A Book of Errors Revised (Marriage, Divorce)

By Hugo McCord
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My long time friend, John Edwards, in whose home in St. Louis I have been a guest, has a sympathetic heart toward people with marriage problems. But it is sinful to allow a sympathetic heart to alter Jesus' teaching, which he has done in his book An In Depth Study Of Marriage And Divorce. He sent me a copy, and I wrote to him to reconsider and to return to "the old paths" where he formerly walked.

Instead, in a second edition he has only revised the wording of his errors, saying that his book is intended to help those … involved in divorce to realize that God still loves them, and they do not need to live lonely, guilt-ridden lives (p. 13).

It is true that God still loves them, and will forever, but "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). It is also true that fornicators and adulterers do not need to "live lonely, guilt-ridden lives," for "the Son of man has come to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). When in penitence they hate adultery and turn from it, they will be perfectly forgiven (Acts 22:16; 1 Cor. 6:9-11) and will "rejoice in the Lord" (Phil. 4:4).

Everyone can go to heaven if he wants to do so, but Jesus said that some would have to "make themselves eunuchs" (Matt. 19:12). Apparently Jesus and John Edwards differ about that matter, for in a lengthy book of 203 pages John not once cited what Jesus said about eunuchs.

On page 15 John makes an admirable statement: "We need to search God's word for His answers." But immediately John

turns, away from His answers to an emotional appeal to the readers' heart to make them sympathize with the much married who have two or more sets of children, and wants the readers to despise any preacher who would refuse to baptize them. John the immerser refused to baptize those who did not quit their sinning (Matt. 3:8), but John Edwards will baptize those married and divorced for any reason. He makes preachers who respect Jesus' words about marriage and divorce worse than murderers, saying they are sending souls to hell!" He quotes a preacher as saying a woman who had had three husbands as having too many "to even think of going to heaven." The preacher was wrong. Any one can go to heaven who wants to do so, as I have already proved. I am sorry that John leaves the impression that the woman at Jacob's well who had had five husbands was on the way to heaven.

John calls undoing "past marital mistakes" an "Evil Tree, whose fruit is corrupt." But if, according to Jesus, a marital mistake causes one to "commit adultery" (Matt. 19:9), yes, to be living in adultery (Col. 3:5-7), what will make the tree and its fruit good? Paul tells how adulterers and homosexuals at Corinth made the tree and its fruit good: they "were washed were sanctified … were justified" (1 Cor. 6:11).

Though God allowed David to keep Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11:27), and though God tolerated (cf. Acts 17:30) divorce for any cause and remarriage in the Old Testament (Deut. 24:1-4), and though he tolerated polygamy (2 Sam. 5:13; 1 Kings 11:3) in the Old Testament, that Old Testament has now been nailed to the cross (Col. 2:14). Then, the one of whom God said, "Hear ye him" (Matt. 17:5), made it clear that he repudiated polygamy (Matt. 19:4-5) and divorce (except for fornication) and remarriage (Matt. 19:9). What he said was directed to non-disciples (Matt. 19:3), but his disciples understood his "whosoever" as including everybody, and they were shocked, thinking that if marriage and divorce have such a rule, "it is not expedient to marry" (Matt. 19:10). John would have said that the number of

times one divorces and remarries does not matter (on p. 16 he cites an example of a woman who had six husbands).

However, Jesus thought that even one divorce and remarriage makes a difference, and that under some circumstances one must refrain from marriage, or quit a legal marriage, and make himself a eunuch by will power (Matt. 19:12).

On p. 18 John writes that the Bible says nothing about "adulterous marriages" or "living in adultery," but Matthew 19:9 is still in the Bible, saying that a certain divorcee on remarrying commits adultery, and Colossians 3:5-7 is still in the Bible, saying that some Colossians had formerly lived in adultery (cf. also Rom. 6:2; Eph. 2:3; Titus 3:3; 1 Pet. 4:2 on living in adultery).

On p. 18 John writes that "adultery in the gospel passages" is not "the physical sex act in marriage," but only "a violation of a covenant" (p. 50, and often). However, a covenant is broken in the first part of Matthew 19:9, "whosoever shall put away his wife." At the divorce he has broken his vow and his covenant, but according to Jesus (not John Edwards) he has not yet committed adultery, and does not until he remarries. Adultery in Jesus' eyes is not covenant breaking but is something that occurs after marriage.

On p. 21 John begins a discussion of Greek words, which is an admission that he needs something besides English translations to find his manufactured meaning of adultery. If we need to know Greek to understand marriage, billions of people are helpless.

