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The Christian and the LGBT Movement

*A Question of Honor, Approval,
Acceptance, and Inclusion*

Gerald Cowan

What would David Lipscomb say about LGBTQ attitudes and activities on campus at the university which still (for how long?) bears his name? What would George Pepperdine say about similar affairs at his namesake university? Some will say the question is irrelevant – a dead person cannot offer opinions on this or any other current affair, cannot respond approvingly or disapprovingly to anything done in his or her name. But it is not irrelevant since the inclusion of one's name in any enterprise or organization implies the approval of the one named. That would apply to schools, hospitals, businesses, churches, and religions, especially those which have Christ or Christian in their name or title.

For example, to say we are a church of Christ implies that Christ accepts, approves, and authorizes the group and its doctrines, attitudes, and activities. To say I am a Christian implies the same and more: it implies that I accept, agree to, and abide by the principles and stipulations of Jesus Christ, that I am a proper reflection and representative of Christ. If it is

not true, the honorable thing to do is remove his name from any reference to myself and, perhaps, to any and all my associates.

Now we are ready to answer and discuss the Christian's response to the LGBTQ movement. We are not discussing current cultural, social, political, national, or historical concerns, but only properly defined Christian concerns. Please note, we are not interested in the attitudes of religions, cults, churches and/or denominations.

We are not discussing atheism's or agnosticism's response or even pseudo or counterfeit Christendom's response, but only a true Christian's response. It is individual, not collective. It is personal and private but must sometimes be public. And there's the rub: LGBTQ generally refuses to allow even private and personal demurral but demands openly public welcoming assimilation.

God must be remade in the current image and stipulations of LGBTQ or be rejected and replaced by a "friendlier" god more compliant and accommodating to current concepts and desires.

The LGBTQ god is on a takeover mission – casualties are expected and collateral damage to society is irrelevant. "Resistance is futile; you will be assimilated," to cite a mantra from a once wildly-popular science fiction television and movie program (the "Borg" is believed in as "science" to which all must yield and bow).

JUST AS I AM

By many accounts Charlotte Elliot's song with that title is the favorite hymn of "invitation" and acceptance used in Christian churches today. The song's premise is easily misunderstood and misapplied, like Robert Frost's "Home is where, when you have to go there they have to take you in."

No implication that any change is necessary – whatever you've done and whatever you've become are irrelevant and home has to accept you back in. So people understand that whatever you've done and whatever you've become when you go to the Lord He must and will accept you. Liar, thief, murderer, adulterer, idolater?

It's OK, everything is acceptable. Just come as you are (because you can't change what you are and you can't be anything except what you are) and God will welcome you. **Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Queer** or questioning persons and groups have co-opted the premise. All (including God) must accept you for who and what you are; you are what you are and shouldn't try to change what can't be or needn't be changed. You should be allowed to come just as you are and be welcomed, honored, and assimilated – no matter what your inclusion will do to the whole.

What nonsense! If poison requests entry and assimilation *as-is* into your water supply would you accept it?

The result would be that the whole of your water supply is poisoned. Is that really acceptable? You may oppose and reject the example because it would appear to suggest that LGBTQ is a poison that should not be assimilated into Christianity. That would be a fair interpretation. Is it valid? It depends upon your definition of Christianity.

IS REJECTION OF LGBTQ A “HATE CRIME”

You have no doubt seen placards and banners in “Gay Pride” and LGBTQ advocacy events that say **GAY IS GOOD. GOD APPROVES WHAT IS GOOD.** I’ve noticed a frequently flashed sign, a long “rainbow” banner that says **BOYCOTT HOMOPHOBIA.** Homophobe is a manufactured word that means “one who is afraid of homosexuality” and is applied by homophiliacs (those who love homosexuality) to all who oppose them and their lifestyle.

May I suggest that homophobia is not the opposite of homophilia. As the opposite of straight is crooked or not straight, and the opposite of natural is unnatural, and the opposite of good is bad or not good, so the opposite of love (*philia* – affection, acceptance, approval) is not fear (*phobia*) but hate (*misō, miseuō* – distrust, to disapprove, disavow, reject). It is not an emotional word – it is not hostility or animosity, the desire or intent to harm, damage, or destroy. When God said *Jacob I loved but Esau I hated*

(Malachi 1:1-3, Romans 9:13) it meant only “I accepted Jacob and rejected Esau” (for a place in the lineage of Messiah). Christians do not fear homosexuals any more than God fears them. But if God disavows and rejects (hates) homosexuals, the Christian must do the same. The LGBTQ community is allowed to say “boycott homophobia” but if God lovers and Christ lovers say “boycott homosexuality” it is branded as a punishable hate crime.

Strange isn’t it? Any opposition to an aberration of nature such as homosexuality is *hate* but opposition to what is natural and normal is not hate. A request to boycott homophobia is equivalent to a request to honor homosexuality. Will the LGBTQ example prompt a movement to give honor and support to *pedophilia* (attraction to and sexual involvement with children), but boycott *pedophobia* (disapproval and rejection of sex with children)? Both *homophilia* and *pedophilia* are unnatural, aberrant crimes against nature.

If homophilia is honorable, why not pedophilia? In fact that concept is in the works now too. Homophobia is thought by some to be an unacceptable and unjustifiable prejudice against a naturally occurring minority in the population. So the placard reads **YOU CAN’T HONOR PEOPLE BY PREJUDICE.** But the proper response to that is: **You can’t honor any person, people, or principle by being, doing, accepting, approving**

or even tolerating something wrong or dishonorable that they are or that they do. I will illustrate the point with several examples.

You can't honor the nation by violation of proper law or by acceptance and submission to improper law and criminal behavior. *Proper* means *in keeping with the law and principles of God* (see more about honoring God below). Disobeying national laws dishonors the nation (Romans 13:1-7, 1 Peter 2:13-16). Failure to honor an honorable nation dishonors God and is a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor parents by laziness, disobedience, immorality, or by departing from the ways of God when properly taught by your parents (Ephesians 6:1-4). Children who are brought up in the way they ought to go – God's way – have no right to depart from it, no matter what their age or condition, no matter what social attitudes prevail in their generation (Proverbs 22:7). Failure to honor honorable parents dishonors God and is a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor the church by violating God's gospel, or with character, attitudes, or activities that are contrary to the foundational principles of the church. Changing the church to suit social desires contrary to God's instruction desecrates and dishonors it (1 Corinthians 3:11-17). Dishonor to the Lord's church is a dishonor to God and to self.

You can't honor Jesus Christ by departing from his teaching and example. Christianity is not just doing something in the name of Christ (Matthew 7:21-23). Christians are to accept and approve what Christ does, but disapprove and reject what he does not accept and approve. Misquoting or misapplying the words of Christ dishonors him and alienates one from him (Matthew 12:30). Any sin against God's Son is a dishonor to God who sent him to be savior and Lord (John 13:20, Luke 10:16). Any dishonor to Christ is a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor the Bible as God's word by ignoring it or refusing to abide in what it says, whether to please yourself or please other people. Misquoting, mistranslating, or misapplying it makes one anathema to God by perverting the scripture rather than honoring it (Galatians 1:6-10). Dishonoring God's word is a dishonor to God who gave it (2 Timothy 3:16-17) and a dishonor to oneself.

You can't honor God by departing from His design (natural law and principles inherent in His design), especially as rational humans, accepting what He rejects, praising what He condemns, or honoring what He calls an *abomination*. Homosexual activity, either male or female (Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:28-29), transvestism (Deut. 22:5), pretending to be of the gender opposite to your biological reality (1 Corinthians 6:9-11), etc. are all abominations to God. You dishon-

or God by calling natural or normal what He calls contrary to nature (Romans 1:24-27) and dishonor yourself as well (24).

