chance; but, time and space refuse to be fooled. Our prejudice in favor of here over there when we choose to be in a place other than where the church meets and/or works will stand in bold relief against our absence. Here sometimes, as far as our choices are concerned, boldly says, “I do not like here.”

Our preference, our prejudice, for self, or —God forbid—sin, over God and His Will is measured by now and then. Heaven-bound people realize the necessity of subordinating now to then; whereas too many like to talk about then, but live only for now. Time and space; friend or foe? They can be either; they are reveling; and, they will surely figure in our judgment.

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People can be adept and subtle at cloaking their prejudices, and true feelings. A smile, a wink, sometimes belies a knife in the back given the chance; but, time and space refuse to be fooled. Our prejudice in favor of here over there when we choose to be in a place other than where the church meets and/or works will stand in bold relief against our absence. Here sometimes, as far as our choices are concerned, boldly says, “I do not like here.”

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