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THE REVIEW

The Pitfall of Intellectual Arrogance

by Dr. Bob Payne, Moderator IBFNA

In my Moderator's column in the August 2010 issue of *The Review*, I wrote that one of the main characteristics of the Reformed Theology that has reared its ugly head within professing fundamentalism is "An arrogant 'cerebral' approach to the scriptures (with a resulting attitude of 'We are smarter than you are!'). Human reasoning takes precedence over biblical teaching; philosophy supersedes the text."

As professing fundamentalists have continued to give themselves over further and further to the Reformed hermeneutic this "'cerebral' approach" to the text, along with its resulting intellectual arrogance, has become more and more obvious. One needs only to spend a few minutes perusing the blogs to see the constant bickering over human philosophy and the contemptuous belittling of others who do not agree with the Reformed person's "enlightened" approach to the text.

We Are Better Than They Were!

Those who are given over to the Reformed hermeneutic view the history of fundamentalism through a tainted lens of pride. Although every movement has those in it with wrong attitudes who act in ungodly ways, many of those following the Reformed crowd view early fundamentalists as "uneducated simpletons" out for their own self-aggrandizement. All early fundamentalists are lumped together as a bunch of men who were combative and unloving, and their "militant"¹ stand for the Word of God and biblical separation as overbearing and hateful. This "kinder and gentler" fundamentalism embraces the kind of compromisers that early fundamentalism rejected and, ironically, *despises* with pompous and venomous words those who desire to stand militantly for biblical truth.

Arrogance by "Degree"

To those embracing the Reformed approach, education has also become a major source of pride. Please do not misunderstand. I am not anti-education. In fact, I am involved in teaching in a masters degree program overseas. The problem with these individuals is not so much the education but the attitude. Only those attaining to the level of education of these men and at the institutions of which they approve are worthy of any serious consideration. In their opinion an uneducated man is well nigh worthless to the cause of Christ. Moreover, a degree from a Reformed institution is considered a badge of intellectual honor.

I wonder how a great man of God such as Harry A. Ironside would be viewed by the Reformed crowd if he were preaching today? Although he was a godly man and tremendous Bible teacher who pastored Moody Church from 1930 to 1948, he only had an eighth-grade education. This self-taught, humble servant of God's commentaries are still enjoyed today by those who appreciate a literal interpretation of the text.

I Don't Know

The Reformed group seems to have a very difficult time with the words "I don't know." To them, most of the great mysteries of theology have a rational explanation. There are few mysteries when it comes to subjects such as the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. A doctrinal idea must be true, not so much because the biblical text



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says so, but because “it only makes sense.” I am not suggesting that students of the Bible “park their minds in neutral” when studying the Word of God but that the biblical text should *always* trump man’s reasoning, even if we cannot fully comprehend all that the text implies.

Caution!

Perhaps you are thinking that this article is a bit like the person who wrote the book, *Humility and How I Attained It*. It is not my intent to set myself up as “Mr. Humility.” God, my wife, and I all know that I struggle with pride. These cautions are not just for the reader but for me as well. As we deal with those with whom we disagree, we need to keep a few things in mind:

- ◆ We should never be tempted to use philosophical argumentation. Just because those with whom we interact use those types of arguments does not mean that we should in return. We need to point to sound doctrine from the text. Allow the Bible to speak for itself.
- ◆ We need to be gracious and humble with those with whom we disagree. We should not return “evil for evil, or railing for railing; but contrariwise blessing.” We need to have an attitude of

godly humility but not back down from what the Word of God clearly teaches. The goal of any exchange must be the glory of God.

- ◆ We need to keep 1 Corinthians 1:23-29 in mind. It will keep us both humble and encouraged as we seek to stand up for Christ in this difficult time.

(Footnotes)

¹ Dr. George Houghton does an excellent job describing biblical “militancy” in his May 1994 *Faith Pulpit* article, entitled, “The Matter of Militancy.” Dr. Houghton writes, “Some, no doubt, shy away from militancy because it can easily be abused. Militancy, however, is not the same as meanspiritedness. It does not have to arise from poor motives or the desire for personal power. It does not need to be imbalanced, where ‘issues’ become one’s hobby horse. Nor does it imply a lack of ethics - rushing into print without checking the facts, false labeling, or guilt by association. If some may be guilty of these abuses, the corrective is not an abandonment of militancy, but, rather, an ethical, careful, kind and yet firm outspokenness which stands for the truth and is willing to defend it against error. May God help us to be militant fundamentalists!”

How Long Will They Last?

A Biblical Consideration of the Cessation of the Sign Gifts in the Church

by Pastor Gary Freel



One of the most troubling trends today is the acceptance in many quarters of the church of the continuation of the first century “sign-gifts” (i.e., those miraculous gifts such as tongues, miracles, healings, etc., given by Christ to the early church for the purpose of communicating His Word and authenticating His message and work through the church, a “new man” formed by believing Jews and Gentiles). A number of ministries teach or are open to the possibility that the sign-gifts performed by the Lord and the apostles, authenticating their ministries and claims, are still to be found in the church today. In other words, they believe that part of the normal Christian life is that the believer may be able to speak in tongues, to prophesy or to have the gift of healing or the gift of divinely bestowed knowledge and understanding (I Cor. 13:8-11). Others, while they may not believe the miraculous sign-gifts have continued, are willing to cooperate with, and even promote those who do. A recent example

of his is the Pre-Trib Study Group’s invitation to have as their banquet speaker Chuck Smith of the Calvary Chapel. What is being passed off today as the miraculous sign-gifts is simply one of the biggest deceptions to come along in all of church history. It is sad to witness countless numbers of people being manipulated and controlled to perform some of the most ridiculous and in some cases downright blasphemous actions imaginable, under the guise that “the Lord is leading us.”