You can't honor yourself by dishonoring your nation, your family, the church, Christ, the scripture, God, or yourself. You cannot honor your own body by homosexuality. Homosexual activity dishonors the bodies of all who participate in it (Romans 1:24-28, compare 1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

It doesn't matter whether it is persons in brief hookups or two persons committed and faithful to each other. It is a travesty of marriage to use the term *monogamous* of such a same-sex relationship. Monogamous means literally one *mate*, one *spouse* and not "one sexual partner." It dishonors the very concept of marriage (Genesis 1:27, 2:18-25, 5:1-2; Matthew 19:4-6) to call a homosexual (same gender) partner a mate, a match, a man's husband or a woman's wife.

Now we are back to the point, the question of "honor" for LGBTQ persons. There is no honor for them from God. His attitude is consistent, not merely Old Testament but New Testament as well. It is not an outdated Biblical thing, since God's word in the Bible is a forever thing that cannot be changed except by God himself, which He steadfastly avers He will not do (1 Peter 1:24b, 25 *The word of God lives and abides and endures forever*). His word is consistent. Those who dishonor and reject (hate)

God deserve no honor from God or from those who honor God. The only honor they can claim is from among themselves. But what honor is there in being honored by other dishonored and dishonorable persons?

DO NOT WORRY IF LGBTQ CALLS CHRISTIANS UNLOVING FOR SAYING THESE THINGS

We have not addressed the question of trans-gender in this brief essay. It deserves extensive treatment as a separate category – it is not necessarily homosexual. Gender and sex are different matters. Suffice it to say here that transgenderism is scientifically impossible since gender is not a matter of organ placement or function but a matter essential physical identity embedded in one's DNA and in every cell of one's body, though perhaps not in one's mind and psyche, mind.

Changing how one feels about himself or herself and what one wants to "identify" as, either temporarily or permanently, does not change what one *is*. Biology and physiology are not a state of mind. Gender dissatisfaction and dysphoria are mental problems, no matter what pseudo-scientists (who disgrace their white smock and whatever schools granted them scientific certification) say. *Science which is false so-called* (1 Timothy 6:20 KJV) is a false god. Science is supposed to mean *truth*. But calling it science or truth does not make it so.

If you call Christians unloving you must also call Jesus Christ unloving, call God unloving. You must then call the Bible the unloving words of an unloving God, an unloving Christ, and unloving apostles of Christ. If you call me unloving because I will not accept and approve the sins of people (any and all sins, not only this one sin of homosexuality), I will tell you I must stand with God, with Christ, and with the Bible even if the world stands against me.

You too must choose your company, choose where and with whom you stand. Just remember that **when you choose your position you also choose the consequences of the choice.** Do not suppose that the LGBTQ crowd and their hatred of you will be able to overthrow God and prevent the consequences of their position, the consequences God threatens against all evildoers. God will win. All who are not with Him will lose.

Think about Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:1-29). If fire and brimstone and utter destruction of the sodomites and those affected by their culture seems harsh and frightening, think how much more terrible the endless fire of hell will be. There is no hope of heaven for practicing sodomites, or for male, female homosexuals, or “transgendered” individuals. And there is only one alternative to eternal heaven – eternal hell.

Here is a final positive thought: If we cannot honor the LGBTQ people what should we do? We can love them as God does. We cannot invite them to come just as they are, without repentance and change, but rather to come and be willing to change and be changed into what God can accept and approve, and thereby what we can accept and approve too.

We cannot affirm them as normal or natural, or with proper human nature. But we must teach them why we take that position. We can regret the broken-ness of humanity but ignoring it will not heal it.

To accept it would require re-definition of humanity. We are not to see humanity as evolving into alternate or variant forms; we are to call all humans to return to verifiable human nature.

Let us repeat something here: love does not mean accepting people as they are. It means helping them become what they ought to be while showing ourselves to be what all humans should be.



The Christian and Politics

Reconsidering Some Issues Raised 150 Years Ago

Mel Futrell

In the years 1866-1867, David Lipscomb (1831-1917) printed in his paper, the *Gospel Advocate*, his views on civil government and the Christian's relation to it. This material would later be published in book form and have a tremendous influence on the thinking and views of Christians for generations to come. In the Preface of that volume Lipscomb made this insightful statement that is worth our reflecting on now 150 years later:

“Man's duty is to learn the will of God, and trustingly do that will, leaving results and events with God. It became a fixed principle with him that in religion man must in faith do what God has ordained he should do, what he has declared would be well-pleasing to him; and then leave all in the hands of him who overrules the universe...While I failed to see then as I now see, that religion embraced every duty and every relation of man and molds every thought, purpose and action of his being, the feeling would creep into my mind that even in political affairs man should do only what God commanded him.”¹

David Lipscomb's short volume (158 pages), was published just following a time of war – when Americans had been “engaged in a great civil war” as Lincoln called it in his

Gettysburg Address. His book was published in a city where the war, and the effects of that war, was without doubt impacting the lives of people in general and God's people in particular. Among many other things, the Lord's people of Lipscomb's day had been greatly divided over participation in the war itself. So brother Lipscomb sought in his writing to determine what man's relation was to human government and therefore what his duties to this institution were.

For those who have not and perhaps never will read the book, it should be noted that brother Lipscomb's views on Christians and politics would be viewed by most today as somewhat extreme. By extreme, I mean brother Lipscomb advocated a strict pacifism and practically no involvement by the Christian in matters of human politics and government – even voting. This would not be my thinking on the matter and even in his day it was not the thinking of many, if not most, of his brethren. Though let me quickly add that there is more to the book than just these issues and Lipscomb does make many valid points in the small volume with which I wholly agree.

Today my impression is that most New Testament Christians are politi-

cally concerned, as they may choose to be. But the larger and more important question is, “Do you agree that God’s word should govern every action and affair we undertake — even be it political?” In other words, are brethren allowing their vote to be influenced by the word of God or by what is politically advantageous and popular? Why should “politics” be exempt from the biblical and absolute truth that “we ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29 Surely faithful Christians can answer this correctly!

Now certainly in this age of ours where moral/social issues increasingly pervade the scope of elections even in the eyes of some liberal minded journalists, citizens, and politicians; we as Christians would do well to give great significance to the moral practice and positions of a candidate before casting our vote. Civic mindedness, honesty, and truthfulness demand no less.

I’m not naïve! I don’t entertain any illusion that every Christian is politically concerned, concerned to the same degree, or even concerned enough to vote. Numbers of Christians choose not to vote. But when we do vote, morality ought to matter. Admittedly, there are those who are more interested in political matters than others. This may be a feature of human nature. There are also those who are always more eager to discuss politics than they are Bible. That, of course, is unfortunate. But we must

still and always love the brotherhood (1 Peter 2:17).

I do not believe that the church is as divided today over whether or not to vote, participate in government, and go to war, etc., as were the brethren of David Lipscomb’s day. Yet, we still get bogged down in numerous purely political issues on occasion and allow them to distract us from what should be much more pressing concerns (Matthew 6:33).

I do wholeheartedly agree with brother Lipscomb that religion, Christianity, should mold every thought, purpose, and action of our being (2 Corinthians 10:5). But shouldn’t part of that molding process cover even the “political affairs” of life?

ENDNOTE

¹ Lipscomb, David, *Civil Government*, Gospel Advocate Publishing, 1957, p.3.



Does the Bible Support Abortion?

Jackson Erwin

This October, a conservative movie entered some theaters titled: *Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer*. Dr. Kermit Gosnell was an abortion doctor responsible for the deaths of thousands of unborn babies in his clinic (which was called Women's Medical Society clinic in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania). He was held on trial in March of 2013 specifically for involuntarily killing a woman who asked for an abortion as well as having killed several babies who were already born and as late as 32 weeks (3 of which he was convicted).

Gosnell was also guilty of 21 late-term abortions and 211 counts of violating the 24-hour consent law. The case was at first ignored by the leftist media until a journalist posted on social media the empty court seats where the press was supposed to be. Because of the leftist agenda in Hollywood, they refused to support any movie about abortion and thus the producers had to raise the money.

