

FOREWORD TO VOLUME 5, NUMBER 13

With this current issue, Scripture Research, Inc. completes its commitment made in the early 1990s by our former Director, Russ Schaefer, to publish Pastor Lyman Wendt's "Myth" series.

There are five of these messages, preached in the 1950's by Pastor Lyman Wendt to the respective congregations of Calvary Church (Santa Ana, California) and the Riverside (California) Bible Church. These sermons reflect the contemporary views of that time. Consequently, the current generation may not be aware of the Christian mind-set which dominated the thinking of the evangelical/fundamental believers of that season.

Pastor Wendt was a man of "The Book" and, as such, he was dedicated to preaching "The Christ of That Book." This dedication and denunciation of the "leaven" which permeated the liberal churches and, yes, to some extent, even some of the fundamental churches, brought him into disfavor with some of the church leaders in the Southern California area.

Pastor Wendt was growing in his spiritual perception of the Scriptures, as well as his understanding of the Word rightly divided before he went to be with the Lord. This can readily be seen in these articles, particularly in the Preface to "The Church Myth."

i.

In transcribing the 45+-year-old notes and manuscripts to a booklet format, there was the task of editing and "smoothing out" any "disjointed thoughts." This was particularly present in "The God Myth," as the manuscript was very difficult to decipher. The members of the Board of Directors, Scripture Research, Inc., who all serve as the Editorial Committee, were asked to edit, change and/or modify the original "Myth" notes and manuscripts so that they read smoothly and coherently. Care was taken to honor Pastor Wendt's "thoughts" and "intentions."

Not all of the convictions and beliefs expressed by Pastor Wendt found in the various "Myth" messages are shared by all of our Board Members. However, we collectively feel that the treatment of these critical subjects needed to be

published, as these studies may be a "stepping-stone" in the spiritual growth of those individuals who might read these booklets.

We have requested that Mr. and Mrs. (Betty) James Harris, two individuals who sat under Pastor Wendt's ministry in Santa Ana, California, and who currently serve on our Board of Directors, briefly comment on the impact of his ministry as well as the "Myth" series themselves:

Lyman Wendt was a man who influenced many lives with his love of The Lord Jesus Christ, and his intense desire to know the complete truth of The Scriptures. This came at the price of the criticism of those close to him and his eventually having to leave the Calvary

ii.

Church in Santa Ana, California, and his beloved youth group there. He especially focused on the young people, and made

the young people's meetings fun and energetic, but challenging. I was eighteen and made a great effort to ride the street- car or whatever I needed to do to attend those meetings in downtown Santa Ana.

This was in 1945, at the end of World War II, and many servicemen were returning from Europe and the South Pacific. A large number of these servicemen and women came to the Christian Service Organization and then to the Calvary Church's young people's meetings from the Santa Ana Air Base. I met my future husband, Jim, at these meetings. He was just back from England, and was at the Air Base before he returned to his home in Houston, Texas. He returned to Santa Ana a year later when we got married, and Lyman Wendt was a large part of our early marriage, including loaning us deeper Bible study books and having many hours of doctrinal discussions.

Lyman wrote these articles he was just beginning to study much deeper and was growing spiritually himself. During this same period, he withstood much anger

about his "Myth Series" lessons and lack of "sermonizing," and he was criticized by the leaders of Church as he held to the truth. He especially was unhappy with the "Hollywood Christianity" of the 1950's period. We watched as he endured criticism from those close to him and many of the church leaders, and as he began to endure the pain of cancer. He became the Pastor of Riverside Bible Church in 1951 and continued his strong influence on the youth, and many young people from both of his churches became missionaries in many foreign lands. He continued his search for Biblical truth until his death from cancer in 1957.

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One of his last sermons was "He is Precious." I doubt that there was a dry eye in the congregation, certainly

not mine. Knowing him as Betty and I did, I have no doubt it came from a heart that was filled with all the love a Christian could have for his Lord. It was one of the most beautiful expressions and testimonies I have ever heard from the lips of a servant of God.

After all these years we still miss him, but God is faithful and has given us other men who have taken us deeper into His Word, and for that we give praise and thanksgiving "to Him Who is able to keep that which we have committed unto Him." It is our hope that as you read these pages you will see a loved servant of God "fighting the good fight of The Faith" for his flocks against the evils of his day.

Jim Harris

May 31, 2003

An introduction is in order in regard to the accompanying article written by a Christian brother in England, Mr. Norman C. Cooper. It is Scripture Research, Inc.'s great pleasure to republish this excellent article which was written many years ago.

In the current spiritual climate of today's evangelicalism, misapplication of truth is rampant and is seducing young (and old) believers into practices "borrowed" from a former era or dispensation. Believers are trying to go back to the Book of Acts, and, yes, to the Day of Pentecost for their religious expression. Many are told that their spiritual growth and/or maturity are dependent upon how they adhere to the I Corinthian list of spiritual gifts. Perhaps the best (and proper) way to explain why these sign gifts are inappropriate for this day and age is to "rightly divide The Scriptures," and thus assign the former Holy Spirit expressions to the Nation of Israel with all of their promises, covenants (old and new), and hopes -- not the Hope of the Calling as found in the Books of Ephesians and Colossians.

v.

Please prayerfully consider this wonderful, scholarly message as expounded by Mr. Cooper.

Sincerely in His Grace,

**Boar
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Direct
ors**

Scripture Research, Inc.

**And can it be that I should gain an interest in The
Savior's blood? Died He for me, who caused His pain?
For me, Who Him to death pursued?**

**He left His Father's throne above, so free, so infinite His
grace! Emptied Himself of all but love, and bled for
Adam's helpless race.**

**No condemnation now I dread; I am my Lord's and He
is mine; Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in
righteousness divine.**

**AMAZING LOVE! HOW CAN IT BE THAT THOU,
MY GOD, SHOULDST DIE FOR ME?**

Charles Wesley, 1707- 1788

vi.

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THE GOD MYTH

by

Lyman A. Wendt

Prefa ce

A few years ago, a friend of mine and I started a hike from Lake Mary in the High Sierras of California with 25 pounds or so on our backs. We were looking for a small lake which was reported to have very large trout in it. This lake was in a quite remote spot, seldom "trafficked" by man. On this occasion, no signs of any human being could be observed.

Going on farther, we found a series of five lakes which were not even recorded on the government map which we had in our possession. We were, indeed, in a most isolated area! But, after fishing along the banks of one of these isolated lakes, I suddenly saw a glitter from the grass at the edge of the lake. I stooped down and picked up a Wrigley's gum wrapper. So man had been there before me!

More recently, during a time with my daughter, Sharon, I asked her to get me one of her books. She brought me Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*.

You may recall that Robinson Crusoe was shipwrecked on an uninhabited island for 28 years. After being there for 24 years or so, one day he saw in the sand at the edge of the sea the footprints of You will also recall the consequent excitement of discovering a man who was named Friday.

Now it is a strange thing, isn't it, that man, educated man, scientific man, doesn't see as readily the "footprints" of God everywhere in His universe?

God can be seen in the breathtaking majesty of the High Sierras or those wonderful, awesome gorges of the Grand Canyon. The footprints of God can be seen in the majestic spaces of the constellations and the planets or in the dark silence of the ocean depths. The signs of God's being there are everywhere! "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God" (Psalms 14:1 AV*).

But who is this God? How does He live? Is He like a person? Is He an object? Is He material or immaterial? Is He active now? Does He see? Does He hear? Does He see and hear me? What does He think of me when He sees me? Or does He

care anything about me? Who is this God whose footprints are everywhere in the universe?

Some of these questions cannot be answered to the satisfaction of every person who reads this article. Nevertheless, the following thoughts will be presented for the purpose of, hopefully, clearing up some of the misunderstandings relating to the Person of our God. In other words, it is hoped that the following will show that the God of Christendom is not the God of the Bible. The God of Christendom is a myth!

***All Scriptural citations in this article are taken from the Authorized Version of the Holy Scriptures.**

THE GOD MYTH

In discussing this theme, you will note that there is a close relationship to the other "Myth" papers which have been previously published by Scripture Research, Inc. (See: "The Jesus Myth," printed March, 2002; "The Satan Myth," printed June, 1997; "The Church Myth," printed under this same cover; and "The Religion Myth, printed 2000.) If man has made a perversion of the other great subjects of the Bible – Satan, Jesus, Religion, the Church – then it is not surprising at all that the greatest Person found in the entire Bible should also be thus presented – THE FIRST GREAT CAUSE, WHOM WE CALL GOD.

