

## The Love Of The Truth

Though truth is essential to the well-being of every worthwhile area of society, there is now a growing disregard for truth. This lessening of respect for truth in society in general is being reflected in the area of religion, even within the Lord's church. The love of the truth is waning as never before in our time.

It would be virtually impossible, if not altogether so, to over emphasize the importance of coming to have and maintaining "The Love Of The Truth." God-fearing people recognize this most important fact. There is, however, the danger of losing sight of this fact due to the various means of deceit as so successfully employed by the devil. There is nothing so tragic as rejecting the love of the truth and believing the devil's lie. The consequence is eternal in nature — the terrible loss of the soul. These things are so clearly and forcefully stated by the inspired apostle Paul in his second letter to the brethren at Thessalonica. Of that "man of sin" Paul wrote:

*"Even him, whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:9-12).*

Of the above passage we shall note a few of the highlights, but most especially Paul's statement concerning those who **"received not the love of the truth that they might be saved."** It is the principle set forth in this statement to which we shall give most attention in the following discussion. The need to encourage the love of the truth has never been greater in our lives than now. As multitudes allow their love of the truth to be stolen away by the deceitful means of the devil, the Lord's church suffers greatly. As our precious Lord wept over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41) He must surely be weeping now. As the days pass by love for the truth diminishes and the number of those who have pleasure in error increases.

There is lack of agreement as to whom "the man of sin" refers. Many have held that the Papacy of Roman Catholicism fits very well the description give by Paul. It must be admitted that there is considerable evidence pointing to the Pope of Rome. But it is not our objective here to determine the identity of "the man of sin." It is our objective though to consider the principle

involved and see how it relates to people today, and especially as it relates to the church and its members today.

Just as "the man of sin" was "after the working of Satan" so it is that we are now seeing valid evidence of the working of Satan as never before! This working is characterized by deceit which leads people to "unrighteousness" rather than the truth. That which is not according to truth is a lie, and people are believing lies to a degree that we've never seen before.

The "love of the truth," which Paul said those people would "not receive" stands out as highly significant. It is one thing to know what truth is from the standpoint of facts, but to actually have a "love of the truth" is quite another. If we truly love the truth we will long for it and treasure it as we come to know it. Never will love of the truth allow any effort to pervert it, to ignore it, or get around it.

People may know what the truth is but still not have that love for it which is essential. People like this are prime candidates for being deceived by believing a lie. When people are deceived into believing a lie rather than the truth, it is then that they may even have "pleasure in unrighteousness," a deadly spiritual disease.

When the above state is reached God no longer restrains the individual but rather gives him up to do those sinful things of error which he desires. He is allowed to go headlong into unrighteousness. The examples of the progression of error are many, including both individuals and congregations. In the pages of *Banner of Truth* we have given examples of congregations which were sound thirty or forty years ago but are now going full-speed into greater error. The sad thing about it is that this is happening all across our country and in foreign lands.

To be "damned" because one "believed not the truth" is the ultimate in tragic and terrible consequences. How senseless it is that otherwise sensible people will not receive the love of the truth that they might be saved! Yet, the examples of such within the church are growing daily. Of course many people have never come to have a love for God's truth. They have only heard error and do not search the scriptures for themselves to find the truth. However, within the church there are numbers of people who at one time seemed to have a knowledge of God's truth but have since come to have "an evil heart of unbelief" in departing from it. This represents an absence of The Love Of The Truth.

In the following discussion we shall consider a number of questions concerning truth, which in some way are related to the subject under consideration — The Love Of The Truth.

## I. WHAT IS TRUTH?

The word **TRUTH** is generally understood to mean that which is actual, true to fact or reality. It is that which is not false. This is the sense in which we are using the word. Though truth is highly important in the secular world, we are considering it in an even more important area, the spiritual. The emphasis upon TRUTH in the New Testament may be noted from the fact that it is used more than a hundred times, as translated from the Greek word *aletheia*.

Just a few references from the New Testament make it crystal clear as to the correct answer to the question, What is Truth? To put it in a nutshell, our Savior defined Truth in a most

concise way in His prayer to the heavenly Father on behalf of the apostles. Jesus said, "*Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth*" (Jno. 17:17). Now we know that Truth is — Truth is what God says in His word. Jesus, who is also God, had earlier said to the apostles, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me*" (Jno. 14:6). Jesus is the very embodiment of truth. His words are truth.

With regard to the truth, Jesus said to the apostles, "*Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth...*" (Jno. 16:13). The Holy Spirit guided God's writers as they recorded His word, the truth, so that it would be available to man in written form. This is confirmed by Paul and Peter in 2 Tim. 3:16-17 and 2 Peter 1:21.

In view of the fact that it is so clearly recorded that God's word is truth, one would think there would be few problems among men as to what is truth. That is, however, not the way it is. If men of today were asked the question which was put to Jesus by Pilate, the Roman governor, "*What is truth?*" (Jno. 18:38), a number of confusing answers could be expected.

Subjectivism is ruling the day in religious circles. More and more people are putting their trust in what they "feel" is right or what they "sincerely believe." God's objective truth is being cast aside in favor of feelings. Though God demands sincerity on the part of those who would serve Him acceptably, sincerity never makes right that which is wrong. Even within the church subjectivism has in more than a few cases replaced a "Thus saith the Lord," for which people used to look. Just recently I received a long, long letter relative to knowing what God's will is. The writer's bottom line was that we cannot know what God's will is by our own study of the Bible. According to him we have to pray to God for understanding, and that is the only way we can know the truth. From what he wrote, this hasn't worked for him in knowing God's will.

