

Seek The Old Paths

"Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths... and walk therein."
(Jeremiah 6:16)

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A LOOK AT "PROOF-TEXTING"

Chuck Pearson

Many people in the church today criticize what they call "proof-texting." They regard this method of studying and understanding the scriptures as "shallow, superficial, and unscholarly." When I speak of "they," I refer mostly to professors in "our" colleges — those who have received their education through "prestigious" universities or seminaries, and others who, in general, scoff at the traditional way of interpreting scripture and praise the "new hermeneutic." These people, for the most part, favor an "expository" approach (which is fine, if used correctly) in order to twist and wrest the plain, simple Bible Truth and push their "change agent" agenda!

What is "proof-texting?" It is the way by which one states an argument or point from the scriptures, then uses the text to back up his position. If the position is sound, it will be clearly and satisfactorily proven. If not, then there will be no (or insufficient) proof! "Proof-texting," like anything, can be abused! But, if used correctly, it is a valuable and essential tool for understanding the Bible and discovering truth!

To show how this works we will look at an example from scripture (this, by its very nature, is good "proof-texting!"). It amuses me how some people will criticize this method. Jesus used it all the time! In Matthew 12, the Pharisees came to him accusing the disciples for plucking ears of corn from a field on the Sabbath, saying that this was unlawful (vs.1-2). Jesus responded by giving them three examples from

the Old Testament, separate from one another in the original text (one from Leviticus, one from First Samuel, and one from Hosea), and in different contexts! They were all used to prove his point (his concluding statement): *"For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day"* (v.8).

If "proof-texting" is an inappropriate method for Bible study, how would we know that we must hear the word (Rom. 10:17), believe (Mark 16:16), repent (Acts 2:38), confess (Acts 8:37), and be baptized (Rom. 6:4; Acts 22:16) in order to be saved? Nowhere in the scriptures are all these commandments found in the same place! No wonder the change agents bash "proof-texting!" Without it, one can re-write the God-authorized prescription for obeying the gospel (this is, in fact, exactly what they would like to do and many have already done!).

Brethren, let us continue to *"hold fast the form of sound words"* (2 Tim. 1:13), call Bible things by Bible names (1 Peter 4:11), and let the Word of God speak for itself (2 Tim. 3:16-17)!

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Editor's Note:

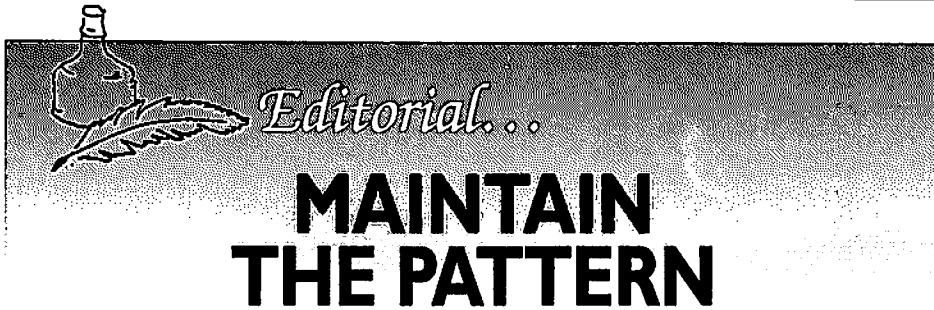
It is unthinkable how the liberals hold with great disdain anyone who would use the Bible to declare the Will of God. Those who provide book, chapter and verse in their preaching and teaching are ridiculed and scoffed at. University professors often will not allow their students to

research the books and materials published by anyone who is a member of the Lord's church. None of the past or present preachers, they claim, are scholarly. They require reading and quotations from denominational sources. Such is evident in their teaching and preaching. They had rather read poems and devotional guides, speak of philosophy and "new hermeneutics," than quote from Peter, Paul, John or even Jesus.

When you take the Bible away from a Gospel preacher, he has nothing to preach. On the other hand, when you put the Bible in the hands of a digressive (a liberal), he has nothing to preach (according to him) for he won't preach it! Especially is this so when you put the King James Version in his hands! Liberals much prefer the NIV because it supports their departure from the Truth.

