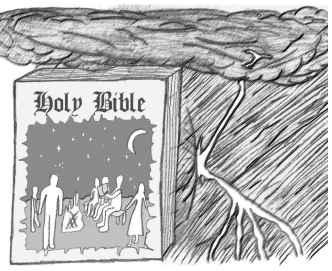
Shelter in the Word



He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty
You are my refuge and shield: I have put my hope in your Word. ***—Psalm 91:1; 119:114***

Vol. 3, No. 4 Helping you become self-sufficient in the Word—for a lasting relationship with the Almighty **July/Aug 2000**

Should We Participate in Secular Government?

by Norman Edwards

The indecision of the presidential election in the USA has drawn a lot of attention to secular human governments. How well do they work? Does it matter who is in charge? Does the Bible teach that believers should or should not participate in secular governments? If we should participate, than to what extent?

There are many extremes of belief on this issue. Some believe that we should have as little as possible to do with human governments. Some will even try to form independent, isolated communities where they can live by "God's laws" as opposed to "man's laws". On the opposite side are people who attempt to gain control of existing human government to implement Biblical values for all people.

There is no single section of the Bible that clearly explains what a believer is to do. But there are verses in many places that give us much information. Often, we find contrasting verses where we need to study in order to determine how they are different.

Obeying Government Authorities

Before we look at participation in government, we should take a brief look at how a believer obeys governments. The most common scripture cited is:

> Rom 13:1 Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God.
>
> 2 Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.
>
> 3 For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and he will commend you.
>
> 4 For he is God's servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God's servant, an agent of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

It is important to realize that the governments Paul tells us to follow are those governments that are commending people who do right and punishing people who do evil. Sometimes governments punish—even seek to kill people for following God:

> Acts 5:28 "We [the Sanhedrin—Jewish governing body] gave you strict orders not to teach in this name [Jesus]," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood."
>
> 29 Peter and the other apostles replied: **"We must obey God rather than men!**
>
> 30 The God of our fathers raised

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Jesus from the dead—whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.

31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel.

32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

33 When they heard this, they were furious and **wanted to put them to death.**

Key to Government Participation

The two previous scriptures give the basic key that everyone needs: **cooperate with governments as long as they do not stop one from obeying God.** Wisdom and study are required to determine exactly how to do this. When government requirements agree with godly standards, everyone should cooperate. There are times to cooperate with governments even though they are wrong. Christ clearly stated that He did not have to pay the temple tax, yet he paid it for Himself and Peter "so that we may not offend them" (Matt 17:24-27). Some of the examples of the faithful listed in Hebrews 11 (a great chapter to read) are commended for resisting the governments of their day:

Heb 11:33 who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions,

34 quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

35 Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection.

36 Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.

37 They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated—

38 the world was not worthy of them. They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.

39 These were all commended for their faith, yet none of them received what had been promised.

Notice that *some* of these faithful men and women were physically delivered from their trials and *some* died in them. Having faith in God in a particular situation means that one will accept whatever result comes from it. We can learn a lesson about faith from the incident where Peter saw Christ walking on the water (Matt 14:27-31). Peter asked if it were God's will for him to join Christ in this miracle, and received the answer of "yes". Peter walked also, but later feared and almost lost his life. He was corrected for his lack of faith. The other disciples in the boat did not get into such danger (but they did not have the same leadership role as Peter—Luke 22:32). The lesson here for government is this: whether we feel the Bible requires us to support or resist governments in a particular situation, we need to do it in faith that we are following God in that situation.

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"...Everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Rom 14:23).

This article (or this writer) does not claim to have the "will of God" for your life. But all of us can learn from the biblical examples of how God and those who follow Him have reacted in various government-related situations. We will concentrate on those examples where righteous men live under governments not claiming to follow God—the situation in which most believers find themselves today.

Old Testament Examples

Genesis 11 contains a vital lesson in government. People built the tower of Babel (or Babylon) in order to unify themselves (v 4)—to create one world government. They would have accomplished a lot physically (v 6), but God did not want that, so He confused their languages and scattered them across the whole earth (v 9). It is interesting to consider this in the light of today's tendency toward breaking down language barriers via computerized translation and the movement toward one world government.

Genesis 20 is the story how Abraham was afraid that Abimelech, King of Gerar, would kill him to take his wife, Sarah, so Abraham said that she was his sister. Therefore, Abimelech tried to take her as his own wife, but God punished him and explained why in a dream. Abraham's sin was not simply deceptive part-truth he told the King by saying (Sarah *was* his half sister), but his sin was failing to protect his wife from possible adultery by clearly identifying her as his wife. Because Abraham feared that government, he, his wife and the government suffered.

The way the Israelite midwives dealt with an unjust government is well worth reading. The midwives also told deceptive part-truth to protect themselves. Some Israelite women probably did deliver without the midwives present (v 19), but the midwives were also clearly involved with letting boy babies live (v 17). But this part-truth did not hurt anyone except the evil King's plans.