There are now a great many people, including some of our own brethren, who are claiming that truth is being received by the direct operation of the Holy Spirit. This would rule out God's word being all-sufficient, as stated in 2 Tim. 3:16-17. Furthermore, those claiming a direct contact with the Holy Spirit often come up with things which are clearly contrary to God's revealed word. This would mean that God's word contains only part of the Truth.

Some believe that The Truth is found in the writings of men, such as the *Book of Mormon* and a number of others. These writings of mere men are not Truth, and those who accept them as truth are denying God's truth. The only way to be safe relative to the so-called inspired writings is to apply the words of Paul when he said, "*let God be true, but every man a liar*" (Rom. 3:4).

What Is Truth? It is God's word as stated objectively in the Bible. It is absolute, not relative. The acceptance of this fact is right and cannot be wrong. As long as one is guided by this truth, that one will never go astray due to the lack of a true guide.

## **II. CAN WE KNOW THE TRUTH?**

We have seen what truth is. It is God's word. However, if we cannot know what His word says, as some contend, then we would be unable to reap the benefits which are made available through the word. Just as we looked to God's word to learn what truth is, we need to look to God's word in response to the above question.

Hardly anyone makes the claim that one can come to know all of God's truth. God's word is of such a nature that there will always be room to learn more from it. The important point is this, that we can know enough of God's word to be made free from our sins and live in such a way as to receive that "crown of righteousness" which is laid up for the faithful. We shall set forth some evidence to prove that we **can know the truth** to that extent. (The following emphasis is mine. wwp).

First, let us note the words of Jesus to the Jews which believed on him, "*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (Jno. 8:31-32). Jesus didn't say that we can know all the truth that can be known but He does say we can know it to the extent needed to make us free from our sins, to be saved. To say that one cannot know the truth is to take issue with the words of Jesus himself, but some are so bold as to do even that.

Can anyone imagine Jesus saying, "*He that rejecteth me and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day*" (Jno. 12:48), if it is not possible **to know** what His word says? I couldn't imagine that.

There are various statements in the New Testament which clearly imply that one can know the truth. If they do not imply such then they are nonsensical. A truly God-fearing person would not attribute such statements to God's word. God's word is truth.

Paul writes to Timothy about those who would "*depart from the faith*." He goes on to say that they would command to abstain from meats, "*which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth*" (I Tim. 4:3). Was Paul wrong in saying people can "believe and **know the truth**"? Who would suggest that?

The writer of Hebrews said, "*For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins*" (Heb. 10:26). To receive the knowledge of the truth is **know the truth**.

When Peter said, "*Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth*." (1 Pet. 1:22), he certainly implied that it is possible to **know the truth** one is to obey. It could be said of Peter's exhortation, "*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*" (1 Pet. 2:2), that one would have to **know the word** which is to be desired.

We have noted only a few of the passages in the New Testament which clearly imply that one can **know the truth**. If one cannot know the truth, then God's word becomes meaningless.

When people say, "We cannot understand the Bible alike," they are suggesting that God's word lacks uniformity. That is, God's truth says a thousand and one things that many people. It is a fact that many people misunderstand God's word, but when it is understood it teaches the same thing to as many as hear it.

Any Bible-believing person must admit that we **can know the truth** to the extent that we can be saved and remain saved. This should be our most serious objective in life. Let God be thanked that He has made this possible.

### **III. HOW IMPORTANT IS THE TRUTH?**

To those who are concerned with their well-being in this life and in the world to come, God's Truth is **all-important**. It should be so with every accountable person since all are amenable to God's law and all will appear at the judgment (Matt. 25:31-32). God's Truth is the only means by which preparation for the judgment can be made. To reject the Truth is to ask for the condemnation which shall come upon unbelievers.

We have never seen such a devaluation of Truth as has occurred in recent years. Not only is this true in society in general but also in the area of the spiritual realm. Good times, material prosperity, have redounded to a terrible spiritual depression. Just like the church at Laodicea, people are "*rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing*" (Rev. 3:17). That is, they only think they have need of nothing. The sobering facts are that people are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" when it comes to spiritual well-being. Sound evidence of this is reflected in our morally corrupt society. The true importance of God's truth is seen in that it is the only means by which men can be freed from the guilt of their sins. Jesus said, "*the truth shall make you free*" (Jno. 8:32). Paul said of the gospel, a term which stands for God's truth, "*it is the power of God unto salvation*" (Rom. 1:16). Peter says obeying **the truth** is the means by which souls are **purified** (1 Pet. 1:22). Purification of the soul represents acceptance by God. The word of God's grace is able to give one "an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32).

In Paul's description of the Christian as a soldier, he commands, "*and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*" (Eph. 6:17). The writer of Hebrews describes God's word, the truth, as "*quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword*" (Heb. 4:12). We may say that God's truth serves as an effective weapon in the Christian's warfare.

The Truth, the word of God, serves as an all-sufficient guide in living the Christian life. Nothing else serves this purpose. Paul said, "*All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instructions in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works*" (2 Tim. 3:16-17). This rules out any need for a man-made creed or set of rules to guide the child of God. If this Truth was accepted in the religious world, it would do away with the world of denominationalism.