A number of years ago while discussing certain moral and doctrinal issues with Jeff Walling, he told me he had never talked with anyone who took such a literal view of the Bible. I don't know how else to take it, do you? If we can rationalize the Bible away or make it to be no more than general guidelines, then Jesus lied when he said, *"Ye shall know the truth and the truth will make you free"* (John 8:32). Even though Jeff claimed he preached against drinking, drugs, smoking and dancing, he would not say these things were sins and one would be lost for doing

(Continued on page 5)
"Proof-Texting"...



The cry and wail of so many today is that there is no set pattern or standard to follow. The digressives whimper and whine, sneer and mock, at those who demand that all men follow the Lord's set of rules; and, that all men can know what those rules are.

THERE IS A PATTERN

There is a PATTERN, despite the cry of liberals and digressives to the contrary. There is a set of rules by which we must live (cf. 2 Thess. 3:14) and by which we will be judged (John 12:48). The rules (commands, laws) are God's rules, not man's rules (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:21). All men must learn the God-given rules of life and abide by them or suffer certain and complete destruction (cf. 2 Thess. 1:7-9). Notice the following scriptures which speak plainly of God's pattern.

Paul told Timothy to "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). The Greek word for "form" means "an outline, sketch, example, pattern" (Thayer). The word is also used in 1 Timothy 1:16 where it is translated "pattern." "Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting." Paul serves as an example, a pattern, for those who believe and obey the Lord. Now, is there a pattern or

not?

Hebrews 8:5 reads, "Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount." In the Old Testament, Moses had been given instructions by God for building the tabernacle and then warned that he build it, in all respects, "according to the pattern shewed thee in the mount" (cf. Exodus 25:9,40). The emphasis here is that since God demanded strict adherence to His specific instructions (pattern) in the Old Testament, a law inferior to the New Testament, He most assuredly demands strict adherence to His specific instructions (pattern) in the New Testament, a law superior to the Old Testament. The new law (pattern, rule, standard) is established upon better promises and is a better covenant (v.6); therefore, it demands an even greater respect and obedience.

Romans 6:17 speaks about a "form of doctrine." "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you" (Rom. 6:17). The word "form" has to do with a certain: stamp, shape, model, pattern. "In the technical sense, the pattern in conformity to which a thing must be made" (Thayer). Those in the church at Rome, having obeyed that "form of doctrine" (water baptism), the model or pattern, a certain rule of compliance, were freed from their sins. Their sins were not forgiven before they obeyed the rules of God, they were forgiven after they obeyed the rules — the pattern.

There is such a thing as "sound doctrine." Sound doctrine is God's pattern. The laws or rules of God are made "for whoremongers, for them

that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine" (1 Tim. 1:10).

There are certain rules of conduct that those who will be saved are to follow. Paul said, "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you" (Phil. 4:9). "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

Those who depart from God's pattern provoke the wrath of God and bring upon themselves certain destruction (Gal. 1:6-9; Rom. 3:10-18; Phil. 3:18-19; 2 Thess. 1:9; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 3:16).

CLING TO THE PATTERN

We must hold to and continue in the pattern just as the faithful of the first century did. They stood fast in God's law (cf. 1 Peter 5:12; Acts 13:43; Rom. 5:2; 1 Cor. 15:1).

Timothy was told to "Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 1:13). All Christians are exhorted, saying, "Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)" (Heb. 10:23). The church at Thyatira was told, "But that which ye have already hold fast till I come" (Rev. 2:25). To the church at Philadelphia, we read, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown" (Rev. 3:11).

When Paul and Barnabas traveled among the churches they had earlier established, we read of them "Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). To the churches throughout Galatia, Paul wrote, "Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage" (Gal. 5:1).

"Therefore, brethren, stand fast,

and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle” (2 Thess 2:15). “That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour” (2 Peter 3:2).

GUARD THE PATTERN

We must contend for and guard the pattern. If there is no set standard, this would be unnecessary. However, Jude tells us, “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3). The words “earnestly contend” mean to “struggle for.” Why would God have us struggle for that which does not exist? The point is, “the faith,” the system of faith, God’s Way, the law of God, the New Testament, the pattern, is to be maintained. It is so important that we are exhorted to struggle (contend) to maintain it. Therefore we must uphold it and guard it closely.

“But Saul increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwell at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ” (Acts 9:22). Paul used the Scriptures (the pattern) to confound the Jews. The word confound means to be in disorder and uproar. He proved from the Scriptures (God’s set order, instructions, pattern) that Jesus is Christ. If the Bible is so powerful, it surely must be guarded and upheld. Notice other passages on the subject. “And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (Acts 18:4). “For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:28).