In chapter 6 (p. 49-57) John, after citing figurative (Jer. 3:6-10) and mental adultery (Matt. 5:27-28), calls attention to the passive voice of moicheuthenai in Matthew 5:31-32. It is true the wife now discarded has not committed adultery, but in Jesus' eyes she has been "adulterated." The husband's breaking his covenant with her, Jesus does not call adultery,

but the husband has used her sexually and abandoned her, leaving her “adulterated.”

On p. 51 it is strange that John holds that moichatai in Matthew 19:9 is in the passive voice, for the verse would say, “Whosover divorces his wife, except for fornication, and marries another, is adulterized.” Also he asserts that the same word in Mark 10:11 is in the passive voice, which would make the verse read, “Whosover divorces his wife and marries another is adulterized against her.” Those senseless renditions do not appear if one says that moichatai is in the middle voice, calling for an active meaning, “he commits adultery,” and “he commits adultery against her.” The parallel in Luke 16:18 uses the active voice, moicheuei, “he commits adultery.” If one wants the whole truth, and is not simply trying to prove what he believes, he will by all means check the parallel readings in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. There is a way, by looking to ambiguous Greek grammar, and by checking only Matthew and Mark, to assert Matthew and Mark meant for moichatai to be taken as passive (though the resultant English translation is senseless) but the Greek grammar is not ambiguous in the word Luke wrote, moicheuei, and even John would say it could not be passive.

Further, to say that moichatai in Matthew 19:9 is point action (do you know of a commentator who says so?) would make adultery two legal steps (divorce and remarriage), and would declare that sex acts with the new spouse are not adultery. It is strange that Jesus used a word that commonly refers to a violation of the marriage bed and makes it refer only to two legal ceremonies. If the disciples listening to Jesus had understood that adultery is legal ceremonies, would they have said, “It is not expedient to marry”? According to John, it would be expedient to marry, with no risks involved: marriage would be easy to get into and out of. Some have seen a difficulty in giving moichatai a linear or durative meaning, because the physical act in adultery is not continuous.

However, the present tense in Greek not only can refer to point action (punctiliar) as in Matthew 13:14; 27:38, and to linear action (durative) as in Matthew 25:8; John 5:7, but also to iterative action (repetitive) as in Matthew 9:11, 14; 15:23; 1 Corinthians 15:31. Obviously if one is living in adultery the word iterative or repetitive is the correct description.

In John's search to find some proof of his thesis that adultery is covenant breaking, not sexual activity, he refers to Luke 16:18, "Every one who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery." However, if only the divorcing and remarrying ceremonies are the adultery, then if an innocent spouse divorces a spouse for fornication and remarries, that innocent person has committed adultery, for he or she has gone through the legal ceremonies that constitute adultery.

On p. 67f John quotes Greek scholars as saying that sometimes the present tense is point or punctiliar action, but it is noticeable that he quotes no Greek scholar who says that such is true of moichatai and moicheuei in Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18. Incidentally, John uses denominational terminology in saying that "Church of Christ teachers and leaders" take his position. One whom he quotes, Raymond Kelcy, says, "There's not a great deal to be had on the tense of that verb, Matthew 19:9," but John bases his whole thesis on the possibility that that verb might be punctiliar. Further, surprisingly, John quotes Kelcy, "A person who enters an illegal marriage, an unscriptural marriage, does continue to commit adultery," but according to John only the divorcing and remarrying constitute adultery, and that no one ever continues to commit adultery after marriage. Kelcy and John do not agree.

John quotes Carroll Osburn, but Osburn fails to say that Matthew 19:9 must be considered as punctiliar, yet John's thesis depends wholly on what Osburn does not say. Osburn holds that Matthew 19:9 is a "gnomic present," in which Osburn

says “continuity may or may not be involved.” A “gnomic present,” according to Ernest De Witt Burton, Moods And Tenses, p. 8, expresses “customary actions and general truths.” So, Matthew 19:9 expresses the customary action and general truth that a remarrying divorcee (except for fornication) commits adultery. Osburn fails to help John.

John also quotes from Jack McKinney, and got some help, for McKinney said that Matthew 19:9 expresses “point action” (p. 70). However, McKinney contradicted himself, for he also said (as had Osburn) that Matthew 19:9 is a “gnomic present.” He cannot be right both ways. If Matthew 19:9 speaks of “point action” it does not use the “gnomic present.” McKinney also misused the word aoristic, apparently thinking it means point action. But the word aorist says that an act is unspecified as to the kind of action (whether punctiliar, repetitive, or durative). A gnomic present can be aoristic (no specification of the kind of action), but it cannot be punctiliar.