If this subject of God is to have proper treatment, then a return to the earliest dependable record must be our starting point in this treatise. *Life Magazine's* treatment on this subject, as well as H.G. Wells' *The Outline of History*, are not acceptable sources for this study. Instead, the source for this study will be the Bible. And, more explicitly, the first book in the Bible, chapter one, verse one, is the starting point. What does this Holy Book say about God?

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

So the first consideration in a fair treatment of the subject will have to do with Creation and the absurd theory of evolution. The theory of evolution, succinctly stated, is that man evolved from a lower form of life (from random molecules to complex man without God's directing the process). Charles Darwin's treatise states that, "Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin."

On a personal note, if such a theory (evolution) as this satisfies you, the reader, then by all means embrace it. As a matter of fact, I realize that a person cannot

simply dismiss this theory with contempt or sarcasm, but, frankly, this in particular addresses those old and young alike who may be reading this article. I was not saved until I was 25 years of age, so I had finished my high school and college work. Even when I was in this unsaved state, a young man subject to the subtle unbelief which we find in modern education today, I would not and could not accept the evolutionary hypothesis. There was something in my type of thinking that would not accept it. Therefore, as I stated, it is absurd. I will address this statement shortly.

Returning to the Genesis account of Creation, there are many things not revealed in this section of Scripture which pertain to God. The statement of the verse itself is very clear: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." No one should have any difficulty with that statement. However, it does not say anything about the manner of His Creation. How did He do it? Did He pick things up and form them with His hands? Does He even have hands? Did He speak things into existence, or did He think them into existence? How did He do it? God's Word doesn't tell us!

How this original creation came into the chaotic condition of verse two, we are not told. "And the earth became" (a better translation than the word "was" in the AV text) – "the earth became without form and void." The reason that the original manuscript reads became can be ascertained by turning to Isaiah 45. In this section you will find that the earth was not created without form and void (Isa. 45:18):

For thus said the Lord that created the heavens: God Himself that formed the earth and made it; He hath established it, He created it not in vain.

"Vain" is the same word found in Genesis 1:2, "without form and void."

He formed it to be inhabited: "I am the Lord; and there is none else."

He didn't create the earth and the heaven as "void and without form." The Creation of Genesis 1:1 was not a creation of formlessness and chaos. He formed it "to be inhabited," but something happened and "the earth became without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep." In this Genesis passage, it does not indicate to us "how it came about." In many theological "circles" it is thought that this chaotic scene was due to the fall of Lucifer. We, however, are not told. And, also, we are not told how long this chaos lasted.

Beginning at verse three, the Scriptures state: "The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters." Followed by the account of the re-creation – the re-forming of things and the length of time of that reforming – that timing is uncertain. Were those "days" 24-hour days? Or were those days of re-creation long periods or "ages" of time? No one can say definitely.

It is this author's opinion that the re-creation days were 24-hour days. But we don't know for sure.

As a side note, we also don't know the way God re-peopled or re-populated the earth. We do know that He created Adam and Eve. Needless to say, there are many things which we are not told about God in the beginning of the Word of God. Yet, there are a few things which are very clear. For instance, one of them is that God's creation of man was different from that of His creation of any other creature. Take, for instance, Genesis 1:26, 27: "And God said, 'Let Us make man.'"

Birds have been made, and animals have been made. Now His creation of man is different from that of His creation of any other creature.

"And God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image.'" Note the pronouns, "us" and "our." Almighty God said, "We" are going to make man in Our image – after Our likeness. The plural forms (Us and Our) are no doubt referring to the Trinity in the creation process.

Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: and let them...

It is clear from this verse that man was not to be alone – it was man and woman. They constitute God's unit.

...have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air. (Genesis 1:26, 27)

Man was created differently by God and was given authority and dominion over all of the other things of creation, i.e., "the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth." Verse 27 further states:

So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them.

Returning again to the evolution question, every person has the right to choose whether he/she wishes to embrace this theory (that man evolved). To select this belief system, however, is in direct disbelief of the Biblical record. You cannot believe the Bible and also believe in evolution insofar as the creation of man is concerned. They are contrary to one another.

Similarly, you have the right, as an individual, to hold to the theory of evolution. BUT IF YOU DO, you are a BIBLE UNBELIEVER on this point. You cannot believe the Word of God and believe in evolution. It is possible to believe that man is a result of the process of evolution if you wish. This position, however, does not remove your problem at all. In actuality, there is only one thing where knowledge is absolute, and that is that you exist. The fact that I exist is the only thing that I absolutely and positively know. That is a fact and beyond the sphere of any possibility of doubt. Concomitantly, that is the only thing that is beyond the sphere of any possibility of doubt, i.e., that YOU exist.

I know that I exist. But how did I come to exist? I live, but how did my life begin? To say that I descended from the first man is no solution. Where did he come from? To say that he evolved or developed from a life germ doesn't solve the problem. It merely puts it farther back, for if you "chased" man back and back and back to explain where life came from, it still doesn't remove the difficulty.

If man could be placed back a hundred thousand years, as some scientist believe, or perhaps a hundred million years, as other scientist believe – it doesn't remove the problem, for the original life germ has still not been accounted for.

By forcing the scientist(s) to say that man came from a life germ, etc., you force man back to that life germ and must find out where that life came from. At the same time, the so-called scientist is forced to silence since LIFE CAN COME ONLY FROM PREVIOUS LIFE. And to say that Adam suddenly began to be – that he was created out of nothing by nothing -- is absurd! At the same time, it is no more absurd than to say that original life (whatever it consisted of) came from nothing. Neither life nor matter can come from nothing. Life can come only from previous life.

There are many secular scientists who expect our society to take for granted that their "naturalistic" explanation for the origin of life is true. By the same token, not all scientists are non-Christian. Some of the greatest and most prestigious scientists the world (past and present) has ever known are believers in Christ. These great men accepted the Biblical explanation for the origin of life, i.e., GOD CREATED IT. To accept the "naturalistic" explanation for life's origin will begin that ominous "slippery slope" for the rejection of other Divine precepts.

Where does the so-called scientist say that this life germ came from? Either it had a creator or it was itself eternal and, if it was itself eternal (not having a creator), then it was responsible for all of the vast complexities of life that followed afterward. Having stated this, we are soon faced with the absolutely absurd, untenable and impossible conclusion of calling this little, one-celled animal, God (creator or originator of living matter)! To repeat, HOW ABSURD!

The evolutionist or scientist who rejects the revelation of the Word of God tries to confuse us by giving that "first cause" a name of some kind. He calls it protoplasm. This definition is unsatisfactory! To the Christian there is only one word in the human language that most aptly describes the great self-existent, eternal first cause, and that word is GOD or CREATOR!

Should you, the reader, reject the evolutionary hypothesis (which is just that, a hypothesis which has never been proven and never will be proven!), what is your alternative? By intellectual default, creation. Creation, by default, requires a creator, i.e., GOD.

Isn't it a sad commentary that man can see the obvious "footprints" of God everywhere in HIS universe and knowingly (and it must be admitted that, in some cases, unknowingly) reject The Creator of those "prints"? The Scriptures speak to this situation (rebellion) when they state, "The fool hath said in his heart there is no God" (Psalms 14:1). It isn't that the FOOL is stupid or heretical. It is because his hypothesis is absurd. The mere acknowledgement of the fact that the FOOL is alive (exists) proves the existence of God.

The great fact that we all exist speaks to a second great fact of human knowledge: God exists!

Perhaps man's acceptance of the evolutionary hypothesis is manifested by his rebellion to God's laws and mores. This way he can show his independence and need (and rebellion) to a sovereign Creator (and Savior).

Formerly, it was stated that, in the forming of man, he was created differently than any of the other of God's Creation -- he was religious. By this statement the implication should not be drawn that being "religious" is necessarily a good thing. This statement is made merely as a means of showing that man was indeed different from God's other creations.

Looking back at the creation record, one would surmise that the early "religious" expression of our first ancestors, since they had just "come from God," would be a pure, wholesome thing resulting, in turn, in man's always

staying pure and wholesome. Is that what is found (and this is a rhetorical question)? NO! A simple, historical search through the records of every civilization reveals that religion always deteriorates.

For example, old Egypt's last days as a great culture were very religiously corrupt when compared to its cultural beginnings. In the case of China, the high system of moral ethics as developed by Confucius have succumbed to the very sorry, degenerate conditions now found in that ancient country. India started out with a pure worship of Brahma and soon (in not many generations) degenerated even more into a religion of gross pantheism and superstition. Similarly, the teachings of the blind Gautama led to the gross superstition of modern Buddhism.

