

Hickory Grove church of Christ
1131 Hickory Grove Rd.
Almo, KY 42020-9332

Return Services Requested

Sunday Services:

Bible Classes 9:00 a.m.
Worship 10:00 a.m. 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday:

Bible Study 7:00 p.m.

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Almo, KY
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“Please send Banner of Truth to the two men listed below. We’ve sent a check for the amount of \$25.00. Walter I never did receive the three Banner of Truths on Islam. I signed your sheet of paper when you held the meeting at Grand Blanc a year or so ago. Thank you again.” — **Blaine Pinkston**, MI. *(Thanks for reminding me. I do forget things [more often now that I’m almost 80] and I appreciate it when people remind me. If I remember correctly, I put those in the mail for you recently. The religion of Islam is worthy of some serious and deep thinking, with reference to the danger it poses to those of us who believe in the truth of the God of Heaven — Editor).*

“I always look forward to reading your articles. Please keep up the good work. I am praying for your ministry to stay the good path.” — Max Lash, AR.

“Send BOT to these people. They have asked for them. Praying for your health. Enclosed in 100.00 for use of BOT.” — **Anonymous**. *(Thank you so much, not only for the contribution for BOT, but for the names you have sent to be added to our mailing list. Our readers do us a great favor when they send names of people they think will benefit by the paper. For some reason, our mailing list has decreased a bit over the past few months. We could use at least fifty more names to keep our list up. — Editor).*

“We appreciate so much your publication, and the “truth” you present each time, with timely articles from the word of God. I’m sorry to say that many liberal churches of Christ in Memphis and the world are leaning more and more to modern post modernism and into denominationalism. We at Getwell church of Christ are blessed with bro. Gary McDade, a strong gospel preacher, who leads the congregation against all that is against the Truth. I’m a graduate of FHC (1959-61) and am saddened by the worldly changes they have made. I do not contribute to them because of their misdirection.”

Tim & Doreen Harris, TN. *(I also attended FHC and may have been there when you were. Neither do I contribute to them anymore for the same reason. — Editor).*

My Health Report: I am doing some better but still have problems. I do not yet know whether I have pulmonary fibrosis. I am to see doctors in Nashville again in October. I appreciate the many prayers offered in my behalf. — *Editor*.

FOR YOUR ADDRESS BOOK

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In The Midst of a Horrendous Culture War

The current effort to corrupt and replace the traditional views and practices of our society has never been so persistent and intense. The capture of the minds of men by evil, if allowed to prevail, can be more devastating than an armed conflict and the loss of life

From early on in the human race there has been conflict between the elements in society which strive for better things and those which would bring about evil. The degree of support for good and for evil has been variable, but the conflict has persisted. The main lesson in the Book of Revelation is that of a conflict between good and evil, with good winning out by “overcoming” evil. While the conflict in Revelation is between the true servants of God and those of the dragon, the Devil, the present conflict in this Culture War is between those in society who believe in traditional values based on God’s moral standards and those who would remove virtually every vestige of Godly influence from our society. At stake is the way of life that we have known in many years gone by. To help clarify the conflict of which we speak, a definition of a couple words, as we will be using them, is needed.

CULTURE. By this we mean what people in socie-

ty believe and think about morality and how they live. One of *Webster’s* definitions is: “The behavior and belief of a particular social, ethnic, or age group.” We are using the word as it applies to our society in general.

WAR. Again, we are using one of *Webster’s* definitions: “A struggle to achieve a particular goal.” The “goal” we are discussing in this culture war is that of removing God and His influence from our society. This evil goal is on the part of those who are waging an offensive war, and if won will adversely affect our society for generations to come.

There must be a “goal” on the part of those who are on the defensive in this culture war. That goal should be the restoring and maintaining of the beliefs and behaviors which reflect a manner of life characterized by what we have known as “traditional values,” which have been based on the teaching of the only true giver of values, the God of Heaven. →

BANNER OF TRUTH

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Continued from Page 1

The absence of these values can only mean the further decay of our society and the ultimate ruin of a way of life which has made our country and our society a place to be desired by people from all over the world. A place where God can be worshipped by those who desire to do so.

THE SERIOUSNESS OF THIS WAR

The likes of this current culture war is that which those of us now living have never seen. Yet, the seriousness of it is yet to be seen. If this war of evil is won, how many have stopped to think about the impact it will have upon our children, grandchildren, and even generations yet to be born, not to mention the influence it has had already and is having now? Furthermore, eternity is involved.

The Culture War we are discussing is very much unlike a physical war in which people take up arms and fight pitched battles, killing and wounding the participants. This war deals with the minds of men, in an effort to conquer them and change their sense of val-

ues and their manner of living. This war involves all our citizens, not just those of a certain age and physical condition. In physical warfare it is generally the case that a series of battles are fought within a relatively short time of not more than a few years at most. In this current Culture War, a few decades have been involved, and a variety of battles fought. Some of the battles for the minds of men are so subtle that they are not even noticed by a great many people.

In a physical war there is fear of death, injury and destruction. In this culture war there is little fear. About the only fear is on the side of the defense, and there is not nearly enough there. Some of us remember the great fear gripping our nation when there was a possibility of a nuclear war. People built "fallout shelters," to protect themselves physically. Today, we need a lot of "fall-in shelters" which are well supplied with God's word to protect us from a mental war of destruction, which can destroy our souls eternally.

In a carnal war people fear the enemy; not so in many cases in a culture war. In fact, the enemy may present himself as a friend, and conquer by friendship. This was an effective method employed by the Crossroads movement within the church. It has also been used in many instances in which people were lured into something evil under the guise of good. Paul warns that "Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light," and goes on to say, "it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:14-15). The culture war offensive of today is being waged by ministers of Satan, whether they realize it or not. Those who would do away with God have to be of the Devil, and they may use his means to deceive.