John pleads his case that Matthew 19:9 must be punctiliar, for he says that “the best Greek scholars” are with him, but none that he quoted says that Matthew 19:9 must be punctiliar. Then John (p. 73) quotes a Greek grammar that “simultaneous action relative to the main verb is ordinarily expressed by the present,” but in the case of Matthew 19:9; Mark 10:11; Luke 16:18 the action of the main verb is not ordinary: the action of the main verb is not simultaneous with the divorcing and the remarrying, for those actions are only legal ceremonies, and no lexicon or dictionary defines adultery as a legal ceremony. Adultery, a violation of the marriage bed, is not committed by divorcing and remarrying, but later. To interpret the gospel verses as point action is to eliminate adultery, for it is not committed in two legal ceremonies.

How refreshing in John’s book to come to chapter nine, “Homosexual Marriages” (p. 75-79). He is clear how sinful they are. But he is inconsistent. Homosexuals and lesbian marriage partners can appeal to John in exactly the same way he pleads

with his readers to approve those divorced and remarried unscripturally. I can hear homosexuals and lesbians turning John's words against himself: "Are we condemning people whom God wants to forgive? … let love and compassion rule over legalistic rules and judgments". (p. 18). They would say the same thing that John says, "Far worse than taking someone's life is sending their souls to hell! Christians, are you prepared to answer for the fruits of your teaching (against homosexuality) that drives people to hell?" (p. 16-17).

John is certain (p. 83) that God wants monogamy, and that Jesus pointed back to monogamy, but John on the mission field today would not teach polygamists to go back to monogamy.

John (p. 89) asks does divorce break the marriage? Legally of course it does, but it does not nullify the vow one made at his marriage to his spouse "until death doth us part." John's words on p. 93 have relevance here: "Our oral words mean just as much to God as our written documents." Jesus, not John, taught that a divorced person is not as free as a single person, for if a divorced (not for fornication) person marries, he commits fornication. Single people and divorced people are equal legally, but not in Jesus' eyes. John and Jesus disagree.

John (p. 95) says that "God recognizes the marriage dissolved when the spouse deserts the marriage," but Paul did not say that. In Paul's inspired words a deserted spouse does not any longer have a sexual obligation (a voluntary bondage, cf. 1 Corinthians 7:3-4, 15) to the former mate, but to interpret a deserted spouse (no fornication involved) as free to marry again is to contradict the Lord Jesus. Jesus did not give two reasons for divorce and remarriage, namely, fornication and/or desertion. Paul gave a release from marital obligation but he did not give a remarrying privilege.

It is refreshing to come to John's chapter fifteen, as he exposes the sins of pornography. But in the rest of his book

(p. 123-203) he is even more determined to prove a non-dictionary, arbitrary, self-made meaning of adultery, a meaning that will give comfort and peace to people that Jesus said are living in adultery. I would not want to be in John's shoes in the Day of Judgment. To destroy a weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is no light matter (1 Cor. 8:11). The first part of Romans 16:18 is not true of John and Olan Hicks, but the second part is true: "By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent."

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Do We Know God?

By Carl G. Hecker
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A basic understanding of the true nature of our God can come only from the Bible. Our ideas of him develop over years of spiritual growth. If our fundamental understanding is wrong, we will never come to an adequate appreciation of what he requires of us. The following simple thoughts seem helpful in searching for deeper insight from the scriptures. See if you agree.

The Godhead

A clear, simple concept of the God of the Bible is essential to the proper faith and practice of the religion of Christ. The Hebrew word translated God *(Elohim)* in Genesis 1:1 is plural in number. It shows plurality in the persons of God. The New Testament also presents the same idea (John 1:1-14).

We ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold or silver or stone, graven by art and man’s device (Acts 17:29). Material representations of the Divine Being are idolatry (Exodus 20:4-6). God is spirit and we must not allow ourselves to think otherwise (John 4:24).

God *(Elohim)* has revealed himself as three persons. Each one in the Godhead is a distinct person but always one in action, thought, and purpose with the other two in the Godhead. These three persons always moved in perfect unity, with each having a specific identity and work apart from the others.

The Father is the designer. The Son, (also designated the Word) is the executor. The Holy Ghost is the organizer. When we read of God in the Bible, it always helps to have these basic thoughts in mind: God, the Father, as Designer; God, the Son, as Executor; God, the Holy Ghost, as Organizer.

We see these three in the redemption of mankind. A proper understanding of their individual roles in this divine plan is essential to overcoming the often confusing and always conflicting denominational doctrines so prevalent today.

Our God in Redemption

We would expect to see the same unity of purpose and the definite assigned work in the revelation and enforcing of the scheme of redemption. The Father is the designer, the planner (Eph. 3:11; II Tim. 1:9). It was his eternal purpose. It was his grace and it was to be expressed in his gospel (Titus 2:11).