The church is to serve as the "*pillar and ground of the truth*" (1 Tim. 3:15). This places a great responsibility upon the church but a noble one indeed. The church doesn't originate any truth; it is to defend and uphold that which has already been given, which is all-sufficient.

The Lord's church is suffering greatly in our day due to the failure of so many congregations to serve as "the pillar and ground of the truth." I hear so very often from concerned brethren in various parts of the country. Their cause for concern is pretty well the same — the congregation of which they are members is being taken over by brethren of a liberal persuasion. Instead of upholding the truth, the truth is being "sold." In many instances those who assume the place of elders are in the forefront in allowing the wolves to decimate the flock. In other instances the elders allow false teachers to come in and do not stop them from teaching. Preachers are some times allowed to set forth error and are not stopped by the leadership.

Those who are serious about serving the Lord in sincerity and truth should be mindful of the all-important nature of God's truth. Its importance is not diminished one whit when and if the greater majority of people have little regard for it as is the case today. It is now and always will

be the one and only means of obtaining freedom from the guilt of sin, salvation.

## **IV. ARE THERE ENEMIES OF THE TRUTH IN OUR DAY?**

To ask that question is to answer it. Yes, there are **Enemies of the Truth** and some are from within the flock. When Christ, who is "the truth," said, "*He that is not with me is against me,*" (Matt. 12:30) He put people into two groups. While those not with Christ are enemies, some are more pronounced enemies than others.

**Perverters of the Gospel** are enemies of the truth. Paul said to the Galatian brethren, "*there be some that trouble you and would pervert the gospel of Christ*" (Gal. 1:7). As it was in the days of Paul, so it is now. The world of denominationalism preaches only a perverted gospel. The true gospel will not produce denominations such as exist today by the hundreds. Of greater concern is the fact that within the body of Christ the number of those preaching a perverted gospel is growing by leaps and bounds. Make no mistake about it, brethren who preach a perverted gospel are enemies of the truth!

Paul says of the Gentiles who "knew God" but became "fools," that they "changed the truth of God into a lie" (Rom. 1:21-25). Today, some who claim to be Christians are upholding things, such as sexual perversion, which are clearly against God's will. Some find causes for divorce and remarriage, other than the one reason given by Christ in Matthew 19:9. Some find ways to fellowship error which are in violation of God's law on fellowship. Some are finding ways of using entertainment as worship, which are in no sense of the term in harmony with John 4:24. These are only a few examples of changing God's truth into a lie. To change the truth into a lie is to be its enemy, no mistake about it.

**Compromisers** are enemies of the truth. The act of compromising truth involves the giving up of some of it. To do this makes it less than the whole truth to which we are amenable. God's words says, "*Buy the truth, and sell it not*" (Prov. 23:23). We've never seen so many compromisers of the truth as we see today.

All **false teachers** are enemies of the truth. Hymenaeus and Philetus were teaching that the resurrection was past, just like the Max King doctrine. They were overthrowing the faith of some (2 Tim. 2:17-18). You name a false doctrine, and there is a great chance that some of our brethren are teaching it. Make no bones about it, such people are enemies of the truth.

**Our Schools.** For the most part these schools are enemies of the truth. This is so because they have faculty and/or staff who are teachers of error. Most of the ones I know about have false teachers come on campus for lectures or other speaking activities. One of the dangers I have noted about "our schools" is that some come to have such strong loyalty for their favorite school that it actually outweighs their loyalty to God's word. One preacher wrote me that he was going to stand with his favorite school "regardless." I was reading a note from the editor of one of our brotherhood papers, in which he expressed his happiness that I.B.C. had stated their stand for the truth. My letter to the editor, asking how the school could be standing for the truth when even at that time they had F. LaGard Smith scheduled to speak on their campus, was last year, and I still haven't heard from the editor. I've wondered why.

Much more could be said with reference to enemies of the truth. Those who will not defend the faith as set forth in Jude 3, when the writer said, "*earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*," and who will not "*stand fast in the faith*" as Paul commanded the Corinthians (I Cor. 16:13), are enemies of the truth. But we must now turn our attention to another very important question:

## V. ARE THE FOLLOWING THINGS DUE TO THE LOVE OF THE TRUTH?

There is something which stands out as very significant about Paul's use of the words, "*The love of the truth*," as used in 2 Thessalonians 2:10. One may acknowledge God's word as being truth and yet fail to have a strong desire for it, to have a special reverence and respect for it. One's interest in gaining more knowledge of God's truth may be only half-hearted. When thinking of the love of the truth I'm reminded of the Psalmist's description of the man in Ps. 1:2: "*But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.*" Love of the truth would be reflected in the devotion to it as demonstrated by the apostles in Acts 5. Though they were imprisoned for speaking the truth (v. 18), they responded to the authorities in the following unwavering way: "*Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men*" (v. 29). When brethren show such devotion to the truth, can we not safely conclude that they Love the Truth? When Paul used the expression to the Ephesians, "speaking the truth in love," was he not advocating speaking the whole truth with high regard and appreciation for it?

We are going to mention a number of things in which some of our brethren have engaged or are now engaging. We suggest that our readers respond in their own mind to the following question: Are these things being done due to **the love of the truth** on the part of these brethren? If not because of **the love of the truth**, is there any other God-approved reason for so doing?