Another contributing factor to the seriousness of the culture war is the great number and variety of means by which it is supported. Few seem to be aware of this. We shall give attention to several of these later. For now we shall consider:

CONDITIONS WHICH FAVOR THE EVIL CULTURE WAR OFFENSIVE

A Selfish View of Society. Some people seem to look no farther than their yard fence when it comes to matters in society. The whole or overall view is not seen at all. A splendid example of this was seen ↴

FELLOW-HELPERS

April, May, June, July 2005

Berea	200.00
Wards Chapel	25.00
Pine Ridge	200.00
Maple Hill	400.00
Alhambra	100.00
Saks	240.00
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Land Between Lakes	250.00
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Robert M. Price	800.00
Barbara Kist	75.00
Brenda Fisher	50.00
Margie Lewis	40.00
Mrs. John H. Brown	100.00
William H. King	25.00
Anonymous	2.50
Fred R. Boyle	33.37
Anonymous	100.00
Edward England	75.00
Dorothy Allen (Memory of U.L. Allen)	25.00
Anonymous	25.00
Martha E. Lewey	10.00
Thomas Forrest, Sr.	100.00
Total April - July Contribution	<u>3,585.87</u>
"fellow-helpers to the truth" (3 John 8)	
Banner of Truth Financial Report	
April, May, June, July 2005	
Balance on hand (May 1, '05)	11,060.81
May - July contributions	3,585.87
Total funds available	<u>14,656.68</u>
April - July Expenses:	
Press rollers	105.56
February - July labels	167.87
Postage and returns for above months	3,207.44
Foreign mailing and stamps	228.00
Hole Punch	212.00
Phone	27.00
Stapler repair	<u>22.50</u>
Total expenses	3,970.37
Balance on hand (July 31, '05)	10,686.31
Thanks to those who make our work possible. —Editor	

SPECIAL NOTE: We had prepared the Financial Statement for the July issue of BOT, but somehow lost it in our transmission to our Assistant Editor, Alan Adams, who formats BOT in order for me to print the plates which are used to print the paper. Therefore, we added the month of July to this Financial Statement.

We continue to be encouraged by our brethren who support our efforts in behalf of the truth. Without them we could not carry on. —Editor

READERS' RESPONSE

We regret that we somehow lost the *Readers' Response* carried in the July issue of BOT. Since we had discarded the information it will be impossible to include them in this issue.

"I've been passing Banner of Truth on to ____ She had desired to have her name added to our mailing list..." — **Faye Bullington, TN.**

"Thanks for the May-June issue of Banner of Truth. I appreciate the article on the family. How sad it is to see what is happening to our country today, where the family is being undermined. No wonder the young of our nation are so confused and uncaring about what God expects of them where marriage and raising a family is concerned. My generation has failed to teach our children the values God expects them to have. Too much money, too many good times, trying to satisfy our selfish desires has sent the wrong message to them. Maybe another depression or a few years of deep recession might bring us to start looking up to see where the blessings come from. We are like a hog rooting around for acorns, never looking up to see where they come from. Thanks again for the paper. If I'm not on the mailing list please add my name. Brother Pigg I will be praying for your health." — **Wilson Rowlett, -AR.** (*Your comments are simply right on course. You have "hit the nail square on the head!" I don't know your age, but in my almost 80 years I've seen so much changed. In the early 1930s we had almost no money but our family stayed together. I agree with you, that a depression might indeed help people to come to their senses. Several years ago I spent a few months in India, where poverty was almost unbelievable, but the people's interest in spiritual things would put many of us to shame. We'll see that your name is added. — Editor.*)

"Dear brethren. This contribution is being made in memory of Bess Johnson, who passed away February 2005." — **Sisters in Christ, Merl Gross, Wanda Hunt, Mary Grimmitt, TX.** (*Our sympathy goes out to those of you who lost a sister in Christ. She is also my sister, and it is comforting to know that when our friends pass from this life they had made preparation — Editor.*) →

Saving Time At Spiritual Expense

Much is said about TIME in God's word. We are taught to use it wisely by "redeeming it" (Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5). *Vine's* says this means "Buying up the opportunity." Paul said he would not "spend" the time in Asia," since he wanted "to be at Jerusalem for Pentecost" (Acts 20:16). The "last time" is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament. In Revelation chapter ten, we learn that a "mighty angel" declared "that there should be time no longer" (v. 6). When eternity arrives, time will not exist.

During our lives we have seen great efforts put forth to SAVE TIME. There has been great success in these efforts. I grew up on a little farm and have spent days plowing with a couple of mules hitched to a turning plow. Now, there are tractors which can plow more in a day than I could have plowed in more than a month; a great saving of time. There has been outstanding saving of time in transportation. I have left Taiwan on Friday and arrived in Washington state on Thursday. Relative to the food we eat, much time as been saved by the preparation of ready to eat meals. We could go on and on with examples where much times has been saved. This saving of time has been in the pursuit of secular things rather than the spiritual.

The Saving Of Time In The Spiritual Realm. Our desire to save time has for quite some time been seen in the realm of the spiritual. But the saving of time in this area is not without a serious price to be paid, relative to spiritual growth and the carrying out of God's will in many areas. We are going to set forth some examples of saving time in the spiritual realm. We will not exhaust them

Gospel Meetings. How often do we now hear of a full week for a meeting? The norm is now for less time to be spent in this way. There are "weekend meetings, three-day meetings, even one-day meetings." Just think, though, of the time we save.

Vacation Bible Schools. My wife and I have participated in a great many VBS'. Time was that there were five days, with two lessons taught daily. God's word was actually studied for two 45 minute lessons. Now, the general practice is to have one session each evening. But the desire to save time is being reflected by shorter schools. A congregation in our area had a Saturday-morning Vacation Bible School. But just think

how much time was saved.

The Study Of God's Word. When teaching a Bible class nowadays, one doesn't have to ask the class who has studied their lesson. No. It is apparent that we are saving time in the study of God's word. Yes, we are paying a great price spiritually, but just think of the time saved.

In Our Worship Services. There is evidence that the 18 to 20 minute sermon is the most popular kind now. Many seem to just "love it," If a sermon lasts a full 40 minutes, there may be neck problems due to looking at the clock. For the song service, we have all heard the expression, "About as likely as the third stanza in a four stanza song." Two stanzas of a song are more common now. But, my, it does save time. We make the Lord's Supper short, by saying nothing as to the purpose of it. One time I was preaching in the Philippines. The men serving at the Lord's Table, took the "cup" and the collection plate to people at the same time. But just think how much time was saved, at least five minutes.

By cutting the time involved in our worship services, enough time may be saved to beat others at our favorite eating place, especially on Sunday.

The Spiritual Price We Are Paying. The time we save in the spiritual realm is being reflected in the lack of spiritual growth. The cost of this time saved is measured in spiritual loss. A serious question: "For what do we use this *saved* time?" Is it not used to satisfy our own secular wants and desires?