This movie is not for the faint of heart, nor is it for young audiences due to some language in the beginning of the film as well as the extremely accurate scenery of the clinic. However, I would recommend every Christian adult to watch this film in order to understand the horrors of abortion and the audacity of pro-choice people to say that the child in

the womb is nothing but a "bundle of cells."

However, with this movie being produced and put in some theaters (I personally had to drive an hour to see it), the controversy for or against abortion has been lately and often discussed. Some pro-choice supporters claim to believe in the Bible and even argue that the Bible supports abortion.

The purpose of this article, therefore, will not focus on the scientific evidence that unborn babies are human. Rather, we shall study the two most often cited passages used to defend abortion by pro-choice advocates. We hope to show that the Bible does not support abortion and is instead vehemently opposed to it.

Exodus 21:22-25

The first passage used by those who hold the view that the Bible proves abortion is acceptable is found in Exodus 21:22-25. In this text, the Lord commanded the children of Israel saying,

"If men fight, and hurt a woman with child, so that she gives birth prematurely, yet no harm follows, he shall surely be punished accordingly as the woman's husband imposes on him; and he shall pay as the judges determine. But if any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye,

tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”

This phrase, “she gives birth prematurely” is rendered by some translations “she has a miscarriage” (the NIV footnotes the “possibility” of this rendering) and thus leaves the idea that God places smaller importance on the life of the unborn (paying a fine for the child’s death) than on the already born mother (the death penalty).

However, the Hebrew literally means “her child comes out” and is not speaking of a miscarriage and thus the loss of a child, but rather of a premature birth in which the baby leaves the womb earlier than planned, but is unharmed. Hence, God says, “but no harm follows.”

Therefore, this passage does not support abortion, but absolutely denies it. If either the unborn child or the mother was killed, then the penalty was “life for life,” thus showing that God holds an equal value on the life of the unborn and that of the mother.

Numbers 5:11-31

A second passage that is generally used by those who are pro-choice is found in Numbers 5:11-31. Many advocates for abortion have used the test of the bitter water that caused the guilty woman’s thigh rot and belly swell as a detailed form of abortion, but nothing is farther from the truth. Again, a misinterpretation of this passage is found in the NIV, as we read in verse 21, “here the priest is to put

the woman under the curse – ‘may the LORD cause you to become a curse among your people when he makes your womb miscarry and your abdomen swell.’”

Once again, a mistranslation is used to promote a false agenda that the Bible is clearly against. First, this “womb” is actually a “thigh” (NKJV, KJV, ASV, NASB, ESV) and the literal meaning for “miscarry” is “to fall off/away.”

Therefore, this is not a miscarriage of the child but a miraculous test to tell if the woman was lying about her adulterous intercourse which would cause her actual thigh to rot and thus fall off her body. If one wishes to be more consistent with the Hebrew, then emphasis should be placed on her belly swelling; but, once again, the Bible does not support abortion in this either.

The woman is never said to be pregnant in this passage nor is any vague reference even provided about such. The actual punishment in this text, however, is not the loss of the child, but rather that the woman would never be able to conceive any children in the future (v. 28), which was a terrible consequence.

Conclusion

Clearly, two of the most often cited passages in the Old Testament by pro-choice “Christians,” do not support abortion; nor do they provide the detailed abortion processes, as the political and moral left will often say.

From these passages we can learn that God puts equal value on the life of the unborn and the already born. Christians simply cannot be true to the teachings of the Bible while condoning or supporting the wicked and disgusting practices of men like Kermit Gosnell. Christians should unite to fight against this great evil through logic, reason, science, and the Holy Scriptures.

WHEN THE WORLD GOES TO CHURCH

Ronald Bryant

Worldliness is, and has ever been, a problem in religion. The world does not disappear from the lives of men when they come to believe in God, it only changes its approach. It constantly works to distort man's view of God and his relationship with God.

It may come as a shock, but the world is ready and willing to accommodate man's desire for religious expression, even as it works to supplant God as sovereign.

Secular concepts, all dressed up in "Sunday-go-to-meeting" attire provide any number of objects of adoration and religious devotion, while scrupulously marginalizing those things that admit of the Lord God and of His sovereign will.

They that belong to the world have no real concern for biblical requirements. They may, when appropriate,

carry a Bible, but their interest in it is benign, and they have no qualms about trivializing it.

Worldliness removes man from God, and works to convince man that he (man) is the final arbiter of truth. It urges man to place his views above the decrees of God; even as it presents itself as an alternative to God.

Worldliness has its program and its methodology. It offers its will and wisdom as normal and as normative. It knows how to please and how to be popular! It knows how to attract and how to please the masses. It argues in favor of what works, not for what is right. Its values are accommodative and vacillating. It values customer satisfaction and contribution, yet has little to no regard for truth or godliness. It corrupts while denying the reality or danger of corruption. It has power but not righteousness! It fears failure but has no fear of God!

Undeniably, worldliness is a powerful system of assumptions which works to destroy faith in and reverence for God. They that embrace the world only pretend to accept God; but, God is tolerated not loved, revered, or obeyed. When convenient, or when they feel that it is producing the result they desire, the worldly may even reference God; but they do not obey Him. The worldly are sure that God is willing to compromise; after all, they are!

In worldly religions, men are taught to see themselves as primarily

physical beings; and to identify themselves with time and timely things. They are taught that they have no real spiritual identity or obligation, with the exception of such religious interests and activities they may choose to manufacture.

Worldly religions view sin as non-existent, and therefore of little consequence. They view sinful activity as normal and normative! Having dismissed God, they view any biblical prohibition or mandate as intrusive and abnormal. With the worldly – in or out of religion -- there are no absolutes – and they are absolutely sure of that!

With the worldly, truth is subjective – it is like beauty existing only in the eye of the beholder; and it is individually respected and regulated. With God and truth set aside, worldliness works to oppose every aspect of the Christian faith, and to prevail against the conviction and confidence regarding the being and character of God, and the actions and the truth of God with its attendant requirements.

When and where worldliness prevails in a culture, it ever works to influence, and finally to dominate, the religious groups in that culture. No one, and no part of that culture, is immune!

Regrettably, worldliness is so much a part of the present age, it is no exaggeration to say, that the world readily slides right into the pew on Sunday morning with us. It is not hes-

itant to intrude into our devotions, and, while we are seeking to worship God, the world hums its tune louder and louder, in order to distract us and turn us away from genuine devotion to the Lord God Almighty.

Sin and Secularism

Robert Waggoner

Many Christians have observed that at least since the beginning of the last half of the twentieth century and onward, the Christian religion has been increasingly assaulted and church attendance has diminished as younger people are more notably absent.

The percentage of our population which identifies itself as not affiliated with any religion seems to be growing rapidly. During this same period of time, moral decay has also manifested itself in various ways.

Abortion, pornography, divorce, drug abuse, battered wives, unwed couples, sexual permissiveness, widespread acceptance of homosexuality, venereal diseases, transgenderism, single parent families in poverty, child abuse, gambling, suicide, legalization of same sex unions, illicit sex slavery, and many other issues have penetrated our culture in ways not previously evident. With these conditions, two questions naturally arise: why is this

happening? And, what can be done about it?

Why these sinful and immoral conditions are now happening, can be answered, at least in part, by noting that “there is no longer a Christian mind.” That was declared by the Englishman, Harry Blamires, in his book *The Christian Mind: How Should a Christian Think?* 1963.¹ More specifically, he said,

“It is a commonplace that the mind of modern man has been secularized. For instance, it has been deprived of any orientation towards the supernatural. Tragic as this fact is, it would not be so desperately tragic had the Christian mind held out against the secular drift. But unfortunately, the Christian mind has succumbed to the secular drift with a degree of weakness and nervelessness unmatched in Christian history. It is difficult to do justice in words to the complete loss of intellectual morale in the twentieth-century Church. One cannot characterize it without having recourse to language which will sound hysterical and melodramatic.”