**Embracing Denominationalism.** The affinity for the man-made religions has been growing with an increasing number of our brethren over the past three or four decades or more. This growing affinity has now come to the outright embracing of denominationalism. We shall note only a few examples, of which there are several.

**The Billy Graham Crusade.** This work of error came to a close only yesterday, June 4th. This represents one of the truly saddest days in spiritual Israel to occur in a great many years. It is sad enough that a reported 76,000 people would flock to hear one of the most widely known false teachers in our country. But sadder still, by far, is the fact that seven congregations of those claiming to be members of our Lord's church and our brethren, were embracing and bidding "God speed" to this propagation of error. They helped to make this dissemination of error possible. Now, please, answer this question: Did our supposed brethren do this due to **the love of the truth**?

In connection with the above, we note the following paragraph by brother Jim Waldron, from the May 2000 issue of *Bulletin Briefs*:

Another ungodly thing about Woodmont Hill's elders inviting Graham to Nashville is that at least 37 teachers and staff at DLU attend Woodmont Hills church (check the Lipscomb

University Campus Directory for 1999-2000).

Now, a question: Do those 37 teachers and staff from Lipscomb attend Woodmont Hills due to **the love of the truth?**

**The Franklin Graham Festival 2000.** The following is from the Jan. 30, 2000, bulletin from the Broadway Church of Christ in Lubbock, Texas:

In the coming weeks you will hear a great deal about the upcoming Franklin Graham Festival 2000. The festival will be coming to Lubbock in the spring of 2000, and Max Lucado will be coming this winter to "kick-off" the events that will lead up to the Festival.

Some of our fellowship will hail this event as a powerful opportunity to have the name of Jesus held high in our community and consider it an opportunity to teach any who may seek further study. Others will not believe members should participate. In short, the Festival has the potential to be a very divisive issue.

In the spirit of unity and in Christ's love, we, the elders of the Broadway Church of Christ, feel that the Broadway congregation cannot serve as an official sponsor of Festival 2000.

We, as an eldership, make this request of our Broadway family. For those of you who might be uncomfortable with any participation in Festival 2000, we ask you prayers and encouragement for those of our family who may attend or work for the crusade. Their desire is that souls are saved and doors opened for the gospel of Christ. For those of you who might feel called to attend or work for Festival 2000, we ask your prayers and understanding for those who might be uncomfortable with any role in the Festival. Their desire is also that souls are saved and doors opened for the gospel of Christ.

We know that Broadway has people wanting to attend or serve in various capacities; and, out of this same desire for unity in Christ, we want them to know that they have the blessings of the Broadway eldership. In a paraphrase of what Paul says in Romans 14 ... what may be wrong for one brother is not necessarily wrong for another.

Our goal is for people to be open and receptive to the gospel of Christ, and that God receive all the glory and honor for what we do. We pray for God's blessings for our congregation as we serve this diverse family of believers.

The foregoing is quoted from the bulletin of Marvin L. Weir, Rowlett, TX, Apr. 16, 2000.

We don't understand how brethren who hold the position of elders, or other members for that matter, could sleep at night when they are guilty of upholding that which flies in the face of our Lord and Savior who gave his life's blood to purchase His church. That is, unless such people do not really believe God's word is to be taken seriously, and believe that the religions which have been brought into existence by men are just as good as the true church which was made possible by Christ. This "Broadway eldership," and those who want to have a part in the Festival are changing "The truth of God into a lie" by implying that a false religion can be supported with God's approval. The "elders" clearly flout God's precious truth or else show their virtually complete ignorance of God's word and its clear teaching concerning the one true church. There could be an element of both.



The very audacity of the elders to ask their members who have enough love for the truth to oppose the Graham Festival, to pray for and encourage the members who have such disrespect for God's word that they want to support that work of soul-condemning error! The eldership seems to be in somewhat of a quandary as to what to do about supporting the Festival, due to what the members think, even though they give it their blessing. Do you suppose they ever considered what the Lord thought about supporting a rank false teacher? It appears they haven't. It is evident that there is a lack of knowledge as to the difference between the true gospel of Christ and a "perverted" gospel (Gal. 1:6-9).

Now, a serious question: Are the elders and other Broadway supporters of Graham Festival 2000, doing so due to **the love of the truth**?

**Church provided entertainment.** There is now a widespread clamor for more and more entertainment to be provided by the church. It seems to me that it would be difficult for anyone not to see that behind this clamor is the pleasing of men, not God. We know that the providing of entertainment by the church never was authorized by God and never will be. Yet, many will have the entertainment, whether God approves or not. The time was that most brethren would have been taken aback to see the announcements that are so common in church bulletins now — certain people are going to "perform," and various kinds of "entertainment" will be provided. The overriding emphasis is on many occasions, what can we do to please men? What pleases God so often takes a backseat. Question: Is all of this due to **the love of the truth**?

**Independent organizations.** The number of organizations, under no eldership, which are now supplanting the work of the church, are on the increase. Both individuals and congregations are solicited for financial support of these organizations. If there is a valid basis for the existence of these independent organizations, would it not follow that in principle all the work of the church could be turned over to such groups? As of now I've not seen New Testament justification for the above. Consider the following question: Do you think these organizations come into existence due to **the love of the truth**?

