

The Summit Chronicle

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord — Isaiah 2:3

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Table of Contents

CONCERNING MORAL STANDARD PART 2

pg 2 by Rex Banks

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

pg 4 by Edwin Jones

HOSPITALS? FUNERALS? THEY'RE NOT FOR ME!

pg 5 by Al Horne

LESSONS FROM GOLGOTHA

pg 6 by Rob Sparks

LIVE RENT FREE pg 8 CODICES AT NAG HAMMADI EQYPT pg 13

by Jaracz J. Heather

THE REST THAT REMAINS

pg 9 by Kevin L. Moore

TWO TRUTHS, ONE GOD: THE SCHIZOPHRENIA OF POST MODERNISM

pg 11 by Dave Bell

Contributing Writers for this Month's Articles

Al Horne • Dave Bell
Edwin Jones • Rex Banks
Jaracz Heather • Rob Sparks

Scripture of the Month

**"All the ways of a man are
clean in his own sight, but the
Lord weighs the motives".**

— Proverbs 16:2

Contact Us

If you have any questions that you
would like answered by any of our
writers, please feel free to contact us via
email on:

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PROCLAIMING: The Summit Chronicle Worldwide by Jaracz Heather

For a newsletter that was only started in February, *The Summit Chronicle* was, and is, well received throughout the brotherhood worldwide!

Brother Allan G. Fowell and myself have received numerous emails from brethren all over the world wanting to subscribe to the electronic newsletter. Which is all a bit overwhelming as we weren't expecting it to spread that far, that quick!

But you know what? It's a joy to have the Word of God spread through this medium and we're both glad we decided to start this newsletter. It's wonderful to be a part of something that can help the work of the Lord both here and outside.

However, it is important to note that the 'focus of thanks' is not on us but on our wonderful and gifted writers who have contributed their materials to be published on *The Summit Chronicle*.

While editing the paper for it's first run, I couldn't help but feel so encouraged as I was reading the articles from these great brethren. And it made me feel so joyous to know that the church of the Lord possesses some incredible writers, thinkers and teachers of the

Word of God.

Because of this, we decided to recruit even more writers to contribute—and I'm glad to say—you won't be disappointed.

Some of these brethren are individuals Allan and I have known for years. Others we have met only a few weeks ago. But nevertheless, they are brethren who can all help each and every one of us to grow and be strengthened in the Lord.

While discussing how we were going to spread the paper worldwide, we decided to make it electronic so that it can be delivered **fast** as well as **cheap**. And with technology these days, it sure does make life easier and it's cost effective.

I would like to encourage you to send in any questions you may have and we will have one of our writers respond to it as best as he can.

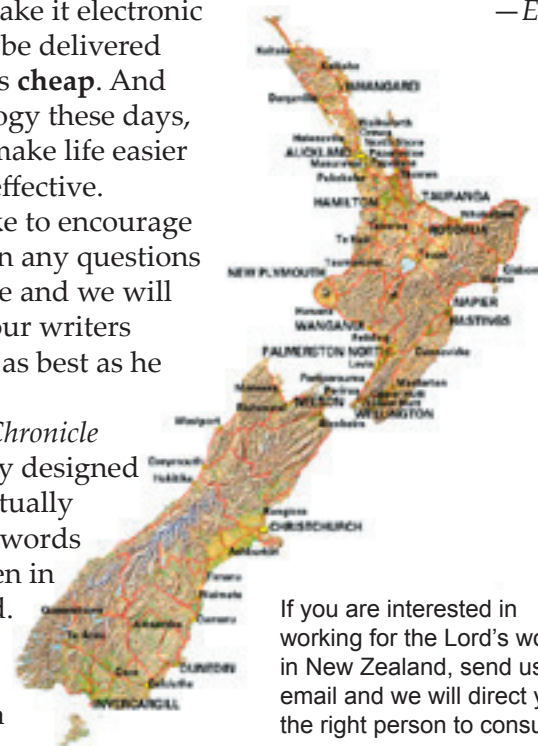
The Summit Chronicle was originally designed to bring spiritually encouraging words to the brethren in New Zealand. We also thought we would send a

few copies here and there to brethren we knew overseas.

Of course, with the power of the Internet, those brethren who forwarded the very first copy of the newsletter caused a domino effect to take place!

The Summit Chronicle contributing writers are from various backgrounds and personalities. As such, we can all enjoy and appreciate the diversity that this e-newsletter brings to our spiritual table. We hope and pray that your soul is uplifted from the words of these wonderful brethren.

—Ed.



If you are interested in working for the Lord's work in New Zealand, send us an email and we will direct you to the right person to consult.

CONCERNING MORAL STANDARD:

Does the answer lie within man? Part 2

by Rex Banks

When Peter addressed the saints in Asia Minor as “aliens and strangers” (1 Pet 2:11 c.f. 1:1) he may well have been reinforcing the point that this earth is not the Christian’s home, and indeed there are many things in life which remind the believer that he walks to the beat of a drum which the world does not heed. For example, the Christian’s belief in a *theocentric* or *God-centred* ethical system and his conviction that Scripture contains an immutable moral law reflecting the perfect unchanging holiness of God (**Part 1**)—makes him an oddity in contemporary New Zealand society.

If acknowledged at all, the Christian viewpoint on such matters as pre-marital sex, homosexuality, abortion and the like, is usually treated as a quaint relic of the past or as an unwelcome restriction upon personal freedom.

The Christian is often confused by such dismissive treatment of his cherished convictions, and in large measure this confusion results from his failure to recognize that fundamental differences exist between his own world view and the dominant cultural world view. Moral decisions reflect philosophical positions, and in order to understand the erosion of Biblical values in our society—we need to know something about those influences which have led to the marginalization of the Christian viewpoint.

MORAL SCEPTICISM

The term *moral scepticism* has different shades of meaning but in general it is used in connection with the idea that man needs to be sceptical about the possibility of objectively valid moral judgments. Arguments in the defence of the sceptical position

include the following:

There is no God and therefore the idea of morality is ridiculous.

In **Part 1** we argued that if morality is indeed a human construct then no ethical system has the power to constrain those who reject it. Some *moral sceptics* acknowledge the truth of this position and being atheists they take this to its logical position and deny the possibility of an objective moral code. As the General Theory of Evolution with its naturalistic world view has spread its influence over the minds and hearts of men, this dismissal of objective morality has become widespread.

