

A Criticism of Progressive Theology

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In the book, *Progressive Orthodoxy*, a future probation for all the unprivileged is inferred (1) from the character of God, and (2) from the relation of Christ to all men. Under the first head may be brought such statements as these:

"We may go so far as to say that it would not be just for God to condemn men hopelessly when they have not known him as he really is—when they have not known him in Jesus Christ. The judgment does not come till the gospel has been preached to all nations. The gospel is preached to a nation, not when within certain geographical boundaries it has been proclaimed at scattered points, but only when in reality all individuals of all the nations have known it." (p. 64.)

Again,

"All this means that the supreme, final, absolute revelation of God to men is in the person and work of Jesus Christ; that, therefore, justice does not pronounce the word of destiny till love and mercy have gone forth to all those children who are partakers of the same flesh and blood of which he took part. If no man comest to the Father but by Christ, we conclude that without him—and almost as certainly we conclude that without the knowledge of him—no man can be brought back to God." (p. 65.)

According to these and other passages:

- a) Sinners are not finally condemned because of their sins, but because of a particular sin because they do not repent when they know God as he is, know him in the clearest revelation that can be made to them of his character, which is love.
- b) Such a knowledge of God is not given to all men in the present life, but those not receiving it here will have it given them hereafter, before the last judgment. For justice requires this. The offer of pardon on condition of repentance must be made to all in the most affecting manner possible.
- c) This, however, requires the influence of the Holy Spirit in connection with a knowledge of the person and work of Christ.

Thus it is said (p. 116): "1. The work of the Holy Spirit, as a work in motive, fulfills and makes effective the method of salvation proposed by Christianity. 2. Historic Christianity alone offers sufficient material in motive, in the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord, for the natural and efficacious work of the Holy Spirit."

On this it may be remarked,

(a) That in so far as these statements are inferences from the character of God, they are inferences from that character imperfectly apprehended, and cannot, therefore, be accepted as conclusive.

(b) That they do not agree with the prima facie meaning of Holy Scripture as to the condition of men by nature (Luke 19:10; John 3:14-16), as to the grounds of condemnation in the last day (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 25:26-30), and as to the method of grace. (Eph. 1:4; 2 Tim. 1: 9)

Under the second head may be brought such statements as the following:

"The Scriptures plainly teach the universality of Christ's work in its interest, its application, and its consummation...It is not incumbent on us to quote Scripture which shall show that the heathen do have the gospel before they are judged." (p. 102)

"We are not as positive concerning the times, seasons, or circumstances under which God will reveal himself in Christ, as we are that the principle is of universal application: that no man will be finally judged till he knows God in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and that no man will be hopelessly condemned except for the willful and final rejection of Christ. The sin against the Holy Ghost, which is thought to be that hostility to Christ which makes one incapable of redemption, is the only sin for which we are explicitly told there is no forgiveness in any world or age." (p. 105)

"The opinion, therefore, has reason in it that there would have been the incarnation even if there had been no sin. It is not easy to believe that the Word of God would not have become flesh but for sin...While sin may have had much to do with the conditions of our Lord's life and work, it may actually have retarded his historical appearance." (p. 45)

"Christ mediates God to the entire universe...Christ cannot be indifferent to the least of his creatures in its pain and wickedness, for his universe is not attached to him externally, but vitally. He is not a governor set over it, but is its life everywhere," etc. (p. 44)

On these extracts it may be remarked:

(a) Some of the language in them fails to discriminate properly between the pre-existent Word and Jesus Christ.

(b) Some of it affirms a closer relation of Christ to all created beings than the Bible suggests or reason teaches.

(c) Some of it favors the opinion that the incarnation would have taken place if there had been no sin, but this opinion is scarcely Biblical.

(d) Some of it denies that any man will be finally condemned except for the sin against the Holy Spirit—a denial not justified by the Word of God.

(e) Some of it appears to assert the universality of Christ's work, as though in the end all moral beings would be saved by it—an assertion which is opposed to strong Biblical evidence.

The trend of reasoning in man, passages of Progressive Orthodoxy is distinctly towards the final restoration of all the wicked to holiness and God's favor. Yet there are explicit rejections of this theory on the ground of Holy Scriptures. Moreover, the doctrinal equipoise of the work, as an exposition of Christian truth, is more or less disturbed by ignoring the justice of God. What justice requires him to do for sinners, and forbids him to do against them, is grasped far more firmly than what justice

requires him to do against them. And finally in the argument for probation after death, the light which God gives to the heathen by reason, conscience, the order of nature and of providence, and by the Holy Spirit, is strangely undervalued.

But is there any evidence that human probation after death would increase the number of the saved? Is it probable that the conditions of moral life would be as favorable to repentance then as now? In hades as on earth? May we not justly surmise that the total silence of Scripture as to the recovery of evil spirits to holiness is due to the fact that sin in purely spiritual beings is a more willful and obstinate choice of self in place of God, than it is in human beings as now constituted? This is not expressly taught, but do not the revealed facts favor this view rather than the opposite? Assuming that a sinful choice in moral beings always tends to become confirmed and unchangeable, it may yet be true that this tendency operates more slowly under the conditions of our present life than it does in the case of unembodied or disembodied spirits. For in our present condition:

(1) We have to spend much time, thought, and labor, in supporting and protecting the body. The law of nature and of God makes this our duty, and in performing this duty we are obedient to reason and conscience. How large a part of life is thus occupied in doing what is believed to be right and according to God's will! And, by so much, progress in evil is delayed. Says George Macdonald in "Malcom": "He lacked labor, the most healing of all God's holy things, of which we so often lose the heavenly benefit by laboring inordinately that we may rise above the earthly need of it. How many sighs are wasted over the toil of the sickly—a toil which perhaps lifts off half the weight of their sickness, elevates the inner life, and makes the outer pass with twofold rapidity."

(2) We have to spend much time and toil in providing the comforts of life for members of the same family. Domestic ties are very close, and the duties which they impose peculiarly sacred. But they appear to be conditioned on our physical nature, and to belong especially to this period of our existence. Now most of the time and thought given to these duties is believed to be used in accord with the divine will. At least, they are performed without conscious opposition to that will, or to the law prescribed by it. Hence the spirit of rebellion is not directly fostered by them. Nay, more, they seem not to originate in pure selfishness, but rather in natural reason and affection. Hence their influence is preventive of rapid spiritual deterioration. Family ties have also a certain tendency to keep the heart gentle and susceptible to divine appeals. But these ties will be shorn of their power at death—if not wholly, yet in a great measure.

(3) We have to spend much time and strength in social, civil, patriotic, and humane activity, which is prompted by reason and conscience. There is ground to suspect that men are less isolated now than they will be after death. Almost everything in this life links us in some way to other men. We are made to feel that no one liveth to himself or dieth to himself.

Thus patriotism grows out of a common soil and peril and hope; and philanthropy, out of a common origin and destiny. The kinship of mankind generates a feeling that men ought to serve one another. To be a man is to possess the secret of human nature and the key to human hearts everywhere. And, therefore, a portion of our activity here, which may be described as social, patriotic, or philanthropic, tends to retard in some degree the growth of mere selfishness and conscious hatred of God, so that the heart remains for a longer time pervious to good moral influence. But after death, many, if not all of these ties, will be sundered, and the naked spirit dwell apart, or, if it have any society, it will be that of spirits morally akin to itself. Such, at least, is the impression made upon the mind by Biblical allusions to the state of wicked men after death. How much less favorable to their recovery from sin than their state here!

(4) We have also in this life the advantage of hearing truth from men like ourselves, who have experienced its power to save. Consider the mysterious influence of human feeling when the speaker's whole physical being is penetrated and vivified by it—when the animated face, the glowing eye, the thrilling voice, and the irrepressible gesture speed the message on its way to a brother's heart! It is difficult to imagine any method of appeal surpassing this in moral effect. Consider also the countless emblems and parables of religious truth which are furnished by the works of nature and the lives of men.

Whether these illustrations would be as attractive and convincing in a life out of the body may well be doubted. Here they are natural, and their power is felt. Here they were employed by Him who knew the way to human hearts, and never spoke amiss. But it is hardly possible to believe that they would retain all their power and vividness for spirits that had passed into the unseen, bidding adieu to flesh and blood. Speaking with the utmost caution, it seems improbable that the condition of sinful souls after death can be as well adapted to the reception of the gospel as their condition now, or that the means of

impressing it upon them there can be as effective as those employed by us here. And this must be cautiously weighed in seeking for the truth.