> Ex 1:15 The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah,
>
> 16 "When you help the Hebrew women in childbirth and observe them on the delivery stool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live."
>
> 17 The midwives, however, **feared God** and **did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do;** they let the boys live.
>
> 18 Then the king of Egypt summoned the midwives and asked them, "Why have you done this? Why have you let the boys live?"
>
> 19 The midwives answered Pharaoh, "Hebrew women are not like Egyptian women; they are vigorous and give birth before the midwives arrive."
>
> 20 So God was kind to the midwives and the people increased and became even more numerous.
>
> 21 And because the midwives feared God, he gave them families of their own.

The government of Egypt had not always been so evil. Most people know the story, found in Genesis 41, of how Joseph gave God's interpretation of the Egyptian Pharaoh's dreams about the skinny cows that ate the fat cows and the withered corn that ate the good corn. Joseph offered a plan, suggesting that someone be placed in charge of storing the surplus (v 33-37). The Bible does not say whether the plan was his idea or God's word to him. In any case, Joseph was given the second rulership position in Egypt, along with Egyptian clothes, an Egyptian name and an Egyptian wife, Potipherah, which means "he whom the Ra gave" (Ra is the sun god of Egypt) (v 38-46). Even though Joseph feared God (Gen 42:18), he was able to serve in a government that did not honor God.

Whenever a group of people live together for long, usually a need arises to settle disputes between people. The need for local government is explained in a section of general laws applying to everyone:

> Deut 18 Appoint judges and officials for each of your tribes **in every town** the LORD your God is giving you, and they shall judge the people fairly.
>
> 19 Do not pervert justice or show partiality. Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous.
>
> 20 Follow justice and justice alone, so that you may live and possess the land the LORD your God is giving you.

When people decide whether or not to participate in local government, they might keep these commands of God in mind. If a large group of be-

lievers through some unexpected accident found themselves marooned on an island with no way to contact the outside world, should they form some kind of government? If a few among them begin to steal their scarce food and medical supplies, should nothing be done? Should any strong man simply take it upon himself to punish whoever he believes are the thieves? If a strong man begins to take other men's wives, should they just let him do it? If there were a primitive tribe on a nearby island, with some kind of existing government, should the believers simply ask that tribe to govern them?

In Jeremiah chapter 35, Jonadab commanded his descendants not to build houses, plant crops or drink wine. God told Jeremiah to invite some of Jonadab's descendants into the temple of God to drink wine, but they refused. Because they followed the commandment of their father, God blessed them and told them that they would always have descendants alive. For generations, these people followed the rules of their family government, even though their rules were not taught in the Bible—and God blessed them for it.

The book of Esther is about a young Jewish woman who essentially wins a beauty contest to marry the King of Persia. Later, Haman, an evil official in the Persian government obtained a decree from the King to exterminate all of the Jews in the empire. Even though Esther did not have authority over the decree, her uncle Mordecai encouraged her to use her influence with the king to save her people:

> Esth 4:13 [Mordecai] sent back this answer: "Do not think that because you [Esther] are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape.
> 14 For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this?"
> 15 Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai:
> 16 "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

The first amendment to our Constitution recognizes the people's right "to petition the government for a redress of grievances"—to ask them to fix things that are wrong. Many governments do not recognize this right—Esther could have died making her petition. Many scriptures say that righteous people should intercede for those who are being oppressed (Lev 19:15-18; Job 19:12-16; Prv 31:9; Is 1:17; 58:6-10; Jer 5:28; 22:3; Amos 5:15; Zech 7:10).

One excellent example of righteous men working under a government that did not fear God is that of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They held high positions in the Babylonian government for years, but frequently had to risk their lives to follow God. They requested not to eat the King's food (chpt 1)—probably to avoid eating the unclean foods mentioned in Leviticus 11. They refused to bow to the king's statue and were saved by an angel after being thrown into a furnace (chpt 3). Daniel refused to obey the king's law against prayer and was saved by an angel from a den of lions (chpt 6). In spite of these difficulties, these men were commended for their good work in the government.

New Testament Examples

In the New Testament, the Roman government is in power. This government did not follow God and was easily maneuvered by the Jewish leaders to put Christ to death. Nevertheless, we find a number of interactions between believers and that government. People in that government asked John the Baptist what they should do. He did **not** tell them to leave it:

> Luke 3:12 Tax collectors also came to be baptized. "Teacher," they asked, "what should we do?"
> 13 "Don't collect any more than you are required to," he told them.
> 14 Then some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" He replied, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely—be content with your pay."

A similar event occurs when the first Gentile, Cornelius becomes a believer. He is a Roman Centurion and there is no hint that he is asked to leave his government job as a result of his baptism (Acts 10). Also, the treasurer of the Ethiopian government asked, "Why shouldn't I be baptized?" and was **not** told to resign his post first (Acts 8:27-39). Apparently these people remained in their government positions, but obeyed God the best they could. Paul said a similar thing about slaves, not demanding that they escape their masters, but that they obtain freedom if they can:

1Cor 7:20 Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him.

21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.

22 For he who was a slave when he was called by the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, he who was a free man when he was called is Christ's slave.

23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men.

24 Brothers, each man, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

Paul used his Roman citizenship to his advantage several times (Acts 16:21,37; 22:25-29; 23:27; 25:11). He knew the laws and his rights. Even so, Paul was still frequently treated unjustly. The governor Felix kept him in prison hoping for a bribe (Acts 24:26). The Apostle Paul advised believers not to go to the Roman courts for disputes among themselves:

1Co 6:1 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints?