The following from W.B. Provine, Professor of Biological Sciences at Cornell University appeared in **Creation Ex Nihilo Technical Journal vol. 10 (Part 1) 1996:**

“Let me summarize my views on what modern evolutionary biology tells us loud and clear... There are no gods, no purposes, no goal-directed forces of any kind. There is no life after death... *There is no ultimate foundation for ethics*, no ultimate meaning to life and no free will for humans either (emphasis mine)

This sounds familiar. In his novel **The Brothers Karamazov**, Fyodor Dostoevsky has one of his characters say: “There is no virtue if there is no immortality.” The Biblical picture of man as a being created in the image of God has gradually been eclipsed by the idea that humanity is the product of random, mindless forces and is not qualitatively different from the moss growing on the side of a tree. This partly explains why, as a society, we have accepted the mass killing of unborn children with equanimity.

Since free will is an illusion it makes

no sense to speak of moral choices.

In the present era this depressing view of the human condition is mainly associated with *behaviorism*, and perhaps the best-known presentation of this position is found in a work entitled **Beyond Freedom and Dignity** by one of its chief proponents B. F. Skinner. In Skinner’s view the individual’s wants are *externally determined* and *free will is merely an illusion*. What we may call “good” or “bad” behavior is simply a response to contingencies, and Skinner advocates the modification of human behavior by way of manipulating social environment. He argues for positive reinforcement rather than punishment. A later form of behaviorism is socio-biology.

The influence of behaviorism is widespread in our society as evidenced by our increasing reluctance to take moral responsibility for our own actions. Everyone is “a victim.” The rapist, the murderer, the adulterer, the drunkard, you name it, they are all “victims” of heredity and/or environment. What was once a reprehensible perversion is now an “alternative lifestyle.” Does any of this sound familiar?

Since life has no objective point or purpose the concept of objective morality is barren.

Although difficult to define and nail down, the system known as *existentialism* presents a cluster of ideas which have had a profound influence upon both religious and secular thought in our age. Names like Soren Kierkegaard (1813-1855) and Paul Tillich (1886-1965) are associated with the former, and Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) and Jean Paul Sartre (1905-1980) with the latter. Sartre did most to popularize atheistic existentialism.

Briefly, Sartre pictures man as an autonomous being in a universe which is Godless and therefore devoid of objective meaning (Life is “absurd”). In order for man’s existence to have point and purpose, *the individual must confer meaning upon his own life*. Man is *his own* legislator who shapes *his own* life by means of *his own* free choices, and man deceives himself if he believes that religion or science or any force outside self imparts meaning or coherence to his existence. In fact, according to Sartre, the man who believes that religion or anything else external to him imparts meaning to life, is acting in (what he calls) *bad faith*. Man, says Sartre is *condemned to be free*.

Much more could be said about the influences which have lead to the widespread rejection of moral absolutes, but from what we have seen it is not difficult to understand why the Christian often feels like *a stranger in a strange land* when issues such as abortion, euthanasia and extramarital sex are under discussion. *Moral cynicism* is very much part of the spirit of our age and few areas of public or private life are free from its influence.

SECULAR HUMANISM

The roots of modern secular humanism are to be found in the Renaissance and the accompanying revival of interest in classical learning. In the fifth century B.C. Protagoras had declared that: “Man is the measure of all things” and renewed interest in Greek ideas brought with it an emphasis upon the *importance of man*. Renaissance humanists were certainly not atheists and God was not excluded, but He was no longer the *focus*.

Inevitably this lead to the view known as *deism*. Deism affirmed belief in God, but the God of the deist was a remote figure who was not involved in the affairs of man. This movement away from God finally resulted in *naturalism*, the belief that the material universe is all that has ever existed, all

that exists now and all that ever will exist. Naturalism was the soil from which modern secular humanism grew.

In his **Dictionary of Philosophy** Peter Angles defines humanism as follows:

“A philosophy that (a) regards the rational individual as *the highest value*; (b) considers the individual to be the *ultimate source of value*; and (c) is dedicated to fostering the individual’s creative and moral development in a meaningful and rational way *without reference to concepts of the supernatural*” (emphasis mine).

Secular humanism exists as a well-organized movement with its own clearly-defined goals and its own written manifesto. In the pages of this manifesto (**Humanist Manifesto 2**) we have the following on *ethics*:

“We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational* needing no theological or ideological sanction. Ethics stems from human need and interest.”

Let’s briefly consider two points about the above statement:

First, we have already seen (**Part 1**) that while there is nothing to prevent humanists or anyone else theorizing about ethics, no ethical system devised by *one man* or *a group of men* has a valid claim upon other men who simply say “I disagree.” For example the framers of the Humanist manifesto expressed their disapproval of “exploitive, denigrating forms of sexual expression” and rightly so. But suppose an individual obtained sexual gratification through rape or sadism and that he also subscribed to the view of the ancient Greek philosopher Thrasymachus (at least as Plato represents him) that *right is found in might*? What makes the *humanist position* “better” than the

right is might position?

Second, there is clearly a problem with the notion that ethics is both *situational* and *autonomous*. If ethics is *autonomous* then I define what is right for *me* and *you* define what is right for *you*. Each man defines “good” and “bad” for himself. If on the other hand ethics is *situational* then the *situation* determines what is right and wrong. We can choose one or the other but not both because if man is his own legislator, he can simply deny that a given action is wrong in *any* situation.

Again, the Christian simply must know something of the nature of secular humanism in order to make sense of the world around him. For example Joseph Fletcher, a leading light in the field of medical ethics, defends *infanticide* and argues that human beings without a certain level of intelligence are not persons. It is natural to feel revulsion at such a suggestion but in order to make an adequate response we also need to know something of the humanistic world view which spawned it.

CONCLUSION

In our increasingly materialistic society the Christian who is committed to the notion of moral absolutes constantly finds himself swimming against the tide of public opinion, and although this can be very tiring, let’s never forget that truth is never decided by majority vote. Let’s also keep in mind that in this battle of value systems the stakes are very high indeed. In his essay **Man or Rabbit** C.S. Lewis put it this way:

“The Christian and the Materialist hold different beliefs about the universe. They can’t both be right. The one who is wrong will act in a way *which simply doesn’t fit the real universe*. Consequently, with the best will in the world, he will be helping his fellow creatures *to their destruction*” (emphasis mine).

Having declared that God had died in the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche “prognosticated (first) that the twentieth century would become the bloodiest century in history and second, that a universal madness would break out. He has been right on both counts” (Ravi Zacharias, **The Real Face of Atheism**). When man refuses to know God (Jer 9:6 cf. 9:3; 8:7) he pays a dreadful price.