At the outset, let us be clear that we certainly believe the miracles in the Bible happened just as they are described. The universe was created out of nothing (Gen. 1:1; Heb. 11:3). Moses led Israel across the Red Sea “upon the dry ground” (Ex. 14:22). Elisha recovered the axe head when “the iron did swim” (2 Kgs. 6:5-7). The Lord Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary (Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1; Lk 1-2) and performed many miracles during the “days of His flesh” (Heb. 5:7 cf. 2:3-4), healing the sick, restoring sight to the blind and even raising the dead (Lk. 7:11-17; Jn 21:25). Of course, the greatest of His miracles was His own resurrection on the third day after His crucifixion.

Further, we believe that the future age of earth’s history will see a renewal of this miracle working on the part of God and His servants (Joel 2:28-31 cf. Heb. 6:5). Joel’s prophecy will be fulfilled literally at the time

designated by Joel the Prophet, and not a moment before, at the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

What are the possible motives of proponents who claim the miraculous sign-gifts are for today? First, some desire to “experience God”—by the tangible demonstration of His help in times of need and distress. Second, some believe sign-gifts serve as a witness to others of God’s graciousness and goodness by fulfilling their need to “experience” something; in a doubting world, sign-gifts might be the one thing that turns the skeptic from doubt to faith in Christ. Third, most simply misunderstand and misapply Scripture. We do not discount that many professing believers are going through or have endured some difficult, stressful and heart-wrenching trials and situations. Their need to truly know God is real and their desire to experience God is understandable but misplaced. Seeking an experience only serves to intensify the problem because the “experience” diverts one’s focus onto the experience itself or on oneself rather than where attention needs to remain: the Word of God and the steadfast promises found therein.

The belief that the sign-gifts continue into the present era of the church age is actually an assault on the Word of God. What proponents are insinuating is that the Bible alone is inadequate to meet the true needs of humanity, namely salvation and sanctification from sin (2 Tim. 3:15-17). The sufficiency of Scripture for the believer is also undermined (2 Pet. 1:3). The ultimate result is an assault on the authority of Scripture when pseudo-prophecies, pseudo-tongues and pseudo-words of knowledge contradict the revealed Word. The modern charismatic and signs-and-wonders movements have had a debilitating impact on the church and Christians in general, even causing some to abandon solid fundamentalist churches and ministries.

As we begin our study, it is important to define certain terms. First, what is a **miracle**? “A miracle has been defined as ‘an effect in nature not attributable to any of the recognized operations of nature, nor to the act of man, but indicative of superhuman power, and serving as a sign or witness thereof; a wonderful work manifesting a power superior to the ordinary forces of nature’” (Charles Woodbridge and Harold Lindsell, *A Handbook of Christian Truth*, p. 149). A miracle takes place when supernatural power is utilized, when normal, natural laws are suspended or altered. It is something contrary to the observed laws of nature. Some of the biblical miracles include the events of Jesus walking on the water (Mk. 6:48), turning water to wine (Jn. 2) and raising Lazarus from the dead (Jn. 11) and Paul in Lystra healing the crippled man (Acts 14:8-11). Other terms to know include:

1. **Continuationist**—One who believes some or all of the gifts of the Spirit, specifically the miraculous sign-gifts found listed in 1 Corinthians 12-14, are in existence today, available to the church to be utilized in ministry either by a select, gifted few or by nearly everyone in the church.

2. **Cessationist**—One who believes only some of the gifts of the Spirit (specifically those for service) found listed in 1 Corinthians 12-14 presently exist to be utilized by the church today. However, none of the miraculous sign-gifts are for the church today; they ceased operation with the passing of the apostles in the first century.

3. **Tongues**—“The gift of tongues is the power of speaking supernaturally in a language never learned by the speaker, that language being made intelligible to the listeners by means of the equally supernatural gift of interpretation” (Myer Pearlman, *Knowing the Doctrines of the Bible*, P. 326). In other words, the gift of tongues is simply the ability to communicate in a foreign language the speaker has never previously learned or known. God enabled believers in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost to communicate His message to the many thousands of foreign travelers who happened to be in the city on that particular day (Acts 2). It is not gibberish, or some “heavenly language,” to be used by the speaker to build up self or to “prove” he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

4. **Prophecy** is defined by one Pentecostal as “a gift that is inspired by God through the Holy Spirit; granted to individuals for purposes of edification, exhortation, and comfort; and intended to communicate the mind of God” (C.M. Robeck, Jr., *Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, p. 738). Richard Gaffin, a cessationist, defines it similarly as “a revelatory gift that is, it brings to the church the words of God in the primary and original sense. Prophecy is not, at least primarily or as one of its necessary marks, the interpretation of an already existing inspired text or oral tradition but is itself the inspired, nonderivative word of God” (*Perspectives on Pentecost*, p. 59). Prophecy served to reveal the mind and will of God.

5. **Knowledge**—Based on 1 Corinthians 12:8, the gift of knowledge, it would seem, is something beyond ordinary knowledge. It is something divinely bestowed on individuals along with prophecy and tongues. In other words, it is a revelational gift (i.e., like tongues, the one who receives this gift is receiving personal revelation from God).

6. **Apostle**—Literally, the word means a “sent one”—an emissary, an ambassador, one having the power and authority to act on behalf of the one who sent him to accomplish the task. This is a critically important office to understand. Three requirements that qualified one as an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ are as follows: first, the man had to have seen Christ and been an eyewitness to His bodily resurrection from the dead (Acts 1:22; 1 Cor. 9:1; 15:3-9); second, he had to have been called to the apostolic ministry either by Christ Himself or by the Holy Spirit (Matt. 10:1-4); finally, he was invested with the miraculous sign-gifts, possessing the ability to work miracles (Acts 5:15-16; Heb. 2:3-4) (*Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 1433). Based on these criteria, no one today could possibly be eligible to be an apostle as no one today has any of these three qualifications, let alone the third one

which requires miracles to be an integral aspect of the apostolic office. In fact, 2 Corinthians 12:12 states that miracles were the “signs of an apostle,” not signs of a Christian or signs of a pastor or signs of an elder or signs of an evangelist. Paul specifically says they belonged, uniquely, to the apostles.