After repeating his statement that “there is no longer a Christian mind” he said,

“There is still, of course, a Christian ethic, a Christian practice, and a Christian spirituality. As a moral being, the modern Christian subscribes to a code other than that of the non-

Christian. As a member of the Church, he undertakes obligations and observations ignored by the non-Christian. As a spiritual being, in prayer and meditation, he strives to cultivate a dimension of life unexplored by the non-Christian. But as a *thinking* being, the modern Christian has succumbed to secularization. He accepts religion – its morality, its worship, its spiritual culture; but he rejects the religious view of life, the view which sets all earthly issues within the context of the eternal view which relates all human problems – social, political, cultural – to the doctrinal foundations of the Christian Faith, the view which sees all things here below in terms of God’s supremacy and earth’s transitoriness, in terms of Heaven and Hell”

For some, an explanation of what Harry Blamires means by succumbing to secularization may be helpful. The word secular comes from the Latin *saeculum* which means time, or age. That which is secular is whatever pertains to this world, temporal, confined to, or connected with worldly things.

The terms “secular” and “secularism” must not be confused. Secularism is a belief system which insists that everything is related only to this world, that there is nothing beyond or outside the physical universe. One who believes in secularism may be designated as a secularist.

A secularist is one who “is completely time-bound, totally a child of

¹ Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1963, 3-4.

his age, a creature of history with no vision of eternity. Unable to see anything in the perspective of eternity, he cannot believe God exists or acts in human affairs.

Moral standards, for example, tend to be merely those commonly accepted by the society in which he lives, and he believes that everything changes, so that there are no enduring or permanent values.”² Therefore, to say that society has succumbed to secularization means that people of a culture no longer think about the eternal values in their lives.

The basis of secularism is the autonomy (that is, the self-rule) of man. “Autonomy asserts the essential non-religiousness of all structures of life. The age of the world is to be understood completely on its own basis. Nothing unconditional is encountered through culture or through human reason.

If religion emerges, it is only the glorification of one of the facets of life – of reason, of the vitalities, of aesthetics, or of the state. Thus, secularism centers on the world and seeks to make life meaningful completely apart from God, from the source of life, or from anything unconditional.”³

That this has happened in the western world may be indicated by the fact that we almost never hear comments about sin, except occasionally within church settings.

In secularism, human reasoning becomes the supreme standard for self-guidance. Having faith in reason, secularists believe that progress is inevitable. They think science will enable them to guide themselves toward all truth. Secularists also think humanity is self-sufficient, independent, and at the center of all things because they think humankind is the final species in the evolutionary process.⁴

What is now happening is similar to what happened when the Israelites entered the promised land of Canaan. Moses had warned them not to intermarry with the inhabitants of the land because that would lead them to turn away from the true God to worship their idols (Deuteronomy 7:1-5). When the Israelites entered the promised land they were faithful to God throughout the days of Joshua and all the leading elders who had known Joshua, but after that they became unfaithful, intermarried with the idolatrous inhabitants of the land, and

² James Hitchcock, *What Is Secular Humanism? Why Humanism Became Secular and How it is Changing Our World*, Ann Arbor: Servant Books, 1982, 10-11.

³ Gerald C. Brauer, “Secularism,” *A Handbook of Christian Theology: Definition Essays on Concepts and Movements of*

Thought in Contemporary Protestantism, ed. by Marvin Halverson and Arthur A. Cohen, Cleveland: The World Publishing Company. 1958, 340.

⁴ For discussion of these ideas, cf. John W. Whitehead, *The End of Man*. Westchester, IL: Crossway Books, 1986, 39-47.

turned away for God (Judges 2:7, 10-13).

So also now, secularism has arisen and become the philosophical mindset of our times. Christians within our culture have turned away from thinking about eternal things and have become focused on secular things. The result is that Christian ideas and values are becoming less and less influential in contemporary society. This means that, for many people, ideas about eternal salvation from the consequences of sin are unappreciated.

The answer to the second question about how to change what is now happening seems evident – we must turn away from secular thinking and being eternally minded. But how can people be prompted to turn away from secular thinking and learn to think in a Christian way? Is not the answer to that question easily acquired? We must become extensively knowledgeable about God and his purposes for our lives. To do that we must read and study the Bible.



A Note from West Fayetteville

Our prayer is that you are enjoying and benefiting from the articles published in the *Gospel Gleaner*. We were recently told by the paper's founding editor, Bill Dillon, that he believes the *Gleaner* is better than ever. We hope to make it even better! We are mailing the paper into many states, congregations, schools of preaching, and libraries.

Would you or your home congregation like to receive the *Gospel Gleaner*? Do you know of a preacher, elder, or preaching student who might benefit from this paper? Subscriptions are free.

We also wish to thank everyone and each congregation who has supported the *Gleaner* in 2018. By contributing to this work you are enabling us to increase our printing and mailing efforts. We continue to receive new subscriptions and have never had to turn away anyone for lack of materials. You have helped us to do this work and are to be commended. We are grateful to you. We ask that you will continue or consider supporting the *Gleaner* in 2019. We believe in the potential of this good work and hope that you do as well.

In Christian Love,

-The Elders

West Fayetteville Church of Christ
Fayetteville, Tennessee

The Exegetical Sermon

Denny Petrillo

“You have to earn the right to preach topically!” While this declaration is certainly not unique to me, in 40+ years of preacher training I have often used it. Sadly, most preachers jump right in to topical preaching. Many (most?) of them preach only topically the rest of their preaching lives. To me, this is sad. Topical preaching has its place, no doubt. Yet thousands of people are being robbed of the value of good exegetical preaching.

The word “exegesis” comes straight from the Greek word *exegeomai*. The word is found in John 1:18 and means “to explain, describe in great detail.” Jesus came to “exegete” the Father. That is, He explained the Father, making known to mankind His nature and character (cf. Mt. 11:27).

The word is literally a compound word, with *ek* meaning “out” and *egesthas* meaning “to guide or lead.” Therefore, when applied to exegetical preaching, it describes how one is guiding or leading others in a study that originates in the word and comes out of it. The danger every preacher faces is putting an interpretation or application into a biblical text. This is easy to do (and sadly, is often done).

This practice has a name as well: eisegesis. This has led to many false doctrines and misinterpretations. This

is also why many must choose the position of preacher carefully (Jas. 3:1). God’s word must be kept pure (1 Pet. 2:2). Paul’s admonition to Timothy rings true today: “preach the word” (2 Tim. 4:2). Exegetical preaching is preaching the word. It is wholly dependent upon the biblical text and leaves little room for human interpretation. I tell my students, “if you are determined to get it right, preach exegetically!”

What Exegetical Preaching is Not

A logical place to start in discussing exegetical sermons is to clarify what it is not. There are so many false statements about exegesis. Many think they understand it, but it is clear that they do not.

First, exegesis is not like a commentary. Many times I have heard someone attempt to define exegesis as “a glorified commentary.” However, this is incorrect. Most commentators are preachers and are anxious to get to the application or homiletic value of a passage. Frequently their work with a text is superficial. As a result, their explanation of a text exposes their lack of exegetical work. So, an exegetical sermon is not like a commentary.

Second, exegesis is not a succession of word studies. Not long ago I had a preacher send me four of his

“best exegetical sermons.” In every one all he did was move through the text saying, “the next Greek word is.... It means....” He told me that his congregation does not like exegetical preaching. No wonder! Who would want to hear a sermon like that? While studying words is a valuable tool in doing exegetical work, it is not just a bunch of word studies.

Third, exegesis is not a synonym to hermeneutics. One writer quickly dismissed exegesis as “just another term for biblical interpretation or hermeneutics.” Again, this is a woe-ful misunderstanding of what exegesis is. Exegesis is discovering what a passage says. Hermeneutics identifies what a passage means. Thorough exegetical work places the preacher in the position to then identify the meaning of a text. It is the foundation for what he does next: explaining the meaning and application for his audience. Without solid exegesis you are left with flawed hermeneutics.