**Fellowshipping denominations.** As noted above, it is a sad day in spiritual Israel that a number of congregations are now outrightly embracing denominationalism. There are, however, many instances in which the congregation as a whole has not accepted the vain religions, but some of the members engage in such fellowship. Every time this happens the cause of Christ is hurt, and the distinctiveness of the Lord's church is marred. Yet, those who are thus violating God's law on fellowship are seldom rebuked by the elders or anyone else. Some of those who are guilty of the above would claim to be sound in the faith. In view of the fact that this kind of fellowship is not authorized, could it just somehow be that those who do so do it due to **the love of the truth**?

## **SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS**

In the above discussion we have touched upon some things relating to **The Love of the Truth**, which we believe to be important. Surely we can know what truth is and we can understand it well enough to have salvation. The importance of truth is seen in that we cannot have salvation without it. There are, indeed, enemies of the truth, even within the church. We say without fear of contradiction that the many things being done within the Lord's which are totally without scriptural authority are **not** being done due to **The Love Of The Truth**, but rather due to

the disregard for God's truth. This spells serious trouble indeed. When people "*transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ*" (2 Jno. 9) they cannot have God's approval.

We have asked the question several times as to whether a number of things being done are done due to **The Love of the Truth**. We have done this to try to draw attention the fact that these things could not possibly be done for this reason. It has to be a **lack of love** for the truth.

The present attitude relative to the lack of the love of the truth reminds me of Isaiah's description of the sins of the Jews when he said, "for truth is fallen in the street" (Isa. 59:12-15).

We leave our readers with Paul's warning:

*"And with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness"* (2 Thess. 2:10-12).

- - - Walter W. Pigg

## **Just A Matter Of Interpretation**

**By Alan Adams, Assistant Editor**

A friend and I were recently discussing the Bible; unfortunately, we were in agreement on very few points. He finally made a statement that I could agree with: "It's all just a matter of interpretation." Although, I agree with the statement, I cannot agree with my friend's application of it. He, like so many, views interpretation as a purely personal or subjective exercise; along the order of watching a movie and saying, "I like it," or "I don't like it." I believe this matter calls for a bit more thought and analysis. Let's look at this matter of interpretation.

### **TYPICAL THINKING ABOUT THE BIBLE**

### **APPLIED TO OTHER AREAS OF LIFE**

My Dad was a genius in the field of electronics and communications, but he was a terrible speller. He would often call home and ask the correct spelling for words he was using in some report. I clearly recall his asking one day if the word *water* had two Ts or one. I told him, "only one." Now, suppose my Dad had responded by saying, "Oh well, it's just a matter of spelling." It's true: Whether, *w-a-t-e-r* or *w-a-t-t-e-r*, in either case, you have surely "spelled." So, it is a matter of spelling, but, it doesn't follow that *any* spelling will do. There is *correct* spelling, and there is *incorrect* spelling. So it is with interpretation, one can do so correctly, that is in accordance with certain objective rules and principles, or can do in incorrectly.

### **INTERPRETING INTERPRETATION**

A lot of my work in Taiwan involved translation or interpretation. I would translate things from Chinese to English, and from English to Chinese. Some times it would be oral translation, sometimes written. Good, clean, precise, correct translation/interpretation is based upon objective rules of vocabulary, grammar, syntax, etc. Then of course, one must also take into consideration culture, history, and other related things in order to understand what is meant in the original language. Many people operate under the misunderstanding that translating is a simple tit-for-tat, or this-for-that process, but it's not quite that simple. Then there is also poor, sloppy, ambiguous, incorrect translation. Would it be reasonable to simply say, "Oh well, it's all a matter of interpretation"?

To *interpret* something simply means "to explain the meaning of." It's interesting that the Greek New Testament uses the word "hermeneuo," which is often translated into English as "interpret." Our English word *hermeneutics* also comes from this Greek word. Hermeneutics is the formal science or field of interpretation, especially the interpretation of literature. Yes. Understanding the meaning of the Bible *is* a "matter of interpretation." However, in interpreting the Bible, it doesn't follow that we are free to attach to it just any meaning that pleases us. Are there not certain objective rules and procedures that must be followed in order to correctly interpret the Bible, or even the newspaper for that matter? Paul says that we must "rightly divide [handle aright, ASV] the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

The common practice of saying whatever you might *wish* that the Bible said, and then trying to cover your tracks by saying, "Oh well, it's just a matter of interpretation," makes no sense at all. Why not try writing an overdraft on your checking account, and then tell the bank that it's just a matter of arithmetic? or, get caught stealing and tell the judge that, it's just a matter of making a living.

## INTERPRETING WITH AN AGENDA

When my friend and I had the aforementioned discussion, he mentioned, as an example, that Jesus said the "first and great commandment" is to "love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind" (Matt. 22:37-38). He went on to triumphantly say, "See, he didn't say anything about the church here." My friend believes that one can *love* God and not have anything to do with the church. His principle of interpretation is this: *When a statement in the Bible specifically mentions one obligation, and does not mention any others, we may conclude that the one obligation mentioned is all that is necessary.* This is a commonly held, yet patently false notion of interpretation. It is derived from wishful thinking on the part of a person who would like to have the right to go through the Bible and pick and choose what suits him.

