



Truth 101:

“Expose, rebuke & entreat.”



Herald the word. Stand by it, opportunely, inopportunely, expose, rebuke, entreat, with all patience and teaching. 3 For the era will be when they will not tolerate sound teaching, but, their hearing being tickled, they will heap up for themselves teachers in accord with their own desires, 4 and, indeed, they will be turning their hearing away from the truth, yet will be turned aside to myths. 5 Yet you be sober in all things; suffer evil as an ideal soldier of Christ Jesus; do the work of an evangelist; fully discharge your service (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

Back in October of 1993, the above verse sent me off on my life’s work. I know that Paul originally wrote this letter to Timothy, but the letter is intended by God for all who would teach the Word. In 1993 I found myself desiring to do just that. I love truth. I love God’s word. I also love to write, and in 1993 I badly wanted to pass along my spiritual happiness to others by setting words to paper. I hated that so many people in the world were hearing wrong things about God through mainstream channels. I wanted to take away the wrong things and give out the right things.

God is the original Writer. Putting thoughts/truth into such a timeless, tangible form became God’s primary method of communicating. In this interest, He inspired several penmen. God loved verbs, adjectives, nouns, puns, satire, humor, the active voice, figures of speech, even the double entendre—and He still does. I wanted to follow suit. I wanted to “go, thou, and do likewise,” and I did. I bought books about how to write books. I tell you now that if you really want to exercise your privilege of being made in the image of God, then write something. This is how I felt about it, and still do. The pen is mightier than the sword. A well-crafted paragraph changes more people than a well-tempered blade. As Abraham Lincoln said to *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*



author Harriet Beecher Stowe when first meeting her, “So you’re the little woman who started this big war.”

DIVINE ORDER

Concerning the 2 Timothy passage above, I eventually appreciated the strength and value of the three-fold exhortation, “Expose, rebuke and entreat.” It’s a logical progression. How can you entreat when no one can appreciate your positive declaration because there are so many wrong notions clogging up peoples’ heads? It’s like trying to pave a road overlaid with trash. Who wants to drive over tar-covered Whopper boxes and Coke bottles? Before you pave the road, you must remove the trash. As you’re removing the trash, you must also arrest the person throwing the trash, else your work is in vain because the offender keeps littering. Only when you’ve taken care of these two preliminary things can you then successfully re-surface the road, improving the driving experience for all. Back to Paul. One exposes bad teaching first, secondly rebukes the one throwing the bad teaching “on the road,” and only then declares the positive thing, the right thing, and “paves the road” over a freshly-swept roadbed that can

then be appreciated. True and effective evangelism, then, is 2/3 negative. This rubs some people the wrong way. I can’t help that.

Teaching must begin with exposure and rebuke, else the entreaty falls upon deaf ears. One must say *what* is wrong and then say *who* is wrong, else one wastes one’s breath with entreaty. (A false doctrine cannot be rebuked; people are rebuked.) This is Paul talking, not me. I know many 1/3 evangelists. That’s what I call them: “1/3 evangelists.” They don’t want to make waves. They don’t want to be too strong, because then some people might think that they are proud or self-centered. They loathe hurting

feelings. They are delicate. Thus, none of them are as effective as I am at what I do. I say this without a hint of boasting. I am but a poor player upon the stage of life who has this one thing going for him: I’m at least astute enough to follow direc-

“True and effective evangelism is 2/3 negative. I can’t help that.”

tions: “Expose, rebuke and entreat.” Very well, then. I’m a 3/3 evangelist. Blame Paul. There aren’t many of us in this arena. It’s hard to expose and rebuke, which is why few do it. It takes the balls of an elephant. I have to put up with others saying that I am mean; a bully; divisive; full of myself; arrogant; “Pope Martin.” *Whatever*. All the while, I’m the humblest, nicest guy I know. In the meantime,

hundreds, maybe thousands of people get truth from me. Maybe it pays to follow the instructions of the greatest evangelist who ever lived.

REBUKING REBUKE

I took this progression (“Expose, rebuke and entreat”) as my own. But now I find that I am being tacitly exposed for exposing and rebuked for rebuking. At the same time, you are being tacitly chided for paying attention to such a “divisive,” “subversive,” “contentious” and “arrogant” sectarian trouble-maker as myself. In fact, it is being intimidated by another teacher (Clyde Pilkington) that, if you are spiritual and you want to maintain the unity of the spirit, then you ought to stand aloof from the likes of me. You ought to shun me. Send my emails over into your spam folder. Phase my “sectarianism” out of your life. I hope that you will not do any of this. I like you, and I want you to like me. But I will risk it all, as I do on a daily basis, for the sake of the truth. Truth has cost me over the years. I do choose to explain myself, however, when my Scriptural method of teaching comes under public attack by others unwittingly subverting truth by sneakily outlawing the exposure of falsehood.

Every single one of us who would stand for truth must be subject to exposure, rebuke and entreaty. If you accept my writing without intelligent analysis, then you give me *carte blanche* to say whatever I want. Why would you do that? In the interest of being “nice”? If I am not subject to exposure and rebuke, myself, then I really would become “Pope Martin.” The people who think I’m storming the Vatican aren’t grasping how popes are made. Nobody becomes a pope by exposing and rebuking error in the ecclesia. People become popes by labeling their critics as “divisive.” No one must deflect anyone from holding another’s feet to the fire in the interest of correcting error and forwarding truth. Rather than precluding the creation of popes, such holding of feet to the fire prevents any such papal coronations.

