

**REPENTANCE—Excerpted From-LETTERS WRITTEN TO A RECENT CONVERT
By A.W. Mitchell, M.D. (1853)**

MY DEAR FRIEND:—You will find it useful, both for future stability and present satisfaction, to learn to discriminate between what is genuine and what is spurious in religious experience. I propose to drop a few hints which may aid you in this work.

Repentance, as well in the order of nature as the time, seems to occupy the advance-post in the list of spiritual exercises. Whether repentance precedes faith, or faith precedes repentance, (since a man must believe that he is a sinner before he will repent,) or whether this precedence varies in individuals according their different characters and situations, have been mooted points, which we need not now decide. It is sufficient for us that the Scripture represent repentance as the first step, the turning-point, in the process of conversion.

But remorse is not repentance. Keen remorse, such as the dying Randolph felt, may be produced by considerations which are not of a spiritual nature; such as the loss of reputation, the blight of exposure, the pressure of distress, the recollection of mis-spent time, the apprehension of future torment; but if these can be removed, the sorrow will subside, and the heart relapse into its wonted hardness and indifference. A heart-broken mourner is a common sight. But the heart is like a rock of ice, which may be broken into a thousand pieces, yet remain ice still. But to be at once broken and melted beneath the power of the divine word, this is what is needed.

The torments of conscience and the terrors of an endless hell are enough of themselves, upon the least reflection, to harrow up the soul. Any one who allows his thoughts to turn in this direction, may be filled with hatred of sin, and may even loathe himself bitterly for his vileness. But suppose some cunning Universalist were to be thrown in your way, who would be able to satisfy you that future judgment and eternal punishment are mere figments, and that you have nothing to fear from a God of boundless love; or if justice requires expiation, that every sinner suffers an adequate penalty in this mortal life;—suppose that you could be imposed upon by such plausible views, would your uncomfortable feelings and your sorrow for sin all vanish away? Or do you feel such a hatred of sin and such a sense of its pollution, that, independent of punish or reward, you would still desire to be rid of sin, and to become pure and holy?

Certainly, although these awful realities remain true, and although fear and hope are legitimate motives to action, you must rise superior to merely selfish considerations. You must not be mercenary or venal. Yours must not be a religion that consists more in the fear of the devil than in the love of God. You must abhor sin, and repent of it, and forsake it just as sincerely as if there was no hell to punish or heaven to reward. You must hate sin because it is odious in the sight of God, and all holy beings; because it is hateful in itself, degrading and polluting; and because it was the occasion of the Saviour's sufferings. Until you have such views and feelings, your repentance is inadequate. It stops short of the gospel standard. It is a legal, not an evangelical repentance. It may be remorse, but it is not repentance.

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Righteousness Exalts Nations

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"Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). God blesses any nation that honors His Word. The American Enterprise Institute, a prestigious think tank, recently published the results of a study of the impact of religion on the making of the American society. Contrary to the noisy propaganda of liberals, the foundation of American society is firmly rooted in Christianity. This study showed Christianity's immense influence on so many of the important principles that contributed to the enduring success of this great nation.

The current problem of overwhelming immigration, driven by a desire for freedom and an opportunity for a higher standard of living, makes a clear statement about this country and its abundant opportunities for liberty and achievement. Three primary factors make it possible for us to have the unrivaled standard of living and the outstanding quality of life

that is so desirable to so many: the American form of capitalism; scientific progress; and the capacity for self-government. This study shows that each of these three pillars of this great society have their beginnings in Christianity.

The power of reason and clear thinking is essential for the development and growth of capitalism and scientific progress. Christianity is the genesis of the reasoning that gave us this development which was driven by advancements in industry and technology. Most of the scientific progress, which is the basis of this advancement, has its roots not only in Christian thinking but also in the disciplined and logical minds of Christian scientists.

