



Seek The Old Paths

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

Vol. 28, No. 7

July 2017

THE REMARKABLE SPREAD OF THE RESTORATION AND THE KEY TO ITS SUCCESS

Jon Gary Williams

This article accompanies useful information found on brother Williams' website given at the closing of this article. — Editor.

In the late 1700s and on into the 1800s, there arose people from within religious denominational ranks who saw the need for rejecting the man-made doctrines and practices that divided them. Their desire was to go all the way back to the New Testament pattern of the church and restore it to its original, unadulterated state. Throughout the 1800s and into the 1900s, the efforts of these few grew into a rapidly spreading restoration movement. The many errors of man-made religions were being exposed — doctrines such as total depravity (babies are born in sin), infant baptism, special election (God selects those to be saved), the saved can never be lost (once saved, always saved), sprinkling for baptism, salvation by faith alone and a host of other unscriptural teachings.

Many, upon discovering these errors, were abandoning these denominational teachings to become a part of the restored “church of Christ” (Rom. 16:16). It was a unique experience to be a part of the church as it existed in the first century. People were realizing they could be Christians without being attached to any denomination. The call to be united in the one true church was resonating far and wide. How wonderful it was for them to be

long to Christ’s church as it was in the very beginning — to be added to it upon their obedience to the Gospel of Christ and to work and worship according to the pattern of the New Testament. As we reflect upon this amazing restoration story, we are made to realize how truly blessed we are today to have the good fortune in this century of belonging to the church Jesus established so long ago. This is a treasure beyond our dreams. We should be ever thankful for the efforts of those dedicated Christians who went before us to help restore Christ’s church.

Now consider a question. What made it possible for the Lord’s church to be restored and expand so rapidly? The answer, of course, lies in the fact that plain, Biblical truths were being expounded and people could see the difference between what the Scriptures teach about the church and what the vast array of denominations were advocating.

Yet, how was this teaching being accomplished? And herein lies the key to why the restoration was so successful. The answer involves one key ingredient: religious debates!

From its beginning, the restoration plea was built largely upon religious discussions — debates which regularly engaged preachers of the various denominations. In these debates people were being exposed to truths about the Lord’s church which they had never before heard. Gospel

preachers considered these debates as pulpits — platforms from which they could explain to their audiences the distinctive nature of the church as found in the Scriptures. In these arenas of discussion, people were able to distinguish between their religious affiliations and the one true New Testament church. From the mid-nineteenth and into the twentieth century, the positive effect of these debates was immense, opening the door for more and more people to learn about the Lord’s church.

DEBATE REPORTS PRESERVED — DATING BACK TO 1900 A TREASURE CHEST OF RESTORATION HISTORY

In 1989, an old friend and Gospel preacher passed on to me a large collection of 5x8 cards containing handwritten notes. These cards had been given to him several years earlier by a yet older preacher. My friend, being well up in years at the time, gave the collection to me in hopes that I might make use of them. He gave me no details about the collection in general, nor did he give me the name of the brother who produced these old documents. I initially made no real effort to examine the cards, assuming them to be an old collection of sermon or class notes of some kind, so I stored

(Continued on page 51)

Spread of the Restoration...



Editorial...

GOD'S INSPIRED WORD COMPLETE AND SUFFICIENT

Garland M. Robinson

Many preachers and their helpers are sowing discord, doubt, distrust and gloom concerning God's holy book. They don't believe God can provide the world with His divine will in a written document that is infallible. If you don't love the Word, you don't love God!

Second Timothy 3:16-17, "*All scripture [is] given by inspiration of God, and [is] profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*"

The Divinely Breathed Word of God, the Bible, is profitable for **DOCTRINE** (v.16). It is heaven's teaching that reveals what is right and what is wrong — what is truth and what is error. It remains the Truth whether it is read or not, believed or not, practiced or not. It is the eternal Word and Way of God. In the Lord's prayer, he made a request concerning the apostles, asking the Father to "*sanctify them through thy truth*" and revealed the fact that God's "**word is truth**" (John 17:17). It is not "a" truth or "some" truth. It is truth — all truth. Jesus' prayer was for the apostles to be sanctified (set apart) from the world. That would be accomplished by/through God's word, the truth. It is by (through) the truth (the Scriptures) that all who obey the Gospel are likewise sanctified — set apart from the world, being devoted to God's holy service (cf. Acts 20:32).