Many were the occasions when the Gospel was upheld by exposing those who had violated it and demanding that men keep its commandments. “To whom we gave place by subjection, no, not for an hour; that the truth of the gospel might continue with you” (Gal. 2:5). “But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face,

because he was to be blamed” (Gal. 2:11). Paul did this because Peter had violated the pattern. Those who were impenitent were withdrawn from (1 Cor. 5) and/or marked (Rom. 16:17; 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 1:15; 2:17).

The church at Philippi was told, “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Phil. 1:27).

DON'T FORSAKE THE PATTERN

We must not leave the pattern. “Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines...” (Heb. 13:9).

“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14).

Do you love the pattern, the old Jerusalem way, the Lord’s Way? Jeremiah was commanded to write, “Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jer. 6:16). Will you do the will of the Lord or your own will? Will you seek to follow the pattern or refuse to do so as those of Jeremiah’s day? The choice is yours.

– Garland Robinson

FAITHFUL MEN

Roger Genung

What a great need the Lord’s church has for faithful men: men who will “rightly divide the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15) and “contend earnestly for the faith” (Jude 3).

The adjective “faithful” means the difference between leading others to eternal life and leading others to eternal damnation.

It’s sad how more and more people put less emphasis on faithfulness. Even within the Lord’s church there are those who believe any preaching or teaching, whether true to God’s Word or not, is the only concern. False teaching does more to hurt the Lord’s church than most realize.

It’s my prayer, every time I deliver a sermon, that I say nothing contrary to the Word of God. I believe that which Paul wrote in Galatians 1:6-9, “I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed.” Those who proclaim any other gospel besides the gospel of Jesus Christ will be accursed.

While we should never forget “change agents” (false teachers) are among us, we can still rejoice that there are, if only a few, “faithful men” who hold high the Gospel of Jesus Christ every time they preach or teach. Our part to play is to support these faithful men. Stand with them, never against them. I taught in a congregation where some would not bear sound doctrine. I can tell you how uplifting it is to have faithful Christians support you when others will not.

Thanks be to God for faithful men who can teach us and stand with us against the evil one!

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A VISIT TO BETHANY

David R. Pharr

Up in the West Virginia panhandle, just a few miles from Wheeling, lies the quiet village of Bethany, the place where Alexander Campbell lived, preached, wrote, and was buried. Bethany College, which is now affiliated with the Disciples of Christ denomination, has restored the Campbell home and the old Bethany meetinghouse. Across from the "Campbell mansion" is the Campbell Cemetery where are buried many notables of restoration history.

When last we visited Bethany, the courteous young lady who served as our guide expressed a mistaken notion which is typical of the thinking of Disciples of Christ and others. In telling about one of Campbell's sons marrying an Episcopalian, she expressed that at that time it was unthinkable for one to marry outside his faith, especially in view of the fact that Campbell himself was "the founder of a faith."

Alexander Campbell did not start a new religion. His efforts were in opposition to any religion started by any man. The church he preached was the church founded by Christ. The sign over the doors of the building in Bethany where Campbell preached still says "Church of Christ." He was a powerful advocate of New Testament Christianity and is remembered for his work in urging a return to Biblical principles, but he founded no denomination. Disciples of Christ claim a heritage from his, but there is little similarity between the principles he taught and their theology and practice.

Looking past the erroneous interpretations of the hosts, howev-

It is a quiet and peaceful spot wherein lie the remains of Alexander, his father Thomas Campbell, and many family members. Other famous names of the restoration are found on the tombstones. For all the great and good things done by these, they were, nonetheless, mortal. Our faith does not have its origin in one whose grave can be visited, but in the One whose tomb is empty.

er, a visit to Bethany stirs the heart as one reflects on the emphasis and progress made by Campbell toward undenominational Christianity and the restoration of the ancient order of the New Testament church.

The cemetery was called God's Acre. It is a quiet and peaceful spot wherein lie the remains of Alexander, his father Thomas Campbell, and many family members. Other famous names of the restoration are found on the tombstones. For all the great and good things done by these, they were, nonetheless, mortal. Our faith does not have its origin in one whose grave can be visited, but in the One whose tomb is empty.

