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CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE (1)

How Can All These Different Religions Be Headed To The Same Place?"

By Charles Coats

Beginning with this article and continuing for the next several months, we are going to undertake a study of religion as God would have it. Our standard for this study will be the Bible (2 Tim. 3:16,17; Col. 3:17). No creed, manual, or other man-made book will be used as they are inferior to God's Word. It will be our endeavor and our hope to get all who read to receive God's Word as our divine authority in religious matters (1 Thess. 2:13).

Now, to our question for today's article — "How can all these different religions be headed to the same place?" The sentiment of this question has been expressed in other ways, such as, "We are all going to heaven. We are just going different ways." To further illustrate their belief in this, many religious bodies join in a "Ministerial Alliance." They claim that their differences give them strength (see "Church News," *Mtn. Grove News-Journal*, December 2, 1983).

What does the Bible say about the subject under discussion? A cursory reading of Scripture will show us that this view is false. While man says there are many ways to get to heaven, God says there is only one. Note the following passages (emphasis mine, C.C.):

"For narrow is **the** gate, and straightened **the** way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it." (Matt. 7:14).

"Jesus saith unto him, I am **the** way, the truth, and the life. No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." (John 14:6).

"for through him (Jesus) we both have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. 2:18).

We notice quickly that the only way (the **one and only** way) to get to heaven is through Jesus. Jesus commanded us to obey Him (John 14:15; 12:48). By obeying Jesus and fulfilling the gospel, we can be saved (Rom. 1:16). There is but **ONE WAY** to get to heaven.

The division of the religious world and the thought that differences bring strength are all condemned by Jesus Himself: "And knowing their thoughts he said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand (Matt. 12:25).

God expects all men to come to Him by His directions and not theirs. He has told us there is only one way to get to Heaven. It is up to us to find the way and follow it. As to our question, "Can all these different religions be headed to the same place?", the answer is **NO**. Not heaven, at least!

Let us give prayerful consideration to the things that have been said.

The reason the Devil's crowd seems to be doing so much better than God's people is that they are following the Devil in total obedience and God's people are not totally obeying God.

TACT AND CONTACT

By Johnny Ramsey

Through the years, I have been urged to use more tact in preaching. My usual rejoinder has been: "Tact is good but contact is better." Most folk who pride themselves in being tactful are often compromisers. My observation of human nature causes me to believe that pleas for tact really men: "let us all agree to disagree." There is no tactful way to let a sinner know that he is a sinner. But, the sooner he knows it, the quicker the problem will be attended to. I had much rather meet a man in the Judgment Day to whom I had tried to teach the Truth than to hide my cowardice behind the facade of "tact" and never challenge his attention with the plain Gospel story. Jesus said, "Go teach all nations the gospel." It is very significant that He did not say: "And be sure to be tactful." One basic reason that the Bible does not stress this matter of **tact** is that most people have their own personal idea and definition of **tact**. Often it means: "Don't bother me with the facts because my mind is already made up." But, if we value the souls of men, we will continue to boldly preach the gospel (Acts 14:1-3). Yes, I am aware of Ephesians 4:15 and its sterling message . . . "speaking the truth in love." Paul wrote that to the Ephesians. Yet, when we read Acts 19, the chapter telling of the establishment of the Lord's work in Ephesus, we learn that Paul was considered very untactful by opponents of Heaven's way! He was "so uncouth" that enemies of the gospel wanted to kill him. Actually, though, Paul loved **their** souls more than **they** did! Love prompts us to preach plainly and without apology. Yes, love for God, truth, souls and eternal bliss!

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FULTON COUNTY GOSPEL NEWS

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TACT AND CONTACT

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Our problem today is not the lack of tact but the absence of contact!

In the business world, advertising gets bolder and bolder. Names of competitors are openly called as soap, automobile, and tobacco companies vie for the dollar. We need not be so naive as to think that someone's little feelings will be hurt because we document our opposition to error. God and Satan have been in a pitched battle for a long time. We need to unsheath the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17) and get after it!

Honest people face the facts. Some of the strongest members of the church today were once steeped in error, but someone loved them enough to shock them with plain truth. They searched the Scriptures, found the message and obeyed it. We are all answerable for Truth and need to obey **now** what we know **now**. Anyone who teaches in an ugly manner will give answer for that, also. The Devil wants all men to be lost, and they shall be forever doomed unless they hear, accept and obey the word of God. If we allow Satan to tie our tongues, for fear we might not be tactful, he has won the battle! I have often wondered if the Lord's famous denunciation of Jerusalem (Matthew 23) was considered tactful by that audience. I have even pondered a strategic question concerning Paul being thrown out of all those syna-

gogues! Jeremiah was slapped for his lack of tact — in other words, he told it like it was and spineless folk could not take it. Everyone who stands for anything will be accused of not being kind or sweet or considerate. I had much rather meet God in Judgment having boldly preached the Truth — regardless of how men received it — than to appear before my Maker and hear my neighbor say: "Old Ramsey was a nice guy but he was so afraid to tell me the will of God that we now stand here condemned to Hell!"