Studies show that governmental corruption is the primary cause of poverty in poor nations. Fortunately, ours is a nation of laws, the basis of which are found largely within our own Bible. (Those who are so very negative about this nation need to spend some time in

developing countries or take a good look at world history.) Our founding fathers were men who had been scrupulously taught from the Scriptures. Most of them had formal theological training. Fortunately, they prayerfully drew from the Bible when framing our Constitution. This Judeo-Christian culture of ours is basically a law-abiding culture, giving our nation a capacity for self government; the foundation for the success of capitalism; and the opportunity to enjoy technological advancement.

The next time you enjoy the genial comforts of a safe and secure home, thank God. The next time you drive your car along well-developed roads or beautiful highways, be thankful our founding fathers were students of God's Word. The next time you benefit from technology or medical science, remember that righteousness really does exalt a nation.

E.W. Wheeler

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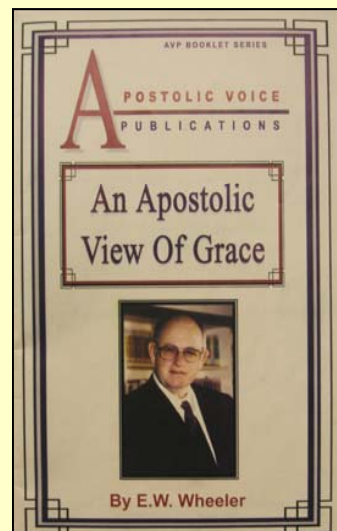
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Since our first publication in the early eighties, our mission has been to provide “doctrine and instruction in righteousness” to the churches in the Philippines (II Timothy 3:16). By request, we are expanding our circulation, trusting that God will bless and use it for the benefit of His Kingdom.

ON THE ERRORS OF THE TRINITY—By Michael Servetus

Furthermore, and worse than all this, how much this tradition of the Trinity has, alas! Been a laughing-stock to the Mohammedans, only God knows. The Jews also shrink from adherence to this fancy of ours, and laugh at our foolishness about the Trinity; and on account of its blasphemies they believe that this is the Messiah who was promised in their law. And not only Mohammedans and Hebrews, but the very beasts of the field, would make fun of us did they grasp our fantastical notion, for all the works of the Lord bless the one God. Hear also what Mohammed says; for more reliance is to be given to one truth which an enemy confesses than to a hundred lies on our side. For he says in his Alcoran that CHRIST was the greatest of the prophets, the spirit of God, the power of God, the breath of God, the very soul of God...and that it is because of the wickedness of the Jews toward him that they are in their present wretchedness and misfortune. He says, moreover, that the Apostles and Evangelists and the First Christians were the best of men, and wrote what is true, and did not hold the Trinity, or three Persons in the Divine Being, but men in later times added this.

ROBERT HINDMARSH

Matthew 8:2-3 KJV

(2) And, behold, there came a leper and worshiped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. (3) And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

Would Jesus admit and receive worship, if he were merely a man, a prophet, or a delegated messenger from the high God? Twice did the apostle John, in his ignorance, attempt to fall down and worship an angel, who was sent by the Supreme God to shew him things to come, as in Apoc. xix. 10; chap. xxii. 8,9. But as often did the angel refuse to be honoured in such a way, and as often direct him to the true God: “See thou do it not: I am thy fellow-servant, and of “thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: “worship God.” Not so Jesus; for being himself the God of angels, of prophets, and of wise men, or what amounts to the same thing, being He who sends and commissions them to perform his will in their different functions, (Apoc. xxii. 16. Matt. xxiii. 34.) he views with complacency every act of worship, when directed to his own divine person; and, in token of his approbation, stretches out his hand, and either cleanses a leper, heals an infirmity, or casts out a devil.

In the present instance the leper not only offers him the honour of external adoration, but accompanies it with a profession of faith in his divine omnipotence, saying, “Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.” To whom the Lord in mercy answered, “I will, be thou clean:” and instantly the effect of his mercy and omnipotence is visible, the faith of the leper is confirmed, his worship accepted, and the malady healed.