The Bethany meetinghouse is

apparently just as it was when Campbell and his contemporaries preached in it. Standing by the pulpit, I tried to imagine some of the sermons that might have been preached. What would have been great and good in those sermons, however, is no different from what is great and good in a sermon today. Pulpit styles may have changed, and there may be few mental and rhetorical giants as was Campbell; but the only thing that ultimately matters about a sermon is whether it effectively sets forth the truth of God. In the meetinghouse there is no instrument of music, nor even a place for one. While Campbell and his influence lives at Bethany, the congregation rejected this innovation. They found no Biblical authority for any music except singing. True to their commitment to the New Testament pattern, therefore, they were content not to add the inventions of men.

As far as I know, in the present town in Bethany there is no congregation that worships after the New Testament order, as did Campbell and his brethren; nor is there one that shows the same reverence for Bible authority. Though Bethany College was founded by Campbell in 1840, it has long since abandoned its heritage. Its theology is modernistic. The Bethany Memorial Church, just a short distance from the old meetinghouse, is affiliated with the Disciples denomination.

It is often observed that the church is always "one generation from apostasy." The point is that if the rising generation does not know and respect the truth, all emphasis on scriptural faith and practice will disappear. A visit to Bethany can remind us of this. A little over a century later, in this lively little village where so much truth was once preached and published, it appears that much of that truth has been forgotten. The lesson of history is that we must never take the truth for granted. The call of history is that we be forever vigilant.

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"YOU NEED TO LOOSEN UP!"

Gary Colley

The advocates of "change for the sake of change" will use every kind of tactic imaginable in trying to indoctrinate the unsuspecting soul with their false teaching. Sad to say, it often works.

Liberalism is an attitude of looseness and usually total disregard toward the Word of God (2 Tim. 4:3). It has so invaded the churches in many places, that the stronger, more faithful brethren, and those who have been faithful to the Lord's cause for many years, have grown weary of the "good fight for the Faith" (1 Tim. 6:12) and have given up! This deplorable and heart-rending condition is being reported more and more. Since many of the teachers of "our schools" had to sit at the feet of the liberals and modernists to get their necessary "degrees," and since they have drunk deeply of these errors and have returned to teach in "our schools," the young, whose parents have paid for them to be filled with false doctrines, are now back in the congregations. It is usually more than unusual now for those who have been indoctrinated to say to the stalwart soldiers of the Cross, "You need to loosen up."

ABOUT THE BIBLE

The "new translations" have been shown to be full of denominational doctrines, especially the "New International Version," which contains all five points of Calvinism, but when this is pointed out to the liberal mind, he says, "You need to loosen up!" One of our granddaughters does not miss it far, by calling it the HIV Bible! Both have to do with disease, either physical or spiritual! **Harding University** sponsors a "Bible Bowl" for a large area of young people from several states, and insists in their advertising that all young people are to use the NIV. What a shame!

It is not unusual for some now to smile and say, "We are a little liberal." Or, "We do not have to have Bible authority for all that we do."

When it is pointed out that Jesus said, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21); or that Jesus said, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say unto you?" (Luke 6:46); or that inspiration says, "Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ hath not God..." (2 John 9-11), these will say, "You need to loosen up!"

One Gary D. Collier has written a book, recently, published by and to the dishonor of **Howard Publishing Co.**, West Monroe, Louisiana, that if we cannot find authority in the Word for what we want to do, we could "just go to the heart of God" and that would suffice! Now if this one has the "direct operation of the Holy Spirit" in which he is enabled, urged, nudged, etc., separate and apart from the Word of God, as some are now claiming, and the man of God is no longer by inspiration "thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17), we can just throw the Bible away anyhow! This one is also, evidently, under the spell of the "New Hermeneutic" doctrine which is being advanced by many liberals today. These do not think they any longer have need for authority in all that we do in the religion of Christ, either by direct command, necessary inference, or approved example. They will say, "You need to loosen up!" (?)

IS IT TRUE?

"Loosen up," say the liberals. But the Bible speaks quite differently! Paul, by inspiration says, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not

endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:2). In other words, stay with the Truth in the "good times" and the bad. Uphold the faith when convenient, and when not convenient! When your surroundings are favorable and when they are not so favorable! As brother Marshall Keeble used to say, "When they like it and when they don't!" Will you "loosen up" and "Stand up, Stand up for Jesus?"