What Exegetical Preaching Is

First, exegetical preaching is coming to a biblical text with a blank page. Some might argue “that is not possible,” and to a certain extent I would agree. It is very difficult to discard a lifetime of teachers who have influenced how one views a text. Yet this is one of the benefits of exegesis. It forces one to do nothing but just study the text before him. It will now allow him to make conclusion that cannot be supported by that text.

Frequently I will hear one of my students say “I used to use this text as a support for my main topic. Now I see that it is not even talking about that!”

Second, exegetical preaching is a thorough examination of a particular text. Frequently this is referred to as a pericope (section or paragraph). Exegetical preaching does not bite off too large of section to preach. Instead, it focuses on a smaller part. This does not mean he ignores the larger context. This is the exegetical work he has done prior to settling in on the section he wants to preach. He understands the “forest,” now he wants to talk about a particular “tree.”

Third, exegetical preaching is looking for the inspired structure or breakdown of the pericope. Perhaps this is the most misunderstood aspect of exegesis. Frequently there is structure – in the text itself! We fail to see it because we are not looking for it. Many are of the opinion that the Bible has few lists. Such is not the case. The Bible is full of lists. They are just not numbered like we do today (and like I am doing this list, with a “first, second, third....”). Biblical lists are done with the repetition of a particular word, verb form, noun form, etc. If the preacher can discover the list, he has discovered his sermon outline! I will illustrate this below.

Fourth, exegetical preaching is based completely on what the text says. Often, expository and topical sermons go to several different pas-

sages to prove a point. Exegetical preaching is able to stay with one pericope. It is where the preacher says, “today we will completely focus on the inspired section found in Proverbs 3:5-10.”

Fifth, exegetical preaching is the best way to honor God’s word. I know. That is a bold claim. Yet adequately understood, there is no other style that removes the preacher and replaces him with the text itself. Exegetical preaching is all about what the word says. It simply does not give the preacher much “wobble room” to wander hither and yon. It keeps him from making applications that are not clearly identified in the text.

Examples of Exegetical Sermons

Proverbs 3:5-10. I mentioned this text earlier, so let’s take a look at it. Here the preacher might use verses 1-4 as his introduction. Most of the time the text itself will provide both the introduction and the conclusion, and of course, the body. You might say that God is doing all of the work for you! How true. So, what is the main thought of verses 1-4? Solomon is encouraging his son to be a good listener, and to apply the truths he is giving. If he will do that, then he will find favor in the eyes of God and man. I might offer the same admonition. Are we good listeners? Are we teachable? Then the exegete notes that Solomon has three “_____ the Lord” statements. This is your exegetical outline: Point One: Trust in the

Lord (3:6-7a). Point Two: Fear the Lord (3:7b-8). Point Three: Honor the Lord (3:9-10). This text also provides the sub-points. With each of these three points Solomon provides a “how” and then a “why.” How should we trust in the Lord? First, “with all of your heart.” Is it genuine trust if it is only half-hearted?

Second, “lean not on your own understanding.” This is the problem with genuine trust. We frequently want to throw in some of our own ideas and viewpoints.

Third, “in all your ways acknowledge Him.” This is genuine trust. We acknowledge God in every action, every relationship, every endeavor. Solomon then provides two reasons why we should do this.

First, “He shall direct your paths.” If we completely trust in the Lord, He will reward that trust by helping us on the journey of life. He will use His word to provide divine direction. Second, (and this one is tricky because of how it is translated and given a new verse number), we should trust because if we don’t we will end up being “wise in our own eyes.”

You get the idea. I won’t go through points two and three. You should now be able to see clearly the breakdown. I will then use verses 11-12 as my conclusion. Are we inclined to “trust, fear and honor the Lord”? If not, He may be compelled to teach us through discipline.

Colossians 2:6-7. In verse 6 Paul provides the foundation (topic) for the sermon. We all must walk in the Lord. Yet with all of us, we would not automatically know how to do that. Here we are commanded to do it (an imperative), but we don't know how to do it. Paul does not leave us guessing. Instead, he gives four directives. How do we come up with four?

This is where our exegetical work has paid off. We noticed that there are four words ending in '-ing.' These are called participles (although you did not need to know that). Sometimes we may have to look at different translations to find the entire list. In this case the NAS is more helpful than the NKJV. Now we have the body of our sermon, using only Paul's points.

First, the one who walks in the Lord is "rooted in Him" ("being firmly rooted in the NAS). Now we can talk about what being "rooted in Him" means. We may mention the meaning of the word ("fixed") and illustrate it from the blessed man in Psalm 1, or talk about how one not rooted in Him will be rooted in something. Paul will say that loving money roots one in all kinds of sinful practices.

Second, the one who walks in the Lord is "built up in Him." This has reference to the foundation upon which one has built his life. Is it truly built on Christ? Again, we might illustrate this by the wise builder verses

the foolish builder in Matthew 7:24-26.

Third, the one who walks in the Lord is "being established in the faith." As our lexicons will tell us, this word actually has the idea of something being beyond doubt or without dispute. It is confirmed. If we are walking in Christ, we know what we believe. Our faith is in Him and His word. As a result, we are not in danger, as Paul mentioned in Ephesians 4:14 of being: "tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming." Paul provides a sub-point here: "just as you were instructed." Paul taught them and expected them to learn and apply.

Fourth, the one who walks in Christ is "overflowing with gratitude." If one isn't grateful, he just doesn't get it. He has failed to learn some of the most important and foundational Christian truths (like forgiveness, grace and salvation). If he is not overflowing with gratitude, he is not walking in Christ.

Conclusion

Could you preach those texts? Of course you could! If you did, you have joined the ranks of those who are preaching exegetical sermons. There are, literally, thousands of such texts in the pages of Scripture. God gave us these lists for a reason. Now it is our job to find them and deliver them to His people.

The Kingdom and the Church in Colossians

Raymond Elliott

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are in Colosse...” (1:1, 2). The apostle Paul, guided by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote this epistle. The “saints” and “faithful brethren” refer to the same persons who were “in Christ” who lived in the city of Colosse. The term ‘saint’ does not mean perfection because Paul instructed them in chapter three to continue putting of certain sins as they matured in Christ. ‘Saint’ denotes a life of holiness, one of sanctification.

In chapter one, verses 13, 14, we read: “He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.” There is a kingdom of darkness from which the brethren had been delivered. This is in contrast to the kingdom of light. All who are not in the “kingdom of the Son of His love” remain in the “power of darkness”. To be “conveyed” is to be ‘translated’, that is to move from one place or condition to another. Thus the brethren in Colosse were in the kingdom of the Lord. They had been redeemed by His

blood and had been forgiven of their sins! It is worthy to note that the kingdom of Jesus Christ was in existence in the first century!

You may ask, when were their sins forgiven by the blood of Christ? In chapter 2: 12 we read: “buried with Him in baptism in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” It was in baptism that these brethren who formerly were in the “power of darkness” now had been “buried with Him in baptism” and “were raised with Him through faith in the working of God.”

We have learned that the “saints” in Colosse were in the kingdom, having been “delivered from the power of darkness and that occurred when they were “buried with Him in baptism”. The brethren were also in the body of Christ according to chapter 3:15: “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful.” Please observe that whatever the “body” is, there is but “one” (1:24).

In chapter 1:18 we read: “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He

may have the preeminence.” Jesus Christ is the supreme and only head of his one body which is His church!

Once again you may ask, how did the brethren get into the “one body”? Please allow me to use a verse by the author, Paul, to answer that question from his epistle as found in 1 Corinthians 12:13: “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.”

In summary, we have learned that the brethren had been translated into the kingdom/church when they were baptized; that they had been baptized into one body which is the church of our Lord. And having been buried with their Lord in baptism they were redeemed from their sins by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Now they had “the hope” which was “laid up” for them “in heaven” (1:5). Thank God for His infinite love and grace!



“Its from our church... we've been called up for active duty.”