2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?

3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!

4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

Paul indicates that being able to make fair judgments with an unbiased mind is a big part of what the Christian life is about. Leaders in the congregations were those who ruled their families well (1Tim 3:4). The purpose of those who will be in the first resurrection is to live and reign with Christ 1000 years (Rev 20:6). Many other scriptures indicate that believers are not to judge others' motives and their eternal destiny (1Cor 4:5), but we are to righteously judge situations of this life (John 7:24). For more information on this, please ask for our free article *What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?*

Finally, let us a look at less-known scripture from the New Jerusalem Bible.

2Cor 8:19 and who, what is more, was **elected by the churches** to be our travelling companion in this work of generosity, a work to be administered by us for the glory of the Lord and our complete satisfaction.

20 We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift.

21 For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.

Young's Literal Translation actually uses the word "vote" in verse 19. The Corinthians were sending money to the poor and they wanted to make sure that it was spent correctly. It is interesting that Paul's effort to "do what is right" for both God and man involves an election. (The Greek word *cheirotoneo* is used in other Greek literature to indicate "voting by raising the hand.") This should help people who may believe that elections are unbiblical.

What Should We Do Now?

The New Testament sets no example of believers attempting to bring about a better world by seeking positions of power in government and getting governments to "enforce Christianity". When people revolted against the sometimes-bad Roman government that God left in power, many died as a result (Luke 13:1-2; Acts 5:36-37). A better world was sought by teaching the ways of God, the sacrifice of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit in individual lives.

On the other hand, people's physical responsibilities did not disappear just because they were believers or involved in preaching the Gospel. Paul said, "If a man will not work, he shall not eat" (2Ths 3:10). People who think that the Bible absolves them from all responsibility from government ought to look at these examples and be sure how they will answer for what they are doing in the Judgement.

In some places people have no voice in government, so they are responsible for little. In other places, like the USA, the people **are** the government, though much of their authority has been given away or taken away. Those who do not participate because others in the government are unjust ought to think about the man who did nothing with his one talent because he thought his master was unjust (Matt 25:24-28).

May God show each of us how we can better serve Him in this area! 🕮

A Widow's Perspective

by Karen Colburn

Author's background: *Twice widowed, Karen Colburn's first husband, Dick Dickerson died of cancer at the age of 34 in Big Sandy, TX in 1977. In 1984, she married Lee Colburn, whose wife, Connie, had also passed away. Lee died in a one-vehicle accident at the age of 47 near Sioux Falls, SD in 1997. Karen's three biological daughters are now grown—two of them with children of their own. Lee's daughter, whom Karen continued to raise, just graduated from high school. Karen currently works as a tutor for the Sioux Falls School District.*

As a body of believers we have been inundated with a virtual torrent of opinions in regard to various aspects of our belief system, what it ought to include and how it ought to be practiced. James 1:19-27 seems to give a pretty succinct description of the essentials of our religious profession. The topic of this piece will be limited to the first portion of verse 27:

> Jms 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

First, what is the "trouble" that the widow and orphan face? Losses of this magnitude inflict indescribable emotional, feelings of abandonment, anxiety, anger, panic, doubt about God's love and mercy, loneliness, disorganization, and depression. In addition, a number of major life changes of economic status, isolation from former couple friends, not to mention a possible change of employment or move. If you're ever tried to imagine yourself widowed or fatherless, realize the reality is a thousand times worse. It takes more time to **work** through all these things than you might think—and mental and physical exhaustion often result. In ignorance, many, even family and friends, may retreat once the funeral flowers have faded.

Why do we appreciate your visits? We have lost among the closet of all human relationships, a husband and a father. We yearn for genuine, caring, compassionate relationships, even long distance ones if necessary. Children require more than a single mother's perspective as their own view of life is developing. The existence of many disagreeing church groups only increases our isolation. Which group(s) will we gravitate toward? Very likely the ones that reach out to us in concrete ways. A polite invitation to church just doesn't cut it. Your words and actions may affect our view of God, and of you as a practicing Christian.

What can you do? Most of the time, a non-judgmental, listening ear will suffice. Emotional turmoil is normal. If you think we are not exercising enough faith in our trial, take into consideration that your comforting example may play a role in restoring us. Don't be afraid to stop by for an occasional chat when you're in town, or drop us a brief note from time to time. When appropriate we would appreciate being included in your social activities, and not as an afterthought. While we don't wish to be a burden to any one person, occasionally we could use a helping hand with those chores that require more strength and expertise than we can muster alone—a hired handyman is not always readily available. Most of us are able learners, and will tackle the job ourselves next time given a little instruction. Over the years some of you have been great surrogate dads when the occasion arose: teaching a teen to drive—stick shift, no less, running rapids in a canoe, helping put up a tent, acting as confidant, to name a few. We have suffered a major blow to our self respect—while a part of our unit has been extracted, we don't respond well to being patronized, or to having someone take over the tasks we are capable of performing ourselves. If you are not sure, just ask. If we are not able to tell you, be observant. By all means, if you offer, follow through, as trust is a major part of our restoration process.

