

A Quarterly Religious Journal
(Presented by email)

“LIGHT FOR OUR AGE”

Bob Oliver, editor

(Please use the following email to contact me.)

boliver@mccallie.org

January, 2011

Volume 3

Issue #1

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

Psalm 119:105

Feature One: Editorial

Part 2: Who or What is the Holy Ghost?

Words are in actuality symbols of ideas and convey meaning. In the English language we must be aware that almost every word, if not every word has multiple definitions that even change from time to time. This has caused confusion in some areas, and I believe our study this quarter is no exception.

In 1611 at the translation of the King James Version of the Bible the word “ghost” was perceived differently than it is today. Two examples from literature will illustrate this point. In Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, there is a scene where Hamlet meets his father’s ghost. The scene is not intended to be scary or frightening, but rather this is where Hamlet is given the crucial information that allows the play to develop. Another play is Charles Dickens famous *A Christmas Carole*. In this play Dickens uses ghosts to bring old Scrooge from being a heartless individual to one that cared for the unfortunate. In other words, the ghosts were an instrument for good in the play. In both of these pieces of literature, the word “ghost” was not used in a sinister manner, but rather for good.

In our age we think of ghosts as “evil”. We have seen scary movies in which “evil” ghosts cause all manner of problems. Therefore we tend to associate the word “ghost” with something evil. It is my contention that when we put the word “holy” in front of the word “ghost” our minds have difficulty understanding the concept. How can these two terms exist together? I believe it was a subconscious problem. People of my generation were raised on the King James Version. There were no other versions that rivaled it in most homes. Most preachers used it in the pulpit. That brought about an interesting situation in relation to our study. My father, R C Oliver, always used the King James Version in his preaching. Yet, when he would read passages that mentioned the “Holy Ghost”, dad would almost always say “Holy Spirit”. Why this change? I believe it was because of the unconscious problem the words “Holy” and “Ghost” presented. We do not have the same problem with the word “spirit”. We will all say that we have a “spirit” our “soul”, and that is not bad or evil, it just is. The word “spirit” is more neutral.

I believe this to be the reason there is so much confusion when we try

to study the subject of “The Holy Ghost”. We can identify with Jesus as deity, because he came to earth and was like we are. We identify with the Father in that we know that a father is to represent love and protection along with discipline and care. However, the phrase “Holy Ghost” leaves us rather lost. It is hard to identify with those words.

Jesus uses a word as a name, or proper noun, which will help us in the study of the Holy Ghost, or Holy Spirit. In John 14:26 Jesus says, “But the Comforter, *which is* the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.

The word “Comforter” in this text is a proper noun, or in essence a name. God uses different terms to refer to himself. Do you remember what God told Moses when asked what name to give Israel in Exodus 3:13-14?

13 And Moses said unto God, Behold, *when* I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What *is* his name? what shall I say unto them? 14 And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

In John 14 Jesus is telling us that the work of the Holy Ghost is that of one that brings comfort. I recommend that you think of the name “Comforter” when you study the nature of the Holy Ghost. This is a term that will allow us to identify with His nature, for the Bible teaches us that he, too, is deity.

In Acts when Peter is reprimanding Ananias the following conversation took place:

Act 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price

of the land? 4 Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God.

So we see that Peter refers to the Holy Ghost as deity or as God.

Studying the nature and work of the Holy Ghost is both fascinating and enlightening. In our next quarter of study we will look at the work of the Holy Ghost today.

Feature 2: an article by R. C. Oliver

This article was in the religious magazine, Light, edited by my father in the 1950's.

SOUND DOCTRINE VS. TRADITION

Christ and the Wise Men

It was the shepherds in the nearby fields, and not the wise men from the far away east, who came and found, the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger." -Luke 2:7-18.

According to Matthew 2:7, compared with 2:16, it is obvious that the wise men, which came from the far away east, did not arrive until Jesus was almost two years old. They were not the ones who saw him "wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger," as is affirmed by tradition; for he had long since been removed from the manger. Neither does it say the wise men even went to the stable; rather, it says: "When they were come into the HOUSE." -Matthew 2:1 1.

Therefore, let us not make the mistake of following tradition there, as the masses do; rather let's correct it.

God Heareth Not Sinners

Tradition says that God will not hear an ALIEN; however, that which is written, "Now we know that God heareth not SINNERS" (John 9:31), does not say, neither does it necessarily mean, that God will not hear an alien's prayer.