Back to *Matthew 22:37-38*. True, this passage doesn't specifically mention the church, but does it follow that the church is not involved in our obligation to love God with the totality of our being? Neither does this passage say any thing about faith or repentance. Is it possible for one to *love* God, but not be obligated to have faith in God, or be willing to repent of his sins? My friend would say (and, most people would say), "If you truly love God, then you will have faith in Him, you will desire to repent of your sins." Now, that is correct interpretation. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (Jno. 14:15). Neither can a person possibly *love* God, nor Jesus, without also loving the church which the Lord "purchased with his own blood"

(Acts 20:28).

## COMMON SENSE AND FIGURES OF SPEECH

The Bible, like any other work of literature, often uses various figures of speech. Apparently not everyone understands figures of speech, notwithstanding the fact that most people use them regularly. Several years ago, I painfully learned that not all people understand nor appreciate figures of speech. In our congregation was an elderly sister along with her elderly daughter. These two ladies were faithful in their attendance, but they were a bit eccentric. One Sunday morning at dismissal, I was shaking hands and saying, "bye." With a typically beaming face, I shook hands with the mom and her daughter and said, "Y'all behave yourselves." Later my lunch was interrupted by the phone. It was the elderly mother and she wanted to know why I thought that she and her daughter needed to "behave," saying, "We always try to act right in church." This was one of the rare occasions in my life when I was at a loss for words. I frantically scrambled for a response, finally, thinking it appropriate to explain a figure of speech, I asked, "Have you ever heard anyone say, 'I'm so hungry I could eat a horse?'" She responded, "Well, I'm frying a chicken." That conversation went nowhere in a hurry. Anyway, I trust that most people do not have quite that much trouble with figures of speech.

One such figure of speech is technically called *synecdoche* (pronounced: *si . nek . duh . kee*). This is a figure of speech where you use a part (like one representative of a group or category) of something to stand for the whole: like *bread* for *food*. Admittedly, the word *synecdoche*, is not a part of common parlance. But, even if you just call it plain *Fred*, it is still a common figure of speech we all regularly use.

If someone says, "Hey, let's go get something to eat," it doesn't take literary analysis to understand that *eat* also includes *drink*. When the Scriptures say that "upon the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7), it doesn't take a professor to understand that "break bread" also includes "drink[ing] of that cup" (I Cor. 11:28).

Think of how our denominational friends "willingly forget" (2 Pet. 3:5) this simple figure of speech. Denominational preachers will reel off dozens of passages which connect belief or faith with salvation (e.g., Jno. 3:16; Rom. 5:1; Eph. 2:8). Since these passages do not mention other things, particularly baptism, they conclude that sinners are saved at the point of faith: in other words, faith only. No, in all these passages "faith" is a part of what is necessary, and it is used to stand for the whole. Consider Acts 11:18, which speaks of "repent[ing] unto life." There is no mention of faith here. Do we conclude that faith is not required? No. Repentance, like faith, is part of what is necessary, but here it is used to stand for the whole. What about Romans 10:10, which says that "confession is made unto salvation"? It's the same principle. The part for the whole. When the Bible says that "baptism doth also now save us" (I Pet. 3:21), does this mean "baptism" without "faith, repentance, and confession"? Once again, this is the figure of speech where the part is used to stand for the whole.

It is a terrible thing to see people playing word games with themselves. In the cool dawn of the morning, can people who excuse their disobedience with such sophistry really believe what they all too often glibly say? Somehow the claim, "It's a matter of interpretation," rings hollow in view of the judgment to come.

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

*W. Justin Adams*

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

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

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

Children's bible school, whether during vacation or every week, must take into account the maturity and attention spans of children, hence the various props are just that: a means to an end, a way to teach children God's Word. When a teacher's method distract students from the goal of learning the method fails; when the teachers encourage children to misbehave, to view worship and study as play time, to view our God and our Adversary as cartoonish characters in a children's puppet play, their methods at best hinder, and at worst pervert learning. In secular schools, parents would not tolerate teachers who use self-defeating methods; neither should parents tolerate, much more encourage such methods in the church.

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Editors' note: We ran the above article last year. We are running it again because we feel there is an urgent need to encourage people to consider its serious message. Thinking back, I can well remember when I was guilty of doing some of the very things mentioned, which conveyed to children a message which did not encourage a proper respect for worship. Sadly, with the entertainment craze which is now in vogue, adults are clamoring for the same thing which we have been encouraging in vacation bible school. The reverence and respect which should prevail in true worship is rapidly becoming absent in many congregations.

### **Response From A Reader**

The following response, dated June 5, 2000, is from a reader of *Banner of Truth*:

Walter,

Recently I saw the April 2000 Vol. 9 issue of the Banner of Truth. While you make some good points I believe they are mitigated by the references to personalities. In the September 11, 1873 issue of the Gospel Advocate, W. Y. Kuykendall wrote "I prefer to name no name lest my readers should begin to compare the men who write rather than the arguments they use." I believe David Lipscomb had a similar policy while he was editor of GA. Recently I've been reading a book where the writer addressed issues that had been made in a sermon and refrained from attacking the speaker but instead addressed the issues one-by-one.

If more writers and speakers would address issues instead of personalities they might be more successful and certainly would appear more loving and therefore more Christ like.....

Signed: John Jenkins, Gatlingburg, TN

My response to John is as follows:

Dear John,

We encourage readers of *Banner of Truth* to respond to its content. We appreciate the interest which moved you to respond, even though we have some disagreement with the conclusions you reach in your response.