Don't All Believers Agree?

What has caused this debate regarding sign-gifts to emerge? First, well-respected men are redefining sign-gifts, explaining them in terms that seem more palatable and thus making the practices more plausible than in previous decades. Second, these respected leaders often give biblical texts new interpretations and applications. For example, Wayne Grudem, a continuationist, recategorizes the terms *prophets* and *prophecy* in terms of “fallible” and “infallible” and has challenged the aforementioned definition of prophecy in his books *The Gift of Prophecy* and *Systematic Theology*. In both these works he explains Ephesians 2:20 and Paul’s use of the designation “apostles and prophets” as “apostles who are prophets” from just “prophets.” Thus, he distinguishes between those who give infallible prophecy (apostolic prophets) from those who are permitted to give fallible prophecy (other prophets).

Grudem uses Acts 21:11 to illustrate the possibility of a fallible prophet, Agabus, claiming that Agabus was “mistaken” in terms of who it was that would bind Paul and hand him over to the Gentiles. Actually, the Gentiles take Paul by force from the Jews; therefore, according to Grudem, this proves the possibility of “fallible prophecy.” However, two critically important points refute this teaching. First, carefully note Agabus’ own claim as to the source of his prophecy when he states, “Thus saith the Holy Ghost....” Clearly, this indicates divine revelation on the matter, not just a man’s opinion about what might take place. However, Grudem has an answer for this. He claims that because Agabus did not use the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord....,” it means this cannot be divine revelation of the same authority given by apostolic prophets. His explanation is neither convincing nor adequate. The fact is, Agabus’ statement is a way to express divine authority and should be regarded as such. Second, according to Acts 28:17, Paul’s own testimony of this event, it is precisely the actions of the Jews that led the Gentiles to imprison the apostle, confirming that this was indeed a message given by the Holy Spirit to Agabus in Acts 21:11. Thus, Agabus’ prophecy was not in error. He did not make a mistake.

Reasons for Adhering to the Belief in Cessationism

1. The Duration of the Apostles’ Ministries: An important indication that the miraculous sign-gifts have passed from the scene today is that the ministries of the apostles and prophets were foundational in nature. Ephesians 2:20 uses the imagery of a temple, with the apostles and New Testament prophets serving as the

foundation. Once the foundation has been laid down, the work is to continue on the superstructure. The foundation is steadfast, secure and stable. The apostles and prophets have completed their ministry. Their work is now done, and there is no need for their work to be continued by anyone else. As we are well into the twenty-first century, it is clear that the church is now far beyond the foundational state of building. We are into the superstructure and growing.

We also note that even in the ministry of Paul, the access to miraculous “signs and wonders” was something that apparently faded in his own ministry. By the time he penned the first epistle to Timothy, the ability to heal had possibly ceased (1 Tim. 5:23). Otherwise, why instruct his beloved son in the faith to use wine for medicinal purposes when he knew they would see each other again? Why did he not instruct Timothy to simply be patient and wait for their meeting so that Paul could lay hands on him and heal him? The sign-gifts were beginning to pass from the scene as they were no longer necessary.

2. The Nature of the Prophets’ Ministries: Both the Old and New Testaments repeatedly use terms and phrases that identified the prophets and their messages as being directly from the Lord, indicating a continuity from the Old Testament prophets to those in the New Testament. Two Old Testament texts spell out the requirements of the prophets and the steps God’s people were to take when a prophet promoted idolatry or even spoke presumptuously, that is, using himself as the source rather than the Lord (Deut. 13:1-13; 18:20-22). Sometimes the false prophet’s message could even be demonic in nature (1 Kgs. 22:20-22; 2 Chron. 18:19-22).

The messages preached by both the Old and New Testament prophets had the same requirements and stipulations. For example, the Old Testament required that a prophecy had to “come to pass”; if it did not, the speaker was a false prophet and was to be executed. Not even the smallest detail could be ignored in terms of the prophecy being fulfilled. Nothing in the New Testament indicates any change in these requirements for the first-century prophets. The divine standards for prophecy remained unaltered.

Why should those in the first century listen to the New Testament prophets regarding their claims about Christ crucified, raised and coming again? Because they were proclaiming the truth, God’s message. How would people know they spoke the truth? By the miracles they were performing. This is one reason why it is absolutely nonsensical for Grudem and others to promote the idea of “fallible prophets.” To claim that anything a New Testament prophet prophesied could possibly be in error would instantly repudiate his message and mission.

Some might object and say that the New Testament does not deal with requirements for prophetic offices in so strict a manner as does the Old Testament, so it is possible that it would be less stringent in its

expectations. However, the Lord and His apostles warned believers to beware of false prophets, to watch as irrelevant but to refute them (Matt. 7:15; 24:24; 2 Pet. 2:1; 1 Jn. 4:1). What standard did the hearers/readers possess in order to identify false prophets? The standard that was already established in the Old Testament Scriptures—no error was allowed! Even today, God has given us all that is necessary to combat false teaching and false teachers. We possess the complete canon of Scripture and we must use it to contend for the truth and against those who like the false prophets of old, are propagating the error that God is speaking to us through sign-gifts in addition to His finished Word.