Under all these circumstances, is it possible for a moment to doubt, that Jesus is God? and if God, that he is the only God, since a second God, or an equal cannot be given?

A Look at the Meaning of “Antichrist”

To just study a text for a contemporary meaning so that it's relevant for today's current situations and problems has its drawbacks. For one, it completely overlooks that vast historical setting by which it was originally staged. To find the original meaning of the text is invaluable because you start with a clearer historical understanding and perspective. When that task is sufficiently accomplished, proceed to a devotional or sermon method of interpretation to find its current relevance. In that way the word in question does not become “hijacked” to fit our immediate circumstances.

For example, the inherent dangers of those that chose to ignore the original meaning of the Constitution is obvious when you see how wrecked our society has become on such issues as abortion and gay-marriage. Likewise, there are inherent pitfalls when we ignore the original meaning of any other text. We need to look at its contextual setting, taking into account the overall theme of the letter. The general, present day sense and future eschatological sense may be understood, but often the historical sense is overlooked.

The word “antichrist” or “antichristos” means an opponent of the Messiah and it is used four times in the New Testament by the Apostle John in his epistles. Today, the word “antichrist” is generally used in a purely eschatological sense and has unfortunately lost part of its historical meaning and import. But John's deliberate usage of the word had some very specific purposes. For one, it was used to warn the church of the heretical Gnostic belief that Jesus did not come in the flesh. This came to be known as Docetism. This was the spirit of antichrist that the early church was combating. In 1 John 2:18 the Apostle insists that there are many antichrists: not just one.

Gnosticism, according to Oxford, is defined as a “heretical movement of the 2nd-century Christian Church, teaching that esoteric knowledge (gnosis) of the supreme divine being enabled the redemption of the human spirit.” John was compelled to write specifically against a teaching within Gnosticism that was antichrist in its very nature—the errant belief that Jesus only appeared to have a body. But if Jesus was a phantom, then so were His brethren (see Hebrews 2:17).

According to Buck's Theological Dictionary, the Gnostics “rejected our Lord's humanity on the principle that every thing corporeal is essentially and intrinsically evil.” Chadwick's, “The Early Church,” states that “The divine Christ (they held) might have appeared to blinded worldlings as if he were tangible flesh and blood, but those with higher insight perceived that he was pure spirit and that the physical appearance was an optical illusion and mere semblance.”

So, John was “earnestly contending for the faith.” Not just contending for the Lord's divinity, but also for His humanity. Lenski contends that these antichrists “did not remain; they ‘went out from us.’” And they “made Jesus the son of Joseph.” He also states that, “The Jews declared that Jesus was not the Christ, not the Son of God, and Jesus proved to them that they neither knew the Father, nor had him as Father, John 8:42, etc., but were of the devil, the liar from the beginning, the father of lies. While John here denounces the early Gnostics [1 John 2:22], Cerinthus [a celebrated Gnostic leader] and his following, his words certainly recall those of Jesus to the Jews, although the latter were not anti-Christ in the sense of having developed in the Christian Church. Cerinthus dreamed of a heavenly Eon . . .

a fictional being whom he substituted for the Son of one essence with the Father; this Eon Christ was not Jesus, who was merely Joseph's natural son. This Eon Christos descended upon Jesus at his Baptism, but left Jesus before his Passion, so that only Joseph's physical son Jesus died on the cross...So that a mere man died on the cross.”

According to Levi Paine (The Ethnic Trinities), “the Gnostics were in fact essentially dualistic Zoroastrians in Christian disguise, and we must not forget how widespread were the Gnostic heresies in the Christian church in this period. Irenaeus recounts about a hundred different Gnostic sects.”

The contextual reading of 1 John 2, and the special connotation that is more than implied about these antichrists, is that they came out from us. Many errors have developed from without, but there's something especially unsavory when it is developed from those that had known the truth.