How foolish it is to pay a spiritual price for the time we save. If we would act wisely rather than foolishly, we would be giving more of our time in the pursuit of spiritual things. We are living in "perilous times" and we must endeavor to stand strong, "always bounding in the work of the Lord" for our labor is not in vain there (1 Cor. 15:58). When the Lord's church became a reality, in a wicked world, the disciples "were continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house..." (Acts 2:46). As we sing, "Heaven will surely be worth it all," but we will not go there by saving time for our own personal use, rather than giving of our time in serving the Lord. In our time, we need to be giving much more time to the Lord rather than less. — *Editor*

in a "letter to the editor" some time ago. The writer said that the matter of abortion didn't bother him, since it didn't occur in his house or family. He said the same thing about homosexuality, that it wasn't a problem in his house.

People like this are quiet naïve. Their failure to look beyond themselves leads them to think that what happens in society will not affect them. People don't live completely alone and what happens in society in general will affect them, like it or not. Furthermore, it is a most selfish attitude which doesn't care about what happens to others. Most people have relatives which help to make up our society and who will be influenced by society.

An Increase in the Attitude of Indifference. It has been suggested that many people are indifferent toward indifference. There is a great deal of truth in that. In my almost eighty years I have never seen a time when so many people simply "Don't care what happens." The time was that many people really got upset when evil things happened, and they often spoke out against the same. Time often seems to be on the Devil's side. By that I mean, let something immoral and ungodly happen, and some people show some concern. But just let a little time pass and it is forgotten. That has happened with regard to doctrinal matters within the church. Let some false doctrine arise and some brethren will speak out, but too often time brings quietness.

The Dislike of a Moral Code of Behavior. When people love darkness rather than light, they don't like that which opposes darkness. More and more society is bending to accommodate the desires of men, evil though they be, rather than that which is for the best. As we look back in history, men have often desired to do evil rather than good. Those who stand solidly for upright moral values in our day are often put down and criticized by those who like darkness. We are living in a time when a great many people want to "do their own thing," regardless of the moral implications, and many are so doing, and we are seeing the results.

The Betrayal of Truth by Religion. By religion we have reference to those who claim to be of the Christian religion and claim to believe God's word. Whereas it used to be that nearly all the so called Christian religions had moral standards by which they lived.

Though there were many differences doctrinally, most opposed such things as abortion, homosexuality, drunkenness, etc. Today it is so different. The number of churches which claim to believe in Christ and His word but are upholding a great many things which are clearly condemned in God's word is increasing rapidly. They are characterized by hypocrisy. It is evident that God's word has little meaning to them. When we think about degrees of evil, those who do evil in the name of religion are more evil than those who make no pretense of religion.

A few decades ago, who would have even thought of those who claim to believe in God, and who call themselves Christians, upholding and encouraging homosexuality, much less so called homosexual marriage. Those who violate God's word on this subject, as clear as it is, can be expected to violate God's word on any matter they desire. And many are doing that very thing. How does this relate to the culture war? When people deliberately violate God's laws, they are by their actions setting God aside, as if He did not exist.

Within the past few years many news articles have discussed the ungodly sexual activities of Catholic priests. Many have been the instances in which Catholic authorities have tried to cover up these sins of priests. Multiplied millions of dollars have been paid out by the Catholics to try to satisfy those with whom the priests have had sexual relations. The Catholic Church is the largest so called Christian religion in the world. Yet, their respect for God in many instances has been practically nil. But just about anything can be expected of those who take it upon themselves to make a religion to suit their taste, and leave God's will behind. What could be a greater affront to God than to claim a mere man replaces Christ on earth. To call him a pope and the "vicar of Christ" is a denial of God.

The Propensity Toward Moral Evils. As we look back in history we see times when people were more inclined toward evil morally speaking. In the days prior to the flood, God saw the evil of man and that "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:15). Through the prophet Isaiah, God spoke of the rebellious people who would not hear the law of the Lord in the following way: "Which say to the seers, See not; and to the prophets, →

Prophecy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophecy deceits” (Isa. 30:10). Paul, speaking of the Gentiles, said, “Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness” (Eph. 4:19).

Is there not a great similarity between the thinking of those described above and many people in our day? Are not many people thinking evil continually? Is it not a fact that many want to hear smooth things, which deceive people morally? Do not some engage in uncleanness with greediness?

Now that we have given attention to some conditions which are favorable to the evil culture war, we shall consider several areas in which there is clear evidence of the culture war offensive. We will not attempt to exhaust the evidences, but we believe a serious consideration of those we shall consider will be enough to help our readers realize the severity of the danger we are facing. Not only as citizens of our society, but more importantly, those who are trying to live a life of submission to God’s will, and who care about others and their spiritual well-being. We believe a good place to start is with:

THE JUDGES AND COURTS OF OUR LAND

Our American Constitution was not set forth by God and few are they who would say that it is “perfect.” But who can deny that it is to a great extent based upon principles set forth by God? Belief in God has been an integral part of many laws that have been made to serve our country. Our Constitution has served our country so well that our land has been the envy of countries of the world. Why change that which has served us so well? But great change has come about, and not for the better.

It used to be that for the most part judges were expected to make decisions based upon our Constitution. Their job was to adjudicate, or make decisions, rather than legislate, or make laws. However, the activity of judges, from the Supreme Court down, has changed drastically. Judges are now making laws rather than deciding matters on the basis of our Constitution. Judges often rule on the basis of what they think, not what the Constitution says. The results of this change are being seen in many areas of our society, and the present prospects are for even greater changes to come.

The system of civil government has God’s approval (Rom. 13), but that doesn’t mean that God upholds any and everything that may be done by a government. If we would have God’s approval, we must “obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). More and more our courts and judges are making decisions which are opposed to God’s rules for living, rather than upholding such. Just a few examples should suffice to prove that point—

The Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that the phrase “Under God” in the Pledge of Allegiance should be removed.

The Massachusetts Supreme Court ordered the Massachusetts legislature to legalize same-sex marriage, a slap in God’s face relative to the institution of the home and the great part it plays in society.

The U.S. Supreme Court, in a Texas suit, ruled that it is unconstitutional to prohibit any kind of sexual behavior, sodomy or whatever. This was an overriding of a previous ruling about 20 years ago. See the change, and how God’s law is ignored?