(5) We therefore esteem a probation limited to this life more favorable to sinners than one that should be continued indefinitely beyond, even to the judgment day. But why, it may be asked, should there be any limit to the day of grace? Why must the door of escape from sin be ever closed? Because it would be useless to keep it open forever, since choice has a tendency to become irrevocable and character fixed. To a sinner repentance is an unwelcome duty. When urged to its performance, he is apt to say, with Felix, "Go thy way for this time; and when I have a convenient season I will call for thee" (Acts 24:25). Alas! How seldom does that season ever come! A selfish heart will put off the duty of turning to the Lord until the last moment. What, then, would be the influence upon such a heart of a knowledge that deliverance from sin would never be impossible? Or, what would be the influence of a presentiment that far on in the future for a "convenient season" for repentance?

There is reason to believe that such a knowledge or presentiment would lead multitudes to postpone repentance until their nature had become fixed in sin, and the call of God an empty message to the ear. So, then, there is reason to believe that a short period of grace may be far better, in reality, than a long one, and that the very mercy of God moved him to fix a limit to the day of salvation. That the spirits of bad men who had continued impenitent and in prison from the days of Noah until the death of Christ—above two thousand years—should then have repented, though Jews on earth would not, is equally without probability and without proof.

Again, that there will be no unprivileged men, no infants, and no imbeciles on earth at the final coming of Christ to judge the living and the dead, is utterly improbable. But the living are to be changed "in a moment" at "the last trump," and, according to the obvious sense of Holy Scripture, are to be judged without further probation. If then, we are constrained to believe that no injustice will be done to any of these, are we not bound to look upon probation in this life as sufficient for the earlier generations also?

From the fact that no account of the last judgment refers to the case of infants or of idiots, we think it rational to infer that, from the beginning of time, the effect of the fall upon their moral nature has been removed by the Saviour, through the work of the Spirit, before they enter the life to come. No other hypothesis agrees so well with the assuring silence of Scripture in regard to their destiny; for we are unable to find within the lids of the Bible any hint of their being lost hereafter, or any faintest suggestion of prayer for their renewal after death. It is therefore safe to trust that, in the case of those who are thus removed from the only hopeful state of probation, the second Adam has by his perfect grace destroyed the work of the first Adam.

In looking at their case we discover no ground for the doctrine of probation after death. It is a doctrine which lacks any solid foundations in the word or character of God.



The Blind Men at Jericho

Andrew Fuller
From *The Baptist Magazine*, 1848

"And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him. And behold two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And the multitude rebuked them, that they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David. And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."—Matthew 20: 29 to the end.

It is delightful to trace our blessed Lord from place to place, to listen to the applications which were made to him, and to see him continually dispensing blessings. The life of our blessed Lord is filled up with these interesting facts, individuals applying to him in circumstances of the deepest distress, and all made to rejoice in the manifestations of his goodness.

You recollect that he rested the truth of his Messiahship on this. When a message was sent to him by John, "Art thou he that should come, or look we for another?" he did not return a direct answer. It would have been sufficient if he had said, "I am he." John would have believed him, but his answer was equally satisfactory to John, and more so to others: "Go," says he, "and shew John...the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them." (Matt. 11:4-6) As if he had said, "Let him judge from these circumstances whether he is yet to look for another. John is well acquainted with the prophecies, and he will immediately refer all these displays of the divine power and goodness to me. Isaiah, in speaking of the glorious day of the Messiah, had said, 'then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped, then shall the lame man leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing.'"

One cannot help being struck with the simplicity with which these narrations are given. Here is no attempt to increase their interest by a laboured description. The events are wonderful, but they are spoken of as every day occurrences, and such they appear to have been in the life of our Lord. Many are related, and the apostle John closes his gospel by declaring that there were many other things which he did, and which if they should be written every one, the world itself would not contain the books that should be written.

The story contained in the words I have read, is in substance given us by two other of the evangelists, Mark and Luke. There are some little circumstances of variety, the principal of which is, that they make mention of only one, and Mark tells us his name was Bartimeus, the son of Timeus. Probably his might be the more remarkable or singular of the two cases, which might induce a particular reference to him, while Matthew refers to the fact of there being another also.

Let us offer a few remarks on the ease of these two blind beggars, for such in truth they were, and secondly, notice the conduct of our blessed Lord towards them.

There are several circumstances in the case of the men themselves worthy of our notice. Their affliction; the mixture of mercy there was in it; the situation in which they had placed themselves; their petition; their perseverance in their petition; and so on.

In the first place, their affliction is worthy of notice. They were blind. The value of sight, like many other blessings, is overlooked by us, because we have never felt the want of it. It not only the avenue of an abundance of natural enjoyments and social comforts but it is the door at which knowledge enters—the door at which the knowledge of God enters. To be deprived of this blessing is an affliction far beyond the conception of those who have never experienced it.

But there was a mixture of mercy in their affliction. Every avenue of knowledge was not dosed, though this was. They had not lost their hearing. There are two instances intimated in the history in which their hearing availed them. They heard the voice of a multitude passing by; they were led to inquire the cause of this; and they learned that Jesus of Nazareth passed by, and this was a great mercy to them. By the readiness with which they began to cry to him, and the nature of their supplication, it is plain that they must have heard of him before that time.

Thus the want of sight was supplied by the hearing, and they had heard to good purpose. No doubt they had heard that the lame, the blind, and the deaf wherever he went were healed, and they had come to the resolution, "Oh, if he should but come our way, if we can but get within reach of him, if we can but once obtain an audience, our supplication shall come before him. Thus we learn from these men the wisdom of looking rather to the circumstances of mitigation than of poring over an affliction; and also of a diligent improvement of the mercies God has graciously granted us; and it will be no excuse to our own consciences for their misimprovement, that God has not committed to us other talents also.

But notice further, the situation in which they were. They sat by the wayside. It was a natural situation for poor men who depended on the alms of their countrymen for support. Their affliction gave them a claim to relief, and hearing that an extraordinary personage passed by who could confer upon them a still more important blessing than they were asking of

others, they applied to him for it, and thus we learn from their case that those who need mercy should place themselves in mercy's way.

Let us next notice their petition. This part of our subject calls for our special attention. It was very short, but it was very full, and expressive of an ardent mind, of a tender heart, and of earnest desire. No sooner did they hear that Jesus passed that way, than they began to cry out, "Have mercy on us, thou Son of David." It is a charming example of brief and comprehensive prayer. We have many examples of prayer in scripture, and they are all of this brief, comprehensive kind. We never read of a poor sinner who applied for mercy, standing long to present his supplication. These men poured forth their hearts in a few comprehensive words, and waited for mercy.

But let us look a little more closely at this petition. It carries in it much of the prayer of faith. The evangelist Luke mentions that our Lord told Bartimeus, "Thy faith hath saved thee." (Luke 18:42) This petition then may be regarded as the prayer of faith. It is full of faith in every part of it, but particularly in addressing the object of it as the Son of David. This was merely another way of calling him the Messiah. It was well understood in the land of Judea that to say "the Son of David" was the same as saying "the Messiah." The Pharisees knew this, and when it was asked in respect of the Messiah, "whose son is he?" They could answer, "the Son of David," while at the same time they denied that that character belonged to our blessed Lord.

When the multitude of disciples cried "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed be he that cometh in the name of the Lord," and the children cried Hosanna in the temple, they were ready to gnash their teeth with indignation: "Master," said they, "rebuke thy disciples." They felt that it was no less than attributing to him the character of Messiah, the Son of God. No matter how much the scribes and Pharisees might rebuke them, the disciples persisted in calling him the Son of David, and so did these two blind men to whom our text refers.

But this is not all. They beautifully touched on that part of his character by which he should be distinguished—namely, his mercy. It was predicted in the seventy-second Psalm of the Messiah the Son of David, "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper." Mercy was to be his prominent feature; mercy was to distinguish his character throughout his reign; and they most delightfully touched upon that, as if they had said, "Oh thou whose character is distinguished by mercy; thou whose very coming into the world is a display of mercy; thou whose gracious errand is to display mercy of infinite degree; let thy mercy be displayed towards us – let us participate in its benefits.

It is also worthy of notice how they appropriated this general truth to their own particular circumstances, and thus they furnish us with a fine example of the appropriation of faith, converting a general truth to their own particular case. The general truth here intimated is that Messiah, the son of David, is full of mercy and compassion. They turn that into a prayer – "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." The design of mercy originated in the heart of God. It flows to guilty men through the Mediator; they feel their need of mercy, and they take the encouragement which is thus presented to them.

This is the most prevalent mode of prayer of any that is recorded in the oracles of God; to convert the general truths of scripture into a petition for our own souls. Is he a Saviour? "Lord, save me." Is he an Advocate? "Lord, plead my cause." Is he the Physician of souls? "Lord, cure my spiritual maladies; I am unsound, but thou canst heal me— make me whole." Is he a God, pardoning sin? "Lord, pardon thou mine iniquity, for it is great." This is the prayer of faith; it brings down the truths of God's Word to our own particular case. Faith must be founded on the divine revelation, and the prayer of the contrite sinner founded upon that, will ever meet with acceptance at the throne of grace.