What can a widow do? We have to make our needs and desires known in order for them to be met. Also, taking initiative in relationship building may be necessary. Prayer and Bible studies are essential. Challenging ourselves to reinvest in new areas of fulfillment is helpful. Having suffered deeply, we can use the experience to encourage others (2Cor 1:3-4). Service plays a major role in our healing, but we also require our own emotional cups to be re-filled often; if others don't notice your empty cup, call their attention to it. Hopefully, this article will give us all a nudge in the right direction. 🕮

It's About Time

Biblical Chronology Made Easy!

Church History: Bible Days to Now

In previous installments of "It's About Time", we have given a brief overview of the chronology of the events covered in the Old and New Testaments of the Bible. We started at the Creation of Adam, and moved forward to the time of the life of Jesus when He was on the earth as a human. These events cover approximately 4000 years. Although scholars cannot agree on the exact year of Jesus' birth, it was just shortly before the point on a time line where the dates cross over from being "1 B.C."—that is, "Before Christ"—to being " 1 A.D."—that is, "Anno Domini" (the Year of the Lord).

The accounts of the life of Jesus in the Gospels (the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) all end at the time of His death and resurrection. Again, scholars do not agree on the exact year, but it was definitely some time between 25 and 35 AD.

The rest of the New Testament consists of documents covering the time period from the Resurrection until the end of the lifetime of Jesus' Apostles. The last book of the New Testament, Revelation, is believed to have been written by the Apostle John near the end of his life. This was definitely before the end of the first century AD.

The Gospel accounts cover the events of Jesus' earthly ministry, and describe how He prepared a group of men—the Apostles—to continue His ministry once He was gone. The book of Acts, and the rest of the New Testament, were thus written between the years 35 AD and 100 AD. They chronicle the spread of the Good News about Jesus, and the beginning of what is called in most English Bibles "The Church".

What is the Church?

The English word *church* is used to translate the Greek word *ekklesia*. When you hear the word *church*, you may think first about a building, often large and imposing, with perhaps a spire or a steeple on the top. But *ekklesia* does not mean a building.

Or you may think of a *church* as a particular local or national religious organizational institution that people belong to—such as the Roman Catholic Church, the Lutheran Church, the Baptist Church, or the Assemblies of God. Each of these sorts of organizations have a certain governing structure for their activities, a separate statement of beliefs that their members adhere to, leadership—such as pastors, elders and deacons—within their own group that is not necessarily recognized as having any authority role outside their own group.

But the word *ekklesia* in Greek doesn't imply any of these factors either. The word *ekklesia* simply means the "group of called-out ones". This word is used for an assembly of unbelievers in Acts 19:32, 39, 41. But everywhere else in the New Testament it refers to that group of people *called out* from the unbelieving world who have come to follow Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. It is used in two related ways. Sometimes it refers to the whole collection of all people, both past and present, dead and alive, who have been part of that great Body of those who have followed Jesus. And sometimes it refers to the local body of believers in one city or area in a certain time. The Bible speaks of the "church of God in Corinth" and other cities, or even, speaking of a particular believer, "the church that meets in his house".

In other words, the Church is not a building or a corporate organization, it is a **group of people**.

The Beginnings of *the Church*

At the beginning of the book of Acts, we see the beginning of **this** kind of Christian *church*.

> Acts 1:1 In my former book [the book of Luke], Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach
> 2 until the day he was taken up to heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen.
> 3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

9 After he said this, he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight.

10 They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them.

11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

12 Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city.

13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James.

14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers.

15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty)

Note that at this time, even after Jesus had been preaching for three and a half years, the number of "believers" was only about 120.

The book of Acts describes how this 120 grew. Fifty days after the resurrection of Jesus, and forty days after the "ascension" described in the passage above, came the annual Holy Day of Pentecost.

Acts 2:1 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.

2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting.

3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them.

4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

5 Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven.

6 When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

7 Utterly amazed, they asked: "Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans?

8 Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language?

9 Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia,

10 Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome

11 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!"

12 Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, "What does this mean?"

13 Some, however, made fun of them and said, "They have had too much wine."

14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the

crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say.

15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning!

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy.

19 I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke.

20 The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord.

21 And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'

You can read the rest of Peter's words to these gathered people on this day. At the end of his speech…

Acts 2:37 When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

38 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call."

40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation."

41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day.

42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

43 Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles.

44 All the believers were together and had everything in common.

45 Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need.

46 Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts,

47 praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

This is the beginning of the real **growth** of what is called in the Bible *the Church*. It blossomed from about 120 to over 3000 in one day, and continued growing steadily in the days to follow.

The book of Acts, as well as the letters from various Apostles that make up the rest of the New Testament, chronicle the spread from Jerusalem of the Good News about Jesus, and the forming of groups of believers in cities throughout the Roman Empire.

In all of these descriptions, there are no indications that these people immediately built special buildings to meet in… they most often seem to have met in homes. There is no indication that they formed legal corporations and sought recognition from the Roman Government as an official "religion". In fact, they would likely have attempted to meet as quietly and informally as possible to avoid unnecessary persecution. They were simply groups of believers who banded together to encourage one another, worship together, and help one another grow in their faith.

2000 Years Later

Now "fast forward" 2000 years, to our time.

