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THE REVIEW

My Recent Surgery: A Lesson in Trust

by Dr. Bob Payne, Moderator

As many of you know I had surgery December 15 to replace a defective aortic heart valve. The surgery was successful, and recovery is going well. Because of new medication, I have some challenging times ahead of me, but I know that God will strengthen me and help me. Thank you so much for those of you who called, visited and prayed for me.

Through this experience, God showed me once again that He is sufficient. Both the Word of God and the Spirit of God brought great peace to me during this time of trial.

A passage that brought me great comfort at this time was Is. 30:15: "For thus saith the Lord GOD, the Holy One of Israel; in returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not." God wanted Judah to repent and trust wholly in Him. Instead of finding strength in God by resting in Him with a quiet confidence, Judah fled to Egypt for help. Judah would lean on her own understanding (Prov. 3:5) and foolishly look to the arm of flesh for assistance, while at the same time she would reject the promised help and strength of an omnipotent God

I love Spurgeon's comments on this passage:

It is always weakness to be fretting and worrying, questioning and mistrusting. What can we do if we wear ourselves to skin and bone? Can we gain anything by fearing and fuming? Do we not unfit ourselves for action and unhinge our minds for wise decision? We are sinking by our struggles when we might float by faith. Oh, for grace to be quiet! Why even stay at home to cry out in agony because of wretched forebodings which may never be fulfilled? It would be well to keep a quiet heart. Oh, to be still and know that Jehova is God! Oh, for grace to be confident in God!...

So many times I have gone the way of Judah in my life by frantically searching to solve my problems my own way instead of quietly trusting in God. Facing major surgery has a way of humbling a person and focusing his attention solely on the Lord. My health situation was out of my hands. All I could do was trust in Him to do what was right. I am grateful for God's lesson of trust through this time.



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IBFNA
6889 Belleville Rd
Belleville, MI 48111
(734) 697-7150
www.IBFNA.org

On Enjoying Sin

by Dr. Robert Delnay



“Lord, forgive us for the sins
we love to commit”

(heard in a faculty prayer meeting)

A pastor friend of mine was attending a large Baptist gathering. In the course of it, he met over lunch a pastor of a church of some 700. After they had talked pastoral shop for a while, my friend asked, “Tell me about your quiet time.” There were several moments of silence, then “I don’t have quiet time. When I wake up I hit the floor running, and I’m running all day long. (Another pause, and his eyes began welling up) Maybe that’s why my deacons are so worldly.”

In the church’s recent pursuit of the world, that might not be the only evidence. A pastor told me that after he had preached the evening service, he enjoyed relaxing in front of a movie.

So what is wrong with that? To ask the question is to reveal something of how far the saints have moved in the last generation. The rest of this discussion is, I trust, self-evident; but I do not expect it to be welcome in all quarters.

We believers used to avoid almost all forms of the drama, but barely knowing why. I do not remember a discussion that touched on perhaps the leading reason for that avoidance. What we should have thought of was that, whether comic or tragic, all of it at some point meant being entertained by watching someone sin. So why not enjoy that?

1. **Because it displeases God.** At the end of Romans 1 and Paul’s list of what he saw around him in Corinth, he wrote, “Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them” (Rom. 1:32). Can he have meant being entertained? Could he be dealing with our thought life?

Or later in Romans when he warned, “Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind....” God is concerned about His child’s thought life; and we can hardly believe that He is indifferent, much less approving, when His servant is entertained watching people sin.

“Ye that love the Lord, hate evil” (Ps. 97:10). “Be ye clean, that bear the vessels of the Lord” (Isa. 52:11). Or apply Philipians 4:8-9, where Paul told us what to fill our minds with.

2. **Because it hardens the conscience.** As a notable preacher was once heard to say, “Look at a wrong thing long enough, and it will start to look right.” Get your own anecdotal evidence for the truth of that.

“Fools make a mock at sin” (Prov. 14:9), and yet how many of the saints can laugh about sin? Paul wrote the Corinthians at that point, “And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned...” (I Cor. 5:2). If a person can enjoy watching someone sin, is not that evidence of a coarsened conscience? Is not grief a more fitting response?

Drunks can indeed act oddly, but do we not well to caution ourselves against being amused? Elijah did mock at the prophets of Baal, but we might be careful to claim that he was being entertained by their antics.