What of the condition of the only Divine Religion given to the nation Israel when The Lord made His appearance in the flesh? Paul the Apostle supplies the answer as he states in Galatians 1:13 that it was "the Jews' religion," for it had deteriorated from the Divine system found in Leviticus to this low state described by the Apostle.

And what of Christianity? Christianity has, through the centuries, been almost swallowed up by the religion of Christendom, which in reality is a confused mass of divine truth and paganism. And, for re-emphasis, it always degenerates. Why? There is only one explanation adequate and satisfactory, and that is the Edenic Fall. Religion degenerates because man is a depraved creature and those "things" that man "touches" will deteriorate.

Man is not now as he was when he came forth from the hand of God. Man has fallen, and religions for which man alone is responsible, therefore, degenerate because he is ruled and controlled by other men. Man's entire situation suffered in the Fall – physically, morally and spiritually -- and, consequently, there is nothing which should be so distrusted as religion! And yet, very strangely, this is exactly the sphere of most self-satisfaction. (As a personal testimony to this fact, I talked with a young man who has great ambition for a farm on which he intends to put underprivileged children, and he plans to let each of the little groups have its own religion. He said to me that "he doesn't think it makes any difference what their religion is – it's good." That, fellow believers, is contrary to the attitude of most Bible-believing people.)

Another remarkable thing is that most people are convinced that all religions are bad! Except for one -- the one they practice. But this is not limited to religion. It's true of political parties. It's true of denominations. It's true of races. And that is now a problem in our country. That's the reason for race prejudice. We think

that all races of the world are inferior except for one – ours. The fact that we can get a few other people to agree with us in our position simply confirms our own belief system.

Turning to the passage in Acts 19 concerning Paul's conflict with Demetrius, the silversmith who made silver shrines for the worshippers of Diana in Ephesus (verse 34), we read,

But when they knew that he was a Jew, all with one voice about the space of two hours cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."

The Ephesians (who were idolaters) found that Paul was a "minister" of another religion. In order to "muzzle" Paul's message and possible influence to those in that city, they (for a two-hour period) shouted (cried out), "Down with his preaching/teaching." Observe verse 35:

And when the town clerk had appeased the people, he said "Ye men of Ephesus, what man is there that knoweth not how that the city of the Ephesians is a worshipper of the great goddess Diana, and of the image which fell down from Jupiter?"

Now notice the first part of verse 36:

"Seeing then that these things cannot be spoken against, ye ought to be quiet and to do nothing rashly."

In other words, if there is no question in "our" minds, should there be a question in "their" minds as to which is the right religion – it is Diana of the Ephesians. You cannot speak out against this religion, and the people of Ephesus prove it. The town clerk states, in essence, "We have a group of people here who prove that we are right in this matter." In retrospect, what guarantee did he have in making this blanket statement? Today there is an analogous situation in Christendom to that found in Acts 19. To the Christian, is the religion of Christianity "right"?

The intelligent believer should welcome an unbiased investigation into this matter. Is the religion of Christendom the true and right one? This is not a scandalous question, and the true believer should not angrily "cry out" when the issue is being openly discussed or considered. Having said this, "What is our

standard of reference to prove what is right and true?" Unashamedly and unhesitatingly, it is THE BIBLE!

This all sounds well and good, but there are some alarming statistics related to the impact of the Bible on Christendom. Two-thirds of those who consider themselves to be Christians do not believe that they can come to the Bible "directly." In addition, those two-thirds of the professing Christians are not allowed to come to the Bible themselves, directly. They are told that the Bible must be interpreted for them.

In the State of California there are statutes books. These books are the "Standard Authority" for matters related to the citizenry of this state. It should be further pointed out that the interpretation of these statutes is not left in the hands of the individual citizens, but comes from the decisions of state government officials.

By the same token, there are vast numbers of Christendom's citizens who say that the Bible is the standard, but the explanation and interpretation of the Text should be done by the/a church. Don't believe it! Following is a statement illustrating this very point: "Christ did not write a book. He founded a church and that church is to be the interpreter of the Bible." In other words, anyone who follows this religion must go to that church for interpretation. Though the Bible may now be available to them, that system of belief is still very plain in declaring that the poor individual believer or follower may not himself come to the Bible for the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, but he must go to that church for instruction.

If we as Christians feel inadequate to interpret the Bible for ourselves, which church should be selected to function in that role? (We know what the followers of Diana of Ephesus would say.) In our western culture, the predominant response would be "the Catholic Church." But which branch? The Greek Orthodox? The Roman branch? What of the Church of England, which would no doubt reply, "Why do you think the Reformation came?"

Both the East and the West branches of the Catholic Church have erred seriously, not only in their living, but in their ritual and in their doctrine. Do you think this church -- which is responsible for rivers of blood flowing from the persecution of people who did no more than to claim allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ -- should be considered to be the church to interpret the Word of God to us? In thinking about this issue, man cannot be made to believe that water can of itself be made to run uphill. Likewise, you cannot even make a little child believe that 5 plus 5 equals anything but 10. Yet in religion there doesn't seem to be any

limit to man's credulity – there is no limit to what a man will believe in religious things.

Think for a moment about the things that are foisted upon human beings by the so-called sacrifice of the Mass. Also, think of the hundreds of thousands of little children who are supposedly saved by baptism in their infancy. Here is a church whose belief system further states that to save a person, he or she must be baptized into a church. Look at the life of that child afterwards. Is there a sign of regeneration in that life? This is not to say that they all show no signs of spiritual transaction; some are moral and good (most of them are not).

We will now speak of the matter of regeneration. On a personal note, this author knows what happens to a person steeped in the sinful ways of this world, as I was! I worked in the oil fields in Southern California and I was without Christ, accustomed to a lifestyle of drunkenness, lying and stealing. And I know what happened to me when the Lord Jesus Christ came into my heart and life. I was regenerated! I know the difference between a person who is without Christ and one who has Christ.

Just recently a man calling himself "Prophet Jones" arrived in the Los Angeles area. He states, "I come in the power of God." His title is "His Holiness." He claims to be God. His further claim was, "I was given that which was taken from Adam in the Garden of Eden." A newspaper reporter asked him what that was, and he said, "I have dominion over life and death, and dominion over fowl, fish, and beasts, etc."

Another bizarre incident occurred which was recorded in the local newspaper. This concerned the power of prayer and its effects on plant growth. There was a small group of people huddled around a small plant. They began an intense prayer meeting. The control plant was not huddled around and did not receive the intense prayer. The results were that the "prayed over" plant grew more than the control plant. Perhaps the small group huddling and praying over the plant, exhaling carbon dioxide (a necessary component for growth), enriching the air, caused the positive response. But aside from this and more pertinent to the subject of this article, to whom did this small group pray? Unhesitatingly, they were not praying to our GOD – JEHOVAH.

From the bulletin of a local church, a statement of their faith is as follows: "We believe in God, The Father of all men. We further believe that the Word of God is contained in the Old and New Testaments." The average person would read over those sentences and not see anything wrong. To the perceptive Christian, God is not the Father of all men. Further, the Word of God is not contained in

the Old and New Testaments. The Old and New Testaments ARE the Word of God. The bulletin goes on to say, "We believe in the kingdom of God as the divine rule in human society under the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God. We believe in the final triumph of righteousness." That is an illustration of the God Myth.

The "Festival of Faith" was held in San Francisco and later duplicated in Australia, under the auspices of the Great World Council – the National Council of Churches. In their order of service they have taken quotations from the sayings of Confucius, Hinduism, Buddhism, the Christian's New Testament, Islam's Koran, and Judaism's Old Testament. On the platform, a representative from each one of these religions was present. They had to be careful to choose a symbol as something that represented all faiths, that would not offend any religion. They chose a rose on a little pedestal. They couldn't put up a cross. They couldn't display any kind of religious symbol, so they finally chose something just to "inspire" man's heart to be lifted up. To whom? The God myth!

Here are some quotations from the service of the World Day of Prayer put out by the United Church Women in the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America (formerly the old Federal Council of Churches):

Forgive us for our wanton destruction of true community life by our tolerance of unfair distribution of wealth.

Let us pray for the United Nations that they may have a vision of the kingdom of God – its breadth, its depth, its height, and to be given the grace to work together toward the high goal. Let us pray for those in areas of racial tension that the love of God may fill their hearts so that the love of all men as their brothers and God as their Father....