Further, we may remark, that the magnitude of this petition corresponds with the riches of Him to whom it was to be addressed. These poor men had asked many an alms before; they sat by the way-side for the purpose of obtaining the charity of passersby their daily food, but they had never asked any passerby for sight; it would have been little less than blasphemy to have done so. But when the Saviour came, they never thought of asking him for money; that would have been the most egregious trifling. Their thoughts were turned into an entirely different channel.

They now sought for mercy—mercy such as he alone could grant; a blessing suited to their circumstances, and which they believed he was able and willing to give. It was natural that it should so. If we ask a favour of any creature, we shall ask

according to what we conceive his capacity to grant, but in our approaches to God through Jesus Christ, in our approaches to the Son of David, the Son of God, we shall enlarge our petitions. By what rule will he give? "According to the riches of his grace." He gives like a God. While the poor widow gives her two mites, the nobleman, if he acts in character, will give as a nobleman, and the prince as a prince, but none will give like God, he gives "according to the riches of his ; grace, treasured up in Christ Jesus."

Notice lastly, their perseverance in their petition, and this notwithstanding the opposition of those around them. Some rebuked them; some bade them hold their peace. Probably this might be from different motives. There might be some unbelievers among them; scribes and Pharisees, men of the same stamp as those who were displeased at hearing the songs of the children in the temple. They would be confounded at hearing this epithet bestowed on Christ, and they would say, "Let us have none of this which we are pleased to call blasphemy."

Others might wish to silence them, in consequence of the interruption which it occasioned them. The Saviour probably, as he passed along, would be scattering his divine instructions, and they might wish to hear the precepts he delivered. They had not learned the Christian lesson of making a sacrifice of their own comfort for the benefit of them. Some also might be unwilling that our blessed Lord should be disturbed by the crying of these poor men. If so, they were not aware of all the compassion of his heart.

But however, these men were not to be silenced by any such considerations. It was an urgent case, and they felt it so. Methinks I hear them say, "What, hold our peace? When are we to speak if it is not now, when the Saviour is close at hand? He may never come this way again. This may be the only opportunity afforded us: hold our peace now? No. We will cry the more! Thou Son of David, have mercy on us." They felt themselves under the necessity of doing so, in order to drown the clamour of their opponents by their supplications for mercy. They were determined if possible to reach the ear of the compassionate Saviour, and therefore "they cried so much the more a great deal," as one of the evangelists tells us, "Thou Son of David, have mercy on us."

My friends, have we never seen anything like this? When a poor sinner is made to feel his need of the Saviour, and he begins to sue for mercy, it may be that there are a number of persons presenting obstacles greater than those which the multitude presented on this occasion. Some of his neighbours will be ready to say, "Hold your peace; what need of all this ado about religion?" You are good enough already; at all events you have been as good as your neighbours. Hold your peace."

The formal professors of religion will join in the clamour of the multitude. Those who have just religion enough to give them a name among Christians, will not see the necessity for all this anxiety and all this care, and will call it enthusiasm, and take every means of discountenancing it. But if you are truly sensible of your sinful and perishing condition before God, neither the language of the open unbeliever nor of the cold-hearted formalist will silence you; but on the contrary, you will rather cry so much the more; you will be more earnest in your supplications. Nothing will satisfy you till you can obtain the ear of the Saviour.

But you may also meet with opposition from within; secret misgivings of heart, despondency, unbelief, will suggest that it is a vain thing to cry for mercy, either that it is too late, or that you are too great a sinner, or that it is a blessing greater than such a sinner as you have been have any reason to expect. But if you have the spirit of these men, you will not be turned aside by these suggestions of your own hearts, but you will pray so much the more. You will pray against your own heart, like one who cried, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief!" (Mark 9:24)

We have seen the affliction of these poor men. The mixture of mercy there was in it. The situation they were in, their petition, and their perseverance. Let us next notice the compassionate conduct of our divine Redeemer towards them. This is all summed up in a few words, but there is much contained in them. "He stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I should do unto you? They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened. So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes; and immediately their eyes received sight."

In this brief account there are several things worthy of notice. Here are steps in the progress, and it will be worthwhile to stop at every step. First, our Lord stood still; then he called them; then he put it to their choice what he should do for them; and lastly, he mercifully healed them.

He stood still. Here we perceive the wonderful compassion of the Redeemer. What is this but saying that he was arrested by the voice of prayer? Our Saviour, in the course of his life met with many things which were intended to arrest him. Some of the scribes told him that Herod thought to kill him, but it was not the threat of Herod that could stop him for a moment. "Go ye" said he, "and tell that fox...I do cures to day and to-morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected." (Luke 13:32)

Once we are told that one of his disciples attempted to arrest him. He had set his face to go to Jerusalem, and had intimated that he should there be cruelly treated, and put to death. The heart of Peter was moved at the very thought, and he desired in consequence to stop him in his progress. But this ill-judging kindness of the disciple could not turn him aside; he well knew what was before him: but he had a baptism to be baptized with, and he was straitened till it was accomplished. (Luke 12:50) Nothing could stop him in his benevolent course. But here, the prayer of two poor miserable men arrests him in his progress and he stands still. Oh, the amazing compassion of the Redeemer!

There is something in this that seems to resemble another case. When the Saviour was hanging on the cross, the chief priests mocked him, with the scribes and elders, but he took no notice. The two malefactors, one on his right hand and the other on his left, reviled him, and spake in the most bitter and reproachful language of him, but he made no answer; slander could not touch him, reproach had not the least effect upon him; still he made no answer.

At length one of them in his expiring moments exclaims, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Immediately the Saviour's attention is attracted, and he replies, "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." (Luke 22:43) He is moved, so to speak, by this petition; he is arrested by prayer. Here then is the way of taking the kingdom of heaven by storm. Approach the Saviour with the language of Israel, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me," (Gen. 32:26) and you will prevail. Praying breath has never been spent in vain. The prayer of the contrite soul is delightful to his ear. In this the Saviour realizes the purchase of his dying groans. He "sees of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." (Isa. 53:11)

The next thing which is noticed is that he calls them. His standing still had afforded them encouragement to believe that he would pay attention to their case. Some of the multitude seemed to understand it so, for they immediately went and reported it to the blind men, or as one of the evangelists states it, "Be of good comfort; rise, he calleth thee." (Mark 10:49)

Such was the character of the Divine Redeemer; he never disappointed any whom he called; he never gave an invitation and sent the applicant away unsatisfied. And is it not just to apply this to the invitations of mercy—the gospel invitations which are addressed to us? Has he not called us? Does he not say to us, "Come into me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest?" (Matt. 11:28) Where is the man that needs despair? Where is the sinner that can for a moment despair? In such circumstances despair is a crime. No, "be of good cheer; rise, he calleth thee." He has never said to the seed of Jacob, seek ye my face in vain.

Next, he refers it to their own desire what he shall do for them. "What will ye that I shall do unto you?" If our Lord were to offer a favour for which they had no desire, no choice, it would be mercy thrown away. Salvation is to him that is made willing in the day of divine power, and it is to him who is brought to choose Christ with his whole heart. If this question were put to you and to me,—and may I not say that it is put to each of us,—what would you answer?

Consider the Son of God as present in our assembly that he calls you before him, and bids you state your wishes, what would be your desire? Would your heart dictate this petition, "Lord, that my eyes may be enlightened to see thy glory?" "Lord, that I may find favour in thy sight!" "Lord, that I may have an interest in thy love!" "Lord, that I may be made like unto thee!" "Lord, that I may dwell forever in the enjoyment of thy presence!" Should these be the breathings of your soul, he will answer, "Be it unto thee according as thou wilt."

Finally, we are told that he healed them. He did not disappoint their expectations; he bestowed upon them the blessing of sight. And so will it be to all who feel that they are blind, and apply to him to enlighten their minds, and to cause them to see things as they are. May I not appeal to the experience of some present that they were once in the darkness of nature,

and were well satisfied with their state. That they were blind to the glories of the Saviour; that they saw in him no "form nor comeliness that they should desire him;" (Isa. 53:2) that the present world was their idol, and that they had no desire for any other portion. That they were so shortsighted that they could not look beyond the present transitory state, and their minds were grovelling, and sensual, and devilish, but that the Spirit of God hath shined into their souls, and caused them to see their natural state? Like those of whom we have been speaking, they have sought mercy of the Saviour, and have been enlightened so as to see the malignity of sin, the beauties of holiness, the vanity of the world, the glories of immortality, and to see the Redeemer to be the "chief among ten thousand and the altogether lovely."

If this is the case with you, dear friends, you will feel no surprise that these men followed the Saviour. They followed him that they might learn more of him who had displayed this grace on their behalf; they followed him that they might glorify him. The next chapter of our text gives an account of Christ's public entry into Jerusalem, and the great multitude that joined in singing Hosannas to the Saviour.

