

"Grace Gospel Church (Calgary) presents,



The Reformer

A Newsletter of Christian Doctrine"



March, 2009

Vol. 5, No. 3

"So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused [them] to understand the reading." (Neh. 8:8)

The Current Crisis in Christian Publishing – Part III

By Pastor James Parker

"So they poured out for the men to eat. And it came to pass, as they were eating of the pottage, that they cried out, and said, O [thou] man of God, [there is] death in the pot. And they could not eat [thereof]."
(2 Kings 4:40)

At Genesis 1:1, we read that, "In the beginning...God created the heaven and the earth". Thus, everything outside of God came (via creation) *from God* (cf. Rom. 11:33-36), including the situation, the people, the food, and the poison referred to above, at 2 Kings 4:40. God's sovereignty also extends to, and includes, the current state of His Church, including the publishers and publications currently poisoning the Church.

Beyond our (admittedly) metaphorical application of 2 Kings 4:40 to the "printed apostasy" of today, a clear example of the sovereign hand of God in these matters is found at Deuteronomy 13, which deals exclusively with God's commands to Israel, regarding false teachers within her borders. Speaking of these, God reveals one purpose for their existence and activities at verse 3, declaring, "...for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul." The ramifications of this scriptural truth will be explored in greater detail later; suffice it to say that even evil acts and situations come ultimately from The LORD for His sovereign purposes, (cf. 1 Sam. 16:14-23; 1 Kings. 22:19-23; Job 42:11; Isa. 45:7; Lam. 3:38; Amos 3:6, Acts 2:22-24), though He never commits evil (Jas. 1:13-16), and is in no way evil Himself (Ps. 107:1).

Regarding the human cause of the current decline in Christian publishing, this reflects the overall decline in the Church itself, traceable (in part) to some definite events and paradigm shifts which occurred over the last couple of centuries. One such "shift" involved the moving away of most Evangelical Protestant churches from the Reformed (i.e. Calvinistic) doctrines of their forefathers and predecessors. As the Reformed/Calvinist emphasis upon the a)

authority and b) sound interpretation of Scripture was abandoned, it could only cause a weakening of the Church, via a drift towards Romanism on the one hand, and Liberalism on the other.

Born of this first shift away from "sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3, 4), came a later movement called 'Neo-evangelicalism' (coined by H. Ockenga in 1948), which, abandoning the scriptural command to separation (cf. Amos 3:3; Rom. 16:17; 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1), attempted to "mainstream" fundamental Christianity and to integrate it within Liberalism via a more relaxed attitude towards biblical inerrancy, ecumenism, "modern science", etc. Men involved with this movement included Ockenga, Donald G. Barnhouse, Vernon C. Grounds, Bernard Ramm, Carl F. Henry, and others. Ockenga (along with Charles Fuller, C. F. Henry and H. Lindsell) founded Fuller Seminary in 1947, with the express purpose of promoting the compromised *modus operandi* of the Neo-evangelicals. Fuller Seminary continues to promote ecumenical poison (including Mormonism) in the Church of God in our day. Other toxic Neo-Evangelical institutions/ organizations include 'Christianity Today' magazine, the 'National Association of Evangelicals' ('N.A.E.'), and the 'B.G.E.A.' ('Billy Graham Evangelistic Association'). Perhaps more than any other individual, Billy Graham has done more to bring together, showcase, and promote the apostate purveyors of poison in our day, via his "ecumenical evangelism" which features full participation of Christ-denying Romanist and Liberal churches at his "Crusades".

Shortly after these things came another event, this time coming from outside the Church. That event was the Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church (1962-65). Other religious groups (including Protestant churches) were invited to attend the Council as "observers". Of significance to the topic at hand, was the shameless wooing of Protestants by the Council, by referring to them no longer as "cursed heretics", but as "separated brethren" by the Council. As many Protestant Churches were already weakened by the previous shifts,

the false overtures of the Roman Church proved too hard to resist for many Evangelicals. To this day, the "separated brethren" argument is falsely utilized by deluded "evangelicals" to prove that the Roman Church has changed. In fact, Vatican II did not remove or replace any of Catholicism's false doctrines, but only added to them.

This "human dimension" of decline and apostasy has two elements: On the one hand are the denominational institutions such as seminaries, mission boards, etc. On the other hand is the individual Christian, who actually holds (in the human sense) the power over these institutions, via his various forms of support. Ignorance, however, breeds not only further ignorance, but an actual disdain for truth, which can be spiritually fatal (Hos. 4:6; cf. Rom. 11:22). This is the state of Christ's Church in our day. Unlike the men of 2 Kings 4:40, however, many "Christians" of today, having become increasingly immune to truth, having put "...light for darkness..." and "...bitter for sweet..." (Isa. 5:20), are prepared to actually dine on the poison put forth via the perverted publishers in the Church of our day!