Rex Banks is a preacher, researcher and author who resides in Hamilton, New Zealand.



“The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.”
—Matt 13:44

How much is the Kingdom of Heaven worth to you? This may seem like a silly question for a Christian, right? Wrong.

Some of us trade the Kingdom of Heaven, the true treasure, for the passing pleasures and temporary riches of this world.

Moses knew very well that the riches of Egypt were only for a short while, hence why the Hebrew writer records that he considered the riches of Christ far greater (Heb 11:24-27).

It's easy to take our eyes off the goal. All it takes is a moment's temptation which results in eternal condemnation.

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

by Edwin Jones

The Angel of the Theophany:

This angel is spoken of as “the angel of Yahweh,” and “the angel of the presence (or face) of Yahweh.” The following passages contain references to this angel:

- Genesis 16:7—the angel and Hagar
- Genesis 18—Abraham intercedes with the angel for Sodom
- Genesis 22:11—the angel interposes to prevent the sacrifice of Isaac
- Genesis 24: 7,40—Abraham sends Eliezer and promises the angel's protection
- Genesis 31:11—the angel who appears to Jacob says “I am the God of Beth-el”
- Genesis 32:24—Jacob wrestles with the angel and says, “I have seen God face to face”; Genesis 48:15f—Jacob speaks of God and the angel as identical
- Exodus 3 (compare Acts 7:30)—the angel appears to Moses in the burning bush; Exodus 13:21; 14:19 (compare Numbers 20:16)—God or the angel leads Israel out of Egypt
- Exodus 23:20—the people are commanded to obey the angel
- Exodus 32:34–33:17 (compare Isaiah 63:9)—Moses pleads for the presence of God with His people
- Joshua 5:13–6:2—the angel appears to Joshua
- Judges 2:1-5—the angel speaks to the people
- Judges 6:11—the angel appears to Gideon.

A study of these passages shows that while the angel and Yahweh are at times distinguished from each other, they are with equal frequency, and in the same passages, merged into each other.

How is this to be explained? It is obvious that these apparitions cannot be the Almighty Himself, whom no

man hath seen, or can see.

In seeking the explanation, special attention should be paid to two of the passages above cited. In Exodus 23:20 God promises to send an angel before His people to lead them to the promised land; they are commanded to obey him and not to provoke him “for he will not pardon your transgression: for My name is in him.”

Thus the angel can forgive sin, which only God can do, because God's name, i.e. *His character and thus His authority, are in the angel.*

Further, in the passage Exodus 32:34–33:17 Moses intercedes for the people after their first breach of the covenant; God responds by promising, “Behold mine angel shall go before thee”; and immediately after God says, “I will not go up in the midst of thee.” In answer to further pleading, God says, “My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest.”

Here a clear distinction is made between an ordinary angel, and the angel who carries with him God's presence. The conclusion may be summed up in the words of Davidson in his *Old Testament Theology*: “In particular providences one may trace the presence of Yahweh in influence and operation; in ordinary angelic appearances one may discover Yahweh present on some side of His being, in some attribute of His character; in the angel of the Lord. He is fully present as the covenant God of His people, to redeem them.”

The question still remains, Who is the theophanic angel? To this many answers have been given, of which the following may be mentioned:

- (1) This angel is simply an angel with a special commission;

(2) He may be a momentary descent of God into visibility;

(3) He may be the Logos, a kind of temporary preincarnation of the second person of the Trinity.

Each has its difficulties, but the last is certainly the most tempting to the mind. Yet it must be remembered that at best these are only conjectures that touch on a great mystery. It is certain that from the beginning God used angels in human form, with human voices, in order to communicate with man.

And the appearances of the angel of the Lord, with his special redemptive relation to God's people, show the working of that Divine mode of self-revelation which culminated in the coming of the Saviour, and are thus a fore-shadowing of, and a preparation for, the full revelation of God in Jesus Christ.

Further than this, it is not safe to go.

Ed Jones is a teacher at the East Tennessee School of Preaching & Missions. He has written many books and articles from Scripture.

Ed and his family were instrumental in helping the New Plymouth church of Christ grow in the mid 1980's.



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**New Plymouth
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www.churchofchrist.org.nz

HOSPITALS? FUNERALS? THEY'RE NOT FOR ME! by Al Horne

How would you answer this question: **"Could I be lost if I don't visit the sick or comfort the bereaved?"**

Most people would say, "Of course not! That's up to me and I don't have to". Wrong! Think again. Most church members have come to expect preachers, elders and other leaders to visit the sick and comfort the bereaved.

But God expects every Christian to be involved in the ministry of caring for the hurting. "I was sick and you (not the preacher; not the elders, not the man next door, but "YOU") visited (looked after, cared for) me", Matthew 25:36. In that Bible chapter, both the ones declared "'righteous' and the ones adjudged "wicked" ask, "Lord, when...?"

The answer they received was "Whatever you did (or didn't do) for the least of these brothers of mine, you did (or didn't do) for me", Matthew 25:40, 45. Some say, "But I don't like hospitals and funeral parlors!". So who does? We often do what we don't want to do because of Jesus. After all, it benefits those who are suffering.

That is the essence of "agape" love and the golden rule, Matthew 7:12.

Here are some practical hints on "visiting" the sick and bereaved:

1. Don't worry about what to say. No one knows precisely the appropriate words to say to meet every eventuality. Often words are superfluous. And pious platitudes are decidedly irritating. (Statements such as "Don't question God—He knows best", etc.)

Mostly listen! Ask relevant questions. Don't pontificate and don't show off your "superior" knowledge—after all, we are not experts on their crisis. Just speak words that show comfort and encouragement. SOMETIMES A

HUG IS ENOUGH. SOMETIMES IT IS ENOUGH JUST TO BE THERE!

2. Be observant. Someone who is emotionally tired or physically uncomfortable doesn't need company. Don't overstay unless specifically requested to do so. Brief visits are best. Pray with the patient and leave. Sometimes the patient or bereaved wants space. He/she often longs for rest and a moment of solitude. I love having concerned visitors when I am hospitalized, but once I was in Benoni's Glynnwood Hospital and in one day had 40 visitors in serial fashion. Soon I was physically and emotionally exhausted. Not a nice way for a recovering patient to end the day. I know they all meant well, but some such acts are ill-conceived and detrimental to the patient.