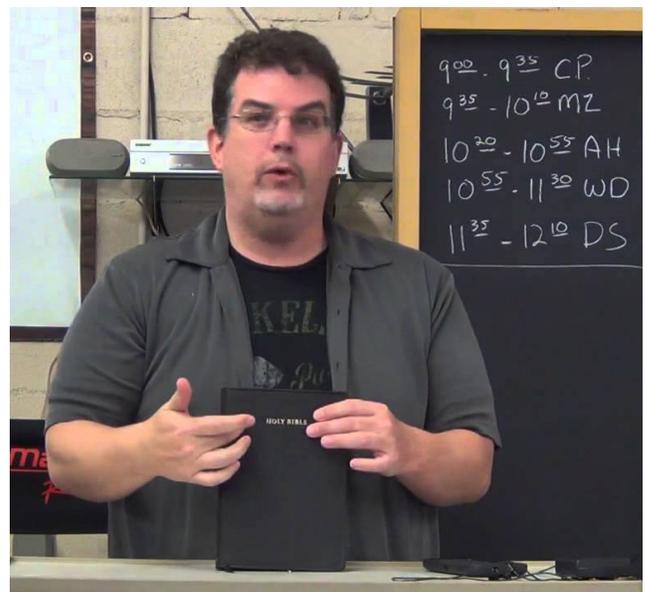
It seems that I am picking on Clyde Pilkington, and I am. Clyde is influential among the body of Christ and he writes more than anyone alive on topics of consequence. Many listen to him. I love the man. I thank God for him. He has nurtured me like a father. He has brought many to truth. But when something comes down the Pilkington Pike that is seriously wrong enough so that it disquiets the saints and produces the very divisiveness and contention that it seeks to alleviate, it’s my duty to do the 3/3 evangelist thing. I can’t help it. I try to avoid

it, but in some cases I can’t. So here I am yet again, about to do my thing. You know that this must be serious, and it is. Otherwise, I would not be doing it. I would rather be continuing on the Romans Series. Consequential truth is at stake. Clyde is exposing and rebuking exposure and rebuke, the very things that keep popes from popping up among us. I personally don’t like the pope, and I would rather not have more of him. I haven’t an ill-willed bone in my body for Clyde Pilkington. My entire being loves the man. This is all about teaching and truth and nothing *but* teaching and truth.

I MEET DAN SHERIDAN

I’ll never forget meeting Dan Sheridan for the first time. My Ohio conference was scheduled for the first weekend in June of that year and I first talked to Sheridan in April. This was 2007. I talked to Dan on the phone and realized how smart the guy was. He was brilliant and he would not stop talking. I “hired” him on the spot to speak at my conference. This was unusual, as I ordinarily insisted upon hearing people speak publicly before putting them on my hometown podium, but Sheridan was different.

Two weeks later, the conference was underway. It was 7:30 p.m. on Friday evening, and Sheridan had yet to arrive. I was on the podium in the middle of a talk when I saw a stout-looking fellow sneaking into the back door (okay, he was striding), wearing a blue Hawaiian shirt. I thought, *That must be Dan Sheridan*. I had never even seen a picture of the guy.



The first thing Dan said to me as we shook hands after my talk was, “I’m impressed.” My talk was an exposure and rebuke of a book by Phil Scranton about the second death. In this book, Phil Scranton celebrates the second death as a second mortality that brings “dead” people to Christ. This, at the same time that Paul, in 1 Corinthians 15:26, calls death an enemy. I can’t stand people glorifying death, so I was decimating Phil’s book, pointing out its faults of logic and reasoning. I read passages from the book and then constructively critiqued them with the aid of properly translated Scripture and laws of language. I was basically bulldozing, not Phil Scranton the man (I liked Phil Scranton the man), but his teaching.

“What impressed you so much about that talk?” I asked Dan.

“Well,” said Dan. “What impressed me so much was that Phil Scranton was sitting in the front row.”

Just then, Phil Scranton came up and said, “Hey, guys.”

A minute later, Phil, Dan and I were at the back of the conference hall during the break,



drinking lemonade and chatting about the Indianapolis Colts; Phil was from Indiana. Later that afternoon, Phil took the podium and defended his crummy book. It was all very instructional. The contrasting viewpoints allowed those in the congregation to look at the topic of the second death from two completely different angles and form their own opinions.

STICKS AND STONES

I have never understood why exposing and rebuking has to be personal. I have never made it personal. Yes, it sometimes hurts, but it’s never personal. Not with me, anyway. It’s all about truth. We are to correct false teaching in the body of Christ and teach truth. It’s all about truth. Have I mentioned truth?

I have been on the other end of exposure and rebuke many times. Anyone can analyze and criticize my teaching, just please don’t make unjustified, disparaging inferences about my character. Break down my words and my teaching—fine. But if you call me names and impugn my character when I don’t deserve it, then you’ve taken exposure and rebuke to unscriptural levels. This isn’t how I operate. It’s not how Phil Scranton operates. I have had many heated Scriptural discussions with another teacher, Rick Farwell. We

disagree on many key points. But whenever we meet, we are very civil to one another. In print, I never disparage Rick Farwell, the man. I will blow up his teaching all day long. Rick carries his own load of dynamite against my so-called heresies (I believe in the sovereignty of God; Rick doesn’t). We report, you decide. The last time I saw Rick Farwell was in Faith, North Carolina a couple years ago. He listened to a talk of mine, shook my hand afterward and gave me a cigar. What a nice guy. I’m nice to him as well. Sheridan and I now disagree on many important things. This is sad, of course, but it’s the way things are. It’s

“What impressed me so much was that Phil Scranton was sitting in the front row.” —*Dan Sheridan*

God’s business. Are Sheridan and I still nice to each other? All the time. Do we ever impugn one another’s character? Never. Do we ever call one another names? Only privately, in fun. I could never repeat the names that we call each other, believe me.