That is the God myth!!

In reality, the living God gave to the world only one true religion and that, of course, is the religion of Judaism. It was given for a specific time and for a specific people. God Himself declared that that religion which He gave was "a shadow of the good things to come." That is the purpose for God's giving mankind the Book of Hebrews, i.e., to show that all of the ritualism of this

religion was culminated and completed in the Person and Work of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the sum and the substance of it all.

Christianity, strictly speaking, is not a religion. It is a revelation. It is a faith. It is a Person. On the other hand -- let us be honest -- we do see in Israel's history a picture of modern Christendom. Follow closely, for this is the heart of this message. The followers of the religion which God gave (Judaism) were nominally the people of God, and her priests were the priests of God. Our Lord came and offered Himself as their Messiah, whom they had been promised and for whom they were presumably looking on the grounds of the Covenant relationship. Yet the Scriptures tell us that God saw something in their hearts which caused Him to make such declarations as seen in Matthew 15:3:

But He answered and said unto them, "Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"

It was stated above that the thing which man ought to distrust the most is religion. Yet that is the very thing which people of this world system go "wild" for.

"By your tradition!" Note verse 9 in this same chapter of Matthew: "But in vain they do worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men."

The Lord is simply stating to mankind that we need to be saved from religion. Outwardly, and with their hands, the children of Israel were carrying the law -- the ritualism of their religion -- but in their hearts God saw that they were far from Him. It is also true today! Across our land, every Sunday, churches empty their buildings of people who have, in many cases, not even had the Word of God opened to them -- people who have seen the candles and the lighted "altar," people who have looked up at the front of the church in awe and silence as the lights have been subdued and the organist played soft music to bring them presumably into an attitude of worship, people who have had no presentation to them of the GOD Who is revealed in the Word of God.

Question: Whom do you think the children of Israel were serving when they stoned the prophets? Please remember, the Israelites were God's chosen people. They were very, very careful to follow their religion. Having stated this, whom were they serving? Were they serving Jehovah when they stoned the prophets? Even more damning, what god were they serving when they killed the Prince of Life? What god was Saul serving when he went about slaughtering the early Christians?

Today we are all aware that we have many friends who are involved in so-called Christian religion(s). But are they going through similar religious "paces" much like that of Saul? In reality, who is their God? They may call Him Jehovah, but is He the God of the Bible?

In this city there are representatives from three religious faiths – Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism -- calling their flocks together to celebrate National Brotherhood Week. Will they be talking about the LORD JESUS CHRIST? This is a rhetorical question, of course. Will they be acknowledging the JEHOVAH of the Word of God? No. Who then? Answer: the god of Christendom, who is a myth!

What then can be learned from this short but candid evaluation of Christendom? What about the God of Christendom? Polls have shown that 99 percent of the United States' population believes in God. One hundred percent of the United States' women believe in God. Ninety-eight percent of all men believe in God, resulting in 99 percent. But is He the God of the Bible?

One of the outstanding bishops of our country (denomination withheld) recently said, "Do you expect me to take that Shylock who demands his pound of flesh in a blood sacrifice?" This same person has been the President of the Federal Council of Churches.

A newspaper editor in the Santa Ana, California, area recently stated, "The God that you Christians follow is the Jewish Tribal God. Do you expect me to accept one who hated and destroyed the people so that the Jews could have access to the land? Nonsense." Is his god the God of the Bible? Absolutely not. He doesn't even understand the God of the Bible.

In my younger years I was associated with Demolay and the Odd Fellows (and the Odd Fellows were based on Bible stories), but was the God of these "lodge" organizations the God of the Bible? Absolutely not!

Who is the true and only God? The answer to this question depends upon your "frame of reference." If it is not the Bible and you come from a "relativistic" reference point, then all gods must be accommodated. All religions must be true regardless of their conflicting doctrine(s) and divine personages. If your God is the God of the Bible, then let the Scriptures define God. The Book of John (14:6) declares that the only way to know God is through the Lord Jesus Christ:

Jesus saith unto him, "I am The Way, The Truth and The Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me."

Notice the words of our Lord when He responded to Philip's question concerning the Father.

Philip saith unto Him, "Show us the Father and it sufficeth us." (John 14:8)

"He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." (John 14:9)

The only way anyone can know the True God is to submit himself/herself to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one God, and He manifested Himself in the Person of Jesus Christ.

There is ONE God! There are not many gods – just one God and one Mediator between God and man, the man, Christ Jesus (I Timothy 2:5).

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WHEN TRUTH BECOMES ERROR

By Norman C. Cooper

Preface

In the March – May, 1954, edition of *The Volume of the Book*, a periodical edited and published in England by Mr. Cooper in, this article appeared. Mr. Cooper also wrote this wonderful manuscript. Recently, Scripture Research, Inc. was able to contact Mr. Cooper in the matter of reissuing this title and we are delighted to report that permission was granted to proceed with the publishing.

"When Truth Becomes Error" is a very appropriate accompaniment to Pastor Wendt's two articles. The error of "misapplication" of truth is error indeed and needs to be prayerfully considered when The Word of God is involved.

Please enjoy!

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"The Christian story is precisely the story of one grand miracle, the Christian assertion being that what is beyond all space and time is uncreated, eternal, came into nature, into human nature, descended into His own universe, and rose again, bringing nature up with Him. It is precisely one great miracle. If you take that away there is nothing specifically Christian left."

C. S. Lewis, "God in the Dock"

WHEN TRUTH BECOMES ERROR

The Word of God is the final authority to which appeal is made by believers concerning all matters of conviction. There is no room for opinions, ideas, or conceptions on matters upon which God's Word gives specific information. If such exist, it merely indicates a tragic lack of faith upon the part of the believer concerned.

Speculation concerning the things of God has existed from ancient times. This has not been due to lack of knowledge, for the numerous ways in which God has made Himself known are beyond dispute. But it is the result of the deliberate rejection of His truth (i.e., His Word) or the equally deliberate alteration of that truth into speculative conclusions. In the Scriptures this process is called "changing the truth of God into the lie" (*to pseudei*).

Much lies behind this systematized corruption of truth, and the results are usually found among those who know not God. An equally insidious form of deception, however, has had for its special target those who claim a relationship to God. Moreover, because such deception comes in the garb of truth, and therefore is so much harder to detect, it is an ever-present danger to all who seek to walk with God. These are not idle statements made to unsettle timid believers. They are facts that are recorded in the Scriptures of Truth.

In Colossians 2:8 a warning is given in terms that cannot be misunderstood. If time has softened for us the meaning of these words, then perhaps a glance at the original wording will indicate the urgency of the Apostle's message. The word "beware" (Gk. *blepete*) means "give earnest heed to." It is a word that was never used lightly, and its form in this context suggested a peril that was very near. In modern times when the words "Danger, beware, road construction in progress" appear on traffic signs placed at conspicuous points, those who read the signs do not expect that the danger referred to is at some distant point. Danger signs indicate a present or imminent peril, and if Scriptural warnings were heeded half as much as road maintenance signs, then much spiritual loss would be avoided.

Unfortunately, however, like reckless road users, many believers seem to have crashed through Scriptural "danger signs" before their presence was realised. Even the root form of the Greek word "*blepete*" may be expressed in very up-to-date language. *Blepete* comes from *blepo*, which means "to see or behold." Therefore, to follow out the figure used above, we might suggest, "Keep your

eyes open" or "Look where you are going." Failure to do this is a frequent cause of fearful accidents – spiritual as well as mundane.

The Colossians were warned against an "empty and deceitful philosophy," which had its foundations in the traditions of men and the elements of the world. This philosophy was empty because it possessed no firm foundation and therefore no permanent superstructure. It was deceitful because it was opposed to the Truth – "not according to" Him Who was truth. We notice that this so-called wisdom was "according to...the elements of the world." What then does this phrase mean?

The translators of the Authorized and Revised Versions were apparently not wholly satisfied with the English word "rudiments" to translate the Greek term *stoicheion*. This appears evident from the marginal renderings of both versions where this word occurs. Their dilemma is quite understandable, however, for this Greek word does provide a translation difficulty. Grimm-Thayer's Lexicon gives the following definitions:

- a. The sound of letters. Thus, the elements or first principles of *speech*.
- b. The elements from which all things have come: the material causes of the universe.
- c. The heavenly bodies, these being the primary causes of many phenomenon.
- d. The elements, rudiments, primary and

fundamental principles (cp. our A B C) of
any art, science, or discipline.