3. Take food to the hurting family but first inquire if it is appropriate and how much is needed. Don't overload the family with enough food to "feed the 5,000"! Twelve milk tarts (or CHOCOLATE CAKES) may be nice but too much is too much, no matter what! Also, don't take chocolates or other sweet treats to a hospitalized diabetic. You're there to encourage, not to kill. Flowers, magazines and fruit are often more appreciated.

4. Since not everyone is able to make a personal visit, send an expressive card or make a phone call. "People don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!" Okay, maybe that is a cliché, but it is absolutely true nevertheless. Tell the victims of circumstances that you love them and will be praying for them. Even a prayer over the phone is helpful and appropriate. God is the real listener and the patient is simply eavesdropping. James 1:27 defines pure religion in terms of a person who takes care of the needs of the widows and

orphans in their time of trial, while keeping his agendas pure.

Now just imagine this scene at the church assembly. The minister announces to the congregation that someone is sick and has been admitted to a local hospital. Or, he tells of someone who has just experienced a devastating loss of a loved one.

Then he asks “Whom shall we send or who will go for us (echoes of Isaiah 6: 8)... to make a visit? “ Suddenly, every hand shoots up! We reply in unison, “Here we are, send us.” Wouldn’t that be lovely?

When I was in Johns Hopkins Hospital for cancer surgery in Baltimore, Maryland, I received over 400 “get well” cards. What a boost! The church in Kerrville, Texas, compiled a book in which each member outlined his/her own hand and wrote a message of encouragement on the page to the forlorn patient (I still treasure that book).

Baltimore was very far from folks who knew me and loved me. However, one family (an elder and his wife from Fairfax, Virginia) drove 290 km (round trip) to visit with me, not once but twice while I was in recovery after the surgery.

Donna was with me everyday, but their visit added an additional dimension of love that remains evergreen in my memory. Don’t miss an opportunity to serve God by serving His people.

It will warm your heart and make you fit for heaven.

Al Horn is a preacher in the Lord’s church in Benoni, South Africa. He is also President of the Southern Africa Bible College.

LESSONS FROM GOLGOTHA

by Rob Sparks

Few signs conjure up more feeling and emotion than the cross. Easily one of the most readily identifiable symbols in existence, the cross has stormed across the barricades of time and culture to represent a myriad of conceptions and ideas.

To some, it has come to represent the suffering we share with Christ. To others, it denotes the victory Christ won over Satan at Golgotha. For the uninitiated, conditioned by years of myth and movie, the cross has come to serve as a sort of messianic talisman, warding off demons, vampires and all manner of real and imagined monsters.

More recently, however, the cross has come to mean nothing. Treating it faddishly, the modern world has managed to reduce the cross to a mere commodity to market – a piece of jewelry, a tattoo, an icon to be sold to evangelicals on the one extreme and then retooled for those of a gothic persuasion on the other.

At best, the cross is accepted without a second thought—an acknowledged fact, divorced from purpose. “Is there any other way the world might have been saved,” we wonder, “than by the cross?” At worst, we treat it with apathy, another note lost in the background noise of our life.

Either way, our constant, uncritical exposure to the cross as an element of popular culture—in fashion, in art, in myth, in architecture—has dulled our senses to the true nature of Calvary. We have left behind the objective, historical context in which Scripture presents it for more subjective constructs.

We have too long asked: “What does the cross mean to me?” (The easy answer for many has become

“Not much.”) The real question is: **“What does God mean by the cross?”**

The Cross Then

To answer this question, we must look at the cross through first century eyes. When Jesus emptied Himself for our sakes, the cross was a far cry from the docile icon of the modern era. Rather, it was the most despised and feared form of execution known to man.

Free of its religious connotations, crucifixion was reserved for those generally considered to be without religion—violent criminals, armed robbers, rebellious slaves and provincial dissidents. To be crucified was to make a statement to society at large—most often: “There is nothing good or redeemable about this person.”

The act itself was unimaginably cruel, more torture ending in death than execution. The convicted was nailed or strapped to two intersecting wooden beams. Most commonly, the beams formed something resembling an upper-case ‘T’, a lower-case ‘t’, or an ‘x’. Once fastened, the prisoner most usually died by suffocation, as his lungs ceased to function under the weight of his own body.

This process could take days, however, as the crucified struggled to relieve the pressure by pulling with his arms or pushing with his feet. To hasten the process, the legs were sometimes broken, preventing the condemned from pushing up, and the bodies were usually left on the cross as examples and for the birds.

The conception of crucifixion was abhorrent to prevailing first century sensibilities. It was illegal, in most circumstances, to crucify a Roman citizen – the act was considered to be

below them. Cicero wrote: “Let the very name of the cross be far away not only from the body of a Roman citizen, but even from his thoughts, his eyes, his ears,” (Pro Rab. 5).

Further, the Jews had long held that Deuteronomy 21:22-23 applied to those who were crucified—to hang on a cross is to be cursed by God. Though this is not the precise context of Moses’ statement, Paul also refers to this interpretation in Galatians 3:13. Therefore, to be crucified—in Jewish eyes—was to be rejected by Jehovah.

Crucifixion meant shame. It spoke of unparalleled degradation on the part of the condemned. In all of antiquity, it was never mentioned in a positive light, save in Scripture. It is no surprise, therefore that Paul speaks of the cross as, “foolishness,” “folly” and a “stumbling block” (1 Corinthians 1:17, 23). To glory in the cross was something worthy of persecution (Galatians 5:11, 6:12-14).

To attribute honor, glory, kingship and divinity to a crucified provincial was laughable at best and blasphemous to most. Why should one believe a convicted criminal, cursed by the very God He claimed to be His Father, was Emmanuel? On account of the cross, those who followed Jesus were considered the worst sort of fools, worthy of ridicule, reproach and persecution.

The Cross Now

I have already suggested modern society has lost sight of the nature of the cross. More precisely, we understand the atoning work done on the cross; we do not understand the man who atoned our sins on the cross, nor do we understand the life he called us to imitate. We sing praises of thanksgiving to God for allowing Christ’s redemptive work into our lives, but surprisingly few have grappled with the implications of such an entrance. *“I am crucified with Christ:*

nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20, emphasis mine). The shame, reproach and offense endured by Jesus on the cross are bestowed on His disciples.

Calvary stood antithetical to everything Roman and Jewish society represented. Where upstanding Romans and Jews refused to even consider the atrocities of the cross, Christians openly and passionately gloried in a crucified Savior. Whereas a common practice was for spectators to parade past, deriding, humiliating and spitting on the condemned,

Christians acknowledged the honor and power of Jesus. What had come to represent utter failure, those who followed in the Way saw as the path to glory and fulfillment. While many withdrew from the shame and horror of the cross, Christians intentionally embraced it.