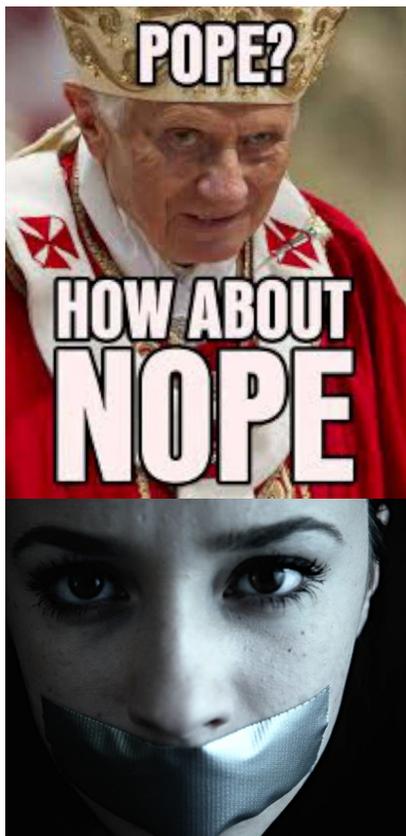
Clyde Pilkington is one of only two guys I know who take exposure and rebuke of their teachings personally. I think that exposure and rebuke *overly* hurts Clyde. I grieve this, I do. And so I think that this attempt by Clyde to dissuade it by labeling it as divisive, is a construct. It’s hard for me to believe that Clyde truly believes his own teaching on this. I could be wrong. I shouldn’t be exploring the man’s motives anyway, so I’ll stop doing it and stick to what he wrote in *The Bible Student’s Notebook*—Volume 13, Issues 572 & 573.

WHO’S THE POPE?

I’ll admit that being on the receiving end of exposure and rebuke is hard. Clyde has been on the end of it quite a lot lately with his taking of the “snatching away” from the body of Christ, saying that half of Paul’s letters aren’t for us. (The “snatching away” is described in one of Paul’s early letters—1 Thessalonians.) Clyde now says that half of Paul’s letters are for Israel and a different body of Christ than existed prior to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome; two separate bodies of Christ. This is a serious swerving from truth.

I have Scripturally discredited this teaching, as has Aaron Welch. Neither Aaron nor I collude. We have each seen the error independently. We always introduce our writings—again, without collusion—by saying how much we love and respect Clyde. Then we decimate Clyde’s teaching with logic and Scripture. (It’s actually not Clyde’s teaching, anyway, it’s Charles Welch’s teaching—as far as I can tell. Clyde is just passing it along.) But now Clyde is tacitly calling us “divisive.” In fact, Clyde is calling anyone who would expose and rebuke another person—especially him, it seems—“divisive.” This is dangerous because some are believing it. It is dangerous because, if we create an environment in which no one can honestly criticize another’s teaching without being labeled “divisive,” “arrogant,” “contentious” or “proud,” then some weaker members of the ecclesia will crumble under the mere prospect of such guilt and will hesitate to criticize anyone, especially not Clyde. They will remain silent to avoid the stigma of being thought of as all of these negative things.

What a terrible/golden opportunity for error to creep into the ecclesia. This is why I’m stopping this nonsense in its tracks. What a terrible/golden opportunity to create a pope. Who is the pope? The potential pope is not the one constructively criticizing, but the one



labeling anyone who dares criticize as “divisive,” “self-centered,” “subverted,” “deceitful,” “dangerous,” and “self-condemned.” (These are Clyde’s words.) Really? All we’re trying to do is get to the truth. If we have to expose bad teaching en route to that destination, we will. This is not the wrecking of peace, but the preserving of it. What wrecks peace is the twisting of Scripture to suggest that critics ought to shut up.

POLITICS INFORMS THE ECCLESIA?

A political illustration of this is the election of Barack Obama as the first black U.S. president. In many circles, Obama was effectively shielded from criticism by his race. Democrats created an environment of political correctness whereby anyone questioning Obama’s policies was labeled “racist.” Such critics automatically hated black people, or so it was said. Democrats created the same false environment for Hillary Clinton. Anyone daring to speak against Clinton’s political ideas simply hated women. All women. Such people were labeled, “chauvinist,” “sexist,” “misogynist.” How unfair. This is known as rigging the game. Most of the people I know who were critical of Obama weren’t against a black president, just *that* black president. Same with Hillary. Give us a woman president any day, my friends said—just not *that* woman president. Nevertheless, the devious tactics of political correctness silenced many.

We must avoid this kind of thinking in the ecclesia. We mustn’t rig the game in favor of one teacher over another. No one must cower from questioning a teacher simply because that teacher insulates himself from criticism by misusing Scripture to condemn doubters as divisive.

Now I will show you how Scripture has been misused for this purpose.

DIVISION WITHIN UNITY

In Issue 572 of Volume 23 of *Bible Student’s Notebook*, Clyde Pilkington writes on the importance of unity.¹ I couldn’t agree more that the unity within the body of Christ is an objective declaration of God founded upon the cross of Christ and that nothing can break it. We can break it relatively—in our own experience—but not absolutely. Such unity does not need made, only kept. Christ has already made it. I think everyone agrees with this.

The same with peace. Who doesn’t want peace? Christ has established our peace. Clyde points out that peace, like unity, need only be kept, not created. So far, so good. Here is where Clyde loses it—

Walking in unbelief we will end up denying the rich, practical benefits of our unity. Rather than embracing the truth of our union with each other, we will walk instead in unbelief’s dark paths of divisiveness

1 <http://www.biblestudentsnotebook.com/bsn572.pdf>

and contention that make *endless dogmas and creeds, human distinctions and preferences*, barriers to living out the divine reality of our unity. Unbelief will make us opponents to the very truth and purpose of God. *Pride and arrogance* must be denied. Cliques and parties must be rejected. All humility must be earnestly given, all meekness must be exercised, with patient longsuffering, bearing with each other in love—“the bond of maturity” (Colossians 3:14).