We cannot doubt that these two men joined in that chorus. It was fit they should be there to bear witness to Him who had mercifully healed them. It was necessary to their own happiness that they should follow him, to convey to others the encouragement which arose out of their own experience of the compassion of the Saviour. Their hearts were too full for them to hold their peace; they must join in the Hosannas to his name; they must tell to others the wonders of that grace and compassion which the Redeemer had manifested to them.

Are there none here whose hearts respond to these expressions, who have felt the love of the Redeemer to be so great that they could not but speak of it to those around? I might rather say, is there any one professing to be a Christian with whom this is not the ease? Surely, if it was fit that these men should follow the Redeemer and show forth his praises, it is more so in the case of those who have experienced his pardoning mercy.

You cannot follow the Saviour in the sense in which these men did, but you may follow him in the ways of his appointment, and by and by you shall be forever with him. But let none of us part with our subject without inquiring how far we are interested in it? Whether we have seen our need of a Saviour, and have sought mercy at his hands? Whether our minds have been enlightened, and we have been saved from ignorance and guilt, and translated into the glorious light and liberty of the sons of God?



Psychology and End Times Mysticism ---

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Psychology has been permeated with mysticism since its inception in the 19th century.

Carl Jung

Carl Jung (1875-1961), the founder of analytical psychology, has been called "the psychologist of the 21st century" (Merill Berger, *The Wisdom of the Dreams*, front cover.) Jung (pronounced Young) has been influential, not only in society at large, but also in the New Age movement and within almost all aspects of Christianity. Jung has influenced both modernists and evangelicals. His writings are influential within the contemplative movement. He has been promoted by Paul Tillich, Morton Kelsey, John Sanford, Thomas Moore, Joseph Campbell, John Spong, Richard Foster, Agnes Sanford, and Gary Thomas, to name a few. Jung's psychological typing provides the underpinning for the Personality Profiling part of Rick Warren's SHAPE program, which is used by countless churches and institutions.

Jeffrey Satinover says:

“Jung’s direct and indirect impact on mainstream Christianity--and thus on Western culture--has been incalculable. It is no exaggeration to say that the theological positions of most mainstream denominations in their approach to pastoral care, as well as in their doctrines and liturgy--have become more or less identical with Jung’s psychological/symbolic theology” (*Homosexuality and the Politics of Truth*, p. 240, quoted from Ed Hird, “Carl Jung, Neo-Gnosticism,” March 18, 1998).

At the same time, Jung was deeply involved in pagan mysticism. He has been called the “Father of the New Age Movement” (Ed Hird).

Jung explored Hinduism, Buddhism, Taoism, I Ching, astrology, Spiritualism, Gnosticism, alchemy, dream interpretation, mandala symbolism, theosophy, Greek mythology, and more. Even as a boy, he was drawn to Hindu gods because he “had an obscure feeling of their affinity with my ‘original revelation’” (*Jung, Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, Vintage Books, 1989, p. 17). He spent time in India studying eastern religion and folk lore. He wrote the first introduction to Zen Buddhism. He amassed one of the largest collections of spiritualistic writings found on the European continent (Jeffrey Santinover, *The Empty Self*, p. 28).

In the pursuit of communion with spirits and a pantheistic “all-pervading power,” Jung used a wide variety of mystical practices, including the divination methods of I Ching, idolatry, astrological horoscopic calculations, meditation, communion with spirits, clairvoyance, séances, dream interpretation, and channeling. Jung’s book *Septem Sermones* (The Seven Sermons to the Dead) was dictated from spirits.

Jung believed that the secret of life is found “at the mystical heart of all religions” and that it consists of a “journey of transformation” to find the true self and bring it into harmony with the Divine. The god that Jung encountered through mystical practices was not the God of the Bible. He was the pantheistic, universalistic, syncretistic, non-judgmental god of Self.

Jung said that Jesus, Mani, Buddha, and Lao-Tse are all “pillars of the spirit” (John Dourley, *C.G. Jung and Paul Tillich*, p. 65). Jung believed in pantheism. “Nothing could persuade me that ‘in the image of God’ applied only to man. In fact it seemed to me that the high mountains, the rivers, lakes, trees, flowers, and animals far better exemplified the essence of God than men...” (*Memories, Dreams, Reflections*, p. 45). He carried a little stone and secretly adored it. He says, “What I dimly felt to be my kinship with stone was the divine nature in both, in the dead and the living matter” (p. 68).

Jung believed that “nothing separated man from God” (p. 45). This, of course, is the non-judgmental god who is not a holy lawgiver and judge.

Abraham Maslow

Maslow (1908-90) predicted a “fourth force” in psychology, which “has become known as transpersonal psychology with a strong New Age element” (E.S. Williams, *The Dark Side of Christian Counselling*, p. 57).

Maslow promoted mystical “peak experiences” as the means of connecting with “god” and achieving self-actualization. By such experiences the individual feels “a part of the infinite and the eternal” (Williams, p. 63).

His mysticism led him to the god of end-times apostasy. Maslow rejected the God of the Bible and hated Bible Christianity, considering it a major enemy of true spirituality. He denied divine revelation and absolute truth. He wanted to lead men to a new god. He saw himself “as a secular prophet who will deliver modern man from the tyranny of traditional religion and lead us to the promised land of human self-actualisation” (Williams, p. 59).

Maslow’s god was “not a person, but a force, a principle, a gestalt-quality of the whole of Being, an integrating power that expresses the unity and therefore the meaningfulness of the cosmos” (Maslow, *Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, chapter 8).

His god was a non-judgmental god who does not give laws and judge disobedience. He denied the doctrine of original sin and taught that man is basically good and has the potential within himself for perfection or “actualization.” This is called “human potential” psychology.

It is mysticism, and the mystical practice is psychological counseling. Man can realize his potential through non-directive psychological counseling. Observing that the mysticism of all religions leads to the same type of god, Maslow concluded that “all religions are the same in their essence and have always been the same” (*Religions, Values, and Peak Experiences*, p. 20).

Carl Rogers

Rogers (1902-98) was ranked the number one most influential psychotherapist in 1982 by the American Psychologist journal. William Kilpatrick said, “I don’t think any other psychologist has had as much influence on our culture and ways of thinking” (*Experiments in Moral Education*, 1997, cited from E.S. Williams, *The Dark Side of Christian Counselling*, p. 71).

Rogers had a massive influence on public education. “In the 50s and 70s these counselling techniques which Rogers had developed were introduced into schools with the result that teachers began to take a non-directive, non-judgmental attitude toward values. Each person would have to discover his own values, and no one could say that one value was superior to another” (William Kirkpatrick, cited from Williams, p. 71).

Rogers also had a huge influence on the abortion counseling movement. “Virtually all abortion counseling services, both Christian and secular, follow Rogers’ non-directive approach. The aim is to provide a pregnant woman with the facts about her options (abortion, adoption, keeping the pregnancy) in an impartial way that helps her to make up her mind as to what she wants to do with the unwanted pregnancy. Whatever choice she makes is the right choice for her” (Williams, p. 71).

After attending the liberal Union Theological Seminary and participating in the liberal World Student Christian Federation Conference, Rogers rejected his parents’ Christian faith. He rejected the God of the Bible and pursued the god of end-times apostasy. He became his own authority, his own god, and “experience” was the channel to truth. Rogers wrote:

“Experience is, for me, the highest authority. The touchstone of validity is my own experience. No other person’s ideas and none of my own ideas, are as authoritative as my experience. It is to experience that I must return again and again, to discover a closer approximation to truth as it is in the process of becoming in me. Neither the Bible nor the prophets--neither Freud nor research--neither the revelations of God nor man--can take precedence over my own direct experience” (Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*).

He became an enemy of the God of Bible Christianity. He wrote, “Religion, especially the Protestant Christian tradition, has permeated our culture with the concept that man is basically sinful, and only by something approaching a miracle can his sinful nature be negated” (Rogers, *On Becoming a Person*, 1961, p. 91).

Rogers was one of the movers and shakers in the Humanist movement and in 1964 was elected Humanist of the Year by the American Humanist Association.

His god was a “life-force” that is present in all forms of life and that individuals can tap for “self-actualization” (Williams, p. 66).

He rejected the fallenness of man and the necessity of the new birth, believing that man has the ability to perfect himself through trusting his experiences and following his feelings. The means to this is “non-directive” counseling which is non-judgmental and morally relativistic.

This is another mystical path to the end-times apostasy god. By pursuing the “light within” and trusting his own feelings and experiences, Rogers was drawn farther and farther into spiritual darkness. Toward the end of his life, he became entangled with the occult, dabbling in such things as thought transference, clairvoyance, human auras, out-of-body experiences, and séances.