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Editor's Note: To this fine article, brother Virgil L. Hale wrote: I can say "AMEN" to this article written by brother Colley. The advocates of "change for the sake of change" will use every kind of tactic imaginable in trying to indoctrinate the unsuspecting soul with their false teaching. Sad to say, it often works. Let us truly put on "the whole armour of God," and we shall be able to defeat error every time.

"Proof-Texting"...

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them. But of course, not being able to use the Scriptures (proof-texting), he offered no proof for his assertions that came from no other place than his own imagination (Rom. 1:21).

As for me and the 7,000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal (1 Kings 19:18), I will continue to preach the Bible, giving book, chapter and verse, for if you take that away, then you might as well stay home and forget about going to heaven. -Editor

“TRUMP CARD OF PHARISEEISM”

Charles Blair

Those who make snide remarks and ugly statements to attack the body of Christ do so for the sake of applause, acceptance and laughter. When their audiences laugh and applaud, it only encourages the speakers to keep up the practice. A word of warning to such who keep up the practice, if your reward is the acceptance of man, then that will be your reward (Matt. 6:1-7). However, when all the jokes are told and the laughter dies down, what then?

When the liberal has played all his cards in this area, the one trump card he has left is the Pharisees. When all else fails, he can accuse faithful brethren of being Pharisees. He makes the charge because he does not want brethren to judge him. After all, only the Pharisees made laws where God did not make them, right?

Were the Sadducees ever guilty of using the Word of God in the wrong way? Jesus accused them of not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God (Matt. 22:29). Here was a sect of the Jews that rejected angels and the resurrection, among other things. The Sadducees were the religious liberals.

The Word of God was simply a device in their hands to get what they wanted. They did not want anyone telling them what God expected out of them. Christ put them into the same category as the Pharisees in Matthew 16:11. I wonder why we do not hear about people being guilty of being Sadducees today like we hear about the danger of Pharisees among us?

The ones who continually run down the church in their sermons, tapes, books and workshops are concerned about brethren who judge them. Yet, the very source of their activities in running down the church is their ability to judge their brethren. Here then is the “brother” who laments what the church has become. He does not want to be sectarian or judgmental, etc. How does he know what the church is unless he “judges” what some brethren are? What if you call his hand on his judging of faithful brethren? Then he reaches into his “mixed bag of tricks” and pulls out the Pharisee card.

Let us try to set the record straight if we can. Faithful brethren are not interested in making laws for

God’s people. There is only one lawgiver (James 4:12). No man on this earth has the power to make laws for God. Our argument over the years has been that the pope, councils or synods of men cannot legislate for God. Our task is indeed to make application of God’s Word. We do not create God’s Word, we simply apply it to all situations (Col. 3:17). Properly applying God’s Word will not give aid and comfort to those who are the enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:18).

The ones whom Paul addresses in Philippians were walking in a path of resistance to God’s will, and hence were enemies of the cross of Christ. Hear me clearly, I am judging. It is time to cease cutting down the body of Christ and get your lives right with God. This is righteous judging — that as a Christian I am allowed by God to make (John 7:24). If you keep hurting the body of Christ, rejecting the scriptures, and pose as a faithful Christian, you are a hypocrite. Faithful brethren will not tolerate nor fellowship you.

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WHAT IF ELIJAH HAD BEEN RIGHT?

Rusty Stark

Elijah was wrong. In I Kings 19:10 & 14, just after his great victory over the prophets of Baal, he claims he is the only faithful servant of God left. He was wrong. God told Elijah that he had more than 7,000 who had not bowed the knee to Baal (v.18).

But what if Elijah had been right? Did that give him the right to sit in that cave and do nothing? If Elijah had been right, would he have been justified in joining the worshipers of Baal? If Elijah had been right, would he have been justified in his failure to oppose all those who were wrong?

If Elijah had been right, if he was the only one left, then he still should have stood up against the wrongdoers. Being in the minority does not give us the right to quit or to give in.

If we miss this point, then we miss the point of the “still small voice” described in verses 11-13. God wasn’t in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire. God was in the still small voice. Let the change agents make noise. Let others follow the fanfare and hoopla. We still must stand for truth and realize that God can work through our still small voices.

If we miss this point, the next few years in the Lord’s

church will be very discouraging ones. Many are leaving the old paths and refusing to stand in the good way. Whole houses and whole congregations are being carried away with the innovations and departures from God’s holy pattern. Faithful congregations of the Lord’s church who will not follow, use, or endorse false teachers are few and far between. And, it appears that it may get worse before it gets better.