What does Clyde mean by “endless dogmas”? What does he mean by “human preferences?” If the quote by A.E. Knoch that is included by Clyde on the first page of this article is any indication, Clyde refers to differences in belief in the body of Christ and their supposed detrimental effect on unity and peace. Here is the Knoch quote—

Difference in doctrine does not destroy the unity—it only mars its expression. — *A.E. Knoch*



A.E. Knoch

I have great respect for A.E. Knoch, but I’ve never hesitated to sniff his pronouncements and find some of them malodorous. Here is one. Why must difference in

doctrine necessarily mar the expression of unity? Cannot unified people disagree? Cannot they, in peace, discuss their differences? Rather than marring the expression of unity, such a thing as people disagreeing peacefully and respectfully would, in fact, demonstrate it.

Consider the conference I referenced earlier, where Phil Scranton and I vehemently disagreed on the second death and yet, at the same time, counted one another as brothers and mingled socially together over lemonade and the Indianapolis Colts. The attendees at that conference were amazed. Some of them still talk about it. It was so encouraging for them to witness the behavior of Phil and myself. Phil and I became an example of how difference of doctrine should be handled in the ecclesia. One attendee said to me, “I was dumbfounded to hear you two going at it over the second death, and then conversing so warmly together afterwards. I loved it.” As I said, our setting forth of different viewpoints helped many to better understand the second death and, as a side benefit, to see a living example of unity within the body of Christ. The takeaway for many was that the unity of the body of Christ is not so fragile after all—at least not among the mature.

NOAH WAY!

When I lived with Clyde, I remember disagreeing with a visitor, Jim Burson, about the Flood of Noah. Burson insisted that the Flood of Noah was a local deluge. (I wrote about this in the Volume 4, Issue 37 edition of the ZWTF.²) I had never heard anything so “crazy” (as I think I might have called it) in my life. When I realized that Jim was deadly serious about it, I gave him quite an argument against it: 1) the water rose over 15 cubits above the tallest mountains on Earth, 2) everything having breath died, 3) God kept only eight people alive out of the entire population of Earth—and so forth.

Waves of flabbergast sloshed in and out of my argument, I’m sure. I was as respectful as I could be, but I’m sure that the aforementioned flabbergast made me seem impertinent at times. I was basically in a state of shock. Clyde witnessed the whole thing, but didn’t say a word. Later (perhaps a year later), Clyde said to me, “When you argued with Jim over the Flood, I have never seen so disgraceful a display in my life.” *Who? Me?* Clyde said that I was completely disrespectful and rude to Jim Burson. I didn’t think I was. I was adamant, yes. Flabbergasted, yes. But not rude. I am not a rude person. I may color and talk outside the lines, but I’m not rude. But of course,

2 <http://martinzender.com/ZWTF/ZWTF4.37.pdf>



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some sensitive people might mistake insistence for rudeness, and confidence for impertinence. Later, I talked to Jim Burson about it. I said, “Remember when we had that discussion about the Flood? He did. I said, “Was I rude?” And he said, (this is an exact quote because I wrote it down right after he said it), “Oh, *please*. That was nothing. I didn’t feel that way at all. I thought nothing about it, except that it was a stimulating conversation. I enjoyed it thoroughly.”

See what I’m talking about?

Clyde’s assumption is that anyone who strongly refutes error in the ecclesia is necessarily proud and arrogant. He can’t help thinking this way, apparently. The problem is that, when he puts this kind of thing in print before the saints and misuses Scripture to defend *his* special brand of sensitivity, he creates the very divisiveness that he’s seeking to allay.

SAINTS ON THE SHELF?

What is the body of Christ for? Is it to be set on a shelf as a museum piece? Is it to be treated like a family Bible that sits on a coffee table and never gets opened? Or is it to grow in realization of truth? Growing in realization is not always a pretty process. My argument with Phil Scranton, however, did not mar the expression of

the unity of the body of Christ. Rather, it illustrated and enhanced it. I would go so far as to say that it defined the unity. Neither Phil nor I acted proudly or arrogantly. In this way, we actually did a great service for the ecclesia.

At least Knoch admits that such differences of doctrine cannot destroy a unity created by Christ. But “mars its expression?” How? Let’s assume that it does. What is the remedy? To never have differences? To never disagree? To place the body of Christ on a high shelf in a museum and stare at it? To put it behind glass and surround it with velvet ropes? Then how could anyone follow Paul’s injunction to, within the body of Christ, “expose, rebuke and entreat”? Clyde agrees with Knoch, but then takes it to extremes. According to Clyde, differences of opinion (“human preferences”) on doctrine (“endless dogmas”), not only necessarily threaten the expression of unity within the body (is the unity created by Christ so fragile?), but they turn the ones who would hope to investigate and iron out these differences into proud, arrogant sectarians. This is its own form of pride and arrogance. What a nasty accusation against people who are merely trying to get at the truth and stay the tide of error.

THE PURPOSE OF DIVISION

In a section titled, “The Divine Purpose of Divisiveness (Sectarianism),” Clyde quotes 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 and then comments. Here is 1 Corinthians 11:18-19—

For first, indeed, at your coming together in the ecclesia, I am hearing of schisms inhering among you, and some part I am believing. For it must be that there are sects also among you, that those also who are qualified may be becoming apparent among you.

Here is Clyde’s comment—

While God has provided us with a fixed spiritual unity, He has also decreed an important place for divisiveness and contention within the Body. The divine purpose for this appointed evil within Christ’s Body is so that those who are divinely “qualified” (i.e., “approved”) among the saints may be easily identified (i.e., “manifest,” made “apparent” or “recognized”). They are *the ones operating in “all humility and meekness, with patience, bearing with each other in love”* (Ephesians 4:2).