In almost every little town in America, there are dozens of buildings called "churches". In larger towns and cities there may be hundreds. Most are owned by organizations registered with the government of the state and country as being "official" Christian religious institutions. In many cases, the people who meet in these various buildings do not have any involvement with those who meet in an-

other building. Even if their buildings are on opposite corners of the same street intersection, they may never have any contact with one another at all!

Even if their names are almost identical, they may have nothing to do with one another! One may be the "First Bible-Believers Church of Smalltown" and the other the "Second Bible-Believers Church of Smalltown". The members of these two groups may have at one time met together under one roof under the name "The Bible-Believers Church of Smalltown". But some time in the past, the congregation may have split down the middle over some disagreement about doctrine or policy, and there are bad feelings between the two factions! Thus each has built its own building, developed its own leadership and programs, and ignores the existence of the other in the small town. Sadly, in many cases the disagreement that caused the split may have happened many decades ago. All of the people who were involved in the original split may now be dead. The current members may not even remember what the arguments "way back then" were really all about. But they may continue an attitude of contempt for the other group merely out of habit!

If you asked for a copy of the "statements of belief" of all the "churches" meeting in one town, you would likely find that many disagree from group to group about both major and minor Biblical issues. A few might largely agree with each other, but not even know it. Some church groups may readily accept other groups as "fellow-believers", just "preferring" their own group out of convenience. At the opposite extreme are church groups that consider the leadership of their organization to be the only legitimate spokesmen for God on earth and anyone who is not a part of their group is an "unbeliever"!

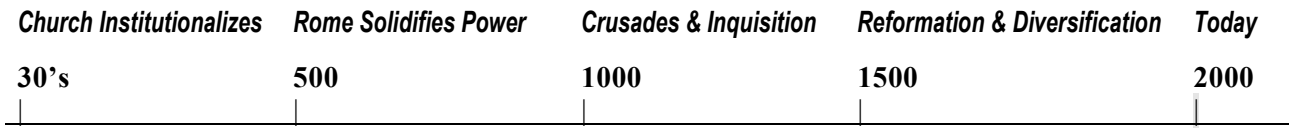
A set of volumes called "The Encyclopedia of American Religions" (1989 edition) lists well over 800 completely separate Christian "denominations" that are distinct from one another and have congregations that meet in the USA. There are many more by now, as new religious groups spring up all the time. If we would expand this list to include all the varieties of "Christianity" in the whole earth, there are undoubtedly many thousands.

How did the world get from the simple groups of believers of the first century, the *ekklesia* meeting in each town, to the current state of chaotic division within that branch of human religion known as Christianity?

In the next issue of Shelter, we will begin an overview of the history of ***the Church*** that will provide some answers to that question.

—Pam Dewey

Simplified Church History Time Line



A.D (Anno Domini—in the year of our Lord.)

Do Your Best

By Josh Edwards

The world is a place to use your brain and think,
To build your boat wisely or watch it sink.

It is not a place to fall behind,
To sit back and watch your life unwind.

But use the time you have to learn what you can.
Become a leader and not just a fan.

Do things for yourself and others too.
And be kind to people whatever you do.

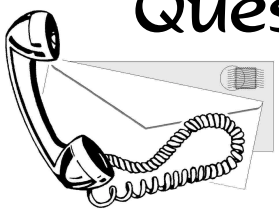
Be strong and work hard but stay on track.
What you put into life is what you'll get back.

Don't run from your troubles, turn and face them.
When friends offer help, accept, don't disgrace them.

And when life's almost over, think; how did I do?
Did I come across as pleasant, make a difference too?

And when it's all said and done, when you go into rest,
You can only hope that you did your best.

Questions & Comments
from Our Readers



April 2, 2000

Dear Norm,

I have some belated thoughts on Y2K to share, since seeing the (hopefully) tongue-in-cheek criticism of your preparedness advice. When we were coming up to the end of the year in December, we tried to put 50 years of observation into our approach. If I've learned nothing else, I believe I know that it is possible to "know, and know that you know" and then find that you've been wrong. I figured the outcome was probably beyond a sure call, so the real question was: would it be more discomfiting to be unnecessarily prepared or sadly unprepared? So we made some modest preparations and learned some things in the process.

I feel the exercise was valuable in many ways.

First and most important, it was a good time to evaluate the relative value of the spiritual and the physical. And to answer the question of what we would be willing/unwilling to do to preserve our physical lives. Also, I found that I took greater pleasure in the simple luxuries that we take for granted in our land of plenty—a good time to give thanks. And to increase our compassion for people in other parts of the world who struggle daily with the mundane aspects of sustaining life, cleanliness, and warmth.

Though we have, as a group, been overexposed to the "last lap" mentality, this was an opportunity to see the gap between our intentions and our actions. As the time drew near, how many things were left undone? How did we feel about the shortfall? When our focus became sharpened, how important did the distractions seem?

So, thanks for your efforts at good preparedness advice and for the other issues you are dealing with for the benefit of all.