The Son is the one who executes by taking the form of a man (John 1:14) and dying on the cross to save all mankind (I Tim. 1:15). The Holy Ghost then did his divine part by revealing the reasonable and orderly plan in the New Testament. He did this by inspiring the apostles of Jesus.

Jesus gave the promise of the Father (infallible guidance) to his chosen apostles just before returning to the Father (John 14:25-26; Acts 1:4-9). The Comforter was to guide them into all truth. This he did. He then confirmed the word with gifts of signs and wonders and with divers miracles (Hebrews 2:1-4). The person of the Holy Ghost is always in the masculine gender (he or him). He is always singular in number. He revealed the word of God but he is not that word. The Holy Ghost has great influence but he is not merely an influence. The Holy Spirit is not some sort of "glorified it."

The Holy Spirit possesses all the divine attributes equally with God, the Father and God, the Son. He is co-eternal, omnipresent, omnipotent, and omniscient. He is a person of the Godhead.

The term *Holy Ghost* equates with the expression *Holy Spirit.* They mean the same. The two English words translate one Greek word. He is a person and always functions as a person. He can be grieved (Eph. 4:30). The Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit is one person the same as God, the Father, and Jesus Christ, the Son are individual persons (Eph. 4:1-4).

Just as one individual cannot dwell literally within another person, so neither God the Father, Christ the Son, nor the Holy Spirit dwells in us personally. Such divine indwelling is a beautiful expression pointing to the closeness of our relationship to them. When one misapplies these scriptures by making them literal, he not only comes up with conflicting and confusing denominational doctrines but deprives himself of the real beauty of the revelation! The indwelling of the Godhead can only be effected by the words of the Eternal One. When this word is in the heart of the sincere individual it is God dwelling in us and we in him!

God dwells in us. Christ dwells in us. The Holy Spirit dwells in us. We dwell in them, that close! Such a close relationship is described by this beautiful and satisfying figure of

speech. Other figures express the close relationship, such as we walk with him; he leads us; we are his sons and daughters. These physical, worldly images are descriptive of the spiritual. Our God is spirit (John 4:24). If any one of them is taken literally, that conveys an unreasonable idea leading to confusion and often unwholesome superstition. Do not allow this to happen to you.

Inexcusable Excuses

By Terry R. Townsend
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Have you ever thought about what folks might say to God at judgment for their failure to obey him? It's sobering, isn't it, to know there's a coming judgment – a day in which all men will give account of themselves to the Lord! Paul writes, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2 Cor. 5:10). Let's consider a few inexcusable excuses.

Without question, millions of people will blame their lack of obedience on preachers. Unfortunately, millions today put more faith in mortal man than they do God. Yet, the Bible is abundantly clear that one must be a doer of the word and not a hearer only (James 1:21-25). False teachers are deceiving millions into thinking they have "peace and safety," when in reality they're on a collision course with destruction (1 Thess. 5:1-3; 2 Pet. 2:1-3). Thus, it behooves us to test the spirits (1 John 4:1; Acts 17:11). Blaming false teachers at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

There will be many on the Day of Judgment blaming the weather

for their lack of involvement in the Lord's work. When asked why they fail to participate in spiritual activities, many blame mother nature – too hot in summer, too cold in winter, too wet in spring, too windy in fall, etc. If truth be told, people will do whatever their hearts so desire! Inclement weather does not negate one's responsibility to serve God (1 Cor. 15:58). Blaming the weather at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

Undoubtedly, millions will blame their parents at Judgment for their failure to do God's will. How often have I heard non-members say the following in a Bible study, "I see what you're saying, but if what I believe was good enough for dad and mom, it's good enough for me!" But what if dad and mom were wrong? Will God still grant you entrance into Heaven despite your failure to obey that which you knew to be true? The Bible says that one must obey Christ above all else, including family (cf. Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-35). In matters of faith, who should we ultimately listen to? Parents or Christ? Obviously, the answer is Jesus (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-3). Putting the blame on parents for your lack of obedience will be an inexcusable excuse.

Others at Judgment will use the excuse of profession for their failing to do the Father's Will. I'm sure some will say, "I would have obeyed and served you Lord, but my job wouldn't allow it." Truth be told, millions are more interested in money than they are in God. Paul had it right when he penned, "But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs" (1 Tim. 6:9-10 ESV). Jesus said that we're to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" (Matt. 6:33). To blame one's profession at Judgment will be an inexcusable excuse.

I’m sure that on Judgment Day some will use their lack of earthly substance (poverty) as an excuse for their failing to do the will of God. Some will probably say, “Lord, I wasn’t as blessed as others; thus, I didn’t do all I could.” I wonder if God will have standing beside Him the widow who gave two mites as an example to those making such excuses (cf. Mark 12:41-44)? The Lord expects us to do what we can with what we have (Matt. 25:14 ff). Blaming our lack of service on poverty will be an inexcusable excuse.