Gnosticism accentuated knowledge. But why accentuate knowledge over faith? Or put knowledge above any other virtue for that matter? Obviously to be “knowledgeable” is powerfully seductive in and of itself. Paul warned that “knowledge (gnosis) puffeth up” (1 Corinthians 8:1). Another translation says “knowledge makes people arrogant.” The key is balance. We must be careful not to make one aspect of Christianity more prominent than the other; but to remain Apostolic in every area of our Christian walk. It is not enough to just have semblances of Christianity; but we need to be like the originals.

What a word has come to “mean” and what a word “meant” can be two different things. Sometimes words evolve. We want its original Apostolic meaning, because a complete meaning has much more impact. John was not flippant with the usage of the word antichrist. He was very pointed, specific and forceful: Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time (1 John 2:18). Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son (1 John 2:22). And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world (1 John 4:3). For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist (2 John 1:7).

There are those that still believe that Jesus did not have human flesh, but that is easily refuted: But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law (Galatians 4:4). Wherefore in all things it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people (Hebrews 2:17). And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Timothy 3:16). Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have (Luke 24:39).

Unfortunately the “antichrist” spirit is still around today. We must combat it as did the Apostle John, taking into account that the word “antichrist” is also speaking about those that do not believe in the true nature of Jesus Christ. We must defend His full deity and His humanity. To simply use the word “antichrist” in a general sense seems to weaken what was originally a very strong and direct application towards those that would “oppose” the true message of the Oneness of God in Christ.

D.S. Garza

Taking Back Our Homes-By Rebecca Hagelin-Excerpted from Imprimis

[T]he toxic culture that is poisoning the hearts and souls of our families and our children isn't just "out there." Often times the American home has become the sump for cultural sewage. It used to be that the home was the nurturing oasis providing relief from outside dangers. It used to be that a parent's greatest worry was looking out for the guy in the trench coat lurking in the shadows at the edge of the school playground. Well, that guy in the trench coat is now in our homes.

Don't believe me? Log on to the Internet. According to the London School of Economics, nine out of ten children who go online, usually to do homework, will stumble across hardcore pornography. Let me repeat: 90 percent of children will fall victim to pornography in their own homes. And then there's intentional porn consumption by kids. Oh, children might pass around a pornographic Web address at school, but it's in the safety of their own homes-often in their own bedrooms-that they close the door and consume hours of pornography. Over 50 percent of kids who enter chat rooms-where conversation is often raunchy and racy-say they have given out personal information to complete strangers. Chat rooms and sites such as MySpace.com have become playgrounds for sexual predators, often luring kids to situations of abuse and even death. Online pornography is more than a \$10 billion a year industry, working 24/7 to make porn addicts out of our kids-and too often succeeding.

Tired of Internet porn? Turn on the television and flip to MTV. Why? It's what your teenagers are watching. As a matter of fact, MTV is the number one viewing choice for teen girls. And if you haven't seen MTV in a while, well, let me just say that our kids are not just watching artsy music videos anymore...Think the problem is just on cable? Why not switch to Desperate Housewives, the third most popular television show among today's teens. By the way, a recent Kaiser Family Foundation Report on media uses of teenagers reveals that 68 percent of children say they now have a TV in their bedroom, and the vast majority say their parents have no idea what they are watching.

Had enough Internet and television porn? Check out the video games our teen boys are playing. The second most popular of these games is Grand Theft Auto, in which the player actually becomes the character who steals cars, rapes women, has sex with a prostitute and then clubs her to death. And that's not to mention the decapitation of policemen.

And then there's the music. The number one music genre of choice for today's youth of all races and socioeconomic groups is the often verbally pornographic and violent rap and hip-hop. According to the media study I mentioned earlier, our kids are consuming six-and-one-half hours of media every single day. And as I've described, the vast majority of it is sexual, violent, uncivil, and often plain stupid.