I have italicized the part of this quote where Clyde departs from the context to introduce a foreign element

from a faraway context that suits his purposes. The schisms and sects referred to by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11 have nothing to do with some members of the ecclesia being so-called arrogant troublemakers, giving others in the ecclesia (the self-assumed meek and humble ones) an opportunity to bear patiently with them. I'm not saying that this doesn't happen within the ecclesia, I'm just saying that this context does not describe it. Let's look at the immediate context, found in the first two verses of chapter 11—

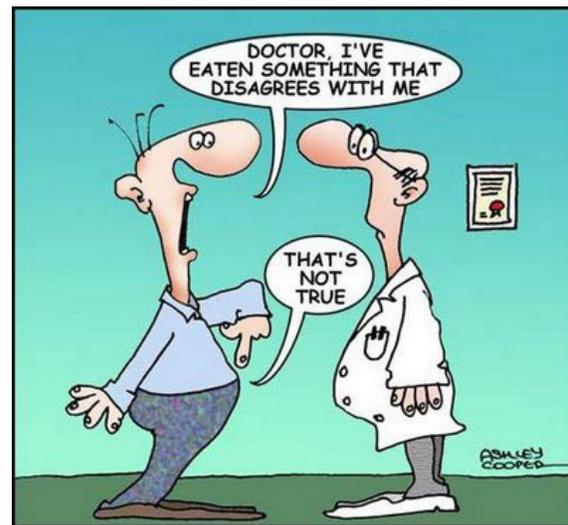
Become imitators of me, according as I also am of Christ. Now I am applauding you that you remember all of mine, and are retaining the traditions according as I give them over to you.

Paul then goes into great detail about 1) men covering their heads, 2) women *not* covering their heads, 3) men having long hair, 4) women having short hair, 5) eating the Lord's dinner unworthily. This is the context surrounding the "there must be sects among you" passage. The "sects" passage sits smack dab in the middle of a discussion of the traditions brought to the ecclesia by Paul. (Ephesians 4:2 belongs nowhere near this passage; it only fogs the point.) Clearly, then (at least I think it's clear), the sects, divisions and contentions arose in the Corinthian ecclesia when some of the saints camped on the "a-man-must-never-pray-while-covered" camp, while others insisted, "it's-no-big-deal-cover-or-don't-cover-it-doesn't-matter" camp. It was the same thing with hair length and the Lord's dinner. The saints apparently took different sides. Paul had said, "Observe these traditions!" but some were saying, "Oh, maybe we will and maybe we won't." This is where the "those also who are qualified may be becoming apparent among you" comment comes in. Obviously, the qualified people were analyzing the situation and siding with Paul in retaining the traditions. The unqualified were ignoring the traditions given over to them by Paul and doing their own thing.

It is evident here that if Paul is so concerned about traditions concerning head coverings, hair length, and behaving oneself at the dinner table, how much more concerned would he be over spiritual truths concerning the resurrection, justification, conciliation, grace, and the sovereignty of God? This passage is more about teaching (albeit the topic here is specifically traditions) than it is about the general dispositions of patience and humility. In fact, Clyde turns this passage on its head, making it say the opposite of what it actually says. He plucks a faraway passage from Ephesians and illicitly joins it to the 1 Corinthians text in an attempt to prove the con-

volved premise that a fellow-believer's teaching ought not to be strongly opposed in the ecclesia (never mind if it's wrong or right), and if it is then the opposers are proud, arrogant sectarians, which is actually *good* ("[God] has also decreed an important place for divisiveness and contention") because then those of the ecclesia who are meek, humble and patient have a great opportunity to exercise grace upon anyone who would dare make bold distinctions between people heralding opposite things.

My goodness. How distorted. 1 Corinthians 11:18-19 is *all* about distinctions between people heralding opposite things. Paul is in fact here *demanding* that the saints camp on the correct side of specific teachings/traditions of his. The divisiveness ("sects") of this context is not that some saints are disagreeing with other saints. To Paul, it is *good* that some saints are disagreeing with other saints!



If there must be disagreement, he *wants* them to disagree. Why? Because the ones who are right are disagreeing with the ones who are wrong. The surprising result? The *wrong* people unwittingly serve as a foil against which the right people make themselves apparent. While Clyde would make this passage to have nothing to do with right and wrong teaching (he says it has to do with dissenters *against* a particular teaching becoming fodder for the supposed meek and humble), this passage is nothing *but* about right and wrong teaching. It's the theme of the entire chapter.

It is interesting that Paul uses the word "qualified," as in, "For it must be that there are sects also among you, that those also who are *qualified* may be becoming apparent among you." One other significant place Paul uses this word is in 2 Timothy 2:15—

Endeavor to present yourself to God *qualified*, an unashamed worker, correctly cutting the word of truth.

I have looked up every passage where Paul speaks of being either “qualified” or “disqualified,” and every passage has to do with knowing the truth and holding onto the truth, as taught by Paul. Even those passages which refer to behavior link correct behavior to a right apprehension of truth.

Have I mentioned that this has everything to do with truth? Have I mentioned that truth has everything to do with right teaching? Have I mentioned that right teaching has everything to do with exposing wrong teaching and rebuking, with Scripture and logic, those disseminating it?