“Peace, Be Still”

Andy Robison

On the day Jesus taught parables from a boat to crowds on a Galilean shore, He, at evening, got into a boat with His disciples to cross to the other side. They were accompanied by other little boats (Mark 4:35-36).

As they crossed, one of those notoriously sudden and violent storms arose on the Galilean Sea. It is called a “windstorm” in Mark 4:37 and Luke 8:23, but a “tempest” in Matt. 8:24 (NKJV). The word for tempest there is related to the word from which we get seismology. Seismologists measure earthquakes—monumental events. This would have been a monumental storm.

The disciples become afraid. Many of these had been professional fishermen (Mark 1:16-20), but the storm still scares them. The accounts give no more mention of the other ships or what happened to them. But, for two millennium followers of Christ have known what happened in this disciples’ boat.

The fearful disciples go to wake up Jesus. That’s right, they go to wake up Jesus. Many people cannot sleep through a storm on land—even when in a brick house with a solid foundation. Jesus is being tossed about by the sea, and He is sound asleep (Matt. 8:24; Mark 4:38). He had apparently fallen asleep during the journey, prob-

ably before the windstorm struck (Luke 8:23).

It is incomprehensible how He could have slept. Waves were beating into the boat (Mark 4:37). “They were filling with water, and were in jeopardy” (Luke 8:23). Yet, “He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow” (Mark 4:38). Remember, this Son of Man had no usual place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). He just had to rest wherever He happened to be.

It is still difficult to imagine His sleep. Some have suggested the stern would have been higher than the sides of the ship in the middle where the waves would have first beaten into the vessel. Perhaps the Lord thus stayed dry. Perhaps, though, just perhaps, His restfulness can be attributed to two factors—two factors in which He was the only being to have them intertwined.

Jesus was fully human on earth, taking upon Himself the form of a man (Phil. 2:5-8). The demands upon Him as the Master Teacher must have been overwhelming. He taught the multitudes on a mount (Matt. 5-7). He healed—sometimes on individual occasions and sometimes, even after a day’s activity—many in the crowds who relentlessly came (Matt. 8:16-17; Mark 1:32-34). He dealt with lepers and demons, the lame, the blind, and the deaf. Sometimes He tried to escape for prayer, but the crowds caught up with Him (Mark 1:35-39).

In His humanity, He must have

been well beyond the point of total physical exhaustion.

However, He was also Divine. He had created these laws of nature (Col. 1:16-17; John 1:1-3). He knew how they worked. He also knew when, exactly, it would be time for Him to leave this earth. He knew when His hour had not yet come (John 2:4; 7:6-7). He knew when His hour had come (John 12:27; 17:1). He would have known that He would not perish in this storm.

Yet, the disciples were afraid. They urgently entreated Him, “Lord, save us! We are perishing!” (Matt. 8:25).

He would rebuke them for their little faith (Matt. 8:26; Mark 4:40; Luke 8:25). Did they not realize they were with the Master who could speak to the winds and have them stop, and to the sea and have it—inexplicably, miraculously, superseding the laws of nature—be immediately calm?

“Peace, be still!” (Mark 4:39).

We serve the Son of Man who knows humanity’s frailty and embedded temptations (Heb. 2:17-18). We serve the Son of God who has the power to calm every heart in every storm. He may not take away the storm, but He provides sufficient grace (2 Cor. 12:7-10).

“I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety” (Psalm 4:8).

Belonging to the Church

Acts 12:1-5

Introduction

1. The events of our text took place about 44 AD, or about 14 years after Pentecost.
2. James indeed was an apostle. (*Matt. 17:1; 26:36, 37*).
3. It is at this point that the history of the church and the world intersects. This is the second notable persecution of the church at Jerusalem.
4. The expression “of the church” – the NRSV says, “some who belonged to the church.” Cf. *Romans 16:16*.

Discussion

I. It Is A Voluntary Experience.

- A. The call of James to be a disciple. *Matt. 4:21, 22*
 1. Not all welcomed the Lord. *John 1:11, 12*
 2. Some walked with him for a while. *John 6:66*
 3. Some wanted no part at all. *Matt. 23:37*
- B. We choose to be a member of the church.
 1. The gospel is the power to save us. *Rom. 1:16*
 2. Obeying brings us remission of sins. *Acts 2:38*
 3. The Lord then adds us. *Acts 2:41, 47*.
- C. Refusal to belong is a tragedy. *1 Pet. 4:17, 18*
 1. Anticipated in the great commission. *Mk. 16:16*
 2. Some procrastinate with their decision. *Acts 24:25*
 3. The end is awful. *II Thes. 1:7-9*

II. It Is A Meaningful Experience.

- A. The word church means the “called out” *Col. 1:13*
 1. It is an “either/ or” –saved or lost
 2. “In” or “out” of Christ!
- B. Different names by which the church is designated:
 1. Disciples. *Acts 11:26*.
 2. The body of Christ. *Eph. 1:22, 23; John 1:14*. His spiritual body: His to do his work now.
 3. The household of faith. *Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19*.
 4. The house of God. *1 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 2:5; Eph. 2:20-22*.
 5. The brotherhood. *1 Pet. 2:17* ; Love is the very badge of our discipleship. *John 13:35*.
- C. The church is a divine institution with a divine purpose for being in the world. *Matt. 16:18; Eph. 3:10, 21*

III. It Is A Demanding Experience.

- A. Belonging implies “self giving”. *Matt. 16:24*
 1. “of the church”- it has a claim on me.

2. If your membership does not cost you anything, then what is it worth? (Time, talent, treasure).
- B. Belonging implies fitting in.
 1. A contrary spirit is embarrassing and oppressive.
 2. Everybody in the upper room loved Jesus but one! “His own place!” *Acts 1:25*
- C. Belonging implies acting in its best interest.
 1. Only those who don’t fit try to tear it down.
 2. Did you ever breathe a sigh of relief when a family member did not show up for a reunion?

IV. It Is A Costly Experience.

- A. James and John’s earlier expectation. *Matt. 20:20-23*
- B. The fulfillment did come some years later!
 1. He went to be with Christ. *Phil. 1:21-23*
 2. *Revelation 20:4* John in that number for sure!
 3. Obituary for James compared to Stephen’s. *Acts 7:54- 8:2*
 4. Why him and not John? Who can know?
- C. Lessons to keep in mind:
 1. Time and manner of your death is not important.
 2. Your length of service is not what counts.
 3. Belonging to the church! That is what matters! *Psa. 116:15; Rev. 7:14; Prov. 14:32; Rom. 14:8.*

Conclusion

1. Belonging to the church is not to be taken lightly.
2. Do you belong to the church?
3. What happened to Herod? *Acts 12; Lk. 16:19-31*

-Mike Kiser

A Confused Christian Community on Campus

Ron Thomas

[The following article first appeared in brotherhoodnew.com. We have included a reader's response for your consideration as well.]

David Lipscomb University (DLU), in their student on-line "paper" "Lumination Network" had an article "in recognition of National Coming Out Day," a day of recognition of and for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community.

Reflect on this for just a moment, a *Christian* university that supposedly stands for the moral foundations of the Lord allows students to come out in support of "National Coming Out Day", an affront of this sexually deviant community to the Lord's way of holiness.

Is this acceptance of the behavior? It appears to be exactly that. It is reported this is "about freedom to be who you are" on this Nashville campus. Student Aria Bartley said, "There's a difference between acceptance and supporting, and although not everyone is going to be supportive, this is about learning to accept everyone for who they are."

Apparently, she does not realize what she is saying. The behavior of the transgender and homosexual community – does the Lord support and accept them. Consider:

For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due (Rom. 1:26-27, ASV).

One can't read the above passage and conclude the Lord accepts and supports the behavioral lifestyle. One can't accept it unless the thinking is clouded with the ways of the world.

Perhaps those who came out to support the LGBT day simply wanted to educate others, "The students had conversations with the student body and sought to educate outsiders on what it means to be a part of the LGBT community to anybody who stopped by the community gathering around the Bison."