Another excuse many will make at Judgment will be that of persecution. I can hear some now, “Lord, I would’ve served You, but I didn’t because I feared persecution.” But didn’t he tell us in his word that Christians would be mistreated on occasion (cf John 15:20; 2 Tim. 3:12). Didn’t he assure us his presence, protection, and panoply to help us overcome (cf. Matt. 28:20; Heb. 13:5-6; Eph. 6:10 ff)? Jesus said, “And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28). Thus, fear of persecution as a defense for failing to obey God will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Finally, millions will offer unto God the excuse of procrastination; that is, many will say, “I wanted to obey You Lord, but I simply ran out of time!” I wonder if Felix will be among the masses who will make such an excuse (Acts 24:25)? The Lord is patient, and he gives men ample time to obey (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9-14); thus, to use procrastination as a reason for failing to obey will be an inexcusable excuse on Judgment Day.

Simply put, we can make all the excuses we want to as to why we fail to do God’s Will; however, on the Day of Judgment, God’s answer to such excuses will be this:

“Depart from me, ye that work iniquity!”

How Are Men Saved?

By Louis Rushmore

Out of boundless love, God the Father sent his son Jesus Christ into the world to die for our sins. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The sacrifice of Jesus Christ for us was part of God’s grace and mercy by which we are saved. The sacrifice of Christ and grace permits a just God to grant forgiveness of sins; Christ’s sacrifice and mercy permits a just God to withhold punishment for sins. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8). “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:5).

Through grace God gives men what they do not deserve (salvation), and through mercy God does not give men what they do deserve (punishment). However, the grace and mercy of God which results in salvation is conditional upon man’s obedience to the Gospel.

With no less love for our souls, Jesus Christ willingly died for us. “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (John 6:38). Through his shed blood Christ saves us. “And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the

prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Revelation 1:5). "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Ephesians 1:7).

Also, as mediator between God the Father and ourselves Jesus saves us. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:4-5). However, Christ as mediator and his blood save men conditionally.

The Holy Spirit's role in conversion relates primarily to the provision of inspired revelation (the Word of God). Second Peter 1:20-21 summarizes the way in which Scripture was communicated from God to man. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:20-21).

The Holy Spirit, along with God and Jesus Christ, participates with men in their conversion. "For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). That joint participation of the Godhead with us in the forgiveness of sins is non-miraculous and through the Word of God.

All that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have done to arrange for the forgiveness of sins is conditional upon man's obedience to God's plan of salvation recorded in the Gospel (the New Testament portion of the Bible). First, one must examine what the Bible teaches about salvation in order for faith to develop. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Romans 10:17). Without faith salvation is impossible. "But without faith it is impossible

to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6); "I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

However, faith only is useless. "But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?" (James 2:20). "Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:24). Though men cannot earn salvation, God refuses to grant forgiveness of sins to men who refuse to obey him.

Faith is followed by repentance. All men are required to repent or perish. "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent" (Acts 17:30). "I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish" (Luke 13:3).

Profession before others of one's faith in Jesus Christ naturally occurs next. "For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Romans 10:10). One New Testament character worded his profession: ". . . I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God" (Acts 8:38).

Baptism (immersion) is the point at which sins are forgiven. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Baptism, though, does not save without the Godhead's role in salvation as well as man's part in his own salvation (i.e., hearing, believing, repenting, professing).

God the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit have done

their parts toward saving men. However, man also has a role in his own salvation according to Philippians 2:12. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Philippians 2:12).

Man’s role is summarized in the Bible as obedience. Speaking of Jesus, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). Obedience is the conditional basis of the Father, Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit’s roles in our salvation.

Men who do not obey the Gospel will be lost. “And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power” (2 Thessalonians 1:7-9).

Dear Reader, are you saved? Have you obeyed the Gospel yet? The Father Son, and Holy Spirit have done their parts toward your salvation. It only remains for you to fulfill your role in your own salvation.

Cotham’s Comments on the Holy Spirit

By Perry B. Cotham
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A misconception of the Holy Spirit and his work for man's salvation leads to all kinds of religious errors. All that we can ever know about the Spirit and his work comes from the Scriptures. It is tragic to see some turn away from what the Bible teaches in favor of an inner, mystical longing, which they mistake for information about God.

The Holy Spirit is a person. There are three beings in one Godhead (Acts 17:29; Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14). There is only one God (Deut. 6:4), but three beings possess the divine nature.