The Psalmist said, "*O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day*" (Psalm 119:97,113,163,165). So many do not love the Word of God — the Bible! And, if you don't love the Word, you don't love God! Dear reader, the best advise I could ever give you is to "love the truth." Only

the truth will save you. Jesus said "*...to those Jews which believed on him, IF ye continue in my WORD, THEN are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*" (John 8:31-32). Rejecting the truth will prevent you from being saved; and, you will die in your sins (John 8:24). Second Thessalonians 2:10 speaks of those who "*...received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved.*" Why are so many preachers sowing discord, doubt, distrust and gloom concerning God's holy book? They are destroying God's means of saving man (cf. Rom. 1:16).

Psalm 119:11 says, "*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.*" Job said, "*Neither have I gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food*" (Job 23:12). Why then do so many disregard the precious Word of God and cast doubt and unbelief upon it? Those who do so think they are smarter than God. They don't believe God can provide the world with his divine will in a written document that is infallible. They've studied under perverters of truth and have swallowed their lies. I sure don't want to be in their shoes come judgment day!

The Divinely Breathed Word is profitable for **REPROOF**. It gives evidence and proof of one's sin, thereby rebuking and convicting one of sin. It gives warning of one's wicked way.

David spoke of the warning he received from God's Word. "*Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward*" (Psalm 19:11). Ezekiel was commanded to give warning from God unto the people (Ezek. 3:17-21). Concerning Christ, Paul said, "*Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*" (Col. 1:28). Gospel preachers are to "*Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine*" (2 Tim. 4:2).

The philosophy of the modernist/liberal is to approach the Bible with doubt and skepticism. They determine what they will find inside before they ever open its pages. They don't want their wild and reckless ways exposed to the world. They despise being censored and rebuked. Yet that is the very thing God provides for all of us. My job, your job, is to warn people of danger, jeopardy, threat and destruction that looms ahead. No one desires to be taken by surprise and fall into ruin. Why would those who know of such peril fail to tell them of it? We must not play "shut-mouth" concerning false doctrine. Instead, we need to heed the words that God told Isaiah, "*Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins*" (Isa. 58:1). I would be remiss (negligent) if I did not warn of error and those who are spreading it. For proof of this, read Romans 16:17-18, "*...mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.*" I did not write these words and I'm not going to sweep them under the rug and let false doctrine destroy your soul without warning you!

The Divinely Breathed Word is profitable for **CORRECTION**. After being shown what is wrong, being reproofed for our involvement in it, we are not left wondering what to do. The all inspired infallible Word shows us how to correct our wickedness. It provides those things necessary to *rectify, reform and straighten up* one's life. "*Wherewithal shall a young man*

cleanse his way? by **taking heed thereto according to thy word**” (Psalm 119:9). The Psalmist said, “*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*” (Psalm 19:7-10). “*Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way*” (Psa. 119:104). So many want to correct everyone but themselves. They don’t think they need correcting. The precious word tells us what to do to get right and stay right with God.

Read these warnings of correction from the Old Testament. “*My son, despise not the chastening of the LORD; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the LORD loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son [in whom] he delighteth*” (Pro. 3:11-12). “*Correction [is] grievous unto him that forsaketh the way: [and] he that hateth reproof shall die*” (Prov. 15:10). “*O LORD, [are] not thine eyes upon the truth? thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; thou hast consumed them, [but] they have refused to receive correction: they have made their faces harder than a rock; they have refused to return*” (Jer. 5:3; cf. 7:28;

The Divinely Breathed Word is profitable for **INSTRUCTION** in righteousness. When one obeys the Gospel, he continues to grow in the Lord by following the instruction of his Word. His infallible Word is able to finish out, equip fully, furnish us completely in order that we can be pleasing unto the Lord. “*As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby*” (1 Peter 2:2). Timothy was instructed by the apostle Paul: “*Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee*” (1 Tim. 4:16). “*But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to*

make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:14-15). Second Peter 1:3-11, gives instruction in growing unto maturity. “*For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ...For if ye do these things, ye shall never fall*” (2 Peter 1:8,10).