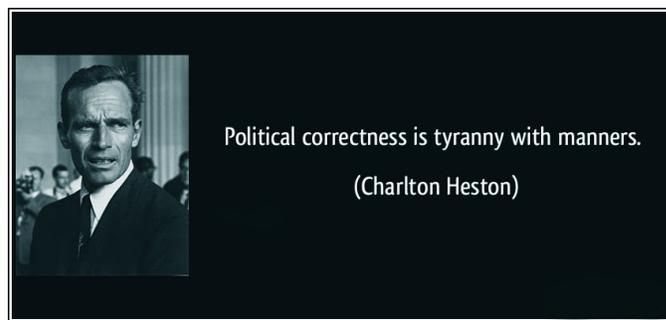
THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

I have not quoted extensively from Issue 572 of the *BSN*, but I linked you to that edition on the bottom of page 5 so that you can read that edition for yourself and see the subtle yet continual accusation that those who would, with boldness and certainty, expose and rebuke another’s teaching, are arrogant and divisive and just ought to shut up and exercise tolerance in the interest of unity. Oh—and everyone else should shun them. This is the tenor of the entire issue. I saw it when I read it, but the next issue, Issue 573, drove the point home. Here, I discovered the root of the problem. Here, I discovered the sickly seed of a worldly, soul-based political correctness that, if left unchecked, would threaten the ecclesia by compromising truth and inviting error. The author’s fatal flaw is the inability to stand strong for truth (or acknowledge such standing in others) and the unwillingness to insist that some people are right while others are wrong. It is a straining for a tolerance of all things that are disagreeable, for the purpose of propping up a false unity. Here is the author on page 1 of Issue 573—

When it comes to doctrine, the sectarians, whether having the honesty to say so or not, display their carnality through the spirit of their conduct and teaching such arrogant attitudes as:

- ▶ “I am right and everyone holding a different understanding is wrong.”
- ▶ “I believe and stand for the truth, those whose views vary from mine don’t.”
- ▶ “I am God’s representative, if you don’t agree with me, you’re not.”

Here it is then. Finally, we get to the bottom of it. In Clyde’s opinion, no one ought to dare insist, with strength of conviction, that he or she is right. Why? Because it would necessarily follow that others would be wrong. And calling other people wrong is, according to the author, “sectarian, carnal and arrogant.” This is a serious swerving as to the truth. By means of such misleading teaching, evils of every stripe would be welcome into the ecclesia—for no evil could be said to be wrong. “Wrong,” according to the author, is only “a different understanding.” Hitler, then, merely had a “different understanding” about Jews. Ted Bundy had a “different understanding” about women. But none of them were wrong. Really? Then perhaps we are not right. Perhaps there is no such thing as right and



wrong. Perhaps there are only differences of understanding, and every understanding is valid and deserves as much consideration as the next. How dare we think of *our* understanding as superior to anyone else’s. How arrogant can we be? How sectarian? How carnal?

God spits this terrible teaching from His mouth, and so should we.

That God will reconcile the universe to Himself, through the cross, is right. Everything else is wrong. Period. It’s this simple. Black and white is what we want, and it is what we must insist upon. “What communion has light with darkness?” Paul asks in 2 Corinthians 6:14. Clyde would answer, “Lots!” The author of the *BSN* would marry light and darkness for the sake of unity and in the interest of not offending the darkness. If we do not have the strength of conviction to stand for truth and call error by its name, then we stand for nothing. What is the alternative? “I am right, and everyone holding a different understanding is also right.” Is this what we should now say? Will this spare us the allegations from Clyde of being “sectarian, carnal and arrogant”? Will this deliver us from the presumed evil of standing for something and calling darkness by name? Is this our new mantra: “Everyone is right”? Is this the newest concept of how to exercise grace? Will this

keep us from making waves and disrupting unity—to say that everyone can feel good about themselves? Will this help keep lawless liars from feeling ashamed of themselves for camping on the wrong side of truth?

Is this now the goal of our calling—to spare the snowflake sensitivities of others no matter how wrong or despicable their understanding of God? Is this our deliverance from the shadow of sectarianism, that no one *can* be wrong or *should* be wrong? Let's try on this shoe and

“Is this now the goal of our calling—
to spare the snowflake sensitivities of
others no matter how despicable their
understanding of God?”



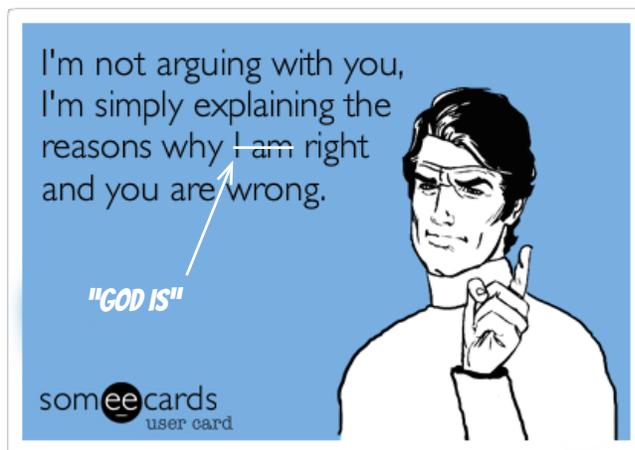
see how this fits: “Eternal torment is right. Annihilation is right. The salvation of all is also right. That the dead are dead is right. That the dead are alive is also right. Martin Zender and Phil Scranton are both right about the second death. Nothing is wrong. It is all a difference of understanding. Two plus two is four—unless, of course, you disagree. If you think it's five, it's just a difference of understanding. I'm not right, and you're not wrong. Everybody's right in their own way.” What are we supposed to call this? *Grace*? It is not grace, it is political correctness (basically, fear of being criticized) disguised as grace. It is lawlessness disguised as righteousness. It is a virus that, left unchecked, will infect the ecclesia with false teaching and compromise truth. Is this where we're now headed? Will we now guilt into silence inspired truth-tellers so as to spare the sensitivities of the perversely mistaken?

WHAT IF EVERY MAN WERE A LIAR?

Besides, how did the saying “I am right” come about? Why the “I”? Have any among us ever *invented* truth? Is anything that is actually truth—is it our *personal* truth? Did the teaching of the reconciliation of the universe to God, through Christ, come out of anyone's “I”? Then how is it that *we* are right? Isn't it God Who is right and that we simply agree with God and declare His rightness? “I” am not right then, but God is. I side with and announce God's rightness. Why would you then make this about *people*, Clyde? (“I am right”) when it really ought to be about truth? And what does holding fast to truth and rejecting falsehood have to do with arrogance? Are the holders of

truth arrogant while the lie-bringers are poor, down-trodden children of confusion who need coddled? I agree that they are children of confusion, but this *still* doesn't make them right or earn them coddling. In this, you become a respecter of persons. But this ought to have nothing at all to do with persons—either arrogant or downtrodden—but with truth.