The U.S. Supreme Court made a most infamous decision in 1973, which allowed the wanton murder of innocent and unwanted children by abortion. This served as a bench mark decision in the denial of the sanctity of life. When human life, created in the image of God, becomes meaningless, why would virtually anything else matter?

Just about anything having to do with God is now outlawed in schools, but that which is morally corrupt is often allowed. It is clear that God is out and evil is in. Too few people protest.

Another concern about our courts is the looking to other countries and their laws as an example for us to follow. At least three of our Supreme Court Justices have made statements that show they are looking to other countries in making their decisions. A good question is, “What do the other countries have that is an improvement over our own country? And why try to placate them by following their examples? From the standpoint of God’s influence in society, the following of other countries will move us farther away from God. As sad as it is, that is the very thing much of our present society seems to want. As citizens who believe in God we should oppose with all our ability the activists judges of the far left. †

“intended” meaning; whereas, the latter uses the word to refer to the Holy Spirit.

As far as I can tell, “spirit” (Gr., *pneuma*) is not used in the New Testament in the sense of the “meaning of words,” whether “real” or “intended,” or “strict” or “literal;” unless, as with “letter,” one makes such the aforementioned assumption.

Even a great scholar like W.E. Vine (*Expository Dictionary...*) equivocates here. Without any inductive basis for it, under “Letter,” he says, “(f) ‘the letter,’ the written commandments of the Word of God, in contrast to the inward operation of the Holy Spirit under the New Covenant” (V. II, p. 333). Under “Spirit,” however, he says, “(g) the significance [read: “meaning,” AA], as contrasted with the form, of words [read: “letter,” AA], or of a rite” (V. IV, p. 63).

The great J.W. McGarvey understand and fought against this presumed *Spirit* ↔ *Letter* antagonism:

Just once in the course of his writings Paul makes the declaration that “the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2Cor 3:7); and no remark that he ever made has been applied in a greater number of unlicensed ways. If a man insists upon preserving some ordinance in the very form of its original appointment, such an ordinance as baptism or the Lord’s Supper, for example, he is accused of contending for the letter that killeth, while the man who makes the charge, and who changes the ordinance, claims that he is following the spirit that giveth life. All of that large class of writers who make free with the Scriptures while claiming to reverence their authority, employ this device to excuse their departures from the word of God, while those who remonstrate with them for their license are denounced as literalists, or sticklers for the letter that killeth. In all these instances it seems to be claimed that that if you stick close to the ordinance as Christ gave it, you will *kill* somebody. The last example that attracted my attention was in connection with the number of elders that should be appointed in a church. The writer says: “It has been thought to be a greater evil to have an eldership without the requisite qualifications;” and he adds: “This is to do violence to the spirit of the New Testament in an effort to be loyal to its letter.” But which, in this case, is the *letter*, and which is the *spirit*? To have a plurality of elders is certainly

the letter of the New Testament; that is, it is the literal requirement; and the literal requirement also is to have elders of prescribed qualifications. Where, then, is the spirit as distinguished from the letter? Echo answers, Where? The writer was so in the habit of using this favorite expression where he wished to justify a departure from Scripture precedent that he evidently applied it in this instance from pure habit and without thought. The watchful reader will have seen many examples of the kind.

But what does Paul mean by the statement in question? We have only to glance at the connection in which it occurs to see. He says: “God made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face, which glory was passing away; how shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory?” Here it is perfectly clear that by the letter that killeth he means the law of Moses, which, as he had abundantly argued elsewhere, could not give life, but brought under condemnation those that were under it; and that by the Spirit he means the new covenant in Christ, which alone can give life. Men who are teachers in Israel ought to know this, and they ought to govern themselves accordingly. They ought to at once abandon the habit of perverting by misapplication of this language of the apostle. [*Biblical Criticism*, April 3, 1897].

What makes this matter *Spirit* ↔ *Letter* thing even more frustrating is this old misinterpretation has virtually become a proverbial maxim in the English language. In sporting events, at home, on the road, we commonly here someone cry, “Yes, that may be the letter of the law, but it’s not the spirit of the law.” Then, people find the words “spirit” and “law” in scriptural juxtaposition and they assume that’s the origin of the whole idea. It’s not.

God’s revelation comes to us in “words...which the Spirit teacheth” (1Co 2:13). We “read” and “understand” those “words” (Eph 3:3,4), and we “obey” those words” (cf. 2Th 3:14). It’s not complicated.

[more to come]—Alan Adams



Chimney
Corner

Spirit of the Law *Versus* Letter of the Law? (I)

Periodically we work at sweeping out the “chimney corner scriptures”; that is, things often quoted and attributed to the Bible when in reality they are not. There are not a few: The forbidden apple; lost ten tribes; three wise men; Jesus born on Dec. 25th, and such like. How these things get started it’s sometimes difficult to say; but they surely do seem to take on a life of their own, and they do not readily disappear from parlance.

I have a years’ long habit of writing “chimney corner” ideas on 3x5s and putting them in my little file box. Several cards are in that box quoting folks using some variation of the old saw: “The Spirit of the Law *Vs.* The Letter of the Law” (Hereinafter, *Spirit ↔ Letter*). Several reasons prompt us to examine this popular, two-tiered, hierarchical view of law; especially, Divine Law: (1) It’s not in the Bible, yet it is confidently cited as though it were; (2) it implies subjective relativism: that is, the so-called “spirit” of the law varies with each person; (3) it creates a false dichotomy of, and antipathy between, doctrinal strictness on the one hand, and attitude or spirituality on the other; and (4) it comes out of a failure to abide by certain fundamental rules of hermeneutics in the interpreting of two or three passages of Scripture.

Thus, by our study it is hoped that: (1) We can disabuse ourselves of this catchy, but unbiblical, cliché; (2) we can be reconfirmed in the fact that one can (in fact, must be) both *loving* in mien and *lawful* in belief and deed; and (3) we can enjoy the practice of correctly applying some principles of biblical interpretation.

CONSIDER THESE FILE BOX SAMPLINGS each which uses *Spirit « Letter*: #1, “We can be so concerned about the ‘letter of the law,’ that we forget about ‘the spirit of the law’”; #2, “The Pharisees emphasized the ‘letter of the law,’ over ‘the spirit of the law’”; #3, “Paul...tells the Corinthians that there is a very big difference between God’s Word acting alone and God’s Spirit—the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life...It is not just the Word. The Word is of critical importance, but by itself it only kills.”