No one can read 2 Peter 1:3 and fail to see the revelation and inspiration of the Holy Scriptures which was provided by God’s divine power. “*According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.*” It is by God’s “*divine power*” that he has provided “*all things that pertain unto life and godliness*” (1 Peter 1:3). The godhead, He who is divine, deity, the essence of all life (cf. John 1:3) and sustainer of the universe (cf. Heb. 1:3) has provided those things necessary for our living on this earth and our preparation for a home in glory. Only God is able to provide such. No one

else could even attempt to do so.

Paul made it clear that the words he wrote were the words and commandments of God. “*And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man’s wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power*” (1 Cor. 2:4). “*Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual*” (1 Cor. 2:12-13). “*If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord*” (1 Cor. 14:37). “*For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe*” (1 Thess. 2:13).

Spread of the Restoration...

(Continued from page 49)

them away with plans of someday taking a closer look.

As we all know, time flies! Twenty years later, while cleaning out a storage area, I came across the box of cards again, and decided to toss it out along with other various unusable items. But, as good fortune would have it, this would not be the case. Standing at the trash bin, I paused long enough to take a closer look. It was then that I was shocked to discover that these cards were actually brief, concise reports of religious debates dating back to the year 1900. There were more than 1000 of them! For two decades I had been in the possession of a valuable reserve of restoration history, and I still shudder to think that it came so close to being discarded.

Included in these reports are records of some of the early debates of M. C. Kurfees, W. T. Boaz, N. B. Harde- man, John B. Hardeman, H. Leo Boles, F. B. Srygley, J. D. Tant, Joe S. Warlick, S. H. Hall, C. R. Nichol, G. C. Brewer, J. W. Brewer, A. G. Freed, J. H.

Lawson, L. S. White, A. W. Young, W. T. Beasley, J. R. Bradley, to name only a few. Most of these reports also contain the names of the men who wrote them — men who had attended these debates and were able to give first-hand information. Some of the reports were drafted by the men who had conducted or moderated the debates.

The brother who had gathered these reports must have been quite well known, considering he made contact with these many different preachers, regarding such a wide variety of debates, and over so many years. Evidently desiring to keep these reports in a unified form, he had carefully sorted and copied the contents in his own handwriting, apparently with some special purpose in mind.

Since a number of the cards have a notation of being “used,” I suspected they may have been intended for publication — possibly in the Gospel Advocate. And sure enough, in checking the microfilms of past Gospel Advocate issues, I found that some of these reports had indeed been published. For many years this brother had supplied the Advocate with a number of these debate reports. Sadly though,

all attempts to determine the identity of this good brother have failed.

As I read through the 1000+ hand-written reports, the significance of these debates loomed before me. Exploring and examining these reports was an education in itself, for I discovered things that had escaped me. I had simply been unaware of the great number of debates that had actually taken place. And furthermore, I had not discerned the profound impact they had upon the spread of the Lord's church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

HOW MANY DEBATES WERE THERE?

These debates were not just occasional, random events springing up now and then. This had been my own impression, but I was terribly mistaken. The number of debates held between 1900 and the 1950s was enormous. The one thousand plus debate reports in my possession represent only a portion of the total number of debates which actually occurred. And keep in mind that this collection of reports covers a period of time only back to the year 1900 and does not include the large number of debates which were conducted during the last half of the nineteenth century.

Many Gospel preachers were said to have conducted dozens of debates, with some holding as many as fifty or more. It is known that brother Guy N. Woods participated in at least two hundred — only twenty of which are referenced in this collection. We may never gain an accurate estimation of the total debates conducted back into the late 1800s, but suffice it to say, they numbered into the thousands.

I recently conducted a quick, one-question survey among a large number of Gospel preachers, asking them how many restoration debates they believed were held between the years 1900 and 1950. The average response was about 150. This illustrates just how far removed we are from comprehending the volume of debates that actually occurred, and consequently, the important role they played in the growth of the church.