But what's the harm? Isn't this just entertainment? Well, let's see. Corporations spend billions of dollars every year on advertising. Why? Because they know that media affects behavior. Today's youth are the most marketed-to generation in the history of the world. Our kids are spending an estimated \$200 billion a year on trinkets and toys and clothes and media. Marketing executives at MTV and other youth-oriented media do not brag about how they know what kids want, but about how they have learned to manipulate the teenage mind. They are selling a "lifestyle" to our children that robs them of their innocence and their best futures, and capitalizes on the natural raging hormones that mark the teen years. Instead of helping channel that energy into worthwhile activities, the media fuels the flames in an effort to keep them tuned into the programming.

These marketers are teaching our young girls that their lives are all about their sexual power and our young boys that life is all about who can be more crudely funny or irresponsible. Sexual activity is expected and has no consequences. Civility does not exist. And the only brand of respect that's taught is a twisted brand of "self-respect."

Preserving the Empire—Thomas Weisser

Jesus came to establish a heavenly kingdom. He told Pilate shortly before His crucifixion, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom from hence." He came during the period in history when the Roman Empire was great. Paul, the greatest missionary in the Empire, recognized the superiority of Christ's heavenly kingdom. He wrote to Timothy from a Roman prison explaining that he expected to be preserved unto Christ's heavenly kingdom. This was written shortly before his death. Paul denied himself status in the Jewish religion and recognized Christ's kingdom as superior to the Roman Empire. Christ's kingdom definitely is superior because of better promises and a better covenant. It is obviously better than any kingdom man has established. A cursory examination of the New Testament will reveal its superiority in potentially civilizing mankind. The Jews were looking for a militaristic Messiah, not a suffering Messiah. In spite of that, the greatest victory the world has ever witnessed occurred on the cross 2,000 years ago.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. 2:14,15). "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col.2:14,15).

During and after the 1st century many ideas infected those calling themselves Christian. That which had started out pure in Jerusalem fragmented into various groups throughout the Empire. The true Church continued to embrace the biblical new-birth teaching of Acts 2:38 and the Oneness of God. As time went by this group became a minority among those calling themselves Christian.

Something very unusual and contrary to New Testament teaching developed in the 4th century. A state religion referred to as universal or Catholic came into being. It ignored the basic teaching of a heavenly kingdom and proceeded to endeavor to preserve an earthly kingdom. It became an essential part of the Roman Empire. Acts of violence against those not conforming to this Church became commonplace. It became a prop for imperial absolutism and supported the concept of rule by the sword. It deviated from the new-birth teaching of the New Testament. It also replaced original Oneness teaching concerning God with Tritheism.

Why were revolutionary changes accepted when they were so plainly contrary to the Bible? One of the reasons could very well be the ingrained traditions of the empire. For example, Roman law was subject to the whims of the emperor. It was accepted practice in the Empire for emperors to change the law through edicts and declarations. At times those edicts contradicted those of previous emperors, but the present emperor held preeminence. By the time of Constantine the New Testament books had been pretty much agreed upon. Why were the following creeds allowed to supersede and overrule the plain teachings of the New Testament? Many reasons could be cited including a desire to appeal to polytheistic thinkers. One of the most obvious is that citizens were used to the authority of the emperor to supersede the written law. Even though the written word was in place in the form of the New Testament, creeds, they felt, were needed to clarify what the Bible teaches. In reality, they used these extra-biblical documents to overrule and nullify the plain teachings of Scripture. In following generations this authority was grasped by the Bishop of Rome on hopes of preserving a human empire. Many decrees and decisions have been made with the hope of preserving and reviving a human empire. These have never returned to the basic New Testament teaching concerning the new-birth and the Oneness of God. In favor of preserving a human kingdom the teachings concerning the heavenly kingdom of Christ have been ignored and ridiculed. In the end the heavenly kingdom will prevail and the Church will rule and reign with Christ. "And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9,10).