This contrast is expressed in a variety of passages in the New Testament. Paul places the wisdom of God, expressed in the cross, over against the wisdom of men and says, “Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?” (1 Corinthians 1:20).

To the Colossians, he echoes the theme by demanding we choose between the emptiness of man’s philosophy and the fullness of Christ (Colossians 2:8). Jesus was equally clear in proclaiming the demarcation between world and cross (Matthew 6: 24, 10:34-39; Luke 14:26-33).

The cross retains this antithetical value for today’s culture as well—the decision between world and Jesus is still ours to make. We have been called to follow in the way of the cross, to suffer as Christ suffered, to put to death ourselves for the sake of the One who gave all for us. As such, we will face shame and persecution similar

to His (Matthew 5:10-11; John 16:33; 1 John 3:1), which we are to count as a joy and a blessing (James 1:2-3; 1 Peter 1:6-8).

Most tellingly, Paul expresses three times his willingness to throw off the glories and expectations of the world for the shame and reproach of the cross. Already cited is 1 Corinthians 1:17—“For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”

Second, a few verses later, in 2:1-2 “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.”

And third, Philippians 3:7-11—“But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ... and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death...”

We clamor for dignity, relevance, success, popularity and acceptance in the church. We work to paint a pretty picture, with our nice clothes and our scrubbed faces and, too often, our sins tucked neatly away so no one can see, on Sunday morning, everyone is expected to play nice in many (thankfully, not all) churches—those suffering from the grip of addiction are discouraged from publicly seeking the help of the church; the young mother whose unbelieving husband torments her for her faith is expected to put on her happy face; the teenager who harbors doubts resulting from grief and loss is made to feel unaccepted by the resounding togetherness and bravado of the well-groomed whole;

and we hope, against hope, that the couple with the ratty clothes, long hair, piercings and tattoos do not come back—that was simply scandalous. These are the experiences shared by many of the hurting and suffering children of God I have known.

We get a sort of high from seeing hordes of new people walking through our doors. Many have jumped on the attendance roller coaster, their spirits alternately soaring and plummeting with the figures. We find ourselves jumping through all sorts of hoops and pulling all sorts of tricks to see those numbers go up. We bribe our children to come to Bible school. We adjure our preachers to keep their sermons short and keep their topics non-offensive—"Wouldn't want to scare off the visitors."

And we never address any of our congregation's shortcomings, of course, for the sake of putting our best foot forward for the visitors.

I sometimes ask the question in my classes, populated by comfortable, middle-class Americans: "If Jesus emphatically promises us persecution, why do you think we rarely suffer persecution as American Christians?" The mental gymnastics are seldom boring to behold. In too many cases, we have traded the cross for the pursuits of this world.

"Give me dignity," I demand. But, God has not given me dignity. He gave me a convicted criminal, stripped and nailed to a cross. He told me to follow Him if I want a relationship with my Father. "Give me success," I implore. Yet, He did not give me success by any worldly account.

He gave me the monumental failure of a promising young provincial rebel who was squashed by the power of the Roman Empire. He told me to trust in Him if I am to find true success. (And that success has little to do with numbers and popularity. Cf.

1 Corinthians 1:17, 2:1-2.) Again and again, the cross calls me away from the things I think are necessary to promote the kingdom of God in this world. It reminds me they are not important—Paul's "rubbish." It reminds me true life is only found in serving before the Audience of One, not in bowing to the whims and expectations of every fad in hopes of "gaining" another fickle, uncommitted member for the church.

Just after Peter proclaims his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus begins to tell His disciples of the cross (Mark 8:27-33). Peter, thinking he was a comfort to Jesus, begins to deny these claims. In response, Jesus turns on one of His closest friends and calls him Satan—"Get behind me, Satan! For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man." Peter's sin was that he tried to diminish the cross and what it would come to stand for.

Today, the decision is still ours. We may think we do Jesus a service when we expound upon the philosophies of men, chasing the latest fads, trends and gems of human wisdom. We don't. In the end, there is only the cross if we are to come to God. Which will we choose?

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LIVE RENT FREE!

by Jaracz Heather

There is an old saying which goes like this: **If you don't forgive someone, they live rent free in your mind.** How true that is.

I have been a Christian since 1986 when I was baptized by Edwin Jones (one of our contributing writers). And since then, I have grown up in the church. As such, I have seen many great things take place, people

growing up to be great Christians and workers for God—but I have also seen something which can only be described as a plague within the church that Jesus died for.

That plague is UNFORGIVENESS.

When we look at Scripture, we find that unforgiveness is not from God. Because of this, we find the Holy Spirit revealing to us through the Word, that unforgiveness immediately affects our relationship with God.

Jesus said in Matt 6:14–15 *"For if you forgive men of their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions".*

Now we know that when we ask for forgiveness from a true repenting heart, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from our sins if we walk in the light (1John 1:7).

I find it interesting that when God cleanses something, **it is no longer unclean**—as the Apostle Peter found out in Acts 10:13–15 concerning the animals on the sheet.

Hebrews 8:12 and 10:17 both demonstrate that when God forgives, he remembers it no more. That of course doesn't mean God has a bad memory. It simply means he won't bring it into account.

We also know from 1Cor 13:5 that true agape love DOES NOT take into account a wrong suffered. Yet that is exactly what some Christians do. They don't forget, don't forgive and they keep the account of wrongs suffered fresh for reference.

Brethren, how sad it would be that we go along thinking that we have eternal life abiding in us when in fact, we don't. Simply because we choose not to forgive from the heart. We want to hear the words "Well done thou good and faithful servant" not "Depart ye from Me, I do not know you". There's no use pleading your case that you did this and that for the Lord. It's too late then.

The day for forgiveness is TODAY. If not, then "Behold, the Judge is standing at the door" (James 5:9). Forgiveness is an attribute of the strong. The weak can never forgive.

THE REST THAT REMAINS (Hebrews 4:1-11) by Kevin L. Moore

When a person is entrenched in “work mode,” he finds it very difficult to relax. A preoccupied mind prevents slumber (Eccles. 2:23), and lingering thoughts of unfinished tasks disrupt repose. The habit of work is not easily set aside by one who just *has* to stay busy.

As a result of their exile in Egypt, unrelenting toil had become a way of life for the Israelites. Even after their emancipation it took a divine injunction just to get them to take a day off! (Exod. 1:11-14; 16:23-30). The concept of meaningful rest had become foreign to them, but God had heard their cries and purposed to provide a better life in “a land flowing with milk and honey” (Exod. 3:8; cf. Gen. 12:7; 15:18-21). This was an environment where they could finally rest.