Therefore, from this variety of definitions, we might translate Colossians 2:8:

**Beware lest any man spoil you
through philosophy and vain
deceit...after the first
principles which belong to the
sphere of material and
external things and not after
Christ.**

These false teachers sought to beguile the Colossian saints with a vain and deceitful philosophy which was truly "elementary" in comparison to the truth. They uttered half-formed letters -- the rudiments of speech -- while God had announced His wonderful revelation concerning His Son in words that burned

with grace and love. Their speculations were characterized by "principles." His truth spoke of "fulness"!

Fortunately, the line of demarcation between God's truth and the false philosophy which was presented to the saints at Colosse was readily discernible, for the terms of both teachings were completely different. In contrast to this, an incident which happened in the Galatian assembly and which was also concerned with "first principles" provides us with our first example of how truth out of place becomes error.

In Galatians 4:3-11, the Apostle deals with the details of his earlier charge, "Are ye so foolish? Having begun in the spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?" (3:3) The danger confronting these believers was more subtle than that at Colosse. Believing Jews, recently reclaimed from the formalities of Judaism, together with the even greater number of Gentile saints, of which the Galatian assembly was composed, were an easy prey to the forceful and persuasive teachers who urged them to return to the requirements of the Mosaic Law. The false instructors maintained that circumcision was essential, and, once this rite was administered, the whole burden of the law brought its crushing weight to bear upon the faltering believers. (Cp. Acts 15:10.)

Some may object that the Mosaic Law is not in view in the phrase "elements of the world" in verses 3 and 9 of the fourth chapter. But, as Paul includes himself with those who were enslaved to these "first principles" (verse 3), the objection is nullified. This point is most important, for it demonstrates a vital truth.

The Law given by Moses and ordained by angels was nevertheless the Law of God. It was wholly divine. It was God's Word. In Romans 7:12 it is described as "holy and just (righteous) and good." What then could have impelled the Apostle Paul to describe the truth of God given to Moses as "weak and beggarly elements"? Moreover, we must remember that the letter in which these words are found is itself God's Word and is therefore the Lord's own comment upon His earlier revelation. What is it, then, that occasioned this tremendous change of viewpoint? In a word, "the appearance of our great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ," when God was "manifest in the flesh."

The advent of Christ to this earth fulfilled much that the Law had typified. Furthermore, His life, death and resurrection created many changes in God's dealings with men. One of the most outstanding of these was the manner in which a man, whether he was Jew or Gentile, could obtain a righteous standing before God.

Prior to Christ's first coming, an Israelite was accounted righteous by God if he kept the Law (Deut. 6:25; cp. Luke 1:6). Similarly, a Gentile, if he lived in accordance with the light that he had, also was accounted righteous (Romans 2:14, 26-29). But, after Christ had walked this earth and fulfilled the complete requirements of the Law of Moses concerning righteousness, the position was completely different.

He fulfilled the Law in respect to righteousness and extended as a gift from God His own righteousness "unto all and upon all them that believe" (i.e., both Jews and Gentiles). Therefore, those "in Christ" possess the righteousness "of Christ." As we read in Romans 10:4, "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth."

This change in the function of the law was the compelling reason for the Apostle's words in Galatians 4:9. The Galatians had believed on Christ, and were found in Him. If, however, they returned to those material ordinances which, in their proper place, had pointed forward to Him, they were not only taking a retrograde step, but they were denying the truths related to His finished work. In the words of the Apostle, they would become "entangled again with the yoke of bondage," Christ would profit them nothing, and they would "have fallen from grace."

As these phrases are carefully considered, they become very heart-searching for, if misplaced truth can become such terrible error on one occasion, then it is obvious that the process can be repeated. Perhaps it is being repeated today when so much that God has set aside for the time being is eagerly sought, if not clamourously demanded, by the unwary.

When certain truths are no longer part of God's current method of dealing with man, then for anyone to insist upon their application is simply disobedience, and is strongly condemned in the Word of God. The Apostle's words are emphatic when dealing with the tragic situation which arose in Galatia: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed," and again, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you" (Gal. 1:9, 5:12).

The insistence of these false teachers upon the observance of past truths was nothing short of "changing the truth of God into a lie." On another occasion, a divinely-instituted ceremony was likened unto pagan barbarianism simply because some sought to embrace it at the wrong time. When writing to the Philippian saints, Paul warns them of false teachers. He writes, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision" (Phil. 3:2). The application of

the term "dogs" to Judaising zealots is rather interesting, for this word had always expressed the utter contempt in which the Gentiles were held by the Jews.

Originally, circumcision was the symbol of God's covenant with Abraham and his seed. Unfortunately, however, when Israel became a nation in their own right, they stressed the idea of separateness (suggested by the rite of circumcision) so much that all "un-circumcised ones" were viewed as unclean, impure, and filthy. In time, the Gentiles were looked upon as akin to the scavenger dogs which roamed in packs through the land and cities of Palestine. To the Jewish mind, therefore, "dogs" became the natural synonym for "Gentiles."

The Jews had claimed to be God's children, eating at God's table, while those outside the covenant (signified by the sign of circumcision in the flesh) were as scavengers, sifting the piles of refuse in search of food. But Paul, or should we not say "the Holy Spirit," reverses the figure. He says that the Judaisers are the "dogs" still scraping about amongst the garbage of carnal ordinances instead of feasting upon the spiritual banquet which God had provided in Christ (cp. Lightfoot on Phil. 3:2).

The term "dogs" was aimed at the "circumcised ones," but what of the rite itself? The word "concision" (Gk. katatome) gives the divine estimate of this sign when it is wrongly enforced. In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the word katatome (concision) is used to indicate the terrible mutilations associated with heathen idolatrous practices and connected with their false worship. Such disfigurements of the flesh were abhorrent to the Lord and were completely forbidden to Israel.

They shall not make baldness upon their head, neither shall they shave off the corner of their beard, nor make any cuttings in their flesh. (Lev. 21:5; see also Lev. 19:28, Deut. 14:1.)

Another example of this heathen practice is found in I Kings 18:28 after Elijah had mocked the priests of Baal: "And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and spears (A.V., lancets) till the blood gushed out upon them."

The same word that is used to describe these hideous mutilations is applied to those who, in Paul's day, viewed circumcision with a fanatical awe.

As the Law of Moses had been described as "weak and beggarly elements," so the very sign of circumcision is likened to a savage heathen mutilation of the

flesh. Once again, the fact emerges that truth out of place can become grievous error.

The principle of later revelations superseding earlier truths may be found throughout the Scriptures. Sometimes when obsolete truths are followed unwittingly, the results are fortunately not so disastrous as those which occurred in the Galatian church. Nevertheless, when a truth is known and is not followed, the results may be even more tragic.

At Galatia and Philippi, the errors were primarily connected with practice in the natural realm, i.e., obedience to the Law of Moses, and circumcision in the flesh. Can we say that misplaced truths associated with convictions in the spiritual realm are of less consequence?

Truth out of place not only produces wrong actions, but also false convictions. The believer who would guard against both of these snares should follow the advice given to Timothy concerning the Scriptures: give himself "wholly to them."

The errors we have considered thus far have dealt with false practices. In conclusion, we shall deal with an incident which promoted wrong convictions.

The standing of the believer during the Acts period was clearly revealed in the letter to the Romans. In that foundational epistle, identification with Christ is set forth in unmistakable terms, and the believer is led to know of his union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

After the period covered by the Book of the Acts, further truth is revealed, and this later revelation involves something hitherto unknown. The believer now not only walks "in newness of life," but is actually "seated...in the heavenlies in Christ." This is identification in its highest sense, and a truth which can only be apprehended by faith.

The terms which revealed this glorious standing contained a phrase, apart from which the believer could not lay hold of such precious truths. This phrase was, "in Christ." The continued and insistent repetition of such expressions as "in Christ," "in Him," etc., should have been sufficient safeguard to those early believers (and, indeed, to some in our own day) to prevent them from becoming ensnared by false teaching. Unfortunately, it was not so, for this time truth was not only misplaced, but also mishandled. That which revealed a glorious identification with Christ in His exaltation at the Father's Right Hand was twisted to mean that a saint no longer required a resurrection.

Two such false teachers were named Hymenaeus and Philetus (II Tim. 2:17), and they taught that the resurrection had already taken place. No doubt their false assertions had some link with the truths revealed in Ephesians 2:4-7, but it is highly probable that (when expressed in their terms) the truth was unrecognizable. Nor did the mischief end with their false claims, for we are told that these pernicious doctrines "overthrew the faith of some." Once again, it was misplaced truth that wrought such havoc in the lives of certain of these early believers and, from the examples we have cited, it is very evident that untold harm can be accomplished by this practice.