Debates between brotherhood preachers and men representing denominational groups were common, especially throughout the mid-section of the country, with some held as far

west as California and as far north as Canada. In some states there were but few counties where debates had not taken place. During some months, upwards of eight to ten debates were being conducted somewhere. Debates were not occasional or incidental happenings — they were a crucial part of the restoration movement. Because of them, it is no wonder that thousands of people were being exposed to Biblical truths they had never before heard.

THE NATURE AND SUBSTANCE OF THE REPORTS

These one thousand plus debate reports were written as brief overviews of the debates, rather than as full expositions of the arguments. However, some are more lengthy. Most reports give the names of the Gospel preachers, the names of their opponents and their religious affiliations, the dates the reports were made, and with few exceptions, the locations of the debates and the names of those who submitted the reports. Also, several of the debates pertain to false views held by some within the church, such as: instrumental music, cooperation in evangelism, orphan homes and divided classes.

Reviewing these reports reveals a number of things that help explain why the debates played such an extremely important role in the restoration movement. In addition to showing how widespread the debates were, notice these important facts as revealed in the reports:

A. The debates were held on a high plane. Though some today may feel that debating only created hostility and was unproductive, this was not the case. Time and again, these reports emphasize that the participants conducted themselves as gentlemen and that the audiences were well behaved. On rare occasions, any bitterness or rancor displayed was on the part of those who taught false doctrines, which served only to hurt their cause. Notice this unique observation by brother C. R. Nichol, following one of his debates in 1922: "We need more debates. Every member of the church needs to be indoctrinated; the fundamental principles need to be grounded in the members. I have never conducted a debate that did not result in good; and if at the time of the debate

there was not a congregation, one was immediately established in that place."

B. Gospel preachers did not spend time seeking out opportunities for debate. Rather, they were sought out to participate in such discussions. First and foremost they were Gospel preachers. But when the need arose to defend the truth against error, they accepted the opportunity. Many times when congregations of God's people were challenged by false teachers, the brethren would contact preachers who they knew could meet the challenge, inviting them to participate.

C. Preachers considered the debates as pulpits. These discussions provided them with captive audiences. No matter whom they were debating, folks from different denominations would be in attendance. From their "pulpit," these men emphasized the identity of the church, the oneness of the church, and how it was different from man-made organizations. They carefully exposed the false ideas of the various denominational groups. Many people were seeing for the first time what true New Testament Christianity really was. In a sense, these preachers looked upon the debates as Gospel meetings.

D. Following many of the debates, the preachers were often asked to continue teaching. This gave them additional time to explain to people more about the church. Sometimes the debates led to Gospel meetings, some of which lasted for days. Also, many of these debates were reported in newspapers and some were broadcast by radio. Additionally, following the debates many home Bible discussions were created, enabling members of the church to teach their neighbors. Many written discussions were spinoffs of these debates. All of this led to many hundreds of people being brought out of their denominational backgrounds and being baptized into Christ.

E. Considering the widespread nature of these debates and their overwhelming influence, virtually all members of the Lord's church today, if it were possible, could trace their spiritual heritage back to one or more of these debates. Though at first this may seem difficult to acknowledge, there is no doubt this is an ac-

curate observation. Looking back into restoration history, the various congregations of the Lord's church merge together, even if only remotely, through these many past debate endeavors.

F. By the middle of last century these debates were slowly dying out. Why was this happening? There were two reasons: 1) Denominational preachers who had debating skills were passing off the scene, and younger men, unable to defend their false doctrines in public debate, were not filling the void. 2) Leaders of denominational churches, after witnessing their preachers unable to defend their creeds, were ceasing to sponsor such events.

REVIVING THE SPIRIT OF THE DEBATES

The day of restoration debates has passed. On occasion, debates still occur, but their influence is limited. We cannot revive the extensive debating that existed in earlier times, but we can revive the spirit manifested by our preaching brethren through those earlier debates.

In our pulpits we should duplicate the initiative propagated by those preaching debaters of the past. We should emphasize what they emphasized — the identity of the one church, its unique nature, and its pure teachings. We should make it clear that the church is different from denominational bodies. We should clearly explain the need for restoring the church to the pattern of the New Testament.