Some folk will even call this article "untactful" but let me ask this burning question: In the parable of the Sower is one word said about **how** the seed was sown? No! But, Jesus did emphasize **how men received it**. Therefore, "take heed how you hear" (Luke 8:18). There is no virtue in going to perdition in a good humor. Let's leave the popularity contests to false teachers.

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EVOLUTION

By Charles Coats

"Shortly after primitive man learned to walk semi-erect . . ." Thus began an article by Colin McEnroe entitled "Cave Wife Originates Tradition of Nagging" (*Arkansas Democrat*, 6-4-86). The article continues in a light vein with the man and his wife discussing bringing furniture into the cave.

To most people, this article is harmless. However, we need to realize that the first statement (alluded to above) is based on the Theory of Evolution. Other such examples would be a recent Sunday comic strip (6-2-86) in which a little girl is watching a group of boys crawl around and jump — generally, act like monkeys. The concluding frame has her saying, "So much for a million years of evolution." Also, Nancy Drew in *The Spider Sapphire Mystery* by Carolyn Keene (1968) is trying to locate a missing sapphire that has a spider in it. How will she recognize it? Notice its description as given on page 101 of the book,

"Millions of years ago the spiders on earth had no spinnerets. The one in my sapphire has none."

More and more examples could be cited, yet these are sufficient to show us that Evolution is a part of everyday life. It is accepted as fact. Few would even notice it when they saw it. Too many Christians are also believing this theory.

We need to remember that Evolution is anti-God.

"If you accept evolution, you must give up the Bible and God. Evolution banrupts the Bible. It discredits the word of God. The Law Scheme and the Scheme of Redemption do not go together. If descended from apes, we don't need a Savior."

Charles Smith, President
American Association for the
Advancement of Atheism, IN:
Oliphant-Smith Debate, Gospel
Advocate Co., 1952, p. 112,
from *Reason and Revelation*,
October 1982, p. 43).

We need to also remember that God said **He** created the earth in six literal 24 hour days (Genesis 1; Ex. 20:9-11).

Let us be aware of how Evolution is taking over. Let us educate ourselves, our children, and others of its dangers (NOTE: If we came from apes, what is to keep us from acting like apes?). Let us always stand firm for God's Word (I Cor. 15:1, 2).

**"Let The Redeemed
Of The Lord Say So"**

By Bill Graddy

Perhaps there is a time when Listening is the treatment of Prevention. However, the lack of substance before this time is the culprit in suicide, drugs and sin.

Seeds of substance (Luke 8:11) must be planted at the time of birth, cultivated during the early years in order to reap the harvest

of wisdom relative to living life in its fullness. The lack of this is resulting in children feeling rejected by their parents. The lack of love and affection shown to children by their parents contributes to a poor self-image and low self-esteem. Failure is the next step down. At this point, peer pressure is so great that children without this nurturing simply cannot cope with the "battle zones" in their lives. Going from one "combat zone" to another (home, school, work, social groups, and sometimes church), frustration erupts and exotic behavior ensues. The "turn around" these children and adults need cannot be fully done by people who are NOT directly responsible: teachers, professional counselors, and physicians who have limited time with them. So we go back to the drawing board and cover the same territory many times to correct these problems. The cure is double the prevention. As the proverb says, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Suicide is almost at an epidemic proportion in our nation, not only with teenagers but with the elderly. Self-murder is sin, unless mental derangement is the exception, and the Lord will know.

It seems we have tried about every philosophic and psychiatric solution known. Yet, the statistics are climbing. Why not try the truth? You ask, "What is truth?" The answer, "Thy word is truth" (John 17:17). We must be more than "hearers" of the word, we must be "doers" of the word (James 1:23). This truth must permeate our souls and our society. The precepts of Christ have not failed, they simply have not been tried. To deny this will work (the divine prescription) is to deny the inspiration of the Scriptures. Only with the truth can we tell the difference between truth and error. Standing in the truth will prevent abortion, suicide, and sin in our lives.

The home and especially the church must take a stand and give all of us an example. God gives us men who will take a stand for truth. "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so . . ." (Psalms 107:2).