Since you do not refer to any New Testament teaching as the basis of your conclusions we assume that you are expressing your opinions. If not, please so inform us. While people are entitled to opinions, it is my opinion that opinions should be based on at least some semblance of Bible teaching when the same have to do with spiritual matters.

John, your opinion is not unusual. I've heard it expressed many times over the years, though I have not understood exactly why such an opinion is held. Therefore, I'm going to pose a number of questions to you, trusting that you might enlighten me. Your response to these questions would be greatly appreciated. If there are valid reasons for holding such an opinion, then it would be to my benefit to accept the same. Then I could present this to others. For sake of easy reference I will number the questions.

1. Did brethren Kuykendall and Lipscomb give any scriptural reason for not calling

names? If they did, what passages did they use?

2. Did the above brethren make any reference to the calling of the following names by the apostle Paul: Hymenaeus and Alexander (I Tim. 1:19-20). Hymenaeus and Philetus (2 Tim. 2:17-18). Demas (2 Tim. 4:10)? If so, did they conclude Paul was in error for so doing?

3. Do you believe Paul was wrong in calling the above names, and that Christ was wrong in His strong criticism of the scribes and Pharisees?

4. Do you believe that Paul would have been "more successful" and appeared "more loving and therefore more Christ like...." if he had not called the names?

5. Do you believe it would be wrong to call the name of a false teacher in accordance with Paul's command in Romans 16:17-18?

6. Do you believe it is wrong to show our love for God by keeping his commandments, as stated in I John 5:3?

7. Was Paul wrong in "attacking the speaker[s]" of false doctrine, Hymenaeus and Philetus?

8. In view of New Testament teaching, could your opinion about name calling be wrong?

John, I don't know what you think, except by what you have written and will not attribute to you something I do not know, but some people only object to calling the name of false teachers in a critical way. Those same people may not object to calling the name of a false teacher in a positive way. It seems even as if they want to for some reason shield the false teacher. Something else I've noticed is that those who oppose the calling of the names of false teachers almost never even attempt to give a scriptural reason for their position, or opinion. It is a matter of fact that opinions do influence people. I believe that you have been so influenced.

In Christ, *Walter W. Pigg.*

## **READERS' RESPONSE**

"I've been receiving your B.O.T. publication for the past ten months and find it to be very good and based on sound doctrine. I have passed it around for others to read and the following would like to be placed on your mailing list to receive your B.O.T. - **Hugh Word.**" - **AR.** (*Thanks for passing BOT around for others to read. This helps us to add to our mailing list those who want it - Editor*)

"Please use this to help spread the gospel to the world - **M/M Leon Crisp.**" - **MO.** (*Your gift is greatly appreciated. People like you make our work possible and we are always thankful for them - Editor*)

"Do you have any back issues of February 2000? It was one of the best issues about issues confronting the brotherhood. I would appreciate more than one copy if they are available. I have had many tell me how well they liked that issue - **Don Layman.**" - **AL.** (*The issues now facing the brotherhood are of a most serious nature. We are encouraged when brethren express their concern as you have done. We wish many others would - Editor*)

"I came across your Banner of Truth and found it very interesting. It warms my heart to know that there are still sound and well balanced brethren out there! Please put me on your mailing list - **Michael G. Kissel.**" - **IN.** (*It is so encouraging to us that we are hearing from more and more concerned brethren like you. We certainly need to encourage each other in the fight of faith - Editor*)

"Here is a small contribution toward the publishing and circulation of Banner of Truth. We enjoy reading it very much and for the truth therein -**Gene and Sue Colley.**" - **KY.** (*Gifts to keep our work going are always appreciated regardless of the amount - Editor*)

"I just finished your article on God's Plan for Elders in the Church and it is excellent. In our congregation there has been quite a bit of discussion lately on the authority of the eldership. One point of discussion has been concerning Heb. 10:25 and whether or not assemblies (such as Sunday Bible study, Sunday night services, Wed. services, gospel meetings, etc.) designated by the elders other than the Lord's day worship service (which is dictated by God) are binding on the members of the congregation and if it is a sin to willfully be absent from these assemblies. If you could offer some comments along these lines, it will be greatly appreciated - **Billy Box.**" (*Since the elders are to be obeyed and are to watch for the souls of the flock as per Heb. 13:17 and are to feed the flock as per Acts 20:28, the members of the church have a responsibility to heed the instruction of the elders. This would include the feeding times. One who is willfully absent from the assemblies has a serious problem in that they do not see the need to "desire the sincere milk of the word" in order to grow (I Pet. 2:2). At one time the Christians were meeting daily (Acts 2:46). When the elders designate various times for feeding the flock they are not making a law, but rather regulating the feeding times which are needed for growth - Editor*).

"I have read some samples of BOT and would like to subscribe to your letter. I am 45 and have been a member of the Lord's church for 32 years, and I am looking for true 'Christian reading material.' Please let me know if there is a charge, and I will send it in - **Daryl Hurst.**" - **OH.** (*We do not have a charge for BOT. However, gifts are always appreciated since that is the means by which we carry on this work - Editor*)

"I hope you are doing well. I need to be taken off the list for Banner of Truth. It is a good paper but I receive so many I can not keep up with them all. Thanks so much - **Mark Lance.**" - **TX.** (*Thanks for letting us know that you no longer want to receive BOT. This allows us to add someone else to our mailing list who can profit from the material we carry - Editor*.)