The Holy Spirit gave us the Holy Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; Eph. 6:17). The apostles were guided by the Spirit into all of the truth (John 16:13; 2 Pet. 1:3; Jude 1:3). In conviction, conversion, and edification the Holy Spirit operates on the heart of man only through the inspired Word of God (Psa. 19:7; Psa. 73:24; Psa. 119:50, Psa. 119:93, Psa. 119:105, Psa. 119:130). "The Gospel … is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). The Spirit operates through the words of revelation, which are spirit and life (John 6:63).

The Bible plainly says that the Holy Spirit dwells within Christians. Paul wrote, "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own?" (1 Cor. 6:19).

How does the Spirit indwell the child of God? He indwells directly or indirectly. There is a difference in stating the fact and in stating the method (the how) of the Spirit's indwelling. The Bible does not teach that the Spirit dwells in Christians apart from the inspired Word. Many religionists have the idea of a personal, direct indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the child of God. They think the Spirit gives the believer extra help besides the Word of God. This, of course, denies the all-sufficiency of God-breathed writing to make the man of God complete. Of course, this belief leads to all kinds

of “experiences” and “feelings.”

Let us note some things: (1) God dwells in Christians (2 Cor. 6:16; 1 John 4:12-16). Does God dwell in his children directly or indirectly? It is indirect, through obedience to the word: “He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him” (1 John 3:24). (2) Christ dwells in Christians (Col. 1:27). But how does Christ dwell in us? Paul explains, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith” (Eph. 3:17). “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). (3) The Holy Spirit dwells in Christians. The Spirit is in each faithful member of the church the same way that God and Christ are in the saved. Neither God, Christ, nor the Holy Spirit dwells directly, personally, in Christians. As the Christian obeys the Spirit’s message, the Spirit’s influences are in him, and he brings forth the fruit of the Spirit in his life: “Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control” (Gal. 5:22-23).

Comparing Ephesians 5:17-19 with Colossians 3:16 shows how the Spirit is in the child of God. To be “filled with the Spirit” is to let the “word of Christ” dwell in you richly. There is no statement of Scripture saying the Holy Spirit dwells literally, directly, and personally in the child of God. If Jehovah the Father and Jesus the Son can indwell Christians indirectly and figuratively, the Holy Spirit can do the same.

Children of God cherish the Spirit’s message and live by it, and in this way the Holy Spirit dwells in them and in the church. The teaching that the Spirit works directly – separate and apart from the Word of God in the heart of the alien sinner or the child of God, is contrary to the teaching of the Bible. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God … that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Tim. 3:16-17). We have the Bible and it is sufficient to make us what God wants us to be.

What About the Rapture?

by Joe E. Galloway
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The rapture is a widely accepted denominational doctrine. Popular TV and radio evangelists teach this idea. Several best-selling religious books deal with this subject. Hal Lindsey's book, The Late Great Planet Earth, became a Hollywood movie. This book, first printed in 1970, was so popular that by 1976 it had gone through forty-two printings!

The result of this blitz of teaching is alarming. The news media mentioned the War in the Persian Gulf as maybe connected with Armageddon. Many people are using the term "the rapture" as if it was a commonly known and established future event, but the word "rapture" is not in any credible translation of the Bible.

The denominational idea of a coming rapture confuses folk and makes it difficult for them to understand and accept the truth. It is necessary to combat this false teaching before we can begin successfully to teach basic Bible truth. Some members of the church have accepted the teaching as Biblical. Brethren, we must teach the truth on "end times" and answer this false doctrine.

This incorrect view of "the rapture" says that Christ will soon appear and take the saved away from the earth for a seven-year rapture, leaving the unsaved on the earth to suffer. Most of us have read articles or heard hair-raising stories on what these people say will occur when Christ raptures the saved.

The anecdotes tell of men waking up and finding their wives

and children mysteriously gone. Others, at work, abruptly disappear from their machines and desks. Drivers and pilots suddenly vanish, causing crippling crashes.

Those not raptured panic, not knowing what has happened. The phone lines are jammed as people call the police, the newspaper office, the radio station. Disorder is rampant. Finally, some slowly realize the “rapture” has taken place, and they, not ready, were left behind. Meanwhile, the saved have inexpressible bliss.

TOO NEW TO BE BIBLICAL

Few people seem to know this unbiblical teaching is somewhat new. Although the false doctrine of premillennialism has been around for a while, dispensational premillennialism (from which comes the rapture idea) is dated from about 1830, beginning with John N. Darby and the start of the Plymouth Brethren movement.

One writer claims the two-stage idea of Christ’s coming commenced with Miss Margaret MacDonald in Port Glasgow, Scotland a few years earlier. No one can trace it back before the 1800’s. This shows the doctrine to be unscriptural. It started 1700 years too late to be from God!