Psychology's God of Self-esteem and Unconditional Love

Two of the fundamental principles of modern psychology are self-esteem and unconditional love. These are blatant denials of Bible Christianity and are a rejection of the God of the Bible and are thus a pursuit of a false god -- the very god of end-times apostasy. The doctrine of self-esteem was developed by the fathers of the psychological counseling movement and has spread throughout that field and beyond to every level of modern society.

According to the doctrine of self-esteem, man must pursue his own self-love or self-confidence for the sake of psychological wholeness, and anything that damages self-esteem is wrong. The mystical path to the development of self-esteem is psychological counseling. Since absolute rules produce guilt in those who don't live up to them, the pursuit of self-esteem emphasizes the need for "new rules which will allow us more freedom of movement and encourage us to accept ourselves just as we are" (E.S. Williams, *The Dark Side of Christian Counselling*, p. 116).

Atheist Abraham Maslow emphasized the need for self-esteem in books such as *A Theory of Human Motivation* (1943), *Motivation and Personality* (1954), and *Toward a Psychology of Being* (1955). He taught that a lack of self-esteem can lead to "neurotic trends." Rejecting the doctrine of the Fall, he believed that man is basically good and there is "a positive, self-actualising force within each person that is struggling to assert itself" (Williams, *The Dark Side*, p. 114). If it is "permitted to guide our life, we grow healthy, fruitful, and happy" (*Motivation and Personality*, 1970, p. 122).

Dr. Nathaniel Branden has had a massive influence in the promotion of self-esteem through books such as *Psychology of Self-Esteem* (1969), *How to Raise Your Self-Esteem* (1987), and the *Six Pillars of Self-Esteem* (1995). He treats self-esteem as a basic human need that is essential for mental health. He says, "The first love affair we must consummate successfully in this world is with ourselves; only then are we ready for a relationship."

Douglas Groothuis identifies the self-esteem doctrine as New Age in character.

"Maslow's path-breaking efforts cleared the way for an exodus from the old psychological view of humanity toward a new human that is essentially good and has within himself unlimited potential for growth. A whole host of thinkers--Erich Fromm, Rollo May, Carl Rogers and others--sound this call. In humanistic psychology the self is seen as the radiant heart of health, and psychotherapy must strive to get the person in touch with that source of goodness. ... This is the message at the core of New Age teaching" (*Unmasking the New Age*, 1986, p. 78).

The pursuit of self-esteem puts one into contact with the god of end-times apostasy.

The doctrine of self-esteem is at the heart of the "Christian" homosexual movement which claims that God accepts homosexuals as they are without the necessity of repentance. At the founding of the Metropolitan Community Churches in 1968, Troy Perry preached a message entitled "Be True to You," from a line in Shakespeare's play Hamlet, "This above all: To thine own self be true."

The self-esteem doctrine was borrowed from humanistic God-haters like Maslow and Rogers and has been promoted far and wide in Christian circles by a slew of Christian psychologists, with James Dobson leading the way.

Dobson claims that "lack of self-esteem produces more symptoms of psychiatric disorders than any other factor yet identified" (*Confident Healthy Families*, 1987, pp. 73-74). His 1974 book *Hide and Seek* was designed "to formulate a well-defined philosophy--and approach to child rearing -- that will contribute to self-esteem from infancy onwards."

He says, "If I could write a prescription for the women of the world, I would provide each one of them with a healthy dose of self-esteem and personal worth (taken three times a day until the symptoms disappear). I have no doubt that this is their greatest need" (*What Wives Wish Their Husbands Knew about Women*, p. 35).

He says, "... lack of self-esteem is a threat to the entire human family, affecting children, adolescents, the elderly, all socioeconomic levels of society, and each race and ethnic culture" (*What Wives Wish*, p. 24).

Dobson believes that lack of self-esteem is the cause of every social ill.

“Thus, whenever the keys to self-esteem are seemingly out of reach for a large percentage of the people, as in twentieth-century America, then widespread mental illness, neuroticism, hatred, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, and social disorder will certainly occur. Personal worth is not something humans are free to take or leave. We must have it, and when it is unattainable, everybody suffers” (*Confident, Healthy Families*, p. 67).

To the contrary, the Bible lays the ills of society at the feet of fallen man and his rebellion against God. Jesus taught that murder, adultery, fornication, covetousness, deceit, theft, and such come from man’s wicked heart (Mark 7:21-23).

David Seamands is another pioneer of the Christian self-esteem movement. His hugely popular books *Healing for Damaged Emotions* and *Healing of Memories* seek to heal the believer of “Satan’s most powerful psychological weapon” which is “low self-esteem.” He aims to take the client back into the past to recover and heal memories of events that injured one’s self-esteem.

Seamands has been widely recommended by evangelicals, including James Dobson and George Verwer (*Youth With A Mission*), who wrote the foreword to *Healing for Damaged Emotions*.

Seamands’ mystical path toward self-esteem is “healing of memories” through psychological counseling and New Age techniques. He promotes things as positive visualization, guided imagery, dream analysis, and venting of emotions. Through visualization, the individual is taught to imagine painful past events in perfect detail and to imagine Jesus entering the scenes to bring healing. This is not only vain fantasy; it is occultic and it is a recipe for communing with deceiving spirits masquerading as angels of light.

The Self-esteem Doctrine Downplays and Redefines Sin

The very popular and influential Robert Schuller, who was a pioneer in the “Christian” self-esteem movement, defines sin as “any act or thought that robs myself or another human being of his or her self-esteem” (*Self-Esteem: The New Reformation*, p. 14). He defined the new birth as “being changed from a negative to a positive self-image--from inferiority to self-esteem” (p. 68). He even said that Christ was “self-esteem incarnate” (p. 135).

Schuller has been praised and promoted by a who’s-who of evangelicalism, including Billy Graham, W.A. Criswell, R.C. Sproul, Christianity Today, National Association of Evangelicals, World Vision, Promise Keepers, James Dobson, Tony Campolo, Bill Bright, Paul Yonggi Cho, Jack Hayford, Ralph Reed, Bill Hybels, Paul Crouch, John Wimber, Ravi Zacharias, Lee Strobel, Chuck Colson, and Rick Warren, to name a few. (See “Evangelicals and Heretic Robert Schuller” at the Way of Life web site.)

The self-esteem doctrine promotes an unscriptural view of the conscience. While acknowledging that the conscience (an “inner voice”) produces guilt and negative thoughts, the proposed solution is not the biblical path of regeneration through repentance and faith followed by a Christian walk of obedience and confession. The proposed solution, instead, is to lower the standards of morality.

The atheist founders of the self-esteem doctrine hated the holy God of the Bible and His holy Law and sought to destroy His authority over men by denying His existence and teaching moral relativism and the pursuit of Self. Christian counsellors who have borrowed the self-esteem doctrine also tend to downplay the absoluteness of God’s Law, the necessity of strict obedience, and they replace the biblical means of soothing the conscience with psychological mumbo-jumbo.

Crusade for World Revival (CWR), founded by Selwyn Hughes, says, “If our standards are so high as to be almost unobtainable we will put ourselves forward for failure.”

Chris Leger and Wendy Bray say that “Bible verses which remind us of God’s command to be obedient may cause guilt to arise...We continually strive to please God, yet never feel that we have pleased him--our self-esteem tumbles down the

ladder" (*Insight into Self-Esteem*, p. 57). Leger and Bray claim that God always accepts our best because His voice is always one of "grace, love and acceptance" (pp. 43, 44).

Dr. E.S. Williams warns:

"In all that has been written and taught about self-esteem, both Christian and secular, there is never any suggestion that the root cause of man's low self-esteem is God's moral law which condemns sinful behaviour" (*The Dark Side of Christian Counselling*, p. 140).

The self-esteem movement twists Scripture out of context. A major proof-text is Matthew 22:39, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." This is interpreted to mean that man needs to love himself just as he needs to love his neighbor, but Christ was not saying there is a need for self-love and He was not encouraging any sort of self-esteem program. He was saying that men already love themselves!

Paul said the same thing in Ephesians 5:29, "For no man ever yet hated his own flesh..." The fallen man's problem is not a lack of self-esteem but far too much of it and a gross lack of God-esteem! Fallen man is an idolater who worships himself in the place of the Almighty Creator. The very essence of sin is that we've "turned every one to his own way" (Isaiah 53:6).

The modern self-esteem doctrine is heresy and apostasy. The very first characteristic of end-times apostasy is that "men shall be lovers of their own selves" (2 Timothy 3:1-2).

The twisting of Scripture in the self-esteem movement reaches frightful heights because of the simple fact that the doctrine of self-esteem is not taught in Scripture but is derived from modern psychology and is then forced upon Scripture.