3. Two Clearly Stated Texts of Scripture: The case for the cessation of the miraculous sign-gifts is more than adequately established in Scripture as well as church history. Certainly other passages can be referenced but we will limit our study to just the following two texts of Scripture:

First Corinthians 13:8-13—Much discussion exists surrounding this particular text, both from continuationists as well as cessationists. It is important to understand that these six verses are part of a larger context pertaining specifically to the issue of spiritual gifts (1 Cor. 12-14). First Corinthians 13 delineates the role that “love” must have in the exercise of these gifts. Verses 1-3 teach that when spiritual gifts are exercised, love must be the controlling motivation. Verses 4-7 describe both the nature and character of this love. Finally, verses 8-13 provide the detail of this love’s permanence in contrast to the gifts of prophecy, knowledge and tongues which will “fail,” “vanish away” and “cease” (v. 8). Why are these three sign-gifts singled out? What do they have in common? Aside from the fact that each is miraculous, these gifts are all revelational in character.

To what does “that which is perfect” refer (1 Cor. 13:10)? A number of interpretations exist. Some believe it speaks of the matured church at the end of the apostolic era, while others view it as a reference to one or more end-time, prophetic events. Some interpret this phrase as a reference to the death of the believer, and others see it as the completion of the canon of Scripture. This final view has fallen into disfavor with many interpreters. This rejection is expected from those who teach continuationism, but it has even fallen out of favor with some within the cessationist camp as well. However, several aspects support it as being the correct understanding. First, 1 Corinthians 13:9-10 makes a contrast, not in terms of *quality* but *quantity*: “in part” verses “perfect.” Second, the word translated perfect means “having attained the end or purpose, complete, perfect.” Third, even the continuationist Gordon Fee admits Paul’s contrasts deal with the partial nature of the gifts and not the immaturity of believers (*God’s Empowering Presence*, pp. 207-208). Fourth, the question remains: Is it possible to discover the quality of

the partial gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge)? Yes, it is; they revealed God’s will and Word. Since this is true, then “that which is perfect” must also be “revelational” in nature. “Thus, when the completed revelation has come, the gifts that communicated partial revelation will be done away, for they are no longer necessary” (Myron J. Houghton, *A Re-examination of 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and Temporary Gifts*, P. 7).

Hebrews 2:3-4—An important term is found in the last phrase of verse 3: “and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him.” The verb “was confirmed” is a technical term meaning the subject is “firm, reliable, steadfast, dependable.” In other words, it is something “made firm.” It is a legal term indicating stability and security. What was in need of such an important confirmation? In the context, the author writes of the “so great salvation” (v. 3), which was first “spoken” by the Lord and then “was confirmed unto us” (the human author includes himself in this category)—to the next generation—“by them that heard Him.” What was the confirmation offered by those who heard the Lord? The author explains this in the next verse: the message was confirmed “with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost.” These “signs and wonders” were miracles designed to forcefully authenticate what was being preached. The author explains that only a select few actually had these sign-gifts, and they were given for a specific reason, namely, to confirm the message Christ proclaimed: salvation from sin through Him Alone. Only one generation had the ability to perform the miracles—those who “heard Him.” Sign-gifts ceased functioning because they were no longer necessary. Now, the message of “so great salvation” is based on the authority of the Word of God, not on human experiences.

Conclusion

What about today? The miraculous sign-gifts that accompanied the apostles are not happening today and are no longer supposed to happen as all such gifts ceased in the first century during the apostles’ ministries. The case for this position has been made, adequately and biblically, throughout church history and particularly in the twentieth century. Books, magazines and journal articles have documented the biblical case that the miraculous sign-gifts ceased functioning in the first century. The modern charismatic movement, with its insistence on the continuance of divine revelation through tongues, prophecy, work of knowledge, etc., remains one of the most serious strongholds of error in the church in the twenty-first century. God’s people must continually refute and reject its false doctrines if they are to follow Him in accord with His precious, infallible, inerrant, God-breathed revelation. The Charismatic Movement must be withstood lovingly, graciously, firmly and biblically. The Bible alone is the only revelation He has given us today. Christian friend, stand firm on this.

Martin and Deidre Bobgan



The following is an interview with Martin and Deidre Bobgan, who were gracious enough to share their expertise in Biblical counseling through Psychoheresy Awareness Ministries in Santa Barbara, CA (www.psychoheresy-aware.org); and we are grateful for their participation. Thanks also to Mrs. Donna Dear for transcribing and organizing the interview for publication. - Editor

Editor: I want to begin with an introduction. Perhaps, if you could just give us briefly how you arrived at your present ministry.

M. Bobgan: We have six college degrees between the two of us, including doctorate, all earned prior to our salvation. After we were saved, I, half-jokingly, say that I was a Trinitarian prior to my salvation. Trinitarian means, "I believed in the usual as a university student: Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud and Charles Darwin." I think that's the danger of kids going to universities, but I was there. After salvation, with my background, I started questioning things. I was questioning with Deidre, talking back and forth; and right on the heels of salvation, we said wait a minute now. This confidence that we had (because my doctorate is in Educational Psychology, and I took a number of classes in Psychology from some of the well-known authors, and so on) we questioned immediately because in that salvation what we found was sufficiency in the Word of God for the issues of life. That has been a constant, repetitive, ongoing theme from the very beginning. As we discussed it, because we come out of an academic background, doing master's theses, doctoral dissertations, and so on, what we did was we started writing for Bethany House. Following that, we wrote for Moody Press, then Harvest House. Then, because at that point, what we called psychoheresy was so imbedded in the church and in the Christian publishing companies that we formed our own company. We started publishing our own book, "Psychoheresy," because nobody wanted it. Later, we decided to start our ministry, "Psychoheresy Awareness Ministries."

Editor: How did the term "psychoheresy" become coined?

M. Bobgan: Well, we did this manuscript and were discussing it with a friend, and we first titled it "Psychoquackery" because of the scientific literature that would discredit this psychotherapy. Our friend said, "You want to have a title that has something to do with the church." We thought a little bit more; and, as we thought about it, we said it really is psychoheresy. The reason is (and this is the basis of a lot of our writings) that it is a denial of the sufficiency of Scripture for the issues of life that are normally treated with psychological counseling. Instead of utilizing the very wisdom of men about which God has warned his people, we need to invest our total effort in the Word and all it has to offer to deal with the issues of life. That's the basis and a repetitive theme in our work.