Whether a man is in the church, or out of the church, if that man has "turned away his ear from hearing the word of the Lord" (Proverbs 28:9), and neither worships God, nor does His will, "even his prayer shall be an abomination" before the Lord!

When the man who has been blind uttered the words of John 9:31, he did not have in mind a penitent sinner, for then he would have contradicted Jesus -See Luke 18:13. Neither did we have in mind an honest alien -an honest man out of the church, for then he would have contradicted what Luke later affirmed -Acts 10:4. What then, you ask, did he mean? He simply meant that if any man, whether in or out of the church, should turn away his ear from hearing the word of the Lord, God will not hear that man's prayer.

The very purpose of the healed man's statement was the overthrow of the Pharisee's argument which said: "This man is not of God." Let us therefore remember that any man who works in opposition to God's will, a sin of which the Pharisees were accusing Jesus, God will not hear him; but "if any man be a worshipper of God, and doeth his will, him he heareth."

Church Cooperation Apes The Pope!

Tradition says that several congregations of our Lord's church cannot cooperate together in helping another congregation do a work which the latter congregation cannot do alone, that is, except in the case of an emergency.

The fallacy of this tradition is obvious, for whether we have an emergency or not, it is never right either to work through, or aid, the pope, in the work that he is doing! Weak indeed is the mind of that man who tries to make such foolish comparisons.

The work of the church is two-fold: benevolent and evangelistic. And in that several congregations were instructed to help a church in a benevolent work which the latter could not do alone (I Cor. 16:1-2), by the same principle several churches can help another congregation do an evangelistic work which it otherwise cannot do alone. If not, why not?

Therefore, let us no longer transgress the law of God through observing such traditions as will prevent our helping sister congregations in their righteous work; rather, let us resolve today to do all we can to aid our brethren in their onward march for Christ and His church.

Feature 3: Our Communication ---

In the King James Version of the Bible, we read in Philemon 1:6 “That the communication of thy faith may become effectual by the acknowledging of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus.” You might be interested to note that the word “communicate” in this text means much more than just “talking”. Notice what John Gill writes in his *Exposition of the Entire Bible*. “The grace of faith itself cannot be communicated from one to another; a believing parent cannot communicate it to his children...; but an account of it, of its actings and exercises, of the joy of it..., may be given to the mutual comfort and edification of saints; and it may be shown forth to others by the fruits of it, works of righteousness....”

In many ways our communication does mean much more than our speaking. As this text indicates, it implies the way we act as well. In other words, don't “do as I say not as I do” but rather “do as I say and that I do”.

Feature 4: Bible Questions

Will you explain the apparent contradiction in the following two passages?

John 6:29 Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.

Eph 2:8-9 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: 9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

At first glance it appears that the Bible is confused on the topic of works. The answer is simply that we need to ask the question, “What kind of ‘works’ is under consideration. Obviously, Jesus stated that “belief” was a “work of God” and was necessary for salvation. In Ephesians the emphasis of the term “works” was “of yourselves”. We cannot “work” our way into heaven. We cannot earn heaven. If, however, a “work” is “of God” then it must be accomplished. When Jesus tells us that we must repent, must we not obey that work? Jesus specifically instructs us to be “baptized”, and Peter in Acts 2:38 commands that we obey God’s work of baptism. Must we not obey what both Jesus and Peter command? The church at Ephesus in the book of Revelation was told to “do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent.” This is in Revelation 2:5. Was the church at Ephesus not required by our Lord to “do the first works”? Then also, in verse 10 we find the following: “...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.” Does that not imply that we must be “faithful until death”?

The answer to the apparent contradiction lies in the meaning of the word “works”. The Bible speaks of the “work of God” in John, and “works of the devil” in 1 John 3:8. It also speaks of the “works of the Law”, and “work of men” in Acts 5:38. In analysis, if the “work” is something commanded by God, then it must be obeyed. If it is of the devil, of man, of our own desires, then it will not avail us of salvation.

Humor:

A preacher asked a little boy if he said his prayers every night. “Yes, sir.” the boy replied. “And, do you always say them in the morning, too?” the preacher asked. “No sir,” the boy replied. “I ain’t scared in the daytime.”

In Closing:

As I begin the third year of this endeavor, I want to wish you a very happy new year. I have enjoyed so much this little medium. Always feel free to send me the names and email addresses of others that you believe will enjoy this paper. May God bless you, each one.

In the Master's service,

Bob Oliver