“Let God be true though every man a liar (Romans 3:4).” This is Paul's attitude. Is Paul an arrogant, carnal sectarian? The apostle has no problem calling everyone but God a liar. You cannot say this, Clyde. You would say, “Let God be true though every man simply have a different understanding.” Perhaps you *could* say it of God (“Let God be true though every man a liar”), but you trip when making the transition from God to humans—from God being true to people holding to and heralding the true God being true. It's okay for God to be true, but not people? But why can't people holding to God's



truth also be true? How can they not be when they're holding to God's truth? Is God an arrogant, carnal sectarian? Maybe He is, because He's always right. But if He's not an arrogant, carnal sectarian, then why the accusation that human beings standing for and defending God's rightness are this, when all they are doing is standing upon God's truth? After standing for and defending God's truth, we humans must simply let the chips fall, and if every other human on Earth is a liar (that is, they tell lies about God, consciously or not), then so be it. We are not to be respecters of persons. Yet this is what I see coming from you. This is not a popularity contest, Clyde. No man's character is reflected upon truth. The truth doesn't care. Why, then, should we?

We discover truth by logically analyzing Scripture. When we discover through sound research what is true, then we become rooted and grounded in it. When truth is truth, then everyone and everything else *is* wrong. Everything else *is* false. Truth is absolute. Do you no longer believe in absolute truth, or that mere humans can embrace it? What is the alternative to being rooted and grounded? The alternative is that we never become sure of even divine sureties. Everything becomes fluid. Anything becomes possible. Even sure things become susceptible to uprooting and ungrounding. Being blown about by every wind of teaching, under such a construct, becomes a hallmark of maturity, humility and unity, rather than what Paul calls it, which is a sign of babyhood and a succumbing to Satan's systematizing of deception (Ephesians 4:14). Surely deception has been systematized when it is now politically incorrect—even in the ecclesia—to call error by name and to expose those publishing it.

NO RESPECTER OF ANGELS, EITHER

Paul was so sure of his evangel and its details that he taught the saints to basically kill any foreign element that would dare attempt to corrupt it. Tell me, reader, if you see, in the following passage from Paul, anything even remotely hinting at, "I am right and everyone holding to a different understanding is also right, or at least deserves to be considered"—

I am marveling that thus, swiftly, you are transferred from that which calls you in the grace of Christ, to a different evangel, which is not another, except it be that some who are disturbing you want also to distort the evangel of Christ. But if ever we also, or a messenger out of heaven, should be bringing an evangel to you beside that which we bring to you, let him be anathema! As we have declared before and at present I am saying again, if anyone is bringing you an evangel beside that which you accepted, let him be anathema! (Galatians 1:6-9).

Paul is no respecter of persons, no, not even of angels. No, not even of himself. For Paul includes himself in the list of people to "kill" in the event that he, himself, were to bring a different message than that which he first brought. To Paul, it's not about people *or* angels, it's about truth. So sure was Paul of his gospel, so bold was Paul in its proclamation, so protective was Paul of the sanctity of his message, that he pronounced "anathema" ("Cursed be you!") upon any dissenting voice, be it angel, human, or

even his own.

The man then says, in another place, "Become imitators of me, according as I also am of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Let us reflect. Wasn't Christ the One who overturned the tables of the moneychangers and called the Pharisees "hypocrites" and "vipers"?

Yes, that's the One.

STOP BEING SO "IDEAL"

Yet I fear lest somehow, as the serpent deludes Eve by its craftiness, your apprehensions should be corrupted from the singleness and pureness which is in Christ. For if, indeed, he who is coming is heralding another Jesus whom we do not herald, or you are obtaining a different spirit, which you did not obtain, or a different evangel, which you do not receive, you are bearing with him ideally (2 Corinthians 11:3-4).

According to the proponents of a politically correct gospel, anyone heralding another Jesus ought to be borne with and even enjoined in fellowship. Those heralding the true Jesus, according to the "no-one-is-wrong" brigade, ought to at least respectfully entertain others' heresies in the interest of unity and a knee-jerk fear of divisiveness. Is this the teaching of our apostle? Far from it! Paul is here chiding the Corinthians for "bearing with ideally" those bringing a different Jesus. Paul wished the saints singly and purely devoted to Christ. Foreign element would only corrupt that singleness and pureness, breaking it into pieces. So as in the letter to the Galatians, Paul coolly and coldly murders any and all alternatives to the truth. The



"Paul coolly and coldly murders any and all alternatives to the truth."

Corinthians may have said to Paul, “Paul, see how graciously we treat those heralding another Jesus. See how we bear with them. See how tolerant we are. See how respectfully, non-arrogantly and non-sectarianally we behave.” Paul, aghast, would have answered, “Yes, but *why* are you bearing so ideally with these liars? You will corrupt yourselves!”

As *Elliot’s Commentary for English Readers* says concerning 2 Corinthians 11:4—“...intensely ironical...[Paul] means, of course, that [the Corinthians] have done much more than tolerate the preachers of the false gospel, and have paid them an extravagant deference.”

Vincent’s Word Studies comments, “The expression is ironical. ‘You gladly endure these false teachers, why do you not endure me?’”

In the same context, Paul then says concerning those who would corrupt the message of Christ—

For such are false apostles, fraudulent workers, being transfigured into apostles of Christ. And no marvel, for Satan himself is being transfigured into a messenger of light. It is no great thing, then, if his servants also are being transfigured as dispensers of righteousness—whose consummation shall be according to their acts (2 Corinthians 11:13-15).