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Some Things Of Which Paul Was Not Ashamed

By Garry Stanton

One of the characteristics of the apostle Paul that helped make him great was the intensity by which he carried out his work. As Saul of Tarsus he worked feverishly doing "many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9). The zeal with which he went about persecuting the church was something to behold. One of the main reasons he had such zeal was that he **thought** he was pleasing God. Saul was not ashamed of what he was doing and, in fact, he was proud to be such an instrument of "righteousness" for God. Of course, he was wrong to persecute Christians and would later repent of his actions and become a Christian himself. The same zeal that drove him to "kick against the pricks" was now helping him to become a great proclaimer of the gospel. Again, Paul was not ashamed of what he was doing, he was proud to have been given another chance to serve the risen Christ.

I think that it is interesting and informative to note the specific things of which Paul says that he was not ashamed. We too can be great in God's eyes if we will not be ashamed of the same things. Let's notice the things of which Paul was not ashamed.

First, Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:16). Paul was ready to preach the gospel anywhere he had the opportunity. He did not wait for a certain season but he proclaimed the message of salvation "in season and out of season" (II Timothy 4:2). He boldly and confidently preached the gospel in prison (Acts 16), in the midst of idolaters in Athens (Acts 17), in the Jewish synagogues (Acts 19), to an angry mob (Acts 21; 22), and in front of governors and kings (Acts 25; 26). Paul was not ashamed of the gospel and so he could say, "I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel

of God" (Acts 20:27). Can we please God and be ashamed of the gospel of Jesus Christ? The answer of course, is a resounding NO! Let us not be ashamed, but proudly and boldly tell our friends, neighbors, and loved ones about God's power unto salvation — the gospel.

The second thing that we notice about Paul was that he was not ashamed of God, he said, ". . . I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day" (II Timothy 1:12). He had no doubts, he knew that God could and would honor his promises of glory. One does not have to worry that God does not see or will not remember the righteousness of one's life. God "is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" and therefore "be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord" (Hebrews 11:16; I Cor. 15:58). We should say with full assurance, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (II Tim. 4:8). In God we have nothing to fear, in him we have nothing to be ashamed.

Thirdly, Paul was not ashamed to praise those who were worthy of praise, "For if I have boasted anything to him of you, I am not ashamed; but as we spake all things to you in truth, even so our boasting, which I made before Titus, is found in truth" (II Cor. 7:14). Paul would often boast to others of individual's or churches' faithfulness and dedication to God (cf. II Cor. 8; 9; Philemon; Acts 17:11). We are not to glorify man, but there are times when it is appropriate, yea even needed, that we give honor to whom honor is due (Romans 13:7). Let us not be ashamed to praise the good works of others.

Fourthly, we see that Paul was not ashamed to show Christ in his life. He tells us ". . . that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by

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SOME THINGS OF WHICH PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED

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death." (Philippians 1:20). Paul was always willing to magnify Christ in his body because he had the mind of Christ. The mind of Christ is a humble mind, a serving mind, an obedient mind, and a sacrificial mind (Philippians 2:7, 8). Paul exhorts us to do the same, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). If we have the mind of Christ we will do the kind of things which brings glory and honor unto the Lord. Do not be ashamed to let your light shine before men. Do not let the ungodly world keep you from living "soberly, righteously, and godly" (Titus 2:12). Sometimes doing right is not the "in thing" to do, but it is always pleasing to God. We need never be ashamed to show Christ living in us.

Paul was a great influence for good. We can be a great influence too, if we will not be ashamed of the same things of which Paul was not ashamed. Paul was not ashamed of God, the gospel, praising those worthy of praise, nor to show Christ in his life. Therefore, let us heed the word of Paul when he said "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ" (I Cor. 11:1).

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He who cannot lead and will not follow, at least makes a dandy road block.

Home should be the ground floor of heaven; departure from this life, just going upstairs.

Praying will make one cease from sinning, and sinning will make one cease from praying.

A study of the Bible is the only sure way to accomplish our true goal in life. Be in Bible study on Sunday and Wednesday. Study at home!

The Church of Christ

1. The Bible is its only guide (Rom. 1:16; I Thess. 2:13).
2. Wears a Biblical name (Rom. 16:16).
3. Established at the right place (Isa. 2:2, 3; Acts 2).
4. Established at the right time (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2).
5. Established on the right person (Matt. 16:18; Acts 2:36).
6. Saved are in it (Eph. 5:23; Acts 2:47).
7. Its members are enrolled in heaven (Heb. 12:23).
8. Membership in it is obtained by obedience to God's commands, including baptism (Acts 2:41-47; I Cor. 12:13).

God's Plan of Salvation

1. Hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17; Acts 16:32).
2. Believing what is taught (Mark 16:16; Heb. 11:6).
3. Repentance (Acts 2:38; Luke 13:3; Acts 17:30).
4. Confession (Rom. 10:9, 10; Acts 8:37).
5. Baptism (Acts 2:38; Mark 16:16; I Pet. 3:21; Rom. 6:3,4).
6. After 1 - 5, faithful Christian living (I Pet. 2:11, 12; Rev. 2:10).

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