Editor: For how many years?

M. Bobgan: We wrote our first book for Bethany House in the late 70s, and then we wrote "Psychoheresy" in the late 80s. Since then, we have a total of 20 books that we have co-authored.

D. Bobgan: Actually a number of years before we started writing, we were discussing these issues with Christians. We couldn't figure out why these Christians were placing their confidence in the psychological wisdom of men regarding issues of life rather than in the Word of God. So there was a period of time when we were discussing these things with the Christians. I remember one person, actually from Westmont College, who said, "Oh just settle down. After you've been a Christian for awhile, you'll see how this all works together." Well, the more we walked with the Lord the more we saw that it didn't work together. You can syncretize anything you want if you diminish the fullness of one.

Editor: Deidre, if I can take that a little bit further, when you say that you spoke to Christians, were they just church members or were you talking to pastors and other kinds of leaders?

D. Bobgan: These were church leaders of one sort or another. Later, after we started writing, we had more opportunities to speak with ministers. I remember one talk that Martin gave to a group of very fundamental ministers. We thought that this group would be very positive with what we said. As I listened to Martin present this, I thought he gave a really perfect presentation that was so clear. During it, I was focused on Martin; but afterward, you could tell these men didn't like it. They probably had already invested themselves into Psychology. We found out later on that for years in the seminaries and churches, pastors had been hoping that Science would bring forth something that would be helpful to their ministry to people where they had not been successful. Also, the ministers associations of various communities were meeting together with psychologists hoping that they would learn something that they could use. Instead what they learned was that they couldn't do it, and they needed to refer to professional psychological counselors. So the work of the Holy Spirit was totally undermined in these meetings. From that point on, more and more pastors just moved over to that place of referring out. In fact, one person, recently, that we were speaking with said, "Well, you know, I send them to this woman." It was a woman rather than a man. This is a spiritual issue really when we have problems with relationships, problems with our thinking

and emotions of a psychological nature that would actually be of a spiritual nature. In other words, what is identified as psychological is really spiritual. If someone is having an emotional problem, they say it's psychological. We say if they're having an emotional problem, it's spiritual unless there is some biological underpinning. So, these people were "psychologizing" different people in churches. If they sent them to a psychiatrist, they might get medication at the same time. Basically, what they were doing was talk therapy. If you're going to talk about your problems, your life and your emotions, it should be biblical talk. This one man said he sent them to the woman because they would listen to her and do what she said because they had to pay for it; whereas, if he told them something, they wouldn't listen because they weren't paying for it.

Editor: If you were to reflect back from at least the mid 80s to the present time, is there a trend or a pattern that you can identify of how we have come from where we should have been all along to where things are presently?

M. Bobgan: If you go back pre-World War II, we have psychoanalysis. We don't have any of the current psychotherapies going. What people don't realize is this psychotherapy is recently on the scene. In fact, the first Psychologist license was issued by Connecticut and California only a little over 50 years ago. Then the Marriage and Family Therapist a little over 40 years ago. This has started out in the secular universities. It was primed with monies from the federal government, because the federal government invested in the various universities to train counselors for the returning veterans. That's where it began, but then you have young Christians getting into the universities and learning about clinical psychology (it's out of that field that we get the licensed therapist); they major in it and eventually get Ph.Ds. Then they appeal to the various Bible colleges and Christian universities, get positions there and start teaching it. Over a period of time what happens is they more and more aim the students of those institutions in the direction of the value of psychotherapy and of clinical psychology. I'll give a couple of examples. We looked into Philadelphia Biblical University. All you have to do is go to their website and read the descriptions for the 600, 700 and 800 level counseling courses. Not once is there any reference to God, to Jesus, to sin, salvation or anything at all related to the Gospel. If you look at the courses titles and descriptions, they could just as well have come from a secular Psychology Department or university. Another example is Louisiana Baptist University. You go to their website because they give you helpful resources and class offerings. If you look at (I'm not saying the other departments, only the School of Christian Counseling) the recommendations of the Dean there, one of them is that graduate students should become members in the American Association of Christian Counselors, as well as several others. Then look at the textbooks and you

will know that this department fits the psychoheresy that has come along and invaded the very conservative institutions.

Editor: Have you thought, or maybe demonstrated by your research, that this is an outgrowth of the Social Gospel that rose up in the 1920s?

M. Bobgan: We have never related what we have studied to the Social Gospel.

D. Bobgan: I grew up in a very liberal church, and the psychology was there early on. They would teach from the Bible to a certain degree about how we should behave and how we should live, so it became a works thing that ended up being a social thing. There was not the emphasis on the cross and the work of Christ in you through the Holy Spirit, nor was the Word of God *the* Word of God. In fact, one of the ways the Lord used to open the Word to us when we were in that church was how people were misquoting this and that in weird ways. Martin turned to me and said, "You know, one of these days, we need to read the Bible and see if it really is the Word of God, something different from other books; because these people are quoting the other books and the Bible in the same way, and we'd better find that out." So that is how the Lord moved us into faith. He got us to read the Word of God; and as we were reading it, it was Light. I think it was the brightness of that Light for us that showed how dark the wisdom of men in the psychological counseling area was.