If we fail to understand that God works through the still small voice, we will be tempted to join the blind, unthinking masses. Or, just as bad, we will be tempted to hide in a cave and be quiet about the problem.

We must not be fearful to cry out against sin just because it is in the majority. We must be willing to cry out against sin even when we feel we are all alone.

For all those who have been hiding in the cave, voices silent while the Lord’s church is being desecrated, we ask the same question God asked of Elijah in verses 9 and 13, “What doest thou here?” And we point out God’s admonition to Elijah in verses 15-17. God told Elijah to get up and get busy. And so must we.

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PURE RELIGION

Bill Bryant

Isn't it great to live in a "Christian" nation where over 90% of the population believes in God and over 100 million people attend a weekly religious observance? Let us note some of the amazing results of this "religiosity" in the homeland of religious liberty.

America is the most violent, crime-ridden, drug-infested Western industrialized nation. Three out of every ten births are illegitimate. Virginity is a joke. Half of all marriages end in divorce. Homosexuality is an "alternate lifestyle." Abortions have claimed more lives than all the combined wars America has fought. The second highest cause of death among teenagers is suicide. If this is a "Christian" nation, aren't you glad you don't live in a pagan nation like Japan? (In "Christian" America there are 100 times more burglaries than in "pagan" Japan). If there are so many religious people in our country, then why is our country in such dire straits?

There was an article that appeared some time back in USA TODAY that dealt with religion in America. Much of the article had to do with the findings of a book written by Barry A. Kosmin and Seymour P. Lachman entitled, "One Nation Under God." This book analyzes the 1991 National Survey of Religious Identification. This survey asked 113,000 adults across the country about their religion. This book indicates that which many of us have known for some time: that religion in America is only of the "lip-service" variety. A few excerpts from the article are as follows: "While 90% of us say we've gotten religion, living it is another story...religious identity today is often a spiritual gloss on a larger secular society...we like our religion without the particulars...no requirements for moral action...no restraints on personal pleasure."

Statements like these indicate that many who claim to be religious are not truly listening to God with an obedient spirit to do what He says. For years now, denominational

preachers have been explaining away what the Bible has to say about salvation, the Lord's one true church, unity, worship, church organization, and other doctrinal matters. They have left the conclusion in the minds of people that you can substitute your own will in these matters as long as you are sincere. Now people have concluded that if the Bible doesn't mean what it says about those "doctrinal" matters, then it surely does not mean what it says about adultery, divorce, alcohol, homosexuality, pure speech, etc. People are now going their own way and calling it religion and wondering why morals in America are headed deeper into the cesspool.

There are even some in the Lord's church today who are calling for change who are more concerned about attendance than they are about the purity of the church. They encourage us to be more sensitive to the felt needs of those who attend our worship services or else we will lose them. We need to remind those who are so concerned about numbers that if preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27) will cause people to leave, then the Lord has already lost them. They might still be counted on the attendance board, but the Lord stopped counting them as one of His when they sought their own will as opposed to His.

This is not the time to back down from the bold proclamation of the truth. This is the ideal time to teach the world that respect for authority begins first and foremost with the Creator of the world. This is the ideal time to "earnestly contend for the faith" (Jude 3), to preach the message of repentance to a world that is willingly ignorant (Acts 17:30), to worship God in the only way that He will accept (John 4:24), to cling to the New Testament pattern that will always be right (2 Tim. 1:13), to tell of the Lord's love for His church and be willing to give ourselves as He did (Eph. 5:25), and to tell the world that judgment is coming (2 Cor. 5:10).

We need to be shouting from the

roof tops that the church Jesus promised He would build (Matt. 16:18) still exists and that no one will be saved apart from it. We can pick and choose all we want at Wal-Mart, but God will never allow anyone to do that with Him. Augustine of Hippo made the statement, "If you believe in the gospel what you like, and reject what you don't like, it's not the gospel you believe, but yourself."

Pure religion is well defined in the Scriptures (James 1:27). Its fruit can be seen in the godly life of its adherents. Man-made religion can be identified as well. Just open up the newspapers and inspect its fruit and then be willing to tell our supposed "Christian" nation the reason for the difference."