Yet before their respite could be enjoyed, the Israelites had to trust God to do what He said He would do when they did what He asked them to do.

“Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God.” (Deut. 28:1-2, NKJV)

Unfortunately, the majority of the people proved unwilling to take God at His word and thus forfeited this promised rest. “For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, ‘It is a people who go astray in their hearts, and they do not know My ways.’ So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest’” (Ps. 95:10-11).

Nevertheless, after four decades

of restless sojourning, Israel was graciously given another opportunity to enter the land of promise. And once again the promise was conditional. It was theirs to possess as a gift from God, but they had to march ahead in faithful obedience. With the Lord’s help they were to drive out the pagan inhabitants, destroy the vestiges of idolatry, build houses, plant crops, mine ores, and establish herds and flocks as they settled into their new home (Num. 33:51-54; Deut. 1-8). In other words, this was not to be a leisurely period of inactivity—their “rest” would entail a great deal of hard work! Notwithstanding, it was intended to be an escape from oppressive toil, insecurity, homelessness, uncertainty, struggle, and fear. It was to be an active yet peaceful and prosperous existence, saturated with the manifold blessings of God.

The chosen leader and great “rest provider” was an Ephraimite named Hoshea (Num. 13:8, 16; Deut. 1:38), perhaps better remembered as “Joshua” (meaning “Jehovah is salvation”). Under his capable and divinely-directed leadership, the long-anticipated rest finally became a reality.

“So the LORD gave to Israel all the land of which He had sworn to give to their fathers, and they took possession of it and dwelt in it. The LORD gave them rest all around, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers... Not a word failed of any good thing which the LORD had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass.” (Josh. 21:43-45)

Then about fifteen centuries after Joshua’s conquests and the turbulent history that followed, the document known as “Hebrews” was penned.

Apparently a first-century community of Jewish Christians had become disheartened in their faith—their enthusiasm had waned, their spirits were weak, and they were in danger of slipping away from Christ. In order to encourage them to persevere, the writer of Hebrews adopts this theme of God’s “rest.” The theme is introduced in the third chapter and expounded upon in the fourth, where Jesus is shown to be superior to Joshua as God’s rest provider. Interestingly, the name *Ic̥sous* (“Jesus”) is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Jehoshua* (“Joshua”).

THE REST IDENTIFIED

Four different “rests” may be considered here. First, there is God’s “rest” following His six days of creative activity, which simply refers to His work of fashioning the cosmos being discontinued (Gen. 2:2). Second, the Jews were commanded to “rest” every seventh day of the week (the Sabbath) as a reminder of their liberation from Egyptian bondage (Deut. 5:15). Third, the Israelite inheritance of Canaan was to be a kind of “rest,” viz. a life free of oppression and turmoil (Deut. 12:9-11). While each of these may be alluded to in Hebrews for illustrative purposes, another “rest” is spoken of that is yet in the future—something promised that remains to be fully realized.

Specific terminology is used to describe this rest. The inspired writer does not employ the word *anapausis* (“cessation of labor”), which is the regular term for the seventh-day Sabbath rest in the LXX (the version used exclusively in Hebrews for copious scripture quotations). Neither are the words *anesis* (“relief”) or *koim̥sis* (“slumber”) utilized. Eleven times in Hebrews 3-4 the noun *katapausis* and its verbal form *katapauō* appear, referring to “a state of settled or final rest.” And once, in 4:9, the term *sabbatismos* emerges (its only occurrence in the NT), meaning

“a state of rest, a sabbath-state,” which is a reference to the type of rest rather than the day of rest.

There is a sense in which this restful state may be considered a current reality. Of believers it is acknowledged in 4:3: “we are entering [present tense] the rest” (author’s own translation, KLM). This simply affirms the absolute assurance of this rest for those who are faithful (cf. 1 John 2:25; 5:13). However, that the fulfillment of this promise is still in the future is clearly shown by statements like the following: “a promise remains of entering His rest” (4:1); “it remains that some must enter it” (4:6); “There remains therefore a [sabbath] rest for the people of God” (4:9); “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest” (4:11).

What exactly is this impending state of rest? When Jesus journeyed ahead to prepare a place for us (John 14:2-3), He went beyond the “veil” and penetrated the Holiest Place to dwell in the presence of God (Heb. 6:19-20; 9:12). This is none other than “heaven itself” (Heb. 9:24). Accordingly, we now have the confident expectation of entering the very same place (Heb. 6:18-19; 10:19-20, 34). It is heaven wherein our names are registered (Heb. 12:23) and in which we have citizenship (Phil. 3:20), reward (Matt. 5: 12), hope (Col. 1:5), and an inheritance (1 Pet. 1:3-4). And unlike Israel’s inheritance of a temporal rest, ours is everlasting (Heb. 9:15).

This does not mean, however, that the heavenly rest will be an eternity of idleness and boredom. God’s “rest” was merely a cessation of His creative work, but He has continued to be active throughout history. While Israel’s “rest” was simply the freedom from tyranny and dispossession, their lives certainly did not consist of lazy days napping in hammocks! Our future heavenly home will be a place of active service (Rev. 7:9-15; 22:3), but also a “rest” from the labors and toils

of this sinful world, free from death, sorrow, crying, pain, hunger, thirst, darkness, and iniquity (Rev. 7:16-17; 21:4-22:17).

THE REST QUALIFIED

Divine promises have almost always been conditional. As already noted, Israel had to remain faithful and work hard to enter the rest that was provided. But the first generation forfeited their inheritance because of obstinate hearts (Heb. 3:8, 10, 15). Their ignorance of the divine will (Heb 3:10) was surely not due to the Lord’s failure to communicate. “Good news” had been proclaimed to them, but it was profitless without the accompaniment of faith (Heb. 4:2). They did not trust in God’s promise to give them the land, thus neglecting to do what was required in order for this restful state to be enjoyed. Their refusal to listen and constructively respond to God’s word occasioned “unbelief” displayed in “disobedience” (Heb. 3:18-19; 4:6, 11).

Alternatively, there is a rest that is assured to hoi pisteusantes (Heb. 4: 3a), “the believing ones” (author’s own translation, KLM). This participle is not a statement of what we have done (i.e. merely believed) but is descriptive of who we are. It stands in contrast to those characterized by “unbelief” and “disobedience.” Having retired into heaven after completing His magnificent handiwork, the Creator calls it “My rest” and promises the faithful ones a share in it (Heb. 4:3-10).