SHALL WE ASCERTAIN THE “SPIRIT” OF THESE QUOTEES

FROM, SHALL WE SAY, THEIR “LETTER” (WORDS)?

Webster gives as one definition of *letter*: “Strict interpretation of the literal meaning, or the literal meaning itself; exact wording;” and, then of *spirit*: “Real meaning, true intention.” #s 1 and 2 seem to be following Webster. But, anybody who has tried to teach on the subject of “baptism” has encountered the problem of allowing Mr. Webster to define Bible terms.

First, if one granted Webster’s definitions as applied to *Spirit ↔ Letter*, we would still be compelled to ask, “How precisely do you go about knowing the ‘real meaning’ or ‘true intention’ of God apart from knowing the ‘literal meaning’ of His words?”

We’re not talking about “literal” as opposed to “figurative;” rather, in the sense of “real, or actual.” The fact is, even “figurative” language has a “literal” (i.e., real, or actual) meaning. This is kind of like the person who once said, “I’m not interested in what the Bible meant to people 2,000 years ago; I’m interested in how it applies to me.” You just have to ask, “Apart from knowing what it meant to the people to whom it was specifically written, how would you know just how it is to apply to you?”

#3 uses “Spirit” with a capital “S,” and uses the *Spirit ↔ Letter* thing to claim that a person who dedicates himself to living solely by the “words” of Jesus—which words are “spirit and life” (Jn 6:63)—is going to somehow be “killed” by those “words” alone. This view essentially says, “Man shall not live by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God—which word alone killeth—rather those ‘words of God’ must be quickened by an immediately/in/me indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”

SURE WE SHOULD LOOK AT “LETTER” & “SPIRIT” in the New Testament before we freely “use” them. #s 1, 2, and 3 all use “letter” to refer to God’s Word in general. #s 1 and 2 also use it to refer to the “strict” meaning of God’s Word as opposed to its “real” or “intended” meaning. This usage of the word “letter” is simply not found in the New Testament. It is assumed that Romans 2:27-29 uses it in this manner, but we shall later show that this is just that, an assumption.

#s 1 and 2 use the word “spirit” in a way different from #3; the former, in the sense of “real” or

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION (ACLU)

This most liberal organization is indeed waging a war against America’s traditional values. It is a matter of fact that whatever the ACLU stands for is usually that which is contrary to the belief’s and convictions of morally minded people. Space allows us to mention just a few of the things ACLU has fought for: 1) Outlawing of the Pledge to the Allegiance; 2) favoring of homosexual “unions”; 3) demanding the Boy Scouts give up their upright principles by accepting homosexuality; and, 4) upholding partial birth abortion, by which innocent human beings are literally torn apart to stop their lives.

In the following we are quoting statements about ACLU from four well known people. These people are knowledgeable relative to the moral condition of our society and the conflict with our traditional values—

“The ACLU is the most dangerous organization currently operating in America.” – Bill O’Reilly.

“It’s time to resist efforts of the American Civil Liberties Union who have conducted a religious lobotomy on this country, seeking to strip it of any vestige of religious influence.” – Cal Thomas.

“The ACLU is the most dangerous organization in the history of America. They should be closed down under RICO Statutes.” – Michael Savage.

“The ACLU is waging a war against America’s traditional values. Their radical agenda makes me fear for America’s future.” – Sen. Malcolm Wallop.

Can you imagine how much influence the ACLU would have had 50 years ago? But times have changed, and the offensive culture war is making headway through this organization. As God-fearing people we should oppose it and every other organization which is working toward the downfall of our society and the way of life we have known.

FAILURE TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONE’S DEEDS

Like Adam in the Garden of Eden, it was not his fault that he ate of the forbidden tree. And so it is today, that when evil deeds are done it is not the fault of the doer. People lie, steal, rob, rape and murder because of the environment in which they grew up. When people become addicted to alcohol and other drugs someone else is to blame. When families break up, it is someone’s

fault other than the spouses. On and on we could go with the blame game. But that is not the way the God of heaven sees it. Paul said, “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). This is so because man is responsible for his actions. Paul told the Romans that God “will render to every man according to his deeds” (Rom. 2:6).

The criminals in our society are often not held responsible for their actions. God’s word teaches that the “powers that be” are to be “a terror” to evil works (Rom. 13:1-3). Yet, in many cases when people are convicted of criminal activity they are not punished. How often does the guilty verdict only mean “probation”? Far too often.

This lack of accepting responsibility for one’s actions has spilled over into the church to a dangerous degree. There is a great reluctance in people coming clean and admitting to faults for which they alone are responsible. The making of excuses for failure to serve the Lord in a serious and effective way is almost endless. Could it be that we have forgotten that “we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Cor. 5:10)?

That we are responsible for abiding in the teaching of Christ could not have been made clearer. John puts it this way: “Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son” (2 Jno. 9). Having the approval of the Father and the Son will make all the difference at the day of judgment.

What does the above have to do with a culture war? A great deal. If we are led to believe we are not responsible for our actions which are contrary to God’s will, then why be concerned about such? If we are not accountable to God for our actions, then what difference does it make what our actions are? This appears to be the thinking of many today.

INFLUENCE OF LIBERAL POLITICIANS

Our system of government involves a political system. Most of those in power are put there by the vote of the citizens. This allows the citizens to make →

a choice of those running for an office. What the candidate stands for morally is often a great factor in determining the favorable votes received. Then the votes received will tell much as to what the voters stand for. Do the voters prefer an office holder who is upright with regard to moral standards, or one who advocates a very liberal morality?

In our two major political parties there are great differences with regard moral issues, especially that of abortion and homosexuality. There are no perfect political parties or politicians, but it cannot be denied that there is a great difference with regard to the two issues above.

Since abortion and homosexuality are clearly condemned in God's word, those who support and encourage the party which stands for these two sinful practices, are bidding God speed to what which opposes God's will. The support of these two evils is out front in the current culture war. These two things are links in the chain of opposition to God and His influence in our society. These two issues had a great deal to do with the winners in the last presidential election. Yet, the fact that those in support of these evils numbered only about three million less than those on the other side, is a sad reflection of just how far our society has gone in opposing God and His will for man.

I can well remember the time when a politician with a plank of his platform assuring voters that he or she would in no wise oppose homosexuality and abortion would not have gotten to first base. Yet, it is now the case that some politicians are making this assurance one of their strongest appeals. Such politicians cannot have respect for God. They would change our culture to deny God's will rather than uphold it. They can't possible believe that "righteousness exalteth a nation," or else they simply don't care. In some cases it may be both.