Any who seek to foist upon believers the teachings or practices of earlier administrations of God with the deliberate intention of hindering the natural outworking of the truth (i.e., the production of God-given freedom, John 8:32) are not only furthering the aims of the Enemy of truth, but are also discrediting the One Who said, "I AM the TRUTH."

In our endeavours to learn of Him and walk with Him, may we do so in the way HE has ordained for this present time.

* * * * *

"This Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Caesar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, He shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars. He spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet, without writing a single line. He set more pens in motion, and furnished them far more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art and songs or praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times."

Schaff, historian

CHURCH MYTH

by

Lyman A. Wendt

Preface

It will be necessary in the presentation of this article, "The Church Myth," to be quite candid, and, at the same time, be quite severe in exposing the error of a

certain great religious system. I will be calling that religious system by its name. I have no purpose or intention of offending anyone. I hope you will at least consider the words, and research for your own edification the veracity of the statements made. Further, the comments made are not intended or addressed to you (Protestant or Catholic), the individual reader. It is the "religious system" that I am attempting to expose. Succinctly, this article attempts to expose the "myth" of the church.

This message is not a sermon on the Bible doctrine of the Church, nor is it concerned with a study on the various usages of the word "church." For instance, "We are building a new church." That shows that it is referring to a building. Or, "Let's go to church," meaning simply a meeting of some kind. Or, "I belong to the Presbyterian Church." In that usage it is a denomination. Or we speak of the relationship between the church and the state. In that case it means corporate religion. Or we might use the expression in the Bible, "The Church which is in the wilderness." In that case it referred to the Jews only. So, we see it used to refer to an "assembly" of people. During the events found in the Book of Acts, Luke describes the mob scene at Ephesus and uses the same word, "assembly" (same word as church – Ekklesia), an assembly of people. Then, in the Book of Ephesians, the word "Church" is used for The Body of Christ.

Although there is a digression here, it is important to realize that the truth concerning "the Church which is His Body" is an important subject. This teaching concerns itself with that body of truth which was a (the) "mystery" and "hid in God." Hence, it was never before revealed in the Old Testament, the Gospels, or during the Acts period (in those various letters written during the Acts period). This truth states that God was joining the Gentile and the Jew into "one new man" (the Church), formed by the baptism by the Holy Spirit in which the earthly distinction of Jew and Gentile disappears. To the Apostle Paul this new truth was revealed.

At the outset, I would refer the reader to the Scofield Bible note as found on page 1252 and quote the following: "In Paul's writings alone we find the doctrine, position, walk, and destiny of the church." I concur with Dr. Scofield, and believe it definitely, that "in Paul's writings alone" (that rules out the Gospels and the Book of Acts, where most religious people "live"). I challenge and recommend that you, the reader, study carefully the epistles of Ephesians and Colossians to verify the foregoing.

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"If a matter is personal, do not strive about it; but, if it is a matter of principle, then strive for it, and, if need be, die for it."

E. W. Bullinger, quoted in *Questions and Answers*, Vol. 1, No. 5, January, 1943.

THE CHURCH MYTH

In a previous publication ("The Jesus Myth"*) it was revealed that the Jesus of Christendom is not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible, and also in another article ("The Satan Myth"*) it was further revealed that the Satan of Christendom is not the Satan of the Bible. In "The Religion Myth"*) it was seen that the religion of Christendom is not the true faith of the Bible. The current theme, "The Church Myth," will show that the Church of Christendom is not the "Church" of the Bible.

Most "religious" people think denominationally, and, if the truth were known, the leaders of most great denominations are desperately working toward ecumenicity or the great World Church. They, however, have no intentions of giving up denominationalism. Succinctly, there is no plan to forsake the Baptist denomination or the Presbyterian denomination or the Methodist denomination. They (the leaders) are trying to create the ecumenical movement. This ATTEMPT at "unity" is the driving force in getting them together. In short, the one thing which is causing division (denominationalism) they are completely ignoring. Strange, isn't it? They have no intention of giving that up. The only things they are giving up are certain convictions about their belief in the Word of God.

***These titles are available at no cost upon request from Scripture Research, Inc.**

At the present time there are two great bodies Roman Catholicism (Romanism), which is more or less united, and Protestantism, which is more or less divided, but in some cases merging. The mergers are being slowed down -- especially the merger between Romanism and Protestantism -- because of the great jockeying for power. The religious leaders of the Presbyterian denomination, for example, have no intention of completely stepping out of the picture to allow the great religious leaders of the Methodist denomination to take over the Protestant "movement." The jockeying for power is a little slow. There have been two or three mergers and, undoubtedly, if we live long enough, there will be others.

A Roman Catholic prelate has stated, "America can no longer claim to be Protestant," indicating that there is still quite a strong feeling that the two great systems are fighting with one another.

Occasionally, society is startled by the conversion to Catholicism by some prominent figures. Newspapers and magazines "played up" these stories. Claire Booth Luce is perhaps the classic illustration. The *Los Angeles Times* reported that Princess Margaret might soon announce that she was entering the Roman Catholic Church. The inference to these announcements is that, if such intelligent persons as Claire Booth Luce or Princess Margaret take such a momentous step, there must be a valid reason.

Many of the religious motion pictures (and there have been dozens of them) use a Roman Catholic priest. Again, the implication is that the final word in religion is the Roman system.

The primary reason that the media accords to the conversion to Catholicism by an unbeliever or a Protestant is the foundational lie of apostasy that salvation is in and through the church. This is "The Church Myth." And every person who has gone over to the Roman Church has done so after facing the question, "Which is right -- Roman Catholicism or Protestantism?" That is a catch question, for the answer to that question is neither! The rest of this booklet will deal with this statement.

Protestantism recognizes the Roman Catholic Church as the greatest united church. The World Council of Churches in its plan and program for ecumenicity and union naturally is bidding for its inclusion in the Roman system. And, in fact, at that great wicked "festival of faith" meeting which was held in San Francisco and repeated in Australia, Roman Catholicism was called a "sister church" by the great Protestant leaders. Again and again, the leaders of those meetings mentioned, "our sister church." To this recurring phrase, Mr. Minor Stearns, former leader of the Belgian Gospel Mission, wrote an article in which he answers the question, "Is Rome a Sister Church?" (an article well worth the time to read). In the article he calls attention to the fact that Roman Catholicism is closer to the fundamentalist "camp" than the modernist "camp."

How can this be? The answer is that the Roman Catholic faith is closer to fundamentalism because Catholicism does hold to certain great articles of the faith. Nevertheless, in their denial of justification by faith, Roman Catholicism takes the very heart out of the foundation of the true Gospel message. Consequently, it cannot, by any stretch of the imagination, be called a "sister church."

What is it that makes these mergers so popular? The answer is found in the previous "Myth" series, i.e., "The Jesus Myth," "The Satan Myth" and "The Religion Myth." To add to this, it is necessary to repeat the statement, "There is

nothing which should be so distrusted as man's 'religion.'" And man's religion has as its central gathering point "the church" (small caps). On the other hand, God's "religion" is in a Person, and that is a great deal of difference.

The question may be asked, "Doesn't Christendom center in a person?" The name would seem to imply it. It is true that Christendom has a person, and they call that person "Jesus." But in a previous message ("The Jesus Myth"), that Jesus is a "myth." He is not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible.

A young woman (formerly a Roman Catholic) indicated to me that, as a Catholic, she "believed in 'Jesus.'" But later she realized that this "Jesus" was not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible; hence, "He was neither my Lord nor my Saviour." And this is correct! The religious world (Christendom) has "a Jesus." They have a person, but He is not the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible; consequently, their followers have neither a Saviour, nor do they have a Lord.

Let it be known that the Jesus of Christendom is not the supreme authority of this same system. Does that sound contradictive? The logical question is, then, what or who is the supreme authority? For to this same system, it certainly is not the Bible.

In preparation for this theme, it became necessary to review the "sacred" books of the East and those works associated with the world's great religious systems. All of these same systems appeal to their sacred books as a sanction for their existence.

Now (follow closely), Christendom (which is one of the great religious systems) also has its book, and it appeals to this book for sanction. In reading this book, Christendom's appeal to the Bible for sanction is like a juggler's trick. There are thousands of people who have selected the Christian religion, and they pretend to believe the Bible. However, it seems to matter very little to them that the Bible condemns the very things which they believe – and their practices and policies -- but they claim to accept and believe the Bible. It seems to make religion respectable to say that you base it on the Bible.