David Seamands claims that in the Parable of the Talents, the man with one talent was paralyzed by fear and lack of self-esteem! And the reason the Israelites didn't enter the Promised Land was low self-esteem! Seamands applies this as follows: "Where is the vision God put before you? What wrecked it? Your sins and transgressions and bad habits? I doubt it. Probably your dream has been delayed or destroyed because Satan tricked you into thinking of yourself as a grasshopper or a worm" (*Healing for Damaged Emotions*, p. 50).

So man's problem is not sin but lack of self-esteem. Man is not a sinner; he is a victim. He doesn't need salvation and sanctification; he needs psychological counseling.

Unconditional Love

The doctrine of self-esteem is intimately associated with that of unconditional love. To have the highest self-esteem we must know that we are loved unconditionally, no strings attached.

We must see God as a merciful Father who "accepts us totally, exactly as we are" (Chris Leger and Wendy Bray, *Insight into Self-Esteem*, 2006, p. 12).

As Larry Crabb says, "I am completely acceptable to him regardless of my behavior" (*Effective Biblical Counseling*, 1977, p. 70).

Like the doctrine of self-esteem, unconditional love is promoted both by secular counselors and Christians. It is taught by Rick Warren, James Dobson, Philip Yancy, Joyce Meyer, Larry Crabb, Gary Smalley, Selwyn Hughes, David Seamands, Gary Chapman, Charles Stanley, and a host of other popular Christian leaders and authors.

James Dobson said that his book *Love for a Lifetime* is designed to "sum up the importance of selfless, unconditional love" ("Loving Focus: Dr. James and Shirley Dobson," *Christianitytoday.com*, Sept. 12, 2008).

Dr. E.S. Williams observes: "While self-esteem attempts to make man feel good about his sin, unconditional love attempts to make sinful man feel that he will not face judgment or punishment" (*Christ or Therapy?* p. 71).

Like the doctrine of self-esteem, the doctrine of unconditional love was developed by the fathers of the psychological counseling movement and New Agers. Erik Fromm was the first to use the phrase “unconditional love,” while Carl Rogers coined the term “unconditional positive regard,” by which “he meant the granting of love and approval regardless of an individual’s behaviour” (E.S. Williams, *Christ or Therapy?* pp. 65, 66).

The doctrine of unconditional love is a major theme of New Age thought. The god of unconditional love puts no obligations on people and does not punish sin. Harold Becker says the human race is “becoming consciously aware of unconditional love” (*Unconditional Love--An Unlimited Way of Being*, 2007, p. 7). It is “an energy and power” that is “transforming the course of all humanity.” Roy Klienwachter says, “Unconditional love means unconditional freedom. ... Retribution is a lie, it was all made...Anyone who tells you different, is not coming from unconditional love” (*Unconditional Love*, 2008).

Unconditional love is a theme of the occult. Consider Aleister Crowley, who has had a massive influence on the rock & roll culture and whose photo appeared on the cover of the Beatles’ Sargent Pepper’s album. His system was based on two principles: “Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the law” and “Love is the law, love under will.” Crowley’s “love” was unconditional love with no obligations. The Voice of Lucifer website proclaims that “unconditional love is an unlimited way of being” and “as a way of changing our world for the better” and “the sole vehicle for our salvation.”

Unconditional love is a theme of the “Christian” homosexual movement. God accepts them as they are. Unconditional love is also a fundamental principle of the emerging church. In *An Emerging Church Primer* Justin Taylor says we must proclaim “God’s message of unconditional love.”

The God of unconditional love is not the God of Scripture. The love of the sovereign Creator God is unfathomable and unmerited, but not unconditional. God’s love is demonstrated in Christ and the Cross and to benefit from God’s love one must repent and receive Christ as Lord and Saviour. Consider the following statements by Jesus Christ himself:

“He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him” (John 14:21).

“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:21-23).

“He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36).

“I tell you, Nay: but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3).

Repent or perish is not the message of unconditional love!

The doctrine of unconditional love as typically defined denies the absolute holiness of God, the fall of man, the necessity of the atonement of Christ, the requirement of the new birth, God’s call to repentance and faith, the existence of eternal hell for those outside of Christ, and God’s call to holy living in the Christian life.

- The true grace of God leads men to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world (Titus 2:11-12).
- The believer is to lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings (1 Peter 2:1).
- We are to abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul (1 Peter 2:11). We are to eschew evil and do good (1 Peter 3:11).
- We are to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:15-16). That is the strictest, highest calling! And though the born again believer is accepted in Christ and eternally safe because of the perfect Atonement, he is

subject to discipline in this present life and loss at the judgment seat of Christ if he walks in unrepentant carnality and disobedience.

- There is even a sin unto death (1 Corinthians 11:30; 1 John 5:17).

There are some who preach unconditional love that say that they believe the aforementioned Bible doctrines, but the message of unconditional love is contradictory to these truths and those who try to reconcile them are living in a fantasy world.

The god of self-esteem and unconditional love is not the God of Scripture; he is the god of end-times apostasy. As Dr. E.S. Williams observes:

“The concept of unconditional love only exists in a mythological world in which there is no sin, no evil and no law, in which people are free to live as they like without fear of judgment and punishment. In the real world, unconditional love is no more and no less than licentiousness -- an attitude that denies the accepted rules and morals that govern human behaviour. It is an attitude that allows us to do what we want without sanction or control. It is the essential message of pagan morality and New Age salvation” (*Christ or Therapy?* p. 69).

“The permissive god of ‘Christian’ self-esteem dogma longs to satisfy the needs and desires of the human heart. He delights in meeting our needs and likes to make us feel good about ourselves, no matter what. He is careful not to set standards too high or too difficult for us to meet. He is satisfied with our behaviour so long as we do our best. He is a god who is ‘mighty to save’ mankind from a lifetime cycle of low self-esteem. And if the truth were known, he does not really hate evil and sin all that much, for he accepts us totally, exactly as we are. He has commanded us to love ourselves and he loves everybody unconditionally no matter how they behave” (Williams, *The Dark Side of Christian Counselling*, p. 141).

Unconditional Forgiveness

Closely associated with the doctrine of unconditional love is unconditional forgiveness. Over the past two decades this has become a major element of the psychology movement. It is a form of therapy. It is considered a channel to inner healing and self-esteem.

A major force behind the spread of therapeutic forgiveness is the Templeton Foundation, which is New Age to the core. Though a committed Presbyterian, John Templeton is an evolutionist, pantheist, and universalist. He has rejected the Bible as divine revelation, brazenly claiming that the Bible was written by men who “were limited by cosmologies long since discredited” and whose writings were “ignorant and primitive” (*The Humble Approach*, 1995, p. 135). His biographical sketch says that “Templeton’s goal has been nothing less than to change mindsets about the concept of divinity.” Templeton says, “God is all of you and you are a little part of him,” and, “No one should say that God can be reached by only one path” (*The Humble Approach*, pp. 38, 55).

Templeton’s books have been recommended by Norman Vincent Peale (he called Templeton “the greatest layman of the Christian church in our time”), Robert Schuller (he put Templeton’s picture on the cover of his *Possibilities* magazine), and Rick Warren (he was one of the judges of Templeton’s Power of Purpose worldwide essay competition).

Since the 1990s, the Templeton Foundation has funded “scientific studies” on the power of forgiveness, and there has been an associated explosion of teaching on this subject, such as Colin Tipping’s *Radical Forgiveness* (1997); Robert Enright’s *Forgiveness Is a Choice* (2001); Fred Luskin’s *Forgive for Good* (2002); and Martin Seligman’s *Authentic Happiness* (2002).

There is the Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance, the International Forgiveness Institute, the Institute for Radical Forgiveness, and the Forgiveness Project. Many of these people and organizations are New Age in perspective. The Worldwide Forgiveness Alliance is “open to all religions, creeds, and beliefs” and uses forgiveness as an instrument of building a New Age of joy and peace. Colin Tipping’s mission is “to raise the consciousness of the planet through forgiveness.”

In light of the wholesale “repudiation of separatism” that characterizes modern evangelicalism and the charismatic movement, it is not surprising that Christian counselors have been quick to jump on the unconditional forgiveness bandwagon. There is *The Art of Forgiving* (1996) by Lewis Smedes, professor emeritus of theology and ethics at Fuller Theological Seminary, and *The Importance of Forgiveness* (1997) by John Arnot of Toronto Airport Church, and *The Choosing to Forgive Workbook* by Frank Minirth and Les Carter, and *The New Freedom of Forgiveness* (2000) by David Augsburger, and *Total Forgiveness* (2002) by R.T. Kendall, and *Choosing Forgiveness* (2006) by Hancy Leigh DeMoss.

The movement of therapeutic forgiveness is all about Self. It is unconditional forgiveness for my sake, to help me feel good about myself, to have personal peace of mind, to have personal self-esteem and psychological wholeness, even to gain “good karma points” and avoiding “inhibiting our very life-force.”