M. Bobgan: By the way, the U.S. is the seed bed for all of this; it began in the U.S. Well, psychoanalysis began in Europe; Sigmund Freud went to the U.K., etc. Since then, the seed bed for this whole psychotherapy movement is the U.S. It is embedded in practically every facet of Christendom that you can find. What happens is that the individual pastors regardless of church, denomination, etc. (we have on our mailing list Anabaptists, Presbyterians, fundamental Baptist pastors and so on), are referring out or, if you will, genuflecting in the direction of psychology by quoting their books, authors and other things. When someone tells me, "I go to a (whatever) church," I say, "Okay, give me the name of it." Typically, they have websites. I go to the website and find out what's happening there. If I can't find it on the website, I call the church and ask them if they have any counseling provided for individuals or couples to find out what they do. The typical reply is that they lead you to a person in the community. The more fundamental the church the more likely they are to pick a licensed individual who is a professing Christian that they know. What happens is that they are giving up their God-given responsibility to help individuals in their congregations to learn to walk daily with the Lord and handle the issues of life on their own. We see this constantly, and it's one thing that I have done regularly when people call. I say, "Tell me your church;" and if they say that there's no psychoheresy here, very typically, they are wrong.

Editor: Let me go further on that one. This is

probably the major sign that you have just spoken of where there is equal authority between secular and Scripture, but are there other telltale signs that might be a clear indication to the average church member that a particular ministry is moving in the direction of Psychology?

M. Bobgan: You need to know the church library. You need to know the church website, and practically all churches have a website. You have to look into these things. Let me give you an example. We had one fundamental Baptist church in this area who recommends *Focus on the Family*, which was started and developed by James Dobson, although he is no longer a part of it. The only way you can get a counselor through them is by these licensed counselors state by state who apply to be a reference from *Focus on the Family*. When you buy into that, you're buying into that system, trusting Psychology. In addition, *Focus on the Family* is very strong with respect to what we call psychoheresy. We've done a book, "James Dobson's Gospel of Psychology and Self-Esteem." I might mention that all of our books that are still in print are available free at our website as e-books, either as reading online or downloading for printing. They are word for word the same as the hard copy. If you want evidence (the footnote will lead you to the journal, publication or academic place where you can find it) for some of the things we are saying, then that would be a good place to go.

Editor: I was thinking historically, you could go back to Narramore, who I guess would be one of the earliest.

M. Bobgan: Yes, Clyde Narramore was one of the very popular individuals from the very beginning. There were other individuals, Brandt; and then we have others who stimulated it at the beginning. Then probably the most popular of them is James Dobson. Then there is Frank Minirth, Paul Meier and a whole host of others like Larry Crabbe, etc. We've written about a number of them, but none of them can claim that they believe in the sufficiency of Scripture for the issues of life that are normally psychologically treated. They can't claim that. They may say to a person, "We certainly believe in the inerrancy of Scripture, but we don't believe that it is sufficient for all the issues of life because there are other things that need to augment it."

D. Bobgan: Actually quite often they will say that they believe in the full sufficiency of Scripture but, by their actions, they don't. Quite often they say there are issues that the Bible doesn't speak directly to, so now you have to go out into the world. But if the Bible does not speak directly to it, it certainly speaks to the general category or principle. If we obey and follow what we know, the Lord will open up more to us. As we are in the Scripture, we are to be growing spiritually. As we grow spiritually, we will have wisdom in areas where people are now setting up all kinds of rules outside of Scripture. In other

words, they have all of these techniques and how you have to do this and that. Really the spiritual life is developed within the person through the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. It is not something that you can manufacture on the outside. All that psychotherapy can do is work with the flesh, with the externals. Those who think they are going down into understanding the depth of the soul, and so on, are not. They are depending on all outside superficial evidence to come to their conclusions which are, in most cases, wrong. Sometimes you can say someone is selfish just by their actions, and then you can judge why they are selfish. Oh, this is because of unfulfilment in childhood. You know, that's all a waste of time. If a person is selfish and the person wants to follow the Lord, the Lord will reveal this along the way either through other people or through the Word directly. It is the inner work of the Lord in the person as the person reads the Word, follows the Word and trusts in Jesus. Trust and obey; there's no other way. It's that relationship and new life in Jesus where this is supposed to happen. All of these techniques and methods actually operate at the fleshly level.

M. Bobgan: Let me give a little summary here which, hopefully, will be helpful. If one looks at the academic research with respect to psychotherapy, one finds a number of things that are very interesting. One example is Harvard University (and I don't like their term) which says the most serious mental illness throughout the world for men is alcoholism (I don't like the mental illness and alcoholism connection, you could tell that from my writings). They then say that when you look at the research, the one thing that stands out above all the rest is that men change because of themselves and not through any particular approach. One can go to a clinic and pay \$60,000 or go to a church gathering of men with this problem in order to discuss that issue (which, by the way, we're also opposed to); but it doesn't matter what you pay or don't pay, it has to do with the individual. That's also true with respect to other issues of life. That's solidly in the research. In addition, the second important factor if someone needs help (By the way, most men don't need help. Most men get out of their alcoholism, substance abuse, any other addiction or family problem without help) is the relationship between him and the one who is ministering in the church (outside you say counseling, the technical term would be therapeutic alliance). That's the second most important ingredient because if somebody really wants to change sometimes he needs a little assist, someone to draw alongside and help bear that burden. In a professional setting they find the third most important factor is the placebo effect. That's the ingredient that comes into a situation, whether it's an inert pill offered for pain instead of the real pain pill, it works just as well, etc. You add up those factors, and those are overwhelmingly the majority of the reasons why people change.