A few words from a footnote found in Sir Robert Anderson's *The Silence of God* is in order. It is important to realize that this same writer was a member of the Church of England and we would, therefore, expect him to say:

The Church of England teaches unequivocally that there is neither salvation nor infallibility in the church and that the church's authority in matters of faith is

controlled and limited by God's Word, and this basically is Protestantism. Not a repudiation of authority in the spiritual sphere but a revolt against the bondage of mere human authority falsely claimed to be divine. It delivers us from the authority of the church that we may be free to bow to the authority of God. "The church" claims to mediate between God and man, but Christianity teaches that all pretensions of that kind are both false and profane, and points to our divine Lord Jesus Christ as the only mediator.

We are living in a day when "the church" claims to have the last word on things. But, only Jesus Christ is the authority. Protestantism is not your or my religion, but it does leave us with a free conscience and an open Bible face to face with God. Protestantism is not an anchorage for our faith, but it is like the breakwater which renders our anchorage secure. It shields us from the influences which make Christianity impossible.

The Roman Catholic statement, "Christ has founded a church, and in and through the church speaks to us," was challenged. The reply that the Roman Church gave was for those interested to refer to the Scriptures. Yet, when the Scriptures were viewed, human tradition and the authority of the church were given instead. Does this sound familiar? In common terms of the day, this is called "the old con game." That's the walnut trick with the little bean -- where is it? When asked for authority, when asked for proof that the church is the authority, they say, "Well, look in the Scriptures," and yet when the Scriptures are turned to, they respond by saying, "Well, the final word after all is tradition and the word of the 'church.'"

How can you respond to such reasoning? Where are the "absolutes" in defining such an important theme? If the "church" appeals to the Scriptures, then she ought to be willing to place an open Bible on the table as the absolute! Has the Roman Church ever done that? Perhaps only once in the past hundreds of years, and this under the Papacy of John Paul I.

If the church of Rome takes as its authority the Word of God, then it ought not fear to hand this same open Word of God to anybody at any time, under any circumstance. But it does not do that, and it claims to have rather a higher authority of tradition and of man. When the confidence of the Bible is undermined, it is not surprising to see that the church is set up in its place as the

final authority and, of course, this is done! An example of this is in order. One of the most clever bits of subtlety and advertising that has ever been done are the articles published by the Knights of Columbus. In an article titled "The Bible Is A Catholic Book," follow what is claimed:

Nowhere in the Bible will you find a list of the 73 inspired books of which it is composed.

(Note, not 66, but 73.) This statement is readily and immediately accepted by ignorant people. To the clever writer of this article, there are not 66 books – there are 73 books, and there are 73 books because "we say so." Further:

For the record, this list was given to the world by the Catholic Church almost three full centuries after the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Between the time of the crucifixion and the time that the Scriptures were gathered into a single book, millions have received and accepted the teachings of Christ and have died without ever seeing the complete Bible. How were they getting their true teaching and training? If they didn't have a Bible, how were they getting it? From the church? What church? The Catholic Church.

So says the article, which, of course, is false and is also historically false. So the Roman Church says:

For all these centuries – people didn't have a Bible – truth was taught to them by "the church" established by Christ Himself and rapidly spread among the nations of the world – the Catholic Church.

And they would say, "Roman Catholic." Let there be no mistake that that's what they mean, as there is a great difference between a Roman Catholic Church and a Catholic Church. The latter was carrying on Christ's work for the salvation of men some 60 years before the Apostle John wrote his Book of Revelation in the New Testament. There is more:

For more than a thousand years afterwards [note this brash statement by the Knights of Columbus in their article] the Scriptures were preserved and circulated by Catholic monks and scholars who laboriously copied the

Sacred text by hand and the Bible authorized by the Catholic church.

Authorized, you see – the Bible authorized by the church. Not the other way around. Not the Word of God sitting in judgment on a manmade organization, but a man- made organization sitting in judgment (can you imagine it?) on the Word of God. Proceeding further:

Yes, the Bible was truly a Catholic book. They were members of the Catholic church, who under God's inspiration wrote the New Testament in its entirety. It was the Catholic Church which treasured it.

Perhaps the Roman Catholic Church should recall the name of William Tyndale. This stalwart of The Faith gave the Bible to the common people. The Roman Catholic Church rewarded Tyndale by putting him on a stake and burning him to death. The Catholic Church then has the effrontery to say,

It was the Catholic Church which treasured it and gave it to the world in its original and unaltered form. It is the infallible authority of the Catholic Church that has always been the only guarantee of its inspiration. But with the completely revealed truth of God delivered to her from the beginning, the Catholic Church has faithfully unfolded the meaning of the written Word of God to past generations of mankind and does so today.

Succinctly, THAT IS THE CHURCH MYTH! And it is surprising to see the number of Protestants who are taken in by this same error: that the church is the final word and the final authority.

Another series of illustrations is in order when the "authority" issue and the Roman Catholic Church are considered. To those who have Roman Catholic friends who are interested in a listing of the "heresies" invented and perpetuated by that church within the last 1600 years, please be aware:

The federation of angels and saints began in 375 AD. At the reformation, in the 16th century, these heresies were repudiated as having no part in the religion of Jesus Christ as taught in the New Testament. They didn't appear in the first century, as there was no Roman Catholic church in the first century. These things have been brought down to us and have been declared as dogmas by the leaders of that church.

The worship of Mary as the Mother of Jesus and the use of the term "Mother of God" as applied to her originated in the Council of Ephesus in 431 AD.

The Bible teaches that we pray to God alone. In the primitive church, never were prayers directed to Mary or to dead saints. This practice began in the Roman church 600 years after Christ.

The papacy is of pagan origin. The title of "pope" or universal bishop was first given to the bishop of Rome in the year 610 AD.

The worship of the cross, images and relics was not authorized until 788 AD.

The canonization of dead saints began first by Pope John the 15th in 995 AD.

Fasting on Friday and during Lenten season (which undoubtedly has no place in the true Bible Church) were imposed in the year 998 AD.

The mass was developed as a sacrifice, and attendance was made obligatory in the 11th century.

of the priesthood was not decreed until the year 1079 AD.

rosary or prayer beads were introduced by Peter the Hermit in 1090 AD.

of sins to the priest was instituted in 1215 AD.

Bible was forbidden to laymen and placed in the index of forbidden books by the Council of Valencia, 1229 AD.

doctrine of purgatory was first established by Gregory the Great in 593 AD, and was proclaimed as a dogma by the Council of Florence in the year 1439 AD.

Apocryphal books were added to the Bible itself by the Council of Trent in 1546 AD.

immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary in 1854 AD.

1870 AD, Pope Pious the 9th proclaimed the dogma of Papal infallibility.

the year 1930 AD, Pope Pious the 11th condemned public schools.

1931 AD, Pope Pious the 11th reaffirmed the doctrine that Mary is the Mother of God.

1950 AD the dogma of the bodily assumption of Mary was declared.

realize that none of the above Roman Catholic Church assertions are found in the Word of God!! They don't need to be, for, according to them, the Word of God is not the final authority – their "church" is the final authority.

Consequently, when the church declared the bodily assumption of the Virgin Mary, all Roman Catholics must believe it! And they will continue, if the Lord tarries, to believe it, for they take the attitude, of course, that the Roman Church has the authority even over the Word of God – and this is the CHURCH MYTH.

The personal point of emphasis from this author is suggested. Should a Roman Catholic be reading this text, a solemn word of warning for the sake of your soul is put forth as it concerns salvation. You should flee from this wicked system. There is no forgiveness in the Church, but there is immediate salvation and eternal salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ and in Him alone.

The emphasis, I was handed a letter from one of our own church members addressed to a Roman Catholic priest from the Denver, Colorado, Diocese. This same priest was thanking the daughter of a recently deceased relative (who had sent a check instead of flowers) by stating, "I am deeply grateful for the money which was forwarded to me to be used in the remembrance of your mother. I have given the full amount of it as an offering for the Mass for the repose of her soul." What a tragedy! And what a wicked hold such a thing has over people – not for a year or two, but for all their lives. This system boldly asserts that only they can grant assurance of anyone's ultimate salvation. You never know, for sure. The only thing you can do is just to keep paying and paying, hoping that they will be released from purgatory and that they have repose for their soul.