At 2 Kings 4:39 we read of a poisonous "wild vine" which was "shred" into the "pot", thus spreading the poison throughout (vs. 40). This word picture illustrates the "printed pestilence" of our day, which threatens the very foundations of Christ's Church. Yet, at vs. 41-44 a "prophetic remedy" is provided to counteract the "poison in the pot"; in like fashion, we believe that God is, and has always been willing, to provide a remedy in our day, a sure "antidote" to the poisons currently being spewed forth by these "Christian Publishers" so-called.

Next month we consider scriptural godly solutions to the current crisis in Christian publishing

The Manifest Witness of Jesus Christ – Part II

By Chad Stewart

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen [it], and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship [is] with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

(1 Jn. 1:1-3)

John, in his epistle, states at the outset that there were witnesses that testified to the *realness* of Christ. He says, *“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life”* (1 Jn. 1:1). The apostle is concerned here to give those to whom he writes evidence as to the existence of Jesus Christ. His main intent, however, is not to “prove” Jesus to an unbelieving world, but rather to provide testimony, that by such testimony the believers, *“...joy may be full”* (1 Jn. 1:4). Near the end of his letter he further states that his purpose in writing was that, *“...ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son God”* (1 Jn. 5:13). The issue here is assurance for believers.

Some may attempt to extract from this verse that John is indeed writing to unbelievers because of his statement, *“...that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God”*. This, however, is not the case. The sense of what John is saying is that he wants the saints to have assurance; his statement about them believing is a commendation to them, meant to strengthen the belief they already had, not to give them something that was foreign to them.

How do we know that John was writing to the saints—to those who have already been saved? The answer is simple: At 1 John 2:1, John calls the recipients of his letter *“My little*

children.” He then goes on and calls them brethren at 2:7, and then at 2:12 he states again that he is writing unto “little children” (i.e. a term for believers, cf. Gal. 4:19) because their “sins are forgiven.” He carries on from 2:13-14 talking about “fathers” and “young men” (i.e. those who are strong in the faith), and states that they have known Christ and overcome the “wicked one” (i.e. Satan). He then calls his readers at 2:18 “little children” again. At 2:21 John makes the emphatic statement, *“I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it...”* These abundant evidences should suffice to prove that John is indeed writing to believers in Christ, even though there are many more proofs which could be cited.

The reason we are taking the time to correctly identify the recipients

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of John’s letter is to make sure (at the outset) that we understand the *purpose* for this epistle. Many in the Church today attempt to persuade people to become Christians via the “evidences” they can cite. They attempt to “prove” God. Citing evidence is not wrong in and of itself, but there seems to be a mishandling today of that evidence. We need to understand aright the purpose of such evidence, and in doing so be able to maximize the use for which it was designed.

The primary focus of any evidence for the truthfulness of Scripture should firstly be to strengthen the Christians faith, not to produce faith in an unbeliever. Unfortunately, many have this backwards today. A predominate mode of evangelism today is to “prove” the existence of God or the “historicity of Jesus.” These things are not bad in and of themselves, but the Scriptures state that the Gospel, *“...is the power of God unto salvation...”* (Rom. 1:16). And that, *“...faith [cometh] by hearing, and*

hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Too often we Christians get so caught up in the evidence that we forget to preach the Gospel!

We are not saying that if someone sincerely has a question of Scriptural validity that we should not answer it. We should answer it (1 Pet. 3:15), but always remember that we need to answer clearly and concisely. That way unbelievers can be refocused to see their condition as a sinner before a holy God, and that redemption can only be had in Jesus Christ (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).

John, in his first general epistle, identifies his audience as Christians. As with “all Scripture” (2 Tim. 3:16, 17) being, *“...quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...”* (Heb. 4:12) John’s epistles are indeed timeless and have application for all of the saints throughout the ages, indeed, even down to us. God’s Holy Spirit (communicating through John, 2 Pet. 1:21) knew, with Christians of all ages, would need to grasp assurance, gain instruction, and live a holy life upon this earth for the glory of the One who makes men holy (1 Pet. 1:15, 16).

May we, as frail and feeble people, understand John’s passion in writing to us as we continue to learn what the Spirit of God wants us to grasp from the writings of the “disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jn. 13:23; cf. Jn. 20-24).

Amen.

The Reformer is a monthly Newsletter dedicated to preaching sound Christian doctrine. It is published by Grace Gospel Church (Calgary), 208 30th Ave. NE, Calgary, AB, T2E 2C9. For a free subscription please write to us, or go to www.gracegospelchurch.ca. For information on Reformed theology, please call Pastor James Parker at (403) 398-3596. All Scripture is taken from the King James Version (AV) unless stated otherwise.