At Puritan Cambridge in 1586, one Smyth preached in Great St. Mary’s against Sunday theaters to which many in the town went, especially Puritans. Within six years, they had closed the theaters. John Smyth writing in 1603 seemed to comment on it when he mentioned those who “Make themselves merrie with other men’s sinnes” (Stauffacher’s diss. on John Smyth, 1987, page 89).

3. **Because it opens men to commit sins.** We have always had sin and sinners? True, but when on the scale that we now observe? Evil men and seducers seem to wax worse and worse. What cause can we find for that increase more compelling than the universal pressure from the media?

Where can we look to find any shame at cohabiting? —Perhaps among the believers. Where can we find shame at dishonesty? Except only that lying still bothers the victim. What evil is widely condemned, other than bad officiating in the games?

Suggestion still has power. When a media addict claims that what he watches has no influence on him, how does he persuade the advertisers of that?

I presume that these reflections are mainly for preachers and teachers, and that they describe most of the people we love and serve. Many of their minds are conditioned to take the truth casually; so how can we help them? By preaching against the Tube? Hardly. Our fathers tried that sort of thing about World War II, and what did it accomplish?

It may be that in response to our desperation prayers the Lord will grant deliverance to some. It may be that as we preach Christ and His loveliness, some will turn gratefully to Him and turn away from the world (I John 2:15-16).

Otherwise we are trying to convey the unsearchable riches of Christ to people who prefer the world’s here and now (II Tim. 3:1-5), somewhat like showing flowers to the blind.

The Last Outpost for the Truth, The Church of Jesus Christ

Do we promise to tell the truth; the whole truth and
nothing but the truth, so help us God?

By Dr. Charles L. Dear, Editor

As we mark the transition of government this year, it is difficult to ignore the stretch between campaign rhetoric, politicians' promises and anything resembling truth. The very term has been so dramatically abused over the years that Francis Schaeffer felt it necessary to mark biblical principles as "true truth," because there were so many lies and deceptions pawned off as spiritual truth even decades ago. Today, however, we cross a threshold into a new era very much like the times described in Isaiah 59:13-15: *In transgressing and lying against the LORD, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey...* Surely these things come as a direct result of our nation's departure from the Lord and the Word of God. We are awash with worldliness among our own ranks, and we are reaping the whirlwind of a general population that over the last two generations has been ingrained with relativism, fantasy and the priority of earthly comforts. The majority of our population has now called for a leadership that reflects their desire for those comforts and fantasies, even at the expense of personal liberty, and few care if "truth is fallen in the street." The biblical principles of truth and equity that have made our nation great are grown scarce in our legislatures and court rooms, and a growing number of our people are content to have it so.

That we live in a time and in a place where most people have become alienated from the Word of God or the Person and Work of Jesus Christ is hardly new. Our times reflect the history and the people found throughout Scripture, whether we look at the Old or New Testaments. So then neither should we be surprised when Apostasy and Compromise continue to sweep across the professing Church. Rick Warren comes to mind, especially when he recently commended the selection of the sodomite (and "married?") Episcopalian priest offering an inaugural invocation. One must wonder where Warren would find "common ground" with such a heretic, especially when Episcopal Bishop Robinson makes clear that the God to Whom Warren is praying "...is not the

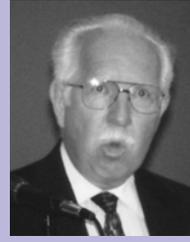
God that I know." The question, however, is how much of this search for common ground has infected our own people and bred compromise in our churches?

There are some in our own congregations, even now, who would sound very much like those described in Isaiah 39:9,10: *That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the law of the LORD which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits and* Jeremiah 5:31: *The prophets prophecy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means; and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?* It remains for the Church of Jesus Christ to make what may well be the last stand for the truth, as revealed by God and written under His inspiration and preserved for us in His Word, the Bible. When the Apostle Paul called "...The church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth," (I Timothy 3:15b), he saw the very same problem in his day and pointed to the tremendous responsibility of the Church to be that one continuous and uncompromised source of God's truth, not to be found anywhere else until Jesus Christ comes again!

Where ministries have adopted both worldly means and cultural trappings in their worship and preaching, they have failed to realize how short a distance it is from "truth fallen in the streets" to trodding "...under foot the Son of God" and counting "...the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace..." (Hebrews 10:29). Those who persist in "doing church differently" continue to ignore the wayside cemeteries that mark the theological wilderness wanderings of the previous generation that experimented with the same things and ended up so terribly far from the truth. It is the height of arrogance to think this generation will fare better.