Not only am I taught to forgive others unconditionally, but also to forgive myself and even to forgive God. R.T. Kendall says that since “God has allowed bad things to happen ... He has allowed us to suffer when we didn’t do anything that we know of to warrant such ill-treatment ... We therefore must forgive him—but not because he is guilty, but for allowing evil to touch our lives” (*Total Forgiveness*, p. 33).

What blasphemy, what foolish audacity, for a mere man to think that he can forgive Almighty God! This is definitely the worship of a false god. Like unconditional love, unconditional forgiveness is unscriptural. Biblical forgiveness is predicated on confession and repentance.

This is true vertically, between man and God. God’s forgiveness is not unconditional; it required the payment of a great price on God’s part (the giving of His Son on the Cross) and obtaining God’s forgiveness requires repentance. Jesus twice said, “except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3, 5).

There is a repentance that is necessary for the once-for-all eternal forgiveness of justification, and there is daily confession and repentance necessary for fellowship with God in the Christian life. “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Adam and Eve weren’t automatically and unconditionally forgiven when they sinned. They were driven out of the Garden of Eden and required to live in a God-cursed world and then die, death being “the wages of sin” (Romans 6:23). They and their children were required to repent and put their faith in the coming Saviour as prophesied in the promise that the woman’s seed (Christ) would bruise the serpent’s head (Genesis 3:15) and signified by Abel’s lamb. Of the first two sons of Adam, Cain and Abel, one believed and one did not, and one was justified and the other was not (Genesis 4:7; Hebrews 11:4). Ever since then, God’s forgiveness has been predicated upon repentance and faith, and those who reject the witness of God’s Spirit and God’s Word in these matters are destined for eternal punishment.

This is also true with forgiveness at the horizontal level, forgiveness between men. We are to be quick to forgive and we are to love our enemies, but this does not mean that we are to forgive unconditionally. As Jesus said:

“Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and IF HE REPENT, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I REPENT; thou shalt forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4).

The apostle Paul did not unconditionally forgive Alexander the Coppersmith (2 Tim. 4:14) or the heretics at Galatia (Gal. 5:7-10). He did not teach the unconditional forgiveness for those who sin against the testimony of Christ in the church (1 Corinthians 5).

Not only is unconditional forgiveness wrong, but it is also hurtful. As Dr. E.S. Williams writes:

“Nowhere in Scripture is the Christian told to unconditionally forgive an unbeliever who sins against him. To do so is only a meaningless gesture; for by what authority does a Christian forgive sin? This only leads to a false view of forgiveness, and the world will gain the idea that Christians practise cheap forgiveness, like New Age adherents. For Christians to offer unconditional forgiveness to all and sundry is to make a mockery of the Cross

of Christ. ... The moral wrongness of unconditional forgiveness is that it condones sin and wrongdoing. The wrongdoer is not held accountable for his sin, but actually encouraged to believe that it is a light matter" (*Christ or Therapy?* pp. 99, 100).

Unconditional love and unconditional forgiveness are attributes of a false god, and not surprisingly, this god is encountered through mysticism.

Emergent leader Nanette Sawyer says that she encountered this god through contemplative prayer. She said that while "sitting in meditation, in a technique similar to what Christians call Centering Prayer, I encountered love that is unconditional, yet it called me to responsible action in my life" (*An Emergent Manifesto of Hope*, p. 44). This occurred AFTER she had rejected biblical Christianity and the gospel that Jesus died for our sins (p. 43).

She said that she found love and Jesus through meditation, but it is not the Jesus of the Bible nor is it the love of God as described in the Bible. It is another god, another Jesus, another gospel, and another spirit (2 Cor. 11:4). It is the god who is found through mysticism.



The New Testament Way—It Really Works! _

Norman H. Wells

From *The Church That Jesus Loved*, 1973 (Chapter 15)

It is easily established from the Bible that in New Testament times missionaries were sent forth by the local churches. There were no Mission Boards! No Mission Directors! No Conventions! No Associations! No Organized Fellowships!

THIS IS THE NEW TESTAMENT WAY!

It worked! The greatest missionary effort the world has ever known took place during New Testament times. The only organizations used were the local churches.

Today's missionary efforts are failing. They are reaching a smaller percentage of the world's population than any generation before. WE NEED TO RETURN TO GOD'S WAY.

THE NEW TESTAMENT WAY WORKS NOW!

There are hundreds of Baptist churches today who are still doing their Mission Work in the New Testament way! Organized Baptists are continually crying that it can't be done but IT IS BEING DONE!

Large numbers of Baptist churches that belong to these organizations are interested. They want to know how it works. They want to know how independent Baptists can send forth missionaries without a Mission Board or some other such organization. A great number of the churches that are in these organizations are taking a hard look at the growing complexity of machinery that it takes to run the organization.

What independent Baptists are doing is simple . . . we are following the New Testament way. For all who are interested let me try to spell it out in the simplest way:

1. The Missionary is called of God and led by the Holy Spirit.

2. The Missionary makes this call known to his local church. This church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, approves the Missionary and assumes the responsibility of sending him forth.
3. The Missionary, sponsored by the local church and led by the Holy Spirit goes to other churches seeking their help in getting him to the field.
4. Other churches, as they are led by the Holy Spirit, agree to help the sponsoring church get the missionary to the field.
5. When the missionary has raised his support the sponsoring church sends him forth.
6. From the field the missionary sends reports of his activities and finances to his local church and to all supporting churches.

Let me give you a couple of examples. I have before me the monthly report of a couple of missionaries who have gone forth in this New Testament way. Bro. Ted Estridge is an independent Baptist Missionary in Okinawa. He has been sent forth by the First Baptist Church of Harrison, Ohio. Bro. Estridge has gone out in the New Testament way. In one year after he had made known his call to Okinawa he was on the field with full support.

The monthly report before me shows that Bro. Estridge received close to \$600.00 in support for the month. THIS SUPPORT CAME FROM 36 CHURCHES IN 6 DIFFERENT STATES!

Bro. Ed Scalf is an independent Baptist Missionary in Japan. He is sent forth by the Rodgers Baptist Church, Garland, Texas. Bro. Scalf's monthly report shows that he received over \$700.00 in support last month. THIS SUPPORT CAME FROM 37 DIFFERENT CHURCHES IN 13 STATES.

These are just examples. As there is no central headquarters for independent Baptists it is impossible to give national reports of all independent Baptists.

However, I can give a report of the Central Baptist Church. We have personal relationship with independent Baptist Missionaries in LEBANON ... JAPAN ... BRAZIL ... PUERTO RICO ... AFRICA ... MEXICO ... ALASKA ... PAKISTAN ... PERU ... MEXICAN BORDER ... INDIA ... CENTRAL AMERICA ... OKINAWA ... JORDAN ... and EGYPT. There are many others. These all have been sent forth in the New Testament way we have set down in this article.

To my knowledge there has never been a missionary sent forth this way who had to come home because of finances. There has never been a time when they did not receive the money needed for emergencies, etc. They all get home when time for their furlough arrives.

LOCAL CHURCHES CAN SEND MISSIONARIES ANYWHERE THAT A MISSION BOARD CAN SEND THEM. It is constantly told that Missionaries cannot get on some fields unless they are sent by Mission Boards. This is not so! If a Mission Board can get on a field so can independent Baptists.

TO ALL WHO ARE INTERESTED ALL I CAN SAY IS ... COME ON IN, THE WATER'S FINE! The number of Baptists who are returning to New Testament ways in missions is constantly growing.

God is blessing with a fine number of independent Baptist missionaries who are continually going forth. New mission fields are being opened up. THE FASTEST GROWING MOVEMENT AMONG BAPTISTS IS A RETURN TO THE NEW TESTAMENT WAY.

IT IS MY FIRM CONVICTION THAT REAL REVIVAL WILL ONLY COME WHEN GOD'S CHURCHES RETURN TO GOD'S WAY. Man's way has failed! Let each examine his own heart.



The Sin of Gambling

William Edward Biederwolf
From the *Plains Baptist Challenger*, 1978

Let it be understood therefore that I am speaking more especially to those who profess to be Christians. Certainly if it shall appear that the things under discussion tonight are impure and unholy and harmful in themselves, I shall expect everyone who claims to stand for that which is highest and purest, regardless of your profession, to register yourself against them. But if I can even so much as prove them to be questionable, it shall certainly be just as much expected of the one who professes to be a Christian that they shall give God the benefit of the doubt in making their decision and follow the teachings of His Word above such things.

The Card Table

Let us begin with the cards, commonly called the euchre deck. And I know the first thought, already rising in the minds of some of you is concerning the question of the difference between playing with these cards and others, such as the flinch deck or the authors, and I make haste to reply that so far as the cards themselves are concerned there is none, nor do I think we can reasonably claim that the playing with these or any other decorated pieces of pasteboard may be properly called a sin in itself, and yet the difference between the use of these cards is as great as the difference between any two things can possibly be.