Anticipating the charge of “Paul, you’re nothing but a carnal, arrogant sectarian!” the apostle writes, “No one should presume me to be imprudent!” (2 Corinthians 11:16).

I must insist the same for myself.

Attempting to garner support for his politically correct teaching style, Clyde quotes Jim Coram of *Unsearchable Riches* magazine—

We must not fight over the truth. We must never seek to injure or destroy anyone, or even their false ideas. This must not be our motive or purpose. The value of truth in the power of love has its own strength. It alone has the ability to conquer evil with good in a truly edifying way. Even orderly and kindhearted ‘discussions’ of controversial points are rarely very helpful. Ordinarily, God’s way is to provide the open door and opportunity for a competent teacher to instruct those ‘whose hearts the Lord opens up to heed what is spoken by Paul’” (Acts 16:14). — James Coram, *Unsearchable Riches*, Volume 75)

It’s a good thing Paul never read Coram; he may have been tempted to have let the Circumcisionists have their way with the Galatians. He certainly wouldn’t have called

anyone “a fraudulent worker” or “a false apostle.” “We must never seek to injure or destroy anyone’s false ideas,” says Coram. No “anathema!” for Jim Coram, that’s for sure. What a nice guy. Even “orderly, kindhearted discussions” are too much for the careful, non-sectarian, non-arrogant, non-carnal Mr. Coram. Just let the false ideas fester, that’s Jim’s alternative. Let the deceptions come—who cares? Throw the sheep to the wolves—as long as we don’t injure the delicate feelings of the wolves. After all, this is what really matters: we must not offend the wolves.



I do agree with one point of Jim Coram’s. We should not destroy anyone’s false ideas. Rather, we should crush, dismantle, eradicate, ravage, raze, ruin, wreck, cream, annul and liquidate them.

COROLLARIES

Since Clyde’s main premise is wrong, the corollaries cannot help but be flawed—

- ▶ “I believe and stand for the truth, those whose views vary from mine don’t.”

If someone does believe and stand for the truth—and it *is* truth—then those of varying viewpoints do *not* stand for truth, no matter how they may insist that they do. I know many people teaching eternal torment who insist that they are correct and that my teaching of universal reconciliation is a doctrine of demons. Of course, the opposite is true. Therefore, the proponent of eternal torment is certainly *not* standing and believing for truth, no matter their insistence to the contrary. Let God be true, though every man a liar.

▶ “I am God’s representative, if you don’t agree with me, you’re not.”

Far from being a sectarian, carnal and arrogant attitude, the statement above is absolutely true as it stands. To one who actually *is* God’s representative (and there are such people), it is not a matter of “disagreeing with *me*” (this is the “respector of persons” flaw creeping in again), but of disagreeing with God, for I am merely aligning myself with God. Paul says concerning God in 2 Corinthians 5:18-21—

Yet all is of God, Who conciliates us to Himself through Christ, and is giving us the dispensation of the conciliation, how that God was in Christ, conciliating the world to Himself, not reckoning their offenses to them, and placing in us the word of the conciliation. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, *as of God entreating through us*. We are beseeching for Christ’s sake, “Be conciliated to God!” For the One not knowing sin, He makes to be a sin offering for our sakes that we may be becoming God’s righteousness in Him.

These are simple facts. God is conciliated to the world, through Christ. He is not reckoning the offenses of the world to Himself. God is now putting this word and this truth into us. For Christ, then, are we ambassadors, *as of God entreating through us*. Anyone can understand these words. So yes, in this we are God’s representatives. So if someone does not agree that God is conciliated to the world (as taught by us), and teaches instead that God is presently angry with the world and will condemn the majority of the world’s population to eternal torment in hell, then this person is certainly *not* God’s representative.

Let God be true, though every man a liar.

Why is this difficult? Why is this made to be about people and not about easily verifiable truth?

IN CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I think that I will simply stop poking computer keys with letters on them and take a rest. But this

is such an important topic that I will take up with it again next weekend. I have much more to say. Here is what you have to look forward to:

▶ The difference between quarreling and arguing (“Six things Yahweh hates”—from Clyde).

▶ How to meekly “hit” those who are antagonizing (2 Timothy 2:25).

▶ Examples of Paul strongly rebuking false teaching while at the same time promoting and retaining patience and humility (Paul corrects and rebukes, even while Ephesians 4:2 and 2 Timothy 2:25 remain true. Also, Titus 3:1-2 and 1 Timothy 3:3 remain true while Paul decimates error and rebukes the mistaken). Dismantling error and remaining humble are not mutually exclusive concepts; those who say that they are neuter themselves. Our heralding is about God and truth, not about man and opinion. Paul was no respecter of persons, not even of himself. Neither should we be.

▶ The spiritual value of contending.

▶ Paul in Cyprus.

▶ Paul withstands Peter to his face.

▶ We are not told to stand aloof from exposers and rebukers, but from erroneous teachings.

▶ Revival of truth follows on the heels of strong and vigorous exposure, rebuke and entreaty; Paul knew what he was doing.

I remain your fellow-slave in Christ and servant in the Lord,

Martin

Martin, it has been a while since I’ve written, but I’m up to date on your Revelations and Romans series. As always, I enjoy them very much and I’m never disappointed with the content.

I agree completely with what you’re saying about the truth being divisive. Correct teaching is the basis for belief, and the devil is in the details, as they say. Deviate from the truth, and you could actually be believing in a false christ and a false god, since God doesn’t change, and the *details* about His character are just as important as the key points.

I’m happy that we have people such as yourself who don’t compromise on the truth and never dilute the teachings of Christ and our apostle in order to be more politically correct or more accommodating to others who are simply wrong about what they believe. Keep it coming, Martin, I’m with you all the way! —JC