We must begin by making certain that we are telling the truth of God's Word. That requires the employment of a literal hermeneutic, lest we wax figurative and symbolize ourselves into oblivion and wander far away from the plain truth of the Gospel message. Figurative interpretation of Scriptures has opened the flood gate of human





Recently, I received one of those “fw: fw:” e-mails from a friend. I am certain all reading this (if you are to any degree computer literate) have received one or more of this type. They are sent from contact to contact and generally have some perceived interest or value to the receiver. This one was the story of the writing of the hymn, “Precious Lord, Take My Hand.” The claim of the e-mail was that this song, a favorite of many, was written by the famed big band leader, Tommy Dorsey. The story was both poignant and compelling, designed to capture the interest and imagination of the reader. I was intrigued since I grew up as this era was waning in popularity, but the names of the Dorsey brothers and others were still common. My databank did not include any spiritual side to this famous musician, so I decided to do a fact check.

Searching my several books of hymn stories and histories, I came across “Take My Hand, Precious Lord” in the book, *Stories Behind Popular Songs and Hymns* by Lindsay Terry and found the story that was highlighted in the e-mail. The song **was** written by Thomas A. Dorsey. According to Terry, Dorsey had written more than 300 songs and for more than 50 years was involved in directing choirs, most of the time at Pilgrim Baptist Church in Chicago. These facts did not connect with the trombonist and band leader Tommy Dorsey. More searching, this time on-line, and I found that this story has been floating around the internet since approximately 2000. *Behind Popular Songs and Hymns* by Lindsay Terry and found the story that was highlighted in the e-mail. According to both *snopes.com* and *truthorfiction.com*, the story is basically true, the writer of the song was Tommy Dorsey but a different one, not the famous big band leader. My response? I immediately dispatched an e-mail to the sender informing the person of my findings and suggesting where to go to try to determine the validity of some of what is forwarded around the World Wide Web. My thoughts? I wonder how many song leaders on Sunday are going to read this forwarded e-mail and then sing this precious song. I also thought how, at times, Christians are considered to be “buffoons” because of this type of mindless parroting. Even more consequential, are we guilty of this when it comes to biblical information which carries with it the potential of eternal penalties.

My mind then went to Acts 17, presenting the account of the response of the citizens of Thessalonica and Berea. Thessalonica was a strategic city and would be a certain destination for Paul and Silas to preach the gospel. Berea was also a relatively large town, with a synagogue, approximately 50 miles west of Thessalonica. Paul and Silas preached the message of Christ with some success to the Jews and Greeks of Thessalonica with many believing. As in the towns of Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, this created jealousy in the hearts of the unbelieving Jews who gathered some unruly characters and started rioting in the city. When they were unable to find Paul and Silas at Jason’s house, they dragged Jason and others before the city rulers accusing them of harboring these two men who were preaching sedition against the Caesar. Jason and those with him were required to post bond which *possibly* brought about the necessity of Paul and Silas leaving town. Certainly this ruckus or threat did not deter them from preaching the same message to the Jews in the synagogue of Berea. In fact, we are told that they went directly to the synagogue to preach.

It is then that we find what separated those of Berea from those of Thessalonica. The KJV says the Bereans were “more noble” than the Thessalonians. What is it to be more noble? What was the difference? The passage tells us that Paul of necessity reasoned with those in Thessalonica from the Scriptures. Paul found it essential to explain and convince the hearers regarding the death and resurrection of the Christ. In fact, the Scripture explains that some were “persuaded” and then joined Paul and Silas. The indication at Berea is that they received the word with eagerness, almost if they were predisposed to hear and believe the message of the Christ. Their mind was ready to receive the word and they were willing to hear it. Could it be that the next phrase gives us the answer for this? Certainly we would understand from this passage that they did not blindly trust the messenger. As Paul preached to them you can hear the pages turning as they checked the center reference column of their scroll and determined the truth of the teaching of Paul comparing passage with passage.

(Continue on page 7)

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The Last Outpost For Truth (Continued from page 2)

imagination to offer us all kinds of things, including the new perspectives of Paul, the emerging church and ecumenicism. It has also robbed the Word of God of its absolute and final authority, such that we now live in a time when the all-pleasing charm of diversity has struck a blow against Christianity in the hearts of the American people. As George Barna is quoted from his recent survey:

Americans are increasingly very accepting of a diverse array of faiths... They're less likely to think that Christianity is right or accurate in what it teaches... people are deriving their biblical literacy and their views of spirituality from conversations that they might have with friends, and they give that equal weight to things they might get in church or from some other religious settings... They'll get their faith views from their own personal reflections as well as from their personal experiences and observations.