THE DISPENSATIONAL PREMILLENNIAL THEORY EXPLAINED

Dispensationalists, generally, teach that all human history falls into seven divisions. They disagree on the designations and the exact periods covered in the first five dispensations, but all agree we are now living in the sixth period, called,

by them, the Dispensation of Grace. They expect the seventh dispensation to last one thousand years and call it, The Millennium.

Most say the Dispensation of Grace will soon end with the reputed rapture. The living righteous will be caught up to meet Christ in the air to be judged and rewarded. The rapture lasts seven years (the "final week" of Daniel's prophesy – Daniel 9:27)

On earth, during this seven-year period, is The Great Tribulation. During the first part of this period, the Jews in Palestine make a covenant with Antichrist. They rebuild the temple, renew its sacrifices, and convert many to Judaism.

In the middle of this seven-year period the Antichrist breaks covenant with the Jews and demands to be worshiped. Multitudes are slaughtered in a great persecution.

After seven years, Christ comes back to earth with the raptured saints. Dispensational premillennialists call this The Revelation. The battle of Armageddon is fought and the Antichrist is destroyed in the war.

The righteous dead are, at last, remembered and resurrected. All the nations are judged. The millennium begins. Christ rules the world from earthly Jerusalem, sitting on David's literal throne. After the thousand years, Satan is loosed for a little while. After Satan's last fling, the wicked dead are resurrected and judged in "The Great White Throne Judgment."

A PROOF TEXT

Teachers of dispensational premillennialism claim First Thessalonians teaches their speculation about a rapture and tribulation and millennial reign of Jesus on earth. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall

we ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:17).

The verse does mention the living saved, along with the resurrected saved, caught up to meet the Lord in the air, however the passage speaks of what occurs after all the dead are raised and judged and says nothing of a secret rapture. The passage also indicates the redeemed in Hades are resurrected and the saved on earth are transformed simultaneously.

The book of First Thessalonians does not teach a clandestine return and rapture but says, “he (Jesus) shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God” (1 Thess. 4:16). This is one of the noisiest verses in the Bible! The verse says, “the dead in Christ shall rise first.”

Verse 17 says the saved of earth shall, with the sainted dead, be caught up “in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.” The word “so,” most people know, is an adverb of manner, and means “in this manner,” that is, “in the air,” shall we ever be with the Lord.

The rapture notion teaches, instead, that only the living righteous will be caught up in the air to be with Christ for seven years. Then they are to return to earth with him in The Revelation.

The advocates of a covert coming of Christ and the rapture say the Bible pictures the final coming Jesus as like a thief. So, they think, he will sneak in and snatch the saved from the earth secretly, like a thief doing his work.

The Bible does not teach the act of Christ’s coming to be as a thief, but says “the day” comes like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2). This does not teach that Christ will be sneaking in and out but shows we cannot know when Christ is coming.

CONTRARY TO BIBLICAL TEACHING

Many things in this fanciful doctrine contradict Bible truth! The word “rapture” is not Biblical. Hal Lindsey says it is not in the Bible and tells us not to look for It (The Late Great Planet Earth, page 126). Consider some discrepancies of this doctrine with God’s revealed truth.

First Discrepancy

The idea that the saved are to be taken from the world, while the lost remain, violates Bible teaching. The parable of the tares (Matt. 13:24-30; Matt. 13:38-43) disproves this notion. The wheat and the tares grow together “until the harvest” (13:30). Jesus tells us “the good seed are the children of the kingdom” and “the tares are the children of the wicked one” (13:38). “The harvest is the end of the world” (13:39). The sacred scriptures say the good and the bad will “grow together” until the “end of the world.” In the final harvest the householder will command, “Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in the bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn” (verse 30). Jesus’ interpretation of the parable says, “The Son of man shall send forth his angles, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun” (verses 41-43). The impress of the passage is a simultaneous judgment of the saved and the lost. The parable says the lost are to be cast into the fires of hell at the same time the saved go to their heavenly mansions.

Second Discrepancy

Dispensational millenarians teach separate resurrections of the good and evil. According to them, the transformed

righteous of earth are swept away to a seven-year ecstasy. After the seven years, the sainted dead are resurrected to take part in a victorious 1,000 year earthly kingdom. After this, the wicked are resurrected. This makes different resurrections separated by at least 1,000 years.

Jesus said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29).

Some try to dodge the force of this by saying that “all” simply refers to the saved. Jesus takes care of this quibble- “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” The ransomed and the dammed are raised the same hour.

Third Discrepancy

The rapture theory demands a secret coming of Christ. In discussing the destruction of Jerusalem, Jesus told his disciples not to believe it if some said, “Lo, here is Christ, or there” (Matt. 24:23-26). Jesus explained, “For as the lightening cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:27).