— Carla Swaim, Indiana

Dear Carla,

There is no doubt that western societies rely too much on technologies that we know very little about. As sinful as many of our nations are, one can expect from Bible principles that God may send a punishment upon them. We can find cases in the Bible and history where God miraculously fed and protected people in times of disaster (Israel fed manna in the wilderness, Elijah fed by ravens, etc.). But we can find even more cases where He used the preparations of some people (sometimes miraculously multiplying them) to feed many who were in trouble. (Joseph saved food in the seven good years for the seven bad years. Abigail shared her families' food with David and his men. The widow shared her stored food with Elijah. Jesus fed thousands from a small amount of stored food, etc.).

I think all of us were happier to have prepared and not needed it rather than to have needed it and not prepared. I hope people will continue to keep some of those preparations through the apparently unstable times ahead.

—Norman Edwards

September 29, 2000

The just approved abortion pill called RU486 has been properly named, whether the French or pharmaceutical companies know it or not.

Having worked in the restaurant and liquor business for several years, and anyone out there who is or has been in that business knows the term "86" means to get rid of or throw it out. It also meant that they were out of some entree or liquor.

The pro-choice people are really pro-death and the abortion pill asks "are you for 86?" In other words "are you for getting rid or it or throwing it out?" How appropriate that our Creator put it in the minds of the creators of that pill to give it such a name. The "RU" probably stands for some research formula and probably after the 486 tries they succeeded in getting the "killing pill" (my name for it) correct.

Our society first took God out of our schools in 1963. Ten years later murder of innocents became legal and this country has been in a downward decline ever since.

It is ironic that those people that are pro-death of unborn babies, will risk their own lives to save the lives of whales, spotted owls, condors or any other animal out there and trees, but think nothing of killing innocent babies.

The inmates are running the asylum!

It is time that the silent majority become the vocal majority and not be intimidated by those ignorant fools out there that are doing the work of Satan.

We need to petition our Creator to intervene on behalf of those innocents and also do our part by putting our money and time where our mouth is by supporting anti-abortion groups out there. Prayer is good, but we also have to act. If we don't, we are just as guilty as the pro-abortionists.

I'm not going to promote any singular group, it is up to you to check out the pro-life groups out there and decide which one does the most effective job.

I do have a group here in the Seattle area that I support, but they may not be in your area, so you have to

search out your local area to find the best one.

"I call on heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have presented you with life and death, the blessing and the curse. Therefore, choose life, so that you will live, you and your descendants" (Deut. 30:19).

Shalom in His Name,

— Loretta Jacobs
Stirred, but not shaken

Dear Loretta,

It has been decades now that science has given the clear understanding that a fetus is genetically separate from the mother. The cells that belong to the baby and its placenta, and the cells that belong to the mother have completely different, identifiable DNA. A human embryo does not have to grow in its "mother" but can grow in the uterus of any woman who is capable of bearing children. Further advances in science may someday allow the transplanting of a baby of any age (from days to months old) from one woman to the next—or possibly into an "artificial uterus". If these things do become reality, they will show that nearly all abortions to be murders—because it will become possible to save nearly every unwanted baby. The only question will be: "Who will raise the children?" and "Who will pay the bills?"

The solution to the abortion problem is not to save all of the babies by raising them in other mothers or artificial environments. The solution is for people to conceive babies only when they want to raise them. But science has showed us beyond any doubt that an unborn baby of any age is not part of the mother (or father), but is a separate individual capable of living without them. The Constitution of the United States of America recognizes everyone's right to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness". While parents have the right to raise their children, the people have authorized the state to help needy infants whose parents would kill them. The state should also help the needy unborn whose parents would kill them.

"Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Prv 31:9). I do not believe that all "anti-abortion" efforts are helpful, but probably very few of us have ever made much effort to find a way in which we can help.

—Norman Edwards

March 21,2000

Dear Norm,

I rejoice to see your article "What Does the Bible Say About Eternal Judgment?"! It is such a basic doctrine and, as you noted, sadly neglected and misunderstood—and something I feel we all need to understand and think about much more. God's people have not all been on the same page with this, with fuzzy understandings and a simple lack of focus on it, though it is a prime focus of the apostolic teaching.

What I call the **Bible** definition of "grace" helps me to remember the Lord's judgment: I have **not** seen this referred to in long Bible studies on the subject by teachers of our tradition, whose thinking about 'grace', I believe, has been rather strongly influenced by those who believe the torah is somehow less relevant nowadays.

"For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good" (Titus 2:11-14, NIV). That, brother, is what God's grace is really all about—Paul's teaching, by the way.

I did happen to notice one spelling error I think you will want to correct; page 18, last sentence under point #2: "Slick, evil people ... will not fair [sic] well in the judgment"—fairness will be hard on them, as in "When justice is done, it brings...terror to evildoers" (Prv 21:15 NIV), but I believe the word you want is "fare", defined as "to get along" (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language).; Such hypocrites will not "get along" well, being righteously known and judged for what they really are!

In view of God's judgment: "The way of the Lord is a refuge for the righteous, but it is the ruin of those who do evil" (Prv 10:29).

Satan ever has sought to turn us from planning and doing what is right: "The plans of the righteous are just, but the advice of the wicked is deceitful" (Prv 12:5)—bad advice to ignore God's judgment is ever what the evil dispense.

God bless you!

Jeffrey Caldwell

Dear Jeffrey,

Thank you for the letter and correction—I did mean "fare", not "fair".