This is something sorely lacking in some congregations, and because of this many of our youth never hear of the oneness of the Lord's church and how different it is from the denominational world. In some congregations children grow up with the impression that we are no different from the denominations around us. Why is this happening? It is because such congregations have lost touch with the concept of restoring the church. The zeal for explaining the true nature of the one church, as contrasted with man-made religions, has departed from their pulpits.

There is a great need for duplicating the spirit and motivation of those earlier preachers. If we will devote more time in our pulpits to

stressing the unique oneness of the Lord's church and how truly different it is, we can revive the restoration plea in the hearts of God's people. We need more preaching like this! Congregations are more evangelistic when the pulpits keep the unique identity of the church at the forefront. By frequently emphasizing how the church is different, our members, and especially our younger generations, will be filled with more evangelistic fervor. It is my hope that as brethren are exposed to the nature and substance of the religious discussions of the past, more enthusiasm will result

for telling lost people about the one way that leads to eternal life.

After considerable time and with able assistance in converting these many documents to text, I am pleased to make these debate reports available online, at www.jongary-williams.com. My hope is that brethren everywhere, and especially younger preachers, might gain a greater appreciation for the important role that religious debating played in the expansion of the Lord's church in our recent past.

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THE PERILS OF TRAVEL IN ANCIENT ROME

The apostle Paul spoke of being:

"In journeyings often...." The peace Rome brutally imposed on the ancient Mediterranean world and the roads they built to facilitate the movement of their armies made travel possible, but in 2 Corinthians 11:25-27, Paul describes the perils of civilian travel in those times.

"In perils of waters...." There were rivers to ford and flooded roads in the lowlands.

"In perils of robbers..." Travelers would carry money with them for their journey and highwaymen watched for the vulnerable along the byways.

"In perils by mine own countrymen...." Many of the Jews hated Paul after his conversion to Christianity and some of them follow Paul to stir up strife.

"In perils by the heathen...." It was the heathen who had Paul arrested, imprisoned, and beaten. Once they stoned him and left him for dead.

"In perils in the city...." They would often be at the mercy of strangers and being in unfamiliar surroundings they would be easy prey for those who would take advantage of them.

"In perils in the wilderness..." They would be far from help in the open land and countryside between the cities where there was the possibility of encounters with wild beast.

"In perils in the sea...." Travel by sea was the most efficient, but the destinations were limited, and the uncertainty of the weather made such travel hazardous. Paul said, *"Thrice was I shipwrecked."* *"A night and a day I have spent in the deep."* And this was before his ill-fated voyage to Rome.

"In perils among false brethren...." Faithful preachers who have suffered from the slanders and ill treatment of false brethren can tell you that these are the most heartbreaking perils of them all.

"In weariness and painfulness...." Walking those rough roads for hundreds of miles would leave them weary, and the painfulness would include both the wear on the body and the suffering of sickness.

"In watching's often...." There is a mental stress of continually being on guard.

"In hunger and thirst, in fastings often...." No doubt it was difficult to assure adequate provisions for long days of physical exertion down long roads.

"In cold and nakedness...." Their nakedness refers to their lack of adequate clothing against the elements, leaving them rain soaked and exposed to chilling winds.

We are humbled by those who suffered that we might hear the Gospel. We should remember them with thanksgiving when we are tempted to whine over our light trials.

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CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM #7: WOMEN

Adam Good

The contrast between the religion (Islam) that gratifies carnal men and the religion (Christ) that pleases God is obvious and striking.

The Bible and the *Qur'an* differ greatly in their teaching about women. The *Qur'an* reflects the 7th Century AD culture of Arabia. It's more concerned with setting forth how men may oppress women and gratify their desires than it is with teaching how to pray. The New Testament on the other hand, presents God's original intentions as seen in the Creation.

The New Testament is unequivocal that men and women stand equal before God. *"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus"* (Gal. 3:28). The apostle Paul listed various classes of individuals and declared them all equal "in Christ." In the context of Galatians 3, he is discussing water baptism, noting that immersion into water puts one "into Christ" (v.27). Baptized individuals are clothed with Christ and become "heirs according to the promise" (vs.27,29). Paul taught that men and women (of all ethnic backgrounds and from all socioeconomic levels) have equal access to the salvation found in Christ.