Secondly, we are obliged to tell "the whole truth." Paul's testimony was clear, "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you... For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." (Acts 20:20b, 27). The problem with today's compromisers is as much what they *don't* say as it is what they *do* say. Sins of omission are no less egregious than sins of commission and pulling our punches from the pulpit, lest we offend some of the wealthy and powerful. Over the last century and up to the present, more men in the pulpit have sounded like lawyers and politicians, carefully parsing their words and selectively addressing the issues, lest they lose the support of their constituencies and their positions of power. They have purposely left gaps in their preaching and teaching so that everyone can walk away feeling good, regardless of their doctrinal persuasions, having filled in the gaps from their own perspective and, thereby, finding nothing said offensive. It is exactly the same kind of deception the Apostle Paul was accused of practicing, which he vehemently denied, in his own ministry and strenuously warned against to Timothy. The term "all the counsel of God..." (Acts 20:27) is not subject to any figurative interpretation. Neither should we preach or teach with our fingers to the prevailing winds of our congregations. Our people need the whole counsel of God. To pick and choose, in order to please men rather than God, is a disservice to God and a failure to "feed the flock of God" (I Peter 5:2).

Lastly, it is incumbent that we give "nothing but the truth." Perhaps we should consider here the final warnings of Scripture found in Revelation 22:18-19: *For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.* First written in Deuteronomy 4:2, God has jealously guarded the fact that it is His Word that is truth, in contrast to the words of men, as Jesus Himself made eminently clear as He prayed to the Father, "Sanctify them through thy truth: *thy word is truth.*" (John 17:17) Since the Garden of Eden, it has been the temptation of man to add our thoughts, our words to what God has actually said. What we have failed to admit to ourselves, however, is that Scripture is replete with examples of how such additions became substitutions all too quickly. For example, consider Jesus in Matthew 15:9 "But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men." Or Paul, in Colossians 2:8 "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ."

Ours is the task of proclaiming truth to a world steeped in illusion, fantasy and overwhelming deception. We would do well to understand, however, that the only reason the sheep follow such hirelings and enemies of their souls is because they have not yet learned to recognize the voice of the Shepherd. It falls to us and the ministries of our churches to introduce them to the Good Shepherd, to teach them His Word and show them from the Scriptures how to follow Him.

Perspectives

by Dr. Ralph Colas



The liberal, left-wing National Council of Churches proudly announced that President-Elect Obama had invited the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins to preach at the National Prayer Service in the National Cathedral on January 21, 2009. Watkins is General Minister and President of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) and an active member of the National Council of Churches Governing Board.

"The President-Elect has chosen a preacher with exceptional skill and theological insight," said the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary of the NCC, also a Disciples minister. "She speaks out of a deep personal faith commitment and with profound respect for the views of others, which is the historic stance of the Disciples of Christ Church. I am sure she will sound just the right note to bring people of faith together at this crucial moment in history."

Attendance at the National Prayer Service would include President Obama and Vice President Biden, high ranking members of the legislative and judicial branches of government, as well as clergy and laypersons from a wide range of communions and traditions. Watkins is the first woman selected to preach at this service.

As General Minister, Watkins is general pastor of the 700,000-member Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She is responsible "for representing the wholeness of the church, for reconciling differences and for helping the church retain its clarity of mission and identity."

She is the chief executive officer for that denomination and is serving a six-year term that extends through the 2011 General Assembly. She also is regarded as "head of communion" and as the chief representative of the church in national and world ecumenical councils.

Dr. Watkins is a member of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches (WCC) based in Geneva, and serves on its Permanent Committee for Consensus and Collaboration. She also serves on the National Council of Church's (NCC) governing board based in New York City.

She has been a pastor of the Disciples Christian Church in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, for eight years and was Director of Student Services at Phillips

Theological Seminary in Oklahoma. Two other churches she served as pastor were located in Boone Grove, Indiana, and Hamden, Connecticut. Watkins holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from Phillips Theological Seminary, a Master of Divinity from Yale Divinity School and a Bachelor's Degree from Butler University. In 2007, she was awarded an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Phillips Theological Seminary.

The 9th Assembly of the World Council of Churches was held in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in February 2006. With press credentials, this writer covered that major ecumenical meeting held on the campus of the Roman Catholic University. One of the most publicized incidents took place when three leaders of the USA/WCC held a special press conference at which they issued a formal apology to the WCC Assembly on behalf of the churches they represented. With a great show, these liberals from the USA, including the **Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins**, had the audacity to ask the WCC for forgiveness because of the USA's actions.