The verses in Titus 2 that you quoted comes out as very long, multi-clause sentences in the KJV and NKJV Bibles and are not easy to quickly quote or understand. The NIV breaks it up into more sentences. The Bible is consistent: "righteous" people bear good fruits. Their righteousness does not produce salvation—Christ's sacrifice and divine forgiveness are required for that. But those who follow God are always attempting to grow in righteousness—whether it be by doing their understanding of the law of God, or by the power of the Holy Spirit and Christ living in them.

—Norman Edwards

August 29, 2000

Dear Norman,

Greetings. I hope this finds you well. Could you send me the latest copy of *What Does the Bible say about Eternal Judgment?* Thank you.

In the May/June issue of *Shelter in the Word,* "Eternal Judgment..." supplement, page 47, you described predestination. You wrote, "**Predestination is similar** [to universal salvation]**, except that only *certain* people are included in the process—in other words, some will be saved no matter what they do, and the others cannot be saved no matter what they do.**" You go on to state, "**Both of these ideas assign little or no control to the individual over his or her destiny. They assume that God has planned out every individual's life before the world was created—that humans really do not make decisions, but are simply doing what God has already planned for them to do."**

I wonder if you would be kind enough to cite your source—chapter and verse, with page numbers—(Other than Church of God unsupported proclamations), for the above statements you made that claim to define predestination. That is, what mainstream church or denomination officially expresses, with any precision, the statements you wrote defining predestination? What typical church states: "Some people will be saved no matter what they do, and the others cannot be saved no matter what they do? (or words to that effect?) Actually, the ideas you describe here sound more like fatalism" (all things take place by inevitable necessity) than anything else.

I have heard and read this kind of commentary about other churches in the past, but to my knowledge, no one has ever supported it with clear, accurate, and faithful documentation. If you can do so, I would appreciate your response. Perhaps I am wrong, but your commentary appears to be an exaggerated claim. You will agree with me, I'm sure, when I suggest that all writers should be prepared to openly and without malice, document their material, and support their claims with concrete evidence, and, that exaggerated claims can be serious and misleading. We have had far too much "exaggeration for effect" in the writings of one group against another. When I questioned such statements in previous groups, I was "disfellowshipped" from their mailing list.

Sincerely,

F. Paul Haney, Connecticut

Dear Paul,

Thank you very much for your letter. I will not remove you from our mailing list! The main purpose of my paper was to explain what the Bible said about eternal judgment and to answer questions that people have on the subject. I never intended it to be a well-documented synopsis of what other groups teach on the subject. I was not "exaggerating" at all. This is exactly what people believe.

Writings in support of a specific complex theological subject tend to be one of two types:

#1. Simple writings portraying the advantages of a particular doctrine, offering some proof, but answering few points of opposition. Doctrinal statements and evangelistic works usually fall into this category.

#2. Detailed writings that put forth the doctrine at length and attempt to answer most known objections. These can extend to thousands of pages and require a many-year effort for someone to refute point by point.

Type #1 literature about predestination or universal salvation usually emphasizes their "good points"—they assure people that their salvation cannot possibly be lost because God has had "everything under control" from the beginning. It is only when one digs into the type #2 literature that one finds explanations of hard questions like: "If I have a child outside of marriage, is that the will of God because God already predestinated that person to exist before the earth was created?" By digging around, one eventually finds statements that say that God is omniscient and has planned everything (including sin) that everyone will do before they do it. Such admissions are usually cloaked in big words and long sentences, but that is what they say. Notice from the works of Calvin, probably the most prominent writer on predestination:

> Let us suppose, for example, that a merchant, after entering a forest in company with trustworthy individuals, imprudently strays from his companions and wanders bewildered till he falls into a den of robbers and is murdered. His death was not only foreseen by the eye of God, but had been fixed by his decree. For it is said, not that he foresaw how far the life of each individual should extend, but that he determined and fixed the bounds which could not be passed, (Job 14:5.) (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin, book 1, ch. 16, sec. 9, p 238.)
>
> A rebellious spirit will display itself no less insolently when it hears that there are three persons in the divine essence, than when it hears that God when he created man foresaw every thing that was to happen to him. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin, book 3, ch. 21, sec. 4, p 1029.)
>
> By predestination we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation; and, accordingly, as each has been created for one or other of these ends,

we say that he has been predestinated to life or to death. This God has testified, not only in the case of single individuals; he has also given a specimen of it in the whole posterity of Abraham, to make it plain that the future condition of each nation lives entirely at his disposal. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin, book 3, ch. 21, sec. 5, p 1030.)

John Calvin does attempt to answer nearly every imaginable argument against predestination. But his answers to some of the big questions are hard to follow and not very convincing to me. He also has a habit of calling those who disagree with him "impious" and "profane", no matter what other spiritual fruit they might have. Here is a complete answer to the question of, **"How can the Eternal hold a person responsible for sin if he is merely doing what he was predestined to do?"** I have included clarifying notes in brackets [].