I am curious about what would be said. Would the education be regarding what the Lord teaches, or would it be the desires of a secular, progressive and atheistic world? I suspect the latter. If this was the educational approach, not much is to be said for the education!

Moreover, concerning the education given, is it known what “diploma” is received? In a context about false teaching and leading, Jesus said the following to His disciples,

“Every plant which my heavenly Father planted not, shall be rooted up. Let them alone: they are blind guides. And if the blind guide the blind, both shall fall into a pit” (Matt. 5:13-14, ASV).

The “diploma” received is a diploma toward a dead-end. His standard of holiness will not be compromised by any without there being accountability on the ultimate “coming out” day, otherwise known as Judgment Day.

What a sad day when the Lipscomb handbook speaks about standing up for “biblical standards of sexual morality” but then has a staff member (Dr. Paul Prill) as an unofficial advocate for the community as they “come out.” Perhaps the staff member was not known to the administration of DLU, but after knowing about it, was there any education on the University’s part to their staff member, perhaps in biblical matters?

A Reader’s Reply

It was not long after I wrote words very similar to the above, when a reply was made.

“What a terrible, short sighted article. Fake news permeates everywhere I suppose. So there is this wonderful thing called ‘freedom of the press’ in

the United States Constitution. The article you referenced was written by one student. You have taken this and warped it into the University being in total support of the LGBTQ community. This kind of stuff has to stop.

You can't seriously consider yourself well versed enough on a topic when you're living in Brazil, and your only knowledge of the situation comes from one article written by a student. WWJD? Well, I can guarantee you Jesus wouldn't be writing snap judgement based articles based on a situation he hardly knows anything about.”

Author Unknown

My Reply

I replied to this criticism, in part, like this: “You criticize because you didn’t read what was written. Let’s consider what you have said in criticism of me. You say the article is short sighted; that means it missed the mark.”

If the words above missed the mark it would have been good to have that pointed out in specificity. It was not, however. I suppose “freedom of the press” is a bullseye mark that I missed, but as I replied, “I have said nothing regarding freedom of the press, for or against.”

Then it was asserted that I accused the University as being in full support. “But there is nothing in what I wrote to say that.” I did say, though, there

was a university professor in an unofficial role of the school that came out in support of the event. I also said something about the publication being connected with the University. Yes, it's true that universities do not support all things students do, but if there is a connection to the University via a publication like this one ("Lipscomb University's Student News Service"), then perhaps there is more of an association and acceptance than is realized.

What would Jesus do or say in this environment in which our morally confused world lives? Jesus expressed Himself clearly on the topic; Jesus stands expressly against the action and the support given by the LGBTQ community, this includes those who support them.

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God for the likeness of an image of corruptible man, and of birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts unto uncleanness, that their bodies should be dishonored among themselves: for that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile passions: for their women changed the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman,

burned in their lust one toward another, men with men working unseemliness, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was due" (Romans 1:22-27).

Moreover, is the on-line publication associated with DLU? If it is, should DLU have prevented the publication because it goes against the standards of the University? For that matter, should DLU have prevented the actions on campus to take place because it goes contrary to the biblical standards of morality? Perhaps you think it is okay because it's only the action of one student, perhaps the actions of many students. What if the action of one student was an action of pedophilia, should the University have stepped in in order to prevent association/connection to the University? I look forward to hearing you answer on this.

Conclusion

Those who struggle with immoral behavior, no matter what it is, need support and education to change their way of thinking from the ways of this world to the ways of the Lord. There are a great many people in this world that would willingly support and help those who bend their knees before the Lord and ask to be forgiven.

Jesus said to all, "Come unto me...take my yoke...my burden is light..." The Lord's burden is much lighter to carry than one's own.

The New Heavens and New Earth:

Does the Renewed Earth Theory Merit the Support It Receives?

Andy Erwin

The overwhelming number of evangelical scholars – past and present – has advocated the theory of heaven being on a renewed earth. It is generally accepted among these scholars that Christ died not only to redeem fallen man, but also to redeem a fallen cosmos.

Anthony Hoekema explains the premise for the renewed earth stating, “The work of Christ, therefore, is not just to save certain individuals, not even to save an innumerable throng of blood-bought people. The total work of Christ is nothing less than to redeem this entire creation from the effects of sin.”¹ Accordingly, this “regeneration or new creation encompasses much more than individual Christians or even the people of God collectively...It is a vision of cosmic redemption and salvation...a renovated and renewed creation.”²

Similar statements were expressed by nineteenth century preachers in the Lord’s church, such as Campbell, Lard, Lipscomb, and Harding. And while the doctrine has not been advocated greatly among us for the last century, a resurgence of it is occurring

in many of our colleges and universities. I hope this research will be helpful, especially to any students who may face this theory as they pursue an education in biblical studies. I cannot place before you everything I have studied and written on this subject in such a small space. I will, however, provide you with some information I have acquired through word studies.

Scholars who believe in a renewed cosmos have the task of harmonizing the “Scripture’s teachings regarding the future redemption of creation with teachings that appear to be intentionally predicting its destruction.”³

“New” in 2 Pet 3:10-13; Rev 21:2

It is very often asserted that the Hebrew and Greek adjectives translated “new” in Isa 65:17; 66:22; 2 Pet 3:10-13; and Rev 21:2 are best rendered “renewed,” “restored,” or “refreshed.” Hoekema provides a brief discussion for the Greek adjective *καινος* (*kainos*).⁴ He reasons, if a completely “new” earth had been the intent of 2 Pet 3:10-13 and Rev 21:2, the adjective would have been *νεος* (*neos*).

¹ Anthony A. Hoekema, *The Bible and the Future* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 275.

² Paul R. Williamson, *Death and the After-life* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2018), 180.

³ Gale Z. Heide, “What is New about the New Heaven and the New Earth? A Theology of Creation from Revelation 21 and 2 Peter 3,” *JETS* 40, no.1 (March 1997): 37-56.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 280.

“*Kainos*,” according to W.E. Vine, “denotes new, of that which is unaccustomed or unused, not new in time, recent, but new as to form or quality, of different nature from what is contrasted as old.”⁵ “*Neos*,” on the other hand, “signifies new in respect of time, that which is recent; it is used of the young...”⁶ Oftentimes, we find *neos* referring to a person who is young or younger. However, according to Vine, “what is *neos* may be a reproduction of the old in quality or character.”⁷

Therefore, Peter very well could have used the adjective *neos* had he wanted to speak of a reproduction of the old earth.

Moreover, *kainos* could easily connote a “completely new earth,” as Kittle notes, “καίνοϛ is what is new in nature, different from the usual, impressive, better than the old, superior in value and attraction...In the NT means ‘not yet used’...and able and ordained as such to replace and excel the old.”⁸

Obviously word studies of this nature can be complicated, especially when two words are often used interchangeably, as is the case with *neos* and *kainos*. Both words are used to

refer to the *new* man (*kainos* in Eph 2:15; *neos* in Col 3:10); *new* covenant (*kainos* in Heb 8:8, 13; 9:15; and *neos* in Heb 12:24); and *new* wine (*kainos* in Matt 26:29; Mark 14:25; and *neos* in Matt 9:17; Mark 2:22; Lk 5:37-39).⁹

When we study these words in the NT, we can possibly find some distinction between the terms and their intended significance, but it is far from being universal. We agree with Silva and contend, “It would be more accurate to say that καινοϛ and νεοϛ have considerable semantic overlap, so that in many or even most contexts they are genuinely interchangeable, but that in many other contexts one is more likely to be used than the other.”¹⁰

One such example is found in Matt 9:17, where we find absolutely no distinction between the terms.¹¹ Both *neos* and *kainos* are translated “new” with the same meaning clearly intended.

“New” in Isa 65:17; 66:22

As we study the meaning of these Greek adjectives, we should also consider the Isaiah passages (65:17 and

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Moises Silva, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 2:585-586.