. Somebody asks what about the techniques and methodology? Those are minor to begin with and also the research is pretty clear about this. It doesn't matter which of those methodologies you use. There are almost 500 of these approaches. Think about it, if one of them had demonstrated that one approach was the very best, scientifically established it, then all the rest would disappear. They haven't, whether it's psychoanalytic, behavioristic, humanistic, etc. They're all still out there, and they have advocates for all of those techniques. How does this apply to pastors, elders, people in the church ministering to one another? They have to remember that the focus is really motivation. I used to say that alcohol was the number one issue I dealt with in men. I'll say now it's pornography. Pornography beats out alcohol in my relationships with men. When we look at this and say, "How can we help this person," we have to understand whether this person first and foremost is truly saved. Only God knows perfectly, but we do the best we can. We move on from there. Most of the time you're dealing with women. At least 2/3 of the time or more it's a woman that's involved. I'll just put a little footnote here. Men aren't interested in counseling, and that's very well established in the research. I mean they have one article after another, "What Does It Take to Get a Guy in Counseling," "What Does It Take to Keep Him There," jokes about the skid marks at the counselor's door are the heels of men being dragged in by their wives, girlfriends or whatever. What we do and this is what any pastor, elder, person in the congregation could do, you put them into (and this is the operative word) a daily walk with the Lord. In most cases, we find that as soon as that hits, whether the family finds out that the father is into pornography, alcohol, whatever, the structure of the family starts deteriorating. The problem gets to be the center. You have to remove that focus and replace it. You have to get the person into a daily walk with the Lord. Typically, I will ask the guy, "Tell me about your daily walk." "I pray before I eat." "Okay, that's good, now what else?" "Well, I've got these problems; my wife this, the kids found out about it, and so on." What I need to do is to move him into what any pastor can do - a daily walk with the Lord. All of the things we practice and pastors have preached can be used with an individual. You build their faith, and they will be able to handle their burdens by themselves as most men do.

Editor: When you are challenged about the value of Psychology, what would you say is the most fundamental, basic, irrefutable error?

M. Bobgan: We always make it clear that we're not talking about the total field of Psychology, because we have university professors of Psychology who are Christians and are on our mailing list who wouldn't be there if we were opposed to all Psychology. When we say Psychology, we make it clear we're talking about clinical counseling psychology and psychotherapy. If you want to look at what is the problem with the psychotherapies, we look at it biblically. Psychotherapies

are merely the wisdom of men about which God has warned his people. In this wisdom of men when you look at it scientifically, what you find is certain interesting things. First of all, no one has ever proven that professional therapists are any better at counseling than amateurs. That's a very important ingredient. Then, when you look at the licensed individuals, you want to remember that those licensed individuals have to operate according to their licenses. In California there are four licenses. The major ones are clinical psychology and marriage and family therapy. Each state licenses its own, and those two are consistent throughout the 50 states. When you are licensed, you are duty bound to function according to that license. If you are a Christian and you are a psychologist or a marriage and family therapist, you are bound by licensing to use the training that you've received in order to get the degree and then the license. In other words (it would be a deception anyway), you can't have somebody come in and say, "By the way, we're gonna start right here. Tell me about your faith. Are you saved?" You don't go there because it's a violation of your license. In California I've checked with the state with respect to what if somebody did that? I was told that if they received a complaint from somebody saying that a licensed therapist was not practicing as stated in their state license, the complaint would be followed up and there would be a hearing on it and likely a revocation of license. They are duty bound to use those things that they have learned in their education and that they have agreed to pursue by licensing. Additionally, we recommend strongly that Christians do not become licensed. There is a recent case going on. I don't have the details of it yet, but it's a woman who was being trained to be a counselor and was terminated from a university because she refused to counsel a lesbian who was having relational problems because the counseling would violate the counselor's religious beliefs. The counselor wanted to refer that lesbian elsewhere. The department found out about it and terminated her from the program. What I'm getting at is those who are licensed must follow a nondiscrimination policy. They can't proselytize; they can't refuse professional service to anyone on the basis of race, gender identity, gender expression, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, socio-economic or marital status. So you cannot refuse service to nor can you proselytize. You are really in a state system that requires you to a) use the wisdom of men, about which the Bible warns us and b) they're using a system in which they're obligated to go against their religious beliefs.

D. Bobgan: Psychological counseling theories and methodologies come out of the personality theories of Freud, Jung, Adler, Rogers, Maslow and others. These men were all, not only unbelievers, but hostile to Christianity. They wanted a system where people could reach the highest level of whatever apart from God. So we have Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (near end of first side). Now that gets embedded in a lot of Christian

counseling and even in Christian teachings. The whole self-esteem movement comes from that. Then you have Rogers' Positive Self-Regard and a number of other things with Rogers. If you look into the history of some of these people, you see that they led horrible lives as far as their own conduct and their own beliefs. When you look at the personality theories, I must say that Martin's professors were kind enough to let me sit in on these classes on personality disorders so I was reading the same books as Martin and we would go from one to the next. At that time, not knowing the Lord, first you put your hope in one and then the next one disenfranchises that. Pretty soon you've got all of these things and none of them is great. They have areas of agreement but a lot of conflict. When you get then to Timothy Leary's "Diagnosis of Personality," it was so stunningly written that it was very impressive. After Timothy Leary wrote that, he found that the best way to go was drugs, pot or LSD. Timothy Leary was using Maslow's theories in order to justify all of these LSD trips, because they were really reaching this high state. Well, you know the horrible disasters that came out of that. Those are obvious horrible disasters but, when you start with those kinds of roots and you build from them and pick out and choose certain things from those roots, you are ending up with a spiritual disaster. How many people are experiencing spiritual disasters because they are using these theories, therapies and techniques. Anything that is good in them would only be a facsimile of something that is already in Scripture; for instance, CBT (cognitive behavioral therapy). We know from Scripture that we need to think the truth. Why do we need to go over to a theory that actually originated with someone who said that belief in God was really a misbelief or wrong belief? We have what we need in the Word and we have what we need through the Holy Spirit. We have been given the new life that is to be nourished. To trade that for a pot of beans from the personality theories of men and the psychotherapeutic theories and techniques is truly a disaster.