The wrong lies in what history has shown them to lead to. The question is not to be settled by what might be done or what might come from these indulgences, but by what history has shown to be their invariable outcome. The card table has been condemned because it leads to a waste of time, but this and many other accusations against it I shall not notice because they are equally true of other games which we hold as innocent. I repeat again that the question must be settled by what the history of the game has proven to be true and the one sweeping condemnation of the euchre deck is that it is, and always has been, the devil's chief tool for gambling.

I do not say that men could not gamble over authors or dominoes or croquet or any other game, but the fact remains that they seldom or never do. If the devil forsook the euchre deck and did with any other game what he is doing today with it, I would assuredly drop that game from my amusement list and substitute the euchre deck in its place. But the fact remains that the euchre deck is the gambler's instrument.

What is the first thing a young man sees when he enters a gambling hall? Is it authors or flinch or Parcheesi or any other such game? No, is the euchre deck just like the one he used to see in his home and just like the one lying on the center table or in the stand drawer in your home, mother, tonight. On every table the card deck is seen. The air is foul with impure breath and fouler still with the oaths and coarse language and harsh laughs that are heard as the chips and the glittering coins mingle their seductive sounds with the clinking of the glasses and the snapping of the pasteboard cards.

Every gambler and every drunkard and every thief and every tramp and the keeper of every brothel and every low-down lecherous debauchee has a pack of filthy, finger-worn euchre cards in his possession, the same cards which are used to lay the same games which some of you are teaching your children to play in your home.

Nine-tenths of all the gambling in America, if you except pool selling, the race track and the Board of Trade is done with the euchre deck. It is the gambler's tool.

It is also a sad fact, but one which no one can deny, that nine-tenths of all the gamblers in this country learned to play cards in the home. You say, you are going to allow your boy to play in the home so he will not want to play when away from home. But what sort of philosophy is that for a game that kindles a passion in the human breast? Gambling is a passion and you might as well say I am going to give my boy a little whiskey in the home so he will not want any when outside of the

home. Mr. John Bigelow, writing on gambling, said: "Nine people out of ten when they for the first time accept an invitation to join in a game of whist or poker have no more suspicion of the passions they may be about to nurse than the maid of sixteen when she engages in her first flirtation."

John Philip Quinn, the converted Chicago gambler, said the card-playing home was "the kindergarten for the gambling saloon." In 1893 the Civil Federation of Chicago interviewed 3,000 professional gamblers, all of whom, with but few exceptions, said they learned to play cards in the home. In a men's meeting recently conducted by one of the most successful pastors in Ohio, a converted gambler, and ex-saloon keeper made the following statement, which created a profound impression. He said:

"I have been in the saloon business with a gambling room attached, for the last four years, and claim to know something about what I am going to tell you. I do not believe the gambling den is nearly so dangerous, nor does it do anything like the same amount of harm as the social card party in the home. I give this as my reason: In the gambling room the windows are closed tight, the curtains are pulled down, everything is conducted secretly for fear of detection, and none but gamblers as a rule, enter there, while in the parlor all have access to the game, children are permitted to watch it, young people are invited to partake in it. It is made attractive and alluring by giving prizes, serving refreshments and adding high social enjoyments. (**Editor's note:** *Of course, in Las Vegas gambling is not done in secret, but wide open.*)

"Perhaps you have never thought of it, but where do all of the gamblers come from? They are not taught in the gambling dens. A 'greener' unless he is a fool, never enters a gambling hell, because he knows that he will be fleeced out of everything he possesses in less than fifteen minutes. He has learned somewhere else before he sets foot inside of such a place. When he has played in the parlor in the social game of the home, and has become proficient enough to win prizes among his friends, the next step with him is to seek out the gambling room, for he has learned and now counts upon his efficiency to hold his own.

"The saloon men and gamblers chuckle and smile when they read in the papers of the parlor games given by the ladies for they know that after a while those same men will become the patrons of their business. I say, then, the parlor game is the college where gamblers are made and educated. In the name of God, men, stop this business in your homes. Burn up your decks and wash your hands."

After he had taken his seat another converted ex-gambler arose and said:

"I endorse every word which the brother before me has just uttered. I was a gambler. I learned to play cards not in the saloon, not in my own home, but in the houses of my young friends, who invited me to play with them and taught me how."

I am indebted to my friend, M. B. Williams, for the story of James Kilgore. It is well known among religious workers. James Kilgore came from the country to the city of Cincinnati, a young man to seek employment. He secured living accommodations at the home of a Presbyterian elder. A few nights after his arrival, when supper was over the euchre deck was brought out and the young man was invited to play. He said he did not know how, but the youngest daughter of the family who had invited him told him they would teach him the game.

He then said his father and mother thought it wrong and did not wish him to play. "Oh," said the young woman, "I'm afraid your father and mother are a little out of date; you don't think there could possibly come any harm from it or else my papa who is an elder in the church would not permit us to play!" And there he stood, a big, bashful country youth with a beautiful city girl poking visions of love into his eyes, and he just allowed himself to be made her prisoner and she took him off to the table. He seemed to have a natural capacity for the game and before long he and his fair partner could beat any other couple in the neighborhood.

One day out of the office a little early he was met by the young man from this same home and invited over to a room to play a little while. He found himself in a room connected with a saloon, and altho' he resented the imposition, in other days he found himself there again. Money was introduced to make the game interesting and Kilgore usually played the winning

card. Finding that the shortest cut to fortune lay in his skill with cards it was not long until he was launched on a gambler's career. One evening he saw an easy prey in a young man just from the country. He said, "Hello! How are the old folks down on the farm," and asked him if he didn't want to see the city. He took him to a place of ill repute with a gambling room attached.

When he knocked, someone said, "Who's there?" and Kilgore replied, "Open up or I'll show you." He had been there a few nights before and had gotten into trouble and threatened to come back and clean the place out. Thinking he had come to keep his threat, a sharp report of a pistol was heard. He felt something warm spatter on his cheek and heard a dull thud on the sidewalk. He reached up with his hand and wiped the young man's brains from his face; ran to the Queen and Crescent depot and took the first train for the south. He opened a gambling room in a Tennessee town and one day the money was piled high around the table.

Everyone felt the final struggle must end in blood, and just as James Kilgore was about to throw the lucky card, there was a quick flash of knives and his gashed and lacerated body rolled on the floor. They dragged him out into the street. Someone said, "He is the one that has ruined our boys; it's good enough for him."

But a Christian woman with a kinder heart said, "He's some mother's boy." She took him to her home and cared for him in the name of Christ, but that did not reform him. He went down to Pensacola, Florida, and one night on his way to a gambling room, he passed the church where a crowd was pushing in to hear John B. Culpepper, the evangelist, preach. He elbowed his way in and heard the burning words of that man of God. The memories of his old home came back, his heart was touched, he went to the front and on his knees in tears he gave himself to God.

He became a preacher of the Gospel, but he preached it with his body all cut and gashed and his soul all scarred with sin. But the worst of it all is that thirteen of the best years of his life were worse than wasted, given to iniquity with their awful sowing to the wind and all because an elder of the Presbyterian church could see no harm in playing cards in his home. You say, "He might have become a gambler anyhow." Yes, that is true, but it certainly furnishes no excuse for the part played in his sad career by one who bore the name of Christ.

That gambling is more widespread today than ever before is easily proven by its literature. Fifty years ago there was but one or two newspapers devoted wholly to sports and these were only weekly or monthly but today we have over forty weeklies and one or two dailies. And did you know that fifty years ago there was but very little card playing in the home. It was the exception where after supper the table was cleared and the parents brought out the euchre deck and taught their children the gambler's game. And do you know that the widespread gambling of our country has kept pace exactly with the increase of card playing in our homes?

And, mother, father, it's an awful charge to make, but before God, it's true, that in a large measure for every mother's heart that's bled, for every wife's heart that's been broken, for every home that has been left to battle with poverty, shame and disgrace, for every shattered character and ruined life, for every glittering blade that has been thrust across the table and bathed in human blood, for every gambler who has lost his life and sent his soul to hell, because of an acquaintance with cards and a passion for the game, the card-playing homes of this land are, I say, before God and man, in a large measure responsible.

Some years ago in a large convention of gamblers the chairman said, "Gentlemen, whatever else you do, encourage card playing in the home."

Now mother, I want to ask you calmly and quietly and tenderly, do you want the same thing encouraged in your home that the gambler wants encouraged there? Is it possible that you are of one mind with the gamblers about this matter? And is not the mere fact that the gamblers of this country want cards played in your home enough to make you stop and seriously consider whether you want it there or not?

What more needs to be said?