Once we have received the “good news” with open hearts and responded in obedient faith, we are “partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end” (Heb. 3:14; cf. 4: 2, 6-7). With the lesson of rebellious Israel before us, “Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11). Four things stand out in Hebrews as prerequisites

of entering God’s rest: (a) a receptive heart (kardia appears eleven times in the epistle—six times in chaps. 3-4); (b) faithful obedience (4:6-11; 6:18; 10: 19-22); (c) steadfast perseverance to the end (3:6, 14; 4:11, 14; 6:9-12; 10:23; 12: 1); and (d) mutual encouragement (3: 13; 6:10; 10:24-25).

THE REST VERIFIED

Perhaps more than any other writing in the New Testament, Hebrews affirms and warns against the possibility of apostasy (cf. 2: 1-3; 3:12-13; 4:1; 6:4-8; 10:26-38; 12: 15, 25). Consequently, one might be intimidated by this prospect and feel somewhat apprehensive about his/her eternal destiny, anxiously living in fear of losing the heavenly rest. However, these warnings are directed to those who are in the process of drifting away from Christ and are heading toward complete severance from God. They are the ones who ought to fear (Heb. 4:1). Conversely, for those who are sincerely doing their imperfect best to live in accordance with the Lord’s directives, perhaps more than any other New Testament document Hebrews offers great assurance (cf. 3:6, 14; 4:16; 6:11, 17-20; 7:19; 10:19-22, 39; 11:1; 12:1-3; 13:5-6).

The Hebrews epistle reassures its readers that the future heavenly rest is divinely promised (4:1) and reserved for the people of God (4:9). The fact that “God is faithful” means that He categorically and irrefutably keeps His word (10:23). Moreover, this rest is so sure that believers are spoken of as already entering it (4: 3). All who are serious about their allegiance to Christ readily accept the Lord’s conditions and possess a willing determination to enter that rest with diligence (4:11). The balance between nagging uncertainty on one hand, and misdirected impudence on the other, is an uncompromising faithfulness to God coupled with absolute confidence in His promises.



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truth of a judgement, only the smaller competing jurisdictions of a **culture, society, or individual can do that.** Doesn't this sound so familiar in our own society especially when it comes to truth in religious matters? Socrates, another ancient Greek philosopher, saw immediately the paradox within such relativism. He pointed out that if no judgement was objectively true, then it must necessarily apply to the truth of relativism also. And it is this point that the postmodernist rejects. However, this does not make what Socrates said any less true. This same point can be made for belief in God, millions may believe that He does not exist yet that never lessens the fact that He does. The Bible also is the objective, inerrant, objective truth in all matters of religion, and by saying it isn't won't change that fact.

Postmodernism came from the a denial and dismissal of Enlightenment, Renaissance, and Modernist rationalistic philosophies and has replaced it. As such it repudiates all absolutes and it does not differentiate between such things as mere coping strategies and genuine perceptions of truth thus making truth subjective, and coping strategies, whatever one uses, the new criterion for truth. Pure objective truth is regarded merely as a stage of history that has now been overcome. In Europe the postmodernists embrace the Nietzschean tradition which speaks of truths being forced into shape by the persons "will to power." In contrast, the American "pragmatic tradition" thinks that truth is to be nurtured (albeit differently by different people), so that we all get along with each other. This of course means we must meet others felt needs, tolerate and not judge all points of view so as not to offend anyone, after all their truth is as good as ours. This "Therapeutic" view pretends it has a physician and that it

this militates against the ethical fabric of both Bible and decent society. We on the other hand are not allowed to judge, argue or speak against such things for this would be unloving and intolerant.

Make no mistake about it, the church in this age is under severe threat because of this spirit of our times and we are sorely in need of men like the sons of Issachar who "understood the times with knowledge." Or like King Ahasuerus who sought the counsel of "the wise men who understood the times." (I Chronicles 12:32 and Esther 1:13). We must stand up to this monstrous lie the devil has perpetrated on mankind and mend the hole in the net so our brethren are not sucked out of the church into the sea of uncertainty and death.

The ancient Greek sophist philosopher Protagoras claimed that "man was the measure of all things, of the things that are, that they are, and the things that are not, that they are not." Relativists of this persuasion believe that there is no superior court that can settle the

"Then I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, 'Write: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on,"' 'Yes,' says the Spirit, 'that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them'" (Rev. 14:13).

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TWO TRUTHS, ONE GOD: THE SCHIZOPHRENIA OF POST MODERNISM by Dave Bell

Postmodernism is the "spirit of our times," and with it comes its brothers and sisters: relativism, pluralism, lack of moral absolutes, and no absolute truth. As Christians we simply cannot afford to close our eyes to this insidious and destructive philosophy, for we well know that the battle between God and Satan is for our minds (II Corinthians 10:5). We are to "Take every thought captive for Christ by speaking against and destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God."

Sadly however, many of the Lord's church instead of taking this philosophy captive for Christ, they have instead embraced it and so have left themselves and others to the "schemes of the devil." This philosophy is one that hates the exclusiveness of the Lord's church, tolerates anything, dilutes at best and denies at worst all objective truth, so that all things are truth in their eyes. From this it follows that morals are whatever one deems them to be and

enables us all to cope with the world. But let me tell you, they have fired the “Great Physician” and His objective truth which heals our souls.

Against such a backdrop there are no absolutes at all, thus we are hopelessly adrift with no compass, either moral or rational, nowhere to moor our ship. As a result the ship keeps on foundering on the reefs of absolute truth and absolute moral standards. It founders because it has no pilot to guide it to a safe haven and no charts to show them the way to safety. The horror of it all is that the postmodernists have burnt the very charts and killed the pilot who drew them up. So, even though the postmodernists deny it, they are in fact not coping at all with the sea of reality and the rocks of truth. That is why when challenged they dismiss you with a wave of their hand and tell us that we are the crazy ones, we are the judgemental ones, we are the intolerant ones and so on.

This Satanic philosophy is seeping into the hearts and minds of our children and grandchildren with the result that now many of our nations children believe that everything is subjective, truth and morals are “their affair,” and not their parents. When they cannot cope with objectivity then they simply take ecstasy or BZP or ‘P’ which gives them their reality. Morality is simply a matter of personal preference, this is why modern “ethics” vary from situation to situation and from person to person, yet all of this is OK and the truth of the matter. The young ones of our society know their “rights” and so demand that they be deferred to. They demand rights but eschew the responsibilities that rights imply thus when they demand licence, they are really demanding liberty, liberty to do what they want, when they want, and where they want and that without restriction.