Jesus lived this principle. He taught women and men, the poor and the rich, the Gentile and the Jew. He did not embrace the prejudices of His era (Mark. 5:25-34; Luke 10:38-42). Disregarding Jewish custom, Jesus welcomed women to learn (Luke 10:38-42). He addressed women as equals. Jewish men were commonly called "sons of Abraham," but in Luke 13:16, Christ the Lord described a woman as "a daughter of Abraham." When Jesus taught on marriage and divorce, He went back to creation at the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:23-23; Matt. 19:3-9). He did not tolerate Jewish traditions that granted husbands more rights than wives, including the ability to divorce for any reason.

Women played a significant role in the earthly ministry of Jesus. Luke 8 notes that Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and many others provided for Him from their substance (Luke 8:2-3). The Lord did not draw upon His miraculous power to solve every problem that arose. His group of disciples needed food, shelter, and other necessities. These women supplied for those physical needs. Devout women continued with Jesus through the crucifixion and were the first to report His resurrection (Luke 23:55-56; 24:1-10).

Although God has assigned different functional roles to men and women in the church, this divine distinction has nothing to do with superiority or inferiority. The instructions concerning the roles of men and women are rooted in the Creation. The Holy Spirit transcended time and culture to explain God's original design. The Lord requires men to hold all leadership roles and for women to submit themselves (1 Tim 2:8-15). This in no way diminishes the daughters of God. Looking through his epistles, it is evident that Paul held numerous Christian women in high regard, praising their service to the kingdom. In Romans 16, he commended Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother, Julia, and Nereus' sister. Christianity restores God's plan for men and women. As such, it uplifts women.

Six hundred years after Christ, Muhammad claimed to receive altogether different revelations. On the one hand, the *Qur'an* indicates that men and women are equal before Allah. "If any do deeds of righteousness — be they male or female — and have faith, they will enter Heaven, and not the least injustice will be done to them" (Surah 4:124; Surah 3:195,

33:35). However, such passages present only one side of Islamic doctrine.

Muhammad taught that women were inferior to men. In legal matters, he instructed to "get two witnesses out of your own men. And if there are not two men (available), then a man and two women, such as you agree for witnesses, so that if one of them (two women) errs, the other can remind her" (Surah 2:282). Muhammad further explained "this is because of the deficiency of a woman's mind" (Bukhari 2658). Regarding divorce, "women shall have rights similar to the rights against them, according to what is equitable; but men have a degree (of advantage) over them" (Surah 2:228). When Muhammad had a vision of Hell, he saw that the "majority of the dwellers of Hell-Fire" were women. He explained that women "curse frequently and are ungrateful to [their] husbands...I have not seen anyone more deficient in intelligence and religion." He blamed a woman's monthly cycle for "the deficiency in her religion" (Bukhari 304). Should a Muslim woman manage to enter Paradise, she can look forward to being part of a harem for all eternity.

In marriage, Muslim men are allowed to take up to four women (Surah 4:24). However, if a man is concerned about accepting such responsibilities, he can use any of the captive or slave women in his possession (Surah 4:3). This general rule has two notable exemptions. Muhammad did not permit the husband of his daughter, Fatima, to marry a second wife unless he divorced her first (Bukhari 5230). He shielded his daughter from having to share her husband. Muhammad gave himself special martial privileges. Surah 33:50 reads, "O Prophet! We have made lawful to you your wives...and those (captives or slaves) whom your

right hand possesses — whom Allah has given to you... and a believing woman if she offers herself to the Prophet, and the Prophet wishes to marry her, a privilege for you only, not for the (rest of) the believers.” In other words, Muhammad gave himself permission to do whatever he wanted.