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SEEK THE OLD PATHS

"I have recently read your paper. I enjoyed it and would like to be put on your mailing list. We certainly need to stay away from modernism" ...*Roy Bearden, Lamesa, TX.* "Trust that all is well with the church at East Corinth. We appreciate the **Seek The Old Paths** publication" ...*Lenard Hogan, Hornbeak, TN.* "A good friend and former elder that knows of my fondness for Jeremiah 6:16 and the fact that many of our brethren share the same attitude toward the "old paths" as those who said "We will not walk therein," gave me several issues of your publication. Please use the enclosed check to further support your excellent publication" ...*Bill Schwegler, Grand Blanc, MI.* "I would like your '96 year of bound volume. Also, I would like all the year of '97 from January to May. I am boning up on "May A Woman Translate A Sermon To An Audience Of Men." Love your work and faithfulness in God's behalf in **Seek The Old Paths**. There is none finer or more scripturally correct and edifying. Please find a check enclosed. Thank you again" ...*Bob Parker, Oklahoma City, OK.* "Thanks for sending **Seek The Old Paths**. It is doing a good work" ...*Eddy Craft, Elizabethton, TN.* "Please remove our name from your mailing list" ...*John & Dawn Tesseyman, Tyler, TX.* "We appreciate so much receiving your publication. We are with a small (in number) congregation and need the strength your paper presents. Thanks so much for your labors" ...*Jim Gribble, Newport News, VA.* We receive **Seek The Old Paths** and find that the articles are some that the brotherhood needs so badly in this perilous time. May God speed the time that faithful Christians will find a home with Him. Our prayer is that you will be fruitful in your endeavor of spreading the much needed gospel and exposing the ones who need to be exposed" ...*M/M Rocky Craig, Troup, TX.* "I appreciate deeply the love you have for His truth and the boldness put forth" ...*Pleasant, TX.* "You are doing a great job. The articles are timely and scriptural. We need 30 copies each time for the staff, students and elders" ...*James Meadows, East Tennessee School of Preaching, Knoxville, TN.* "May God bless you" ...*Melissa Spencer, Secondcreek, WV.* "I just read the Oct. 1997 issue of S.T.O.P. and wanted to drop you a note. I appreciate the good work you are doing with the paper. I especially enjoyed your article "The Bible Versus Change Agents." It is good to see that many brethren are still willing to call names and warn people of false teachers. It amazes me at the number of brethren who feel it is unloving to warn people about false teachers. I know this is nothing new for you. You have been warning brethren for many years. Keep up the good work and may God continue to bless you in your work for Him. In Christ" ...*Ronald D. Gilbert, Cookeville, TN.* "I was holding one night of a gospel meeting for Hickerson Station church of Christ and one of the members there told me to take **Seek The Old Paths** and read it. I did and all I can say brethren is, "Keep up the good work." Being a twenty-two year old minister at Coalmont church of Christ in Coalmont, Tennessee, I need to be more aware of the things that are going on in the churches of Christ in this nation. I enjoyed reading the October 1997 issue and would ask that you put my name on the mailing list. In the near future I would like to give a donation to you for the purpose of sending this publication out. Let us all remember to earnestly contend for the faith and have a ready answer for that faith" ...*William Childres, Altamont, TN.* "Keep up the good work in warning the brotherhood of the false doctrine" ...*Jason Ridgeway, Caldwell, OH.* "Please delete from mailing list or stop S.T.O.P." ...*Sallyann Pickle, Tyler, TX.* "I commend you for your stand for the truth of the Gospel. This is one of the finest papers I've seen. Keep up the good work. I would like very much for you to put me on your mailing list" ...*Dock Campbell, Hendersonville, TN.* "I have come across a copy of **Seek The Old Paths** and I like what I read. Please put me on your list" ...*Lester L. Hibbett, Temple Terrace, FL.* "Would you please put me on your mailing list for **Seek The Old Paths**. A friend of mine receives the paper and I have read several and enjoy the articles very much" ...*Flora Webb, Crossville, TN.* "Enjoy your paper so much. Keep up the good work" ...*Sue Music, Crossville, TN.* "I believe you are doing an excellent job of getting the truth out to those of us who need it. Thank God for qualified elders and good men who will

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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **East Corinth Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is mailed FREE upon request. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3; II Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:13; Titus 2:1; II Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless otherwise noted. Articles are also welcomed.

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