The self then is the only source of truth and reality and that is subjective and movable. Objective truth in ethics and religion are deemed to be simply constructs and as such are to be viewed with total suspicion. This has led to an almost total capitulation by many mainstream denominational churches. Some embrace openly homosexual and lesbian ministers so as not to offend them. Many secretly believe that this is wrong and then go on to say, “whatever happens at home by consenting adults is not the business of the church, after all being labelled as “homophobic” is worse than being labelled a lover of biblical truth. Thus they embrace the schizophrenia of two truths within them and they won’t cure the disease by excising the one that actually is not the truth.

Make no mistake, postmodernism is destroying our nation, our ethics, and our young people just as much as the lie of evolution. We who are faithful to the truth of God and His word have been called to stop it from ruining the Lord’s church here in New Zealand. The alarm has been sounded and we have been called to arms so that we never let postmodern thinking enter the door of the church so that its poison will not infect us, for all who drink of this poison will be slowly paralyzed and end up in the hell of fire.

Truth is truth and that really is the end of the matter for the Christian. But what does Jesus think of all this tampering with His word? I believe we can get a picture by looking into (Revelation 3: 14–22,) the church of the Laodiceans. Laodicea was a self satisfied and indifferent church which believed in its own version of Biblical objective truth. They stood for nothing and nothing bothered them, they were coping very well and their felt needs were being met. If there was any heresy they would simply put it down

to a mere quarrel over words, all is relative thus there is nothing to defend would be their stance.

Now let us look at the response of Jesus to this mindset. **“The amen the faithful and TRUE witness, the beginning of creation says this.”** Here we have the unmistakable tenor and mood of Christ’s response. **Amen** has a definite meaning, the Laodiceans never had that word in their vocabulary since they stood for nothing definite. The word is used in a number of ways, here it means to be firm and definite and faithful to the revealed truth of Christ. In other places it means so be it, of a truth or truly, I solemnly declare to you, thus it leaves no doubt as to what it applies to. Christ then goes on to say that they were tepid or luke warm and because of this they made Christ sick. The Greek word is **emeo** from which we get our word emetic, something used to make one vomit the poison out of their system. This church was acting like an emetic on Christ and He was ready to vomit them out.

Jesus qualifies it by telling them why. Because you say, “I am rich and have become wealthy and have need of nothing (from Christ).” This was their truth but did Christ say “Oh that’s OK then. Your truth is just as valid as Mine. So I’ll just go away and let you be, sorry I offended you brothers!” No, He proceeded to show them the error of their thinking. The Laodiceans were rich, not only were they a banking town but they sold shiny black woollen garments and eye salve worldwide. They were not lying in what they said here for even physically they probably did not need anything they were comfortably off. This was their truth, and according to them and postmoderns, Jesus should have accepted that truth and gone His way.

However, Jesus doesn’t. He looks them

straight in the eye and says: “You are in fact poor, naked, miserable and blind.” I can hear it now, who is He to interfere with my version of truth? Jesus goes on: “I advise you to buy from Me gold refined in fire that you may become rich, white garments that you may cover the shame of your nakedness and it not be revealed and eyesalve that you may see properly, be zealous then and repent.” Now we have His truth, it is the exact opposite of what the Laodiceans believed their truth was.

They had black, Christ says white, they were rich, Christ said they were poor, they could see, Christ said they were blind. These are complete opposites, totally contradictory and one of these “truths” was false. The postmodernist would say that both truths were valid so learn to tolerate the differences, don’t offend the other party by claiming that your truth is valid and theirs is not, accept the other as your brothers and sisters don’t be so exclusive and judgemental. Jesus simply says to them “repent” change your view of truth or else. Not only had they made Christ sick, but they had provoked Him because they had not embraced the truth He had died for and that my brethren, is the only truth that will save us but we must fully believe and embrace it to the exclusion of all other so called ‘truths’. So let us buy the truth and never sell it out to the spirit of our times.

Dave Bell is a researcher and writer who has written numerous articles as well as a book on Islam. You can find Dave's fantastic writings on <http://www.churchofchrist.org.nz/DavesPage.htm>

CODICES AT NAG HAMMADI EGYPT

by Jaracz Heather

In 1945, a collection of thirteen codices were found in Upper Egypt in an area called Nag Hammadi. The translation of those so-called ancient codices, were completed in the 1970’s.

About nine years ago, I had a knock on our door early one Saturday morning. Standing at the door were two well dressed Mormon missionaries. That was the beginning of a series of discussions on The Book of Mormon verses The Scriptures. In fact, they were specially sent to my house by a friend of mine who couldn’t answer any of the questions I put forth concerning the Mormon faith in light of what the Bible taught.



Codices found at Nag Hammadi

One of the “evidences” that was presented to me, against the idea that the Bible is the ONLY inspired Word of God—was the finding at Nag Hammadi, Egypt. This came as somewhat of a surprise because I had never heard of this discovery.

The argument that they put forth is based on the assumption that there are *other* books out there which are inspired outside of the Bible, such as the Book of Mormon.

And they even quote from the Biblical verses like John 20:30—*“Many other signs therefore that Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book”*. They use such verses to argue that there are indeed other books besides the Bible. Now while that is a very weak argument for the existence of external competition against the inspired claim of Scripture, I listened to the argument with an

open mind.

The first thing I did was admit to them that I had never come across this argument before concerning these findings at Nag Hammadi. Secondly, I asked them if I could go away and study the discovery and then discuss it on our next meeting.

What I discovered in my research was both amusing and sad because it really shows how (1) illogical people’s reasoning can be and (2) how poor the so-called evidence is for what they claim to be inspired of God.

What the research revealed was that the codices were indeed discovered in 1945 in Nag Hammadi, Egypt. But that’s about all

that was in favour of the Mormon argument for additional inspired books. **All those codices were Gnostic gospels!**

Now if you know anything about Gnostic belief, you understand very well that they claim, besides other erroneous doctrines, that they are the ONLY revelatory mouth-piece for God on earth.

Now where does that put the Book of Mormon? In light of this, I politely pointed out to these gentlemen that if they believe the Nag Hammadi collection to be inspired of God, then they might as well say goodbye to the Mormon faith. Because Joseph Smith claimed that he was the prophet of God for THIS dispensation. The law of exclusion therefore rules out any other contestant to that claim, including the Nag Hammadi collection. This was clearly not a good argument for Mormon inspiration.

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