The Roman Church actually declares and guarantees the truth of these dogmas, even though they claim that you as an individual with an intelligent mind can't see it. You don't need to see it. Your church declares that it is true; therefore, you must accept it as the truth. Finally, you believers in the Word of God should pray for them and be informed and instruct them in the Word, so that you can help them to be delivered from this awful heresy.

Doesn't the Roman Church say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God? Yes, it does, but you must realize that they also say that He is a piece of bread. In saying this, there is no logical, intelligent, scientific basis for their declaration. But then there doesn't need to be, for, according to their church, they have the authority to make that declaration, and it must be heeded. If the Word of God is not the authority, then upon what basis can we accept any truth? The myth church declares certain things. You accept them in a superstitious sort of way because

the CHURCH declares it. The true Church accepts a thing if it is God-breathed, not because the declaration arises from Rome or a "pastor" or from a "pulpit." *The only authority to recognize is the Word of God!!* Only if the "church" or the "pastor" or the "pulpit" is completely parallel to The Word of God can their "truth" or "teaching" be accepted.

Much of the foregoing has been directed to or about the Roman Catholic Church. What about Protestantism? This is a rhetorical question, for it affects the Protestant exactly in the same way. In almost every denomination, the church is supreme. In spite of the fact that nearly every major denomination has gone into apostasy, very few people have left the church. That in itself is proof of the fact that the church is recognized as supreme. Why haven't they left their church? Answer: There is an inner superstitious belief that the church, "my" church, "our" church, must be right. This statement was further validated when a local Presbyterian minister, after being shown a damaging article by his Presbyterian denomination, was heard to say, "Right or wrong, I'm going to stay with my church."

A local parishioner was quoted as saying that "at one time God had wonderfully blessed the Methodist Church and, although they are currently in a condition of apostasy, He can bless them again, so I am going to stick with them." Another woman also echoed these same sentiments about the "Baptists" when she stated, "Once a Baptist, always a Baptist." Ask many people who sit in the pews of a conservative/fundamental church whether it was easy for them to leave their Episcopal or Lutheran churches and accept the Word of God as their belief system "compass." You will find that it was not easy. It was very, very difficult.

One of the reasons for the difficulty lies in the fact that the believer (?) constantly hears such statements as, "My church teaches so and so" or "I don't care what the Bible says, our church believes...." Then what the church believes is stated (and this statement may not be Biblically sound). Those are common expressions, not the exceptions. They are the rule.

There are other groups, for instance, who claim that their church believes in visions and in experiences, in spite of the fact that God's Word plainly declares that His revelation is closed and finished. There are thousands of these groups – well-meaning, sincere, zealous, religious people. There are many denominations practicing these "sign gifts."

In addition, there is a type of insanity (neurosis?) which is also present in "religious" circles. This mind-set is also dangerous. Consider the illustration of one who is afflicted with this religious neurosis. The person hears what he

believes to be a Divine Voice. On the next day, he lavishes affection on his wife and children. But, on the morrow, hearing the imagined voice, he hacks them to pieces with a knife. (This actually happened to a personal friend, an independent pastor who had a mentally ill wife who did that very thing to her family. She slaughtered her children because of the supposed voice of God telling her to do so.) To repeat, there is nothing in the world more dangerous than a religious neurotic who claims to hear voices or to see visions. *The revelation is closed!* (It is in the Word of God!) God has said His last Word! And the man or woman who listens to the voice of the Church, in a very real sense, is just as dangerous!

It is true that a person who is considered a heretic is no longer burnt at the stake (as they did in the Dark Ages). Having said this, they (the church) have recently done this in South America. The great religious system responsible for these atrocities is so set up and so geared that it actually has in its publications statements, "When the liberty comes, the time comes when those who would be considered heretics by this great religious system will also be burned at the stake!" Yes, the intense desire is still there.

Religious fanaticism much like the Germans of World War II is still present in the world. Please also consider the Japanese fanaticism.

There is nothing that makes people so fanatical as religion!

The emotional punishment can be just as keen as that of physical pain. Illustrations are in order for how this wicked system cruelly punishes people. They are told that you have to call in a priest for final unction, thus creating the impression that a Roman Catholic priest is required for an individual in his last moments of life. The eternal state of his soul will be in doubt or lost if a priest is not present to administer last rites. Or when the death of an infant is involved, this "final unction," if not performed, creates the impression that if a little baby dies before being baptized, he or she is lost!

What of the system of the nuns? Please do not get the impression that there is any immorality connected with the nuns. But this vicious system is wicked for allowing a young woman to live her entire life cloistered. Think of the heartache, the weeping from a life of isolation. It is an offense to right thinking and to humanity.

To summarize this study, consider this question: How is a person supposed to know whether he or she is a part of the true church? That is a fair question. For the sake of argument, suppose that a Roman Catholic is reading this article. The question has a "plain" and "simple" answer. The Bible (whether the AV, NIV,

NASB, etc. and, yes, even the Douay Version) provides insight in the matter of what constitutes His church (see I Corinthians 12):

(12) For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ.

(13) For by one spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free: and have been all made to drink into one spirit.

(14) For the body is not one member, but many.

Note in this passage that The Church (see verse 28) is made up of many members. It has one Head. We (the Jews and the Gentiles) are the members, we who have trusted the Lord Jesus as Savior. The Head is The Lord Jesus Christ, the RISEN Lord Jesus Christ, of those who have been redeemed by the Blood of The Lamb, those who are joined to The Lord. It is an all-inclusive thing. It takes anyone in any kind of fellowship, so long as that person has trusted in The Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. But it is also very exclusive. It does not include those who are religious only. Satan delights in labeling all religions as Christian. He mixes opiates in order to give people a feeling of security while they are still abiding under the wrath of God. King Solomon, who asked Jehovah for wisdom, said:

There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death. (Proverbs 14:12)

But what is the right way? Thomas also wanted to know the right way. So one day he asked The Lord Jesus, "How can we know the way?" (John 14:5)

Our Lord answered, "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me." (John 14:6)

It is not religion that man needs, but it is Jesus Christ! It is not a church that is needed. It is the Lord Jesus Christ!

Many people are religious and unsaved. Many more hundreds of thousands are church members and are unsaved. What mankind needs is a Person, and "as many as received Him to them gave He the right to become the sons of God" (John 1:12). Nowhere in Scripture are we advised to listen to the church. It is not the authority for anything. It is not the interpreter of anything. It is not able to

convey or add anything. Do not turn, therefore, to the church. Instead, turn in faith and confidence to the Word of God. *It is the final authority!*

The organized church has become an idol, and whenever anything becomes an idol, it is an enemy. "What?" you say. Yes, that is correct. The church is the enemy of God, for it is made an idol (to replace personal contact with God), and any idol is the enemy of God. Therefore, it becomes the duty of a true minister to expose the falseness of the claims of the church. In the work which God intended that the church should do, it has absolutely and utterly failed. Instead, it has assumed a position of grandeur and power which in itself is a mark of a type of its apostasy. Organized religion is the "golden calf" religion, and has been marked from the very beginning by human sins and human failure.

In the Book of Hebrews there are at least two great things revealed. One is access to God by means of eternal redemption which is found only in Jesus Christ. The other is an exhortation to go forth unto Him "without the camp" (Hebrews 13:13). Perhaps you, the reader, may be called by God, the Holy Spirit, to also go "without the camp" (your organized church) in the light of the Church Myth.

[The following prayer was offered by Pastor Lyman A. Wendt as the benediction during this presentation to the congregation of the Riverside Bible Church, circa 1955.]

Our Loving Father, we know very well that the issues of the message and this material are very critical – are of a very vital nature. Many of us in this assembly today have had these truths presented to us long ago, and many who are here have taken a stand and paid a costly price for their convictions along these lines.

It is quite likely that there are some here today who have heard for the first time. We pray now that the Holy Spirit might graciously minister to them and cause them to become suspicious of man's religion and distrust it, and trust only in the revealed Word of God as found in our Bible. May the Lord Jesus Christ receive all the praise and honor and glory from this assembly and from this preaching today. May only the Lord and His Word have a permanent place in our thinking. May we exalt Him through it and treasure it and memorize it and, by thoroughly investigating it, come to know Jesus Christ as our Savior.

As we have said in closing this message, dear Lord, if there are those to whom Thou hast spoken today about complicity with unbelief or compromise or doing things because they are expedient, rather than because of conviction, we pray that You will help them today to do that which Thou dost want them to do. And may we all be more faithful – may this be a good week. Amen.

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**Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee.
Opening to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day.**

Henry van Dyke (1853-1933)