Those who boast of their approval of the wanton murder of innocent unborn children, and the sin of homosexuality, would have others to do the same, thereby increasing the enemies of God. In these two areas they are saying in effect, "I'm in favor of removing God from the picture."

It is hard to conceive of the fact that some members of the church, even elders, support the political party which opposes God's will in these matters, but it is a

fact. Such people simply do not put God and His will first, as commanded in Matthew 6:33.

EXTENT OF SEXUAL PERMISSIVENESS

Only in marriage, and only between a man and a woman, does God approve of sexual relations. "Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4). In spite of this, we've never seen such a sexual binge as we are seeing now. There is hardly any stigma attached to sex outside marriage. It is reported that about 35 percent of children are now born out of wedlock. With some minorities it is more than fifty percent. It is reported that in Sweden some 60 per cent of couples are living together without marriage. Here is an example of God's institution of marriage being rejected by a majority.

In "Relation Tips" by Dennie Hughes, in USA Weekend, Jan. 16-18, 2004, Hughes discusses the question: "Is It So Wrong To 'Live together'?" After pointing out that she received more than 1300 letters, mostly upset about the advice she had given a young woman, she said: "I told her it would be OK to move in with her boyfriend, but only after establishing that the relationship was stable and happy, and after serious consideration about her ability to be independent from a disapproving mother." Needless to say that such ungodly advice is being given to many today, and examples of following such advice are more and more common.

It is the case now that nearly everything from caterpillars to fast food services are using sexual displays to sell their products. Movies, magazines, and TV programs have a regular menu of sex. Clothing, or lack of it, has never been so provocative as it is now. So many young people, and some not so young, are attired in a manner which gives the "come on" look. Have you noticed that even news people on TV, when showing raunchy sexual scenes, often display indicate their approval with a sheepish grin? Not a few seem oblivious that their children may be at risk.

The maintaining of sexual purity until marriage is being put down by some, and demonstrated by many. I noted an article in *The Paducah Sun*, June 10, 2005, which was encouraging. The article, by John Seewer of AP, discussed "Silver rings a reminder of teenagers' pledge to purity." The first paragraph reads: †

not their private preferences, and certainly not what they surmise to be "the Lord laying it on their heart." No, friends, true gospel preachers "preach the word" (2 Tim. 4:2), or as Jesus said, they, "preach the gospel" (Mk. 16:15).

"So, you don't think that preachers should preach with emotion"? Preachers ought to energetically and enthusiastically proclaim the Lord's gospel. They, like the apostle Paul, should feel, "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel". (1 Cor. 9:16). But that is a far cry from saying that they ought to claim that "the Lord laid it on their heart." Preaching WITH feeling is not the same as preaching which is totally based on feelings or pure emotionalism. For one to claim that he preaches "what the Lord lays on his heart" simply means that he is basing his message on his own personal speculation and what he feels is right. Jesus did not say, "Go and preach whatever you feel in your heart." The Master said to preach "the gospel." That should settle the matter for those who want to know the truth. —4865 Bates Pike SE, Cleveland, TN 37323

What About Cornelius?

Acts, chapters 10 and 11, contain the record of the conversion of Cornelius. This conversion is of greater importance than some others contained in Acts, in that this conversion was that of a Gentile. Though the gospel had been preached for several years, it was preached only to the Jews. Cornelius had not had an opportunity to obey the gospel.

For years I have heard gospel preachers take the position that the conversion of Cornelius is to be equated with the state of and conversion of denominational people in our day. They may give an example of someone who prays, gives of his means, as a sincere denominational person, and yet he is lost. Then they give the example of the conversion of Cornelius to prove their point.

In my early days of preaching I'm quite sure that I did the same thing. I did it because I heard others doing the same, or saw sermon outlines which took this position. I no longer do this. You may ask, Why? I have studied the matter more and am convinced that I failed to understand some things which are important in this matter.

In the first place, the conversion of Cornelius can-

not be equated with denominational conversions in our time. Miracles were performed in the conversion of Cornelius. The gospel had not yet been made available to Cornelius. He couldn't obey the gospel until it was made known to him. His conversion was special in that it showed God would accept Gentiles as well as Jews. The gospel in our time is available and is for everyone, Jew or Gentile.

In Acts 11:14, Peter is recounting his vision by which it was made clear that Gentiles were to have access the gospel of Christ. This was hard for Peter to accept, since it had not been this way before. The "spirit bade" Peter to tell Cornelius how to be saved: "Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."

From the above statement some people must conclude that Cornelius was in a lost condition even before he had a chance to obey the gospel. Now, there is no question but that when the gospel was presented to Cornelius it was then necessary for him to obey it in order to be saved. But what about Cornelius' condition before the gospel was presented? Many take the position that he was lost. But what about the implication of that position? This question is often overlooked or not considered.

Let us note what is said of Cornelius before he had access to the gospel: "A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God always... Thy prayers are come up for a memorial before God," "And they said, Cornelius the centurion, a just man, and one that feareth God..." (Acts 10:2-4; 22). These words hardly describe a person in denominationalism, something which God has never approved. Do you agree?

Here is a question which deserves an answer with reference to Cornelius and his conversion. That question is: "If Cornelius was lost before the gospel was made available to him, does this mean that every Gentile was also lost before the gospel was made available to them?" Another question is: "Was the Law of Patriarchy no longer in force for years before the gospel was made available to the Gentiles?" From the time when the gospel, the new covenant came into force, were all the people on earth without a law of any kind? Was not the Law of Patriarchy in force for Gentiles until the gospel was made available to them?

—Editor

PREACHING WHAT THE LORD “LAYS ON YOUR HEART”

Roger D. Campbell

What message should preachers preach? Many of our denominational friends would say, “Just preach whatever the Lord lays on your heart.” Is that what the Bible says?