Muhammad is credited with having eleven wives. One of these women was named Zainab, the daughter of Muhammad’s aunt. At the time she attracted Muhammad’s interest, she was already married to his adopted son, Zaid bin Harithah. Fortunately, a new Surah came down from Allah. After warning “it is not for a believer, man or woman, when Allah and His Messenger have decreed a matter that they should have any option in their decision.” Surah 33:36-38, continues to authorize Muhammad’s marriage to Zaid’s wife. “There is no blame on the Prophet in that which Allah has made legal for him.” Another of Muhammad’s wives was named Aisha. He “wrote the (marriage contract) with Aisha while she was six years old and consummated his marriage with her while she was nine years old and she remained with him for nine years (i.e. till his death)” (Bukhari 5158). Muhammad was over the age of fifty at the time. Aisha was the daughter of Abu Bakr, one of Muhammad’s most loyal supporters and the first caliph or leader of the Muslim community after his death. Although Abu Bakr protested when Muhammad proposed the match, the prophet of Islam insisted that it “is lawful for me to marry” Aisha (Bukhari 5081). The *Hadith* records Aisha’s own account of the day she went to live with Muhammad:

My mother, Um Ruman, came to me while I was playing in a swing with some of my girlfriends. She called me, and I went to her, not knowing what she wanted to do to me. She caught me by the hand and made me stand at the door of the house. I was breathless then, and when my breathing became all right, she took some water and rubbed my face and head with it. Then she took me into the house. There in the house I saw some Ansari women who said, ‘Best wishes and Allah’s Blessing and a good luck.’ Then she entrusted me to them and they prepared me (for the marriage). Unexpectedly

Allah’s Apostle came to me in the forenoon and my mother handed me over to him, and at that time I was a girl of nine years of age (Bukhari 3894).

What a heartbreaking picture she paints of leaving the playground to satisfy the carnality of the prophet. The *Hadith* records Aisha’s recognition of the status of women in Islam. She informed Muhammad “You have made [women] equal to the dogs and the donkeys” (Muslim 512). Aisha equated Muslim women with animals, nothing but property for the use and the abuse of Muslim men. Surah 65:4 allows Muslim men to marry pre-pubescent girls. The example of Muhammad has given license to the vilest of predators down to the modern era. Child marriages are common across the Muslim world. For example, in the aftermath of the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the new theocracy lowered the legal marriage age to nine.

In the home, the *Qur’an* gives the husband dominion over his wife. Comparing the wife to a field, the husband is instructed to “approach your tilth when or how ye will” (Surah 2:223). The Bible teaches mutual respect and consideration in 1 Corinthians 7:3-5. “Men are the protectors and maintainers of women, because Allah has made one of them [the man] to excel the other [the woman].” Righteous women are described as “devoutly obedient (to Allah and to their husbands).” Husbands who see “ill-conduct” in their wives are instructed to “admonish them,” send them to separate beds, and “beat them” (Surah 4:34). This surah authorizes spousal abuse. In the *Hadith*, a Muslim woman came to Aisha to show her the bruises inflicted by her husband. Aisha informed Muhammad “I have not seen any woman suffering as much as the believing women.” Pointing to the bruised woman, Aisha continued “Look! Her skin is greener than her clothes” (Bukhari 5825). Muhammad himself struck Aisha “on the chest” causing her “pain” (Muslim 2127). It should be noted that the prophet did place a limit on wife-beating “none of you should flog his wife as he flogs a slave” (Bukhari 5204).

The teachings of the *Qur’an* and the *Hadith* codify 7th Century AD Arabian culture. This is why women are mistreated and oppressed in na-

tions where Islam is dominant. The contrast between the religion (Islam) that gratifies carnal men and the religion (Christ) that pleases God is obvious and striking. From pure motivations, Jesus invited the little children to come to Him to receive blessings. He enjoyed being in the presence of innocent souls that have yet to be marred by sin (Matt. 19:13-15). Muhammad invited a little child to come to him for altogether different reasons.

Although this study is necessary in order to understand the truth about Muhammad and Islam, an apology of sorts is in order to readers. “For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret” (Eph. 5:12).

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Contributions.....	\$1,965.00
Debits	
Supplies.....	\$614.12
Postage.....	\$1,904.44
Ending Balance.....	\$7,915.31



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Seek The Old Paths is a monthly publication of the **Leoni Church of Christ** and is under the oversight of its elders. It is FREE, being supported by the contributions of both individuals and congregations. Its primary purpose and goal in publication can be found in Jude 3, 2 Tim. 4:2, Titus 1:13, Titus 2:1 and 2 Peter 1:12. All mail received may be published unless it is marked “not for publication.” The church building is located at: 6818 McMinnville Hwy, Woodbury, TN 37190.

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