"Please put me on your mailing list to receive your free publication Banner of Truth. I found out about it from the [Seek The Old Paths Website](#). Thank you very much - **Janis Dukes.**" **TX.** (*We appreciate the mention of BOT by bro. Garland Robinson on his website. Bro. David Lemmons carries BOT on his Website at the following address as noted below. Let others know this. <<http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm>> )*

"A friend read our copy of Banner of Truth and liked it so much, we would like to put her name on your mailing list. Please find enclosed check - **Ted & Vella Harshbarger.**" - **NM.** (*We will do. Thanks for check. to help us keep going in our work - Editor*.)

"Starting May 2000 we will be contributing \$50 per month to the Hickory Grove church of Christ for the publishing of **Banner of Truth - Pine Ridge church of Christ.**" - **MO.** (*We*



*thank you very much for becoming a supporter of BOT. The number of congregations supporting this work is growing. We are happy to report that the positive responses from our readers continues to increase on a regular basis.- Editor.)*

"Here is a little something to help with Banner of Truth. I'm so thankful we still have sound brethren. Keep up the good work. Lauren wants to be put on your mailing list. She has read the last two and enjoys them very much. Things have not changed here and we will be worshipping in the home of Jeff and Lauren - **Pearl Bryant.**" - **WA.** *(Thanks for the check - Editor.)*

"Please add our name to the mailing list for the publication 'Banner of Truth.' I know it is mailed free upon request, but please find enclosed a check to help you in the Lord's work. The women translating issue was brought home to us this year. My husband, then a deacon in the church, was withdrawn from in February because of a situation that began when he was accused of causing division by his opposition to the use of a woman translator in the worship services of Airport church of Christ here in Valdosta in their local Spanish-speaking migrant worker mission efforts. He has since been restored, and we have left that congregation, but not before much heartache and tears. Thank you very much for your stand for the truth. Your publication and others have been a source of comfort to us in our trials - **Sandra Daughtery.**" - **GA.** *(Thanks for your kind words relative to BOT and for the check to help in our work. I can relate to opposition for standing against the use of women translators before a mixed audience. When we began to oppose the practice in the pages of BOT, the Knight Arnold elders asked us to stop sending BOT to the congregation and the school of preaching. We were not given a reason for stopping it but we learned that it was not being put out after we ran articles opposing the use of women translators. We still believe the practice is without Bible authority. No Scripture approves it - Editor.)*

## **FELLOWHELPERS**

March and April 2000

Anonymous	60.00
Anonymous	160.00
Anonymous	150.00
M/M John H. Brown	75.00
Lou Nell Elkins	50.00
Paula Crabtree	5.00
Elizabeth Sublett	20.00
Donald R. Shiflett	200.00
Phyllis Mitchell	40.00
Robert L. Schultz	25.00

E. J. Oliver	40.00
M/M Bob Henson	100.00
Wanda Thompson	25.00
James F. Prichard	20.00
Linda Dobson	30.00
Kyle F. Chambers	5.00
Anonymous	100.00
Lois Johnson	6.00
Pearl Bryant	30.00
Ted & Vella Harshbarger	50.00
Herdis Kyle	10.00
Jerry Bailey	25.00
O. C. Bruce	25.00
Julia Hooper	15.00
Anonymous	15.00
The Grace Family	25.00
Ladies' Bible Class, Cloverdale church of Christ. Memory of Leon Robinson	25.00
Maple Hill church of Christ	200.00
West Rd. church of Christ	200.00
Alhambra church of Christ	50.00
Green Plain church of Christ	50.00
Berea church of Christ	100.00
Chestnut Grove church of Christ	50.00
Eastside church of Christ	50.00
Whitlock church of Christ	<u>50.00</u>
Total March & April contribution	2,121.00

*"That we might be fellowhelpers  
to the truth" (3 John 9)*

**Please accept our sincere thanks - Editor**

***Banner of Truth Financial Report***

March & April 2000

Balance on hand March 1, 2000      12,684.60

March & April contribution    2,081.00

Total funds available    14,765.60

March & April expenses:

Mailing Mar. & Apr. & postage      1,132.76

Phone calls      13.82

Mailing labels 47.90

E-mail 24.00

Total March & April expenses      1,218.48

Total Funds Available 14,765.60

Less March & April expenses 1,218.48

Balance on hand April 30, 2000      13,546.52

We are most grateful for the way our brethren are supplying the finances needed to carry on our work. It is so helpful not to have to worry about the needed funds, knowing that they will be there when needed. Thanks again, for being our *fellowhelpers to the truth*. - Editor.

## **PREPARING THE SOIL**

Reading *The Life of Elder John Smith*, popularly known as "Raccoon" John Smith, I found a quote to share with my readers. It is still pertinent.

Smith was asked, "If the gospel is so plain, as you say it is, why do have to labor so hard to get people to understand it? Smith replied, "I have often prepared ground in the wilderness for a turnip patch, and though I had the kindest soil and the best seed, and the sowing was easy, I never got top nor root until I first took my axe and hoe and briar knife, and went in and hacked and grubbed and cleared away the ground. The Lord knows I do not esteem it hard to preach the simple gospel to those who are prepared to receive it, but it is labor indeed to root out prejudice, and cut down the systems, and clear away the sectarian trash that cumbers the minds and hearts of the people. - - Author unknown.

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< <http://www.hcis.net/users/dlemmons/BOTlist.htm> >

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