If one claims that he preaches “what the Lord lays on his heart,” how does he know that it is the Lord that “lays it on his heart,” and not Satan? How does he go about proving that it was more than his own personal gut feeling? There is no way that a person living today could ever prove that his decision to preach on a certain topic, or to deliver a lesson in a certain way, came directly from the Lord. One man that called himself a former youth pastor emphasized to me that a preacher just needs to preach whatever the Lord lays on his heart. Then, in the next breath he spoke of his support for women preachers in public assemblies, the use of mechanical instruments of music in Christian worship, and other unbiblical concepts. This is, as we say, “par for the course.” Why? Because those that advocate preaching “what the Lord lays on your heart,” sooner or later always get a round to propagating unscriptural messages, showing that, alas, their message was not something that the Lord laid on their heart after all. Folks, if the message that they speak is not scriptural, then guess what? It did not come from the Lord, and people ought to stop accusing Him of being the source of their self-imagined doctrines.

Have you ever read in your Bible that the Lord told Christians that they should teach or preach “whatever He would lay on their heart”? Someone might say, “No, not in those exact words, but surely you would agree that there were inspired preachers.” Yes, and the key word here is “were,” not “are.” There WERE inspired preachers, but there ARE NONE alive today. Inspired preachers were those that received God’s revelation in a miraculous way, being directly led by the Holy Spirit to speak forth God’s message. For instance, we read in Matthew 10:18-20 that Jesus told His apostles, “And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.

But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.” That was a promise Jesus made to His apostles, not to people living in the 21st century. Later Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would guide them into all truth and would cause them to remember all that Jesus had spoken to them (John 16:13; 14:26). Again, those were special promises for the apostles, not you and me.

We further read in the New Testament that the mystery of God, which is the salvation of Jews and Gentiles through Jesus, through the gospel, and in the church, was “revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:4,5). The Holy Spirit miraculously revealed it to the apostles of the first century prophets, and they preached it to others. Those men were, indeed, inspired preachers.

Observe this about inspired preachers. In the first century, inspired preachers also received from God the power to perform signs or miracles. What was the purpose of such signs? To confirm the message that they preached (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:3,4). In other words, inspired men preached the gospel of God, and as they did so, by the Holy Spirit’s power they performed miracles to prove that what they were saying was from God, and thus it was true and should be accepted as authentic and authoritative.

Miracles were a temporary phenomena that ended in the first century. Thus, today there are no preachers that are performing genuine miracles. The Holy Spirit’s direct guiding of preachers was also a temporary phenomena that came to an end in the first century. The Spirit now leads men through His truth, the word of God (John 16:13). Instead of having inspired preachers, we now have *uninspired* men that are obligated to preach the Holy Spirit-inspired gospel.

What is it that preachers are supposed to preach? Not their own feelings, not their personal hunches, †

“When Katie Chromik put a silver ring on her finger and promised at church to save sex for marriage, her junior high school friends giggled.” There were other critics, of course. “Critics say the message is too focused on abstinence alone, which is hard to maintain and, if broken can lead to unprotected sex and a higher risk of disease,” the article says. Even the ACLU weighed in as a critic. They “filed a lawsuit May 16 that accused the federal government of improperly using taxpayer money to fund religious activities in the program.” There you have it. There are critics of God’s method of abstinence until marriage. We know His method works, but more and more people are not going to respect His method, since they love darkness rather than the light of God’s truth.

TERRISCHIAVO’S TRAGIC DEATH

The unilateral court-ordered starvation death of Terri Schiavo is a powerful example of how the evil side of the culture war is progressing. I use the word “unilateral” since this woman could not speak for herself. The implication of what happened in this case should sound a serious warning to us, especially those who may become unable to take care of themselves. And, this happens to many elderly people as well as some who are not elderly.

Let us consider the condition of Terri Schiavo when the court decided to order her to be starved to death. Some in our country oppose capital punishment on the grounds that it is “cruel and unusual punishment.” Yet, a court can starve a person to death, and that is not “cruel and unusual punishment.” Back to this woman’s condition. Though impaired physically, 1) She was not “brain-dead”; 2) She was not in a coma; 3) she was not on a respirator; 4) She was not near death; and, 5) her heart was not kept beating by artificial means. Although some have tried to do so, it is impossible to equate the condition of this woman with one who is “brain-dead,” in a “coma,” or totally unconscious and with no possibility of possibly regaining a better state of life.

According to polls, more than 70 per cent of people were in favor of death by starvation for Terri Schiavo. Even some far-out liberals were not in favor of this death by starvation. But what bothers me so much is that if the polls were even half-way correct, the respect

for human life in our so-called “Christian nation” has waned to a frightening degree. This means that a great many who claim to believe in God are in favor of taking one’s life when that person is so incapacitated that others have to feed and take care of them.

I’m almost 80 years old. There is a real possibility that I may become dependent upon others in order to live. I have no fear whatsoever that my children would, in such a case, decide to kill me by keeping necessary food from me, even if I couldn’t talk or take care of myself. But on the other hand, if I had children like Terri Schiavo’s rotten adulterous husband, my existence might well come to an end.

Millions of precious, innocent boys and girls are being murdered by abortion, because they are not wanted. And, because there is no respect for human life, which originated with God. Stop to think of it, if it is alright to kill the innocent while in the womb, why not kill the innocent and helpless outside the womb? This very thing is being done in some places already. They call it “euthanasia” instead of murder. It may sound better but it is no less evil. Under Hitler multitudes were eliminated (killed) because they were unwanted for some reason or other. In Holland people are being killed, when they are unwanted and not useful in society. What does the future hold for us here in America? When God is ruled out, anything can happen.

As a reminder of just how far some in our society have gone in disregarding the sanctity of God-given life we call attention to an article in *The Paducah Sun*, Aug. 6, 2005, by Maya Bell of *The Orlando Sentinel*. The article’s headline: “Schiavo receives honor for letting his wife die.” The facts were that he wanted her dead, and was successful in that the court ordered her starved to death. When people are “honored” for the starvation death of a spouse, our culture has left God out of the picture.

The above article states: “The Florida State Guardianship Association bestowed its Guardian of the Year Award on Schiavo for carrying out his wife’s wishes not to be kept alive artificially despite a drumbeat of withering criticism.”

Terri Schiavo was starved to death without valid evidence that this is what she wanted. Her fate was placed in the hands of the courts and others →

who wanted to see her starved to death. This should serve as a serious warning to those of us who are alive and may face a time when our ability to live depends upon others, and when we cannot speak for ourselves. In some cases, some might even want to see us dead, as was the case with Terri Schiavo.