Just as all see the flash of lightening, so Christ’s ultimate coming will be open and public. It will not be an event so secret that most of mankind will not even realize Christ has returned until many hours afterward. Acts 1:11 tells us, “This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven.” When he comes again, “every eye shall see him” (Rev. 1:7).

Fourth Discrepancy

The rapture speculation of millennial dispensationalists demands two future, literal returns of Christ. They call one return “the rapture” and the other return “the revelation.” Jesus promised, “I will come again” (John 14:3). He did not say, “I will come again and again.” Hebrews 9:28 tells us that “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” A third literal coming of Jesus is not promised in the holy scripture.

Dispensationalists downplay what the Bible says about a second literal coming by calling it the first and second “phase” of his second coming. This does not remove the fact they teach he is coming two more times, with seven years between his second and third coming. The Bible teaches one, still future, literal coming of Christ!

Fifth Discrepancy

A seven-year period of great tribulation on earth triggered by the second, literal coming of Jesus is not in the Bible. Matthew 24:21 mentions “great tribulation” at the destruction of Jerusalem – not after this age and the destruction of the earth.

The great tribulation of Matthew 24 cannot refer to Jesus’ last coming. The passage tells his followers not to return to their houses for possessions and speaks of the difficulty of being pregnant or nursing a baby and of the inconvenience of fleeing during the winter or on the Sabbath, all of which is meaningless, unless he is speaking of Jerusalem’s destruction, and not of his second, final coming. If Jesus is coming again to steal, like a thief, the good folk from the earth, it is pointless to tell them not to pack their clothes nor urge them to pray nor to have babies, nor that it is winter, nor the Sabbath day when he comes to zing them into rhapsody.

Revelation 7:14 speaks of victorious saints who suffered "great tribulation" on earth, who are rewarded by the Lord in heaven. There is no passage in all the Bible that speaks of a great tribulation after the Christian age. The Bible speaks instead of great comfort for the redeemed at the end of this period.

Sixth Discrepancy

The antichrist concept of millennialism is foreign to the scriptures. Antichrist simply means a person who is against Christ. The term is never used in the Bible to designate a leader of the forces of evil at the end of time.

1 John 2:18 helps answer this false emphasis. John said, "even now are many antichrists." The antichrists of John's day disprove the claim that one antichrist will appear after this age.

A list of those identified as the antichrist is amusing – Napoleon, Wilhelm, Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Henry Kissinger, and Ronald Reagan. Soon someone will add Suddam Hussein to the roll. The prophets for dispensationalism are obviously wide of the mark, but that does not seem to bother their followers. They commonly ignore Deuteronomy 18:22! The prophets of the rapture, who teach lies, are the tail (Isa. 9:15)

Seventh Discrepancy

The battle of Armageddon, according to dispensational millenialists, is a war between the forces of the antichrist and those of Jesus at his literal, second coming. Revelation 16:14 mentions a "battle" and Revelation 16:16 mentions a place called "Armageddon." Neither the antichrist nor Christ's last coming is mentioned in this passage.

Pre-millennialists say prophetic statements should be accepted

in an unqualified sense. The battle of Armageddon is therefore a verbatim, carnal warfare. Some claim the carnage will be so great blood will really flow to the depth of the horse's bits – horses will be swimming in human blood.

Will they accept as literal "three unclean spirits like frogs" coming "out of the mouth of the dragon" to gather the kings to battle? The war of Revelation 16 is no more literal than is the instigator a literal frog who comes out of the mouth of a literal dragon.

Eighth Discrepancy

Advocates of the rapture say the earthly phase of the kingdom of heaven is to begin when Christ comes a second time unto salvation. The bible says the earthly phase of the kingdom of God now exists and will end when Jesus appears a final time.

The kingdom of heaven, which John the Baptist said was at hand, began on the Pentecost of Acts 2, during the Roman empire as foretold in Daniel 2:44. First century saints were in it (Col. 1:13-14; Heb. 12:28). At Jesus' last coming he will deliver an already established kingdom to God the Father (1 Cor. 15:23-25).

Ninth Discrepancy

Dispensationalists list as many as seven separate days of judgment. All such false teachers list at least three days of judgment – one at the claimed rapture of the saints, another for the nations after the assumed seven-year tribulation, and a third at the end of the so-called millennium.

The Bible teaches one day of judgment. Near the end of the gospel of Matthew we read of the day of judgment at least four times (Matt. 10:15; Matt. 11:22-24; Matt. 12:36), and "judgment" (singular) at least two more times (Matt.

12:41-42). “He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world” (Acts 17:31). The idea of various days of judgment for various groups of people is alien to the Bible.

“As it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:27-28).

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