> Impiety [an impious person] starts another objection [to predestination], which, however, seeks not so much to criminate God as to excuse the sinner; though he who is condemned by God as a sinner cannot ultimately be acquitted without impugning the judge. This, then is the scoffing language which profane tongues employ. **Why should God blame men for things the necessity of which he has imposed by his own predestination? What could they do? Could they struggle with his decrees? It were in vain for them to do it, since they could not possibly succeed. It is not just, therefore, to punish them for things the principal cause of which is in the predestination of God.** Here I will abstain from a defense to which ecclesiastical writers usually recur, that there is nothing in the prescience of God to prevent him from regarding; man as a sinner, since the evils which he foresees are man's, not his. This would not stop the caviler, who would still insist that God might, if he had pleased, have prevented the evils which he foresaw, and not having done so, must with determinate counsel have created man for the very purpose of so acting on the earth. But if by the providence of God man was created on the condition of afterwards doing whatever he does, then that which he cannot escape, and which he is constrained by the will of God to do, cannot be charged upon him as a crime. Let us, therefore, see what is the proper method of solving the difficulty. First, all must admit what Solomon says, "The Lord has made all things for himself; yea, even the wicked for the day of evil," (Proverbs 16:4.) [Note this verse says God knows that there would be wicked people, it does not say that he made people who had to be wicked.] Now, since the arrangement of all things is in the hand of God, since to him belongs the disposal of life and death, he arranges all things by his sovereign counsel, in such a way that individuals are born, who are doomed from the womb to certain death, and are to glorify him by their destruction. If any one alleges that no necessity is laid upon them by the providence of God, but rather that they are created by him in that condition, because he foresaw their future depravity, he says something, but does not say enough. Ancient writers, indeed, occasionally employ this solution, though with some degree of hesitation. The Schoolmen [a certain school of religious belief], again, rest in it as if it could not be gainsaid. I, for my part, am willing to admit, that mere prescience [foreknowledge of events] lays no necessity on the creatures; though some do not assent to this, but hold that it is itself the cause of things. But Valla [a man], though otherwise not greatly skilled in sacred matters, seems to me to have taken a shrewder and more acute view, when he shows that the dispute is superfluous since life and death are acts of the divine will rather than of prescience. If God merely foresaw human events, and did not also arrange and dispose of them at his pleasure, there might be room for agitating the question, how far his foreknowledge amounts to necessity; but since he foresees the things which are to happen, simply because he has decreed that they are so to happen, it is vain to debate about prescience, while it is clear that all events take place by his sovereign appointment. (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* by John Calvin, book 3, ch. 23, sec. 6, p 1061.)

Calvin is somewhat difficult to follow here, and he relies heavily on quoting others. But he does clearly say that people are simply predestined to do what God has planned from the creation of the world—which involves sin. He raised the argument that God is not responsible for people's sins because He just planned it but they are the ones who are doing it. But the same argument could be used to say that men are responsible for all the good done in the world, because they did it and God only planned it!

Is God any less responsible for our sin whether He planned the universe where we would have to commit certain sin or whether He just forces us to do them? The idea of God making our world so that all of its evils and sins had to occur **makes no more sense** than a person raising generation after generation of genetically defective puppies so he can watch them suffer without hope of relief. Atheists find Calvin's arguments and use them as "proof" that there is

no loving, omniscient God: How could a loving God, create people knowing that they would have no choice but to suffer? **The Bible clearly teaches that everyone will be judged for what they do**—and that good will be rewarded and evil punished—and that we will be judged by what we know.

One other approach to understanding the teachings of predestination without wading through hundreds of pages is to read a summary by another writer (let us hope he or she is accurate and fair). The following material was taken from an Internet page (home.earthlink.net/~andrepar/compare.htm) which is an excerpt from a book that summarizes the teachings of Calvinism (predestination) and Arminianism (people have free will). We list only the part about Calvinism, since that is the subject of your letter. [Readers, please realize that this indented quote—including the subheadings—goes on for nearly a whole page.]

The following material, taken from *Romans: An Interpretive Outline,* by David N. Steele and Curtis Thomas, Baptist ministers in Little Rock, Arkansas, contrasts the Five Points of Calvinism with the Five Points of Arminianism in the clearest and most concise form found by Mr. Loraine Boettner. It is also included as an Appendix in The Reformed Doctrine of Predestination, by Mr. Boettner. Each of these books is published by the Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., Phillipsburg, N.J.

> **Total Inability or Total Depravity**
>
> Because of the fall, man is unable of himself to savingly believe the gospel. The sinner is dead, blind, and deaf to the things of God; his heart is deceitful and desperately corrupt. His will is not free, it is in bondage to his evil nature, therefore, he will not—indeed he cannot—choose good over evil in the spiritual realm. Consequently, it takes much more than the Spirit's assistance to bring a sinner to Christ—it takes regeneration by which the Spirit makes the sinner alive and gives him a new nature. Faith is not something man contributes to salvation but is itself a part of God's gift of salvation—it is God's gift to the sinner, not the sinner's gift to God.
>
> **Unconditional Election**
>
> God's choice of certain individuals unto salvation before the foundation of the world rested solely in His own sovereign will. His choice of particular sinners was not based on any foreseen response of obedience on their part, such as faith, repentance, etc. On the contrary, God gives faith and repentance to each individual whom He selected. These acts are the result, not the cause of God's choice. Election therefore was not determined by or conditioned upon any virtuous quality or act foreseen in man. Those whom God sovereignly elected He brings through the power of the Spirit to a willing acceptance of Christ. Thus God's choice of