¹¹ The same is true in the accounts of Mark (2:22) and Luke (5:37-39). See also Ephesians 4:24 and Colossians 3:10 when, as Silva states, “it stretches credulity to think that different nuances are intended in these two passages. Moises Silva, 585-586.

⁵ W.E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1985), 430.

⁶ Ibid, 431.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1984), 3: 447-448.

66:22) and the Hebrew word translated “new.”

The word is חדש (*hadash*). It is believed that Isaiah’s meaning for *hadash* is “a miraculous transformation... to be miraculously renewed.”¹² However, that *hadash* should be translated “new” in these passages is affirmed by an overwhelming array of witnesses. The adjective translated “new” is thus considered “new” both in the sense of *recent* or *fresh* (as the opposite of old) and in the sense of something *not* previously existing.¹³ Lexicons agree that *hadash* is new; fresh, unheard of;¹⁴ new;¹⁵ new, new thing, fresh;¹⁶ new, fresh;¹⁷ new, recent, fresh.¹⁸

The word occurs 53 times in the Old Testament. Of these 53 occurrences, only one suggests the possibility of a thing being “renewed,” but it would probably be better translated “fresh” (Lamentations 3:22-23).¹⁹

The remaining 52 occurrences are undoubtedly best translated as *new*, *fresh*, *recent*, or *unheard of*. In fact, that *hadash* is translated “new” in these 52 verses is the consensus among all major English translations. Moreover, “It is also noteworthy that חדש is rendered by νεος only 4x, but by καινος in almost every other instance”²⁰ which again speaks to the fact that *kainos* can mean “new” as well as “renewed.”²¹

It is also interesting to note that Isaiah used the words *bara* (“I create,” 65:17) and *asah* (“I will make,” 66:22). *Bara* is frequently found in parallel to *asah* (Is 41:20; 43:7; 45:7, 12; Amos 4:13).²² Isaiah even places these words together on one occasion in 45:18: “God, Who formed (*bara*) the earth and made (*asah*) it...”²³

When Isaiah desired to use a verb conveying the idea of *renewing*, he

¹² Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* in *The Old Testament Library* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), 408. Westermann’s ideas are also cited in the *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament* (2004); *New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (1997); and the *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* (1980).

¹³ Vine, 160.

¹⁴ William Wilson, *Wilson’s Old Testament Word Studies* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 287.

¹⁵ Francis Brown, S.R. Driver, Charles A. Briggs, and Wilhelm Gensenius, *The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gensenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978), 294.

¹⁶ R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 1980), 266.

¹⁷ William L. Holliday, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1988), 96.

¹⁸ Benjamin Davidson, *The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1979), 249.

¹⁹ Lamentations 3:23 is the only variant among the 53 occurrences among some of the dynamic equivalent translations (e.g NLT).

²⁰ Moises Silva, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 3:379.

²¹ For a full listing of these words, see George V. Wigram, *The New Englishman’s Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance* (Wilmington, DE: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1975), 403.

²² Vine, 51.

²³ *Ibid.*

did so. On two occasions (40:31 and 41:1), Isaiah used the verb *halaph*, which means to *renew* (NKJV; ESV). Isaiah also could have used the verb form of *hadash* (see 1 Sam 11:14; Ps 51:10; Lam 5:21).

Instead, Isaiah used verbs which convey the idea of creation *ex nihilo* (see Gen 1:1; 2:3; Isa 40:26; 42:5). In 40:26 and 42:5, Isaiah obviously refers to creation from nothing. For 65:17 to mean *renew*, it would be contrary not only to the normal usage of the *hadash* in the OT, but also to the normal usage of the verbs *bara* and *asah* in the OT in general and in Isaiah in particular. The Lord, through Isaiah, is clearly using the language of creation to announce a new heavens and new earth.²⁴

An Inconsistency?

Peter Davids has stated that he believes the heavens will be entirely new while the earth will be renewed or renovated.²⁵ You will note that this interpretation would allow *kainos* to mean “*entirely new*” when referring to the heavens, but “*renewed*” when referring to the earth. This seems to be placing a subjective definition arbitrarily upon these words.

In Rev 21:1-2, we find the first heaven and the first earth passing away, just as Peter described in great

er detail.²⁶ We find that the new earth differs from the old earth as there is no longer any sea. The new heavens are also different from the old heavens as they are without the sun and the moon (cf. 21:23). The sun and the moon, along with all the host of the heavens, passed away with a great noise (roar, NASB), and the elements were destroyed with intense heat. As Jesus said, Peter and John affirm, “...heaven and earth will pass away” (Matt 24:35). Clearly, “It is not a picture of renovation of this earth, but of the disappearance of this earth and sky.”²⁷

Among some preachers in the Restoration Movement we find an inconsistency on this point. T.W. Brents believed “everything created by God will exist, in some form, as long as he will exist – eternally.”²⁸ We should ask, what about the sun, moon, and sea? The wording of Rev 21:23 is based on Isa 60:19.²⁹ Note, “The sun shall no longer be your light by day, Nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you; But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, And your God your glory.”

²⁴ Robert B. Chisholm, Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2002), 135.

²⁵ Peter H. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude* in *The Pillar New Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2006), 284-286.

²⁶ We must be careful not to argue from silence on this point as Helyer has rightly noted. See Larry R. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012), 267.

²⁷ A.T. Robertson, *The General Epistles and the Apocalypse* in *Word Pictures in the New Testament*: vol. 6, (Nashville, TN: SSBSC, 1933), 466.

²⁸ T.W. Brents, *Gospel Sermons* (Nashville, TN: McQuiddy Printing Company, 1918), 349.

²⁹ G.K. Beale and D.A. Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2007), 1153.

Are we to believe that Christ's regeneration is of "cosmic proportions,"³⁰ and that "...the whole creation will share this deliverance and be freed from the corruption and mortality to which it has been subjected by the sin of man"?³¹ If so, why does this not apply to the sun, moon, and sea? Why does a 'new earth' require *renewing* of the old; yet, 'new heavens' can include the *annihilation* of the old and creation of something that is altogether *new*?

Mounce sees this inconsistency in the theory and attempts to correct it by suggesting that "John is not supplying his readers with information about future astrological changes but setting forth by means of accepted apocalyptic imagery the splendor that will radiate from the presence of God and the Lamb."³²

However, we ask, what function would they serve if not to give light? The sun and moon have been placed to mark time, and time will cease to function in eternity – a point which is repeated by John (Rev 22:5).^{33 34}

³⁰ Williamson, 180.

³¹ David Lipscomb and J.W. Shepherd, *Romans* (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate, 1943), 153.

³² Robert H. Mounce, *The Book of Revelation* in *The New International Commentary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1997), 395-396.

³³ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Revelation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2001), 573.

³⁴ To this point Harrington agrees that John is here describing the heavenly Jerusalem. Wilfrid J. Harrington, *Revelation* in *Sacra Pagina* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1993), 218.

A Final Point

Does the evidence merit the overwhelming acceptance the theory of the renovated earth receives? To this point in our study of words, we would have to answer "no." Much more also needs to be said regarding the assertion that Christ died to redeem the earth. We know that Christ died to redeem man from sin. In order to establish the point that Christ died to redeem the earth/cosmos, we are going to have to have some clear statements from Scripture to prove it. I would like to address this question in a future article, Lord willing. I would also like to be able to state what I believe to be the new heavens and new earth, and not simply argue from a negative standpoint.

In concluding this article, I would like to make a personal observation. We must be careful not to make every disagreement between us a "salvation issue" or accuse someone of teaching "another gospel" simply because he believes something akin to this renewed earth theory. I certainly would not characterize Brents, Lipscomb, Lard, Harding, or Campbell in this way.

Additionally, we must be careful not to form our conclusions in favor of any doctrine on the basis of one or two books, or because good men have believed the doctrine in the past. We should endeavor to study every matter diligently, and our teaching should reflect such study.