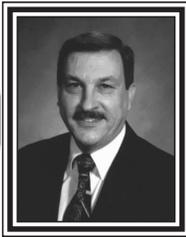
M. Bobgan: I'll give you a little bit of research here with which we have challenged these Christians who are into licensing, like the American Association of Christian Counselors, integrationists, who have almost 50,000 members and probably had 7,000 at their recent meeting in Nashville. The challenge is this: Prove this wrong. No one has ever proven scientifically that any

psychotherapy, choose what you will from the almost 500 approaches, is any better than what has been known in the history of the church as the cure or care of souls. No one has ever proven that psychotherapy any better than what has been in place from the day of Pentecost onward. Now, that's the challenge to these people who are in it. Give me the academic evidence. You claim to be scientific and you're not (we've established that in our books). Now you claim you operate under scientific principles, well show me. No one to date has ever been able to meet that challenge. Why? Because no one has ever compared the care of souls which has existed in the church since the day of Pentecost, as I said, with this Johnny-come-lately-on-the-scene psychotherapy, which is a little less than 51 or 52 years old. So, that's the challenge and no one has ever met it. They are all rushing pell mell down the road as if they're learning something new about mankind. We know what we need to know about mankind. We can pick up a verse here and there. We can start with Jeremiah 17:9 and go on from there, "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." We need to start there. That is not a verse or any verse quoted in counseling. We need to remember that we are armed. We have a full armamentarium in the Scripture of what we can use to bring to individuals who are suffering in life. Hopefully, we have suffered enough ourselves and use those tools/weapons in order to deal with the issues of life that we have encountered. We need to encourage pastors. We need to encourage congregants that they really have what it takes. They don't need a credential, a license, a Ph.D; they don't need any of these things. We were at a church for 16 years where we had the personal care ministry. I was still a vice-president at the local college. Deidre had more time, and predominantly women would come in. One of the hardest things to do was move them from being problem centered, wanting to talk about people who are not there. She talks about him, his parents, her parents, the children, etc. This is not biblical if you examine each statement. What we have is what is generally preached from the pulpit if one is going through the Bible, verse by verse, book by book. What we need to do is bring someone into a daily walk with the Lord. As they grow in the things of the Spirit, we read in Hebrews that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. They will be rewarded for their efforts.

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Signs of the Times

by Dr. Charles L. Dear, Editor



Many years ago, Evangelist John Carrera came to our church for a series of meetings, and we enjoyed his ministry as well as our personal conversations. In one of those conversations, he was asked what he observed as the most serious problem among fundamental churches at that time. He barely hesitated to answer, “the sin of self-satisfaction.” Over the decades that have transpired since that conversation, that is the one issue which has persisted despite the many other changes that have come and gone in our churches.

It is not the spirit of contentment, such as we find in our confidence in Christ. Scripture teaches us that the combination of godliness and contentment is great gain (I Timothy 6:6), but that pertains to the sufficiencies we find in the Person and Work of Christ, as well as the settled confidence in the truth and trustworthiness of God’s Word. Nowhere do we find any contentment or self-sufficiency in connection with our progressive sanctification; but rather, we are challenged to be perpetually growing in the things of the Lord (II Peter 3:18). The problem of spiritual immaturity is compounded by those who think they have arrived at a comfortable level of spiritual life which leaves room for a generous measure of worldliness, balanced by a spirituality barely past the most basic beliefs and salvation. It is a dangerous deficiency that leaves far too many vulnerable to the ill winds of perverted doctrine and apostasy, with the result of weaker local church testimonies and ministries. The problem results from failures and weaknesses on both sides of the pastor-people relationship.

First, the failure on the pastoral side of the equation flows from the lack of teaching and preaching all the doctrines of the Word and such subjects as the doctrine of the Church and the role of its membership, the doctrine of unworldliness and separation, the doctrine of the Great Commission and bearing witness of Christ to others, etcetera. I would hope to think that some of the current pandering to Reformed Theology among us might suffer a chill if we took the opportunity to tell our people how our Baptist forbears suffered terribly at the hands of the Reformers no less than that under the Romanists. Were some of the Reformed heroes alive today and exercising as much power now as they exercised a few centuries ago, we might find ourselves burning at the stake as

heretics. If our people persist in spiritual ignorance, let it not be the result of our failure to teach and preach the whole counsel of God.

On the other side of the equation, the people in the congregation bear an equal weight of responsibility to seek after and learn the doctrines of the faith, as well as their spiritual heritage as Baptists, so that their lives might be more shaped by the things of God than by the things of the world. The Apostle Paul addresses that very issue in his opening verses in Romans 12:1,2. It is a calling to believers that completely defies the imagination of the world. It is an absolute contradiction in principle to everything our people are exposed to by the world’s media. It calls our people, who profess faith in Christ, to live above the world around them in glory to their Savior.

A contentment with less than the best the Lord has to offer motivates a search for an imitation of real contentment from sources other than God’s Word. Carrera’s observation of the sin of self-satisfaction has also bred the sins of self-sophistication and self-possession. We have seen how some would elevate the wisdom of men above the wisdom of God recorded in His Word, while others would retreat to a Gnostic presumption of a superior knowledge of the mysteries of Scripture. The science of Mathematics misapplied to the Scripture has failed to bring the world to certain extinction more than once. The question, however, is how many others, in how many other ways, have fared no better in their scholarly analyses of the Word to produce some new contrarian doctrine that has done more to sell books and garner platform time than to tell the truth of God. How many have failed God’s people by teaching error regarding such doctrines as the Blood of Christ, the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ or Lordship Salvation, who having withdrawn from their errors are no less in demand today, whether in person or by book? How many more have risen up among us in hope of sharing some of that limelight in the hallowed halls of higher education, in expectation of their words filtering down to the pulpits of ill-fed congregations? The cult-like devotion to a personality above Biblical principle can be seen abundantly across our nation, in the absence of a healthy skepticism of persons and a worthwhile understanding of Biblical truth. The sins of Sophistication and Self-Possession have never advanced the cause of Christ, because their objectives have always been the advancement of the self-sufficiency and self-satisfaction of Man. When we become little more than a mutual admiration society, we have abandoned the very reason for the existence of our churches and institutions and deserve extinguishment no less than the Laodiceans.

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