EVOLUTION AND INTELLIGENT DESIGN (ID)

Within the past few decades, as the efforts to remove every vestige of God's influence from our society have increased, the pushing of evolution has increased. The adamant demands of the evolutionist, who doesn't believe in God, is that only evolution be taught in schools, and any idea of "intelligent design" be forbidden. I can remember the time when evolution was a "theory" and not a "fact." Now evolution is being pushed as a fact, not a theory. After more than 30 years of subscribing to *The National Geographic* I cancelled my subscription when they started calling evolution a fact rather than a theory.

The discussion of Evolution and Intelligent Design gained national attention recently when President Bush let his views be known. In an article in *The Paducah Sun*, Aug. 19, 2005, entitled "Scholars debate evolution lessons," the subject is discussed. When the President was quizzed on the subject of Evolution and ID, he responded in the following way: "You're asking me whether or not people ought to be exposed to different ideas and the answer is 'Yes.'"

The third paragraph of the article says: "The President's remark prompted sharp criticism from intelligent design opponents. Democratic Party Chairman Howard Dean said Sunday on the CBS program "Face the Nation" that Bush is "anti-science" and "there's no factual evidence for intelligent design."

"Science" has to do with "knowledge," not "theory," and there is a great deal of difference between the two. Our President is not "anti-science," but he obviously doesn't accept the *theory* of evolution as science.

Those who think in a serious and sensible manner give credence to the principle of "cause and effect." While Intelligent Design (or ID) does not name the "cause" of the creation, the "effect," it does imply a "cause." A good question is, "What 'cause' more sensibly explains the 'effect' of creation than the true God? As we delve more and more into the complexities of the

creation, and the various organs of the human body, and the mind of man, who can, with a good conscience deny Intelligent Design? This brings to mind the words of the Psalmist, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" (14:1).

The person who thinks that all things in creation just happened without a Cause has serious problems. It comes to the point of defying common sense. Yet, there are those so intent or determined on doing away with God that they will affirm anything, sensible or not. It is hard to think of people being more antagonistic toward the existence of God than to advocate withholding from students in our schools any exposure or discussion of Intelligent Design. In other words, they want to control the minds of others as they grow up, by not allowing them to think for themselves on the most important of matters.

When scientists, so called, take the position that they "know" there is no Intelligent Design, they are professing to know everything. Otherwise, how could they "know" there is no Intelligent Design? The one thing they might not know is that the "effect" of creation was made by a "cause."

Remember, we are discussing the Culture War in which our society is now involved. To give some idea as to the power being exhibited by those waging the offensive war, consider if you will, the following: Howard Dean, as mentioned above, has been selected by a major political party to represent it as Party Chairman. The very fact that he affirms, "there's no factual evidence for intelligent design," exhibits his shallow thinking. In spite of his failure to think soundly, Howard Dean shows evidence of Intelligent Design. He has a mind. Did his mind, his ability to think, result from unintelligent design? He also has complex organs of his body. He is able to see, hear, digest food, speak, etc. Did this happen because of unintelligent design? The great complexity of the organs of his body defy the idea of "it just happened without a cause." Can you imagine that there are powerful forces in our society which would have our young people believe such tomfoolery? If we care, if we believe in God, we had better open our to the reality of such.

We have not touched much more than the proverbial "hem of the garment" in this discussion. †

We have not given the attention to the subjects of abortion and homosexuality which they deserve. But due to space we are limiting our discussion, until a future time. We do want to sort of briefly revue what we have written up to this point, trusting that it will help impress upon the minds of our readers the seriousness of what we have discussed.

A CLOSING SUMMARY

1. We have discussed the Culture War which is now upon us in a way we've never seen before. This is an offensive war designed to change the culture which was based upon what we call "Traditional Values." It is a serious effort to remove God from society, and His influence in the way we live.

2. This War is more serious than a physical war. It is a war for the minds of people. It so unlike a physical war in that the enemy is often not feared, since he may present himself as a friend, or "an angel of light." It involves moral values in a wide area and the removal of God's influence. When God is left out, anything goes, even the greatest evil.

3. We have noted a number of conditions which make the success of this evil war more likely— (1) Indifference prevails as never before; many don't seem to care what happens. (2) The dislike of a moral code of behavior; people who walk in darkness do not like the light of truth. (3) The betrayal of the truth of God by those who are religious and claim to believe in God. (4). More people are inclined toward doing evil rather than good; the thoughts of many are continually evil.

4. Several areas in which there is clear evidence of this offensive culture war have been noted— (1) The judges and courts of our land have in many cases substituted their own thinking or desires in making decisions, rather than conforming to the Constitution. (2) The American Civil Liberties Union is waging a persistent war against our traditional values. They constitute an enemy of America. (3) Failure of individuals to assume responsibility for their deeds. (4) The influence of liberal politicians. (5) The extent of sexual permissiveness is at an all-time high, and few seem to care. (6) The disregard for the sanctity of human life as exhibited by the

court-ordered starvation death of Terri Schiavo. (7) The support of evolution and the severe criticism of "Intelligent Design" or (ID).

There has never been a time in our lives when there was a greater need to awaken to the reality of the battle in which we are now engaged, and which is almost certain to worsen. One thing which serves as a setback in the realization of the real danger involved in this war, is that the present generation is not nearly as aware of the changes in our culture which have already taken place, as are those who are much older. Many immoral things which are accepted as commonplace today would have been rare indeed in my growing up days.

Whatever affects our society in general will almost certainly reach over into the church. In my more than 50 years of preaching I've seen this happen as have others who have preached or have been members of the church for many years. What does this have to do with a Culture War, you may ask? A great deal. No, I don't mean that members of the church are trying to completely do away with God's influence, as many people are, but I do say that the respect for God within the church has decreased. How do I know this? The evidence is seen in various areas.

Years ago, most of us demanded a "thus saith the Lord," before engaging in spiritual activities. We often said, "We speak where the Bible speaks and keep silent where it is silent." Though God's word has not changed, our beliefs and practices have change in a number of instances.

We used to contend that the work of the church involved three areas: evangelism, edification and benevolence. I suppose only the Lord knows just how many things are practiced within the church today which fall into neither of the three.

Doctrinally speaking, we took the position that the Lord's church was distinctive, and that abiding in "the doctrine of Christ" was necessary to have the approval of the Father and the Son. Even the basic and fundamental teachings and practices, as approved of God, are now being ignored by too many. In this way, respect for God is lessening, and many seem to want it that way.

Unless I haven't made my point that we are now in a serious Culture War — I'll say no more. — Editor