The shameful two-page letter acknowledged that "we are citizens of a nation that has done much in years to endanger the human family and to abuse the creation. Our country responded to the terrorist attacks by raining down terror on the truly vulnerable among our global neighbors. Our leaders entered into imperial projects that seek to dominate and control for our own national interests."

It continued, "**We lament with special anguish the war in Iraq, launched in deception and violating global norms of justice and human rights.** We acknowledge with shame that we in the USA failed to raise a prophetic voice loud enough and persistent enough to deter our leaders from the path of preemptive war. Lord have mercy."

These few religious zealots, including Dr. Sharon Watkins, declared that not only was the USA guilty of "**raining down terror**" but our nation also "violated our rivers, oceans, lakes, rainforests and wetlands that sustain us, even the air we breathe because global warming goes unchecked while we allow God's creation to veer toward destruction. The USA has a culture of consumption that diminishes the earth. Christ, have mercy."

We must be assured that those of Berea were reading the context of Paul's Old Testament references and considering every aspect of the truth he was explaining to them. Those of Berea were evidently Scripture searchers. Thus the character of those at Berea is recorded for us in the record as a people that would examine the veracity even of Paul, one who came to them with a steadfast reputation.

The application is somewhat obvious. We live in a time and a nation where information is readily available. We can receive information from the internet, radio, television and literature. The information at times comes fast-and-furious. It seems we have little time to scrutinize and determine its veracity. Some sources are obviously deceptive in nature, some not so clearly defined. Some information might come from sources that from all appearances are completely reliable, yet closer scrutiny might reveal flaws. How would that "great Bible teacher" stand before the Bereans? Would that piece of literature be confirmed by the test of the Bereans? Or closer to home, our pastor would *never* lead us astray! We carry an incredible responsibility. If the Lord should tarry, we must accurately pass the truth on to the next generation so they may pass it on to the next generation, etc. If we have hope that our Biblical position is carried forth, there is only one way. As the Bereans searched the Scriptures daily, we must do the same. We must not pass on unchecked and flawed information. The searching of Scripture must be a daily task. They entered the synagogue prepared by a daily review of the truth of God's Word.

Perspectives (Continued from page 6)

The third part of the apology letter from the USA leaders to the WCC dealt with poverty and racism. "In the face of the earth's poverty, our wealth condemns us. Lord, have mercy."

Immediately, a member of the accredited press directed a question to these three NCC/WCC leaders by asking if the 34 church bodies they claimed to represent had approved this letter that declared the USA as a dangerous nation. Forced to admit their church bodies had not approved this letter of apology, but they believed that most of those in the 34 denominations would approve it.

The press conference concluded by the liberal clergy saying it was their responsibility to "**speak a prophetic and pastoral word as we believe God is offering it to us.**"

Now the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins is the one asked by the President-Elect Obama to bring the major message at this event in the National Cathedral.

Two important matters should be underlined by Bible believers about this: (1) While Dr. Watkins has served as the Senior Pastor in several Disciples of Christ Churches, she fails to meet the Biblical standard that a pastor must be "**the husband of one wife**" (1 Timothy 3:2). (2) The denomination she leads drew its major inspiration from Thomas and Alexander Campbell.

That means they hold to Baptismal Regeneration which makes baptism as a part of salvation. No Fundamental Baptist church can accept someone into their church family who was baptized in a group that taught baptism was the process into the family of God. Regeneration which makes baptism as a part of salvation. No Fundamental Baptist church can accept someone into their church family who was baptized in a group that taught baptism was the process into the family of God.

More than 50 years ago this writer was employed as a part-time school bus driver in Kansas City, Kansas. Public funds were used to take students to their church for religious instruction one afternoon a week. My bus was used to take boys and girls to the Disciples of Christ church. Sitting at the back of the church, the bus driver could listen but not speak. One afternoon the minister of that Disciples of Christ church told the students as he pointed to the baptistry, "**Boys and girls that is the place where your sins are washed away!**" That is heresy! Yet Dr. Sharon Watkins is the General Minister of the same denomination. She is also a vigorous promoter of the Ecumenical Movement as it is demonstrated in both the National and World Council of Churches. That same denomination continues official theological conversations with both the Roman Catholic Church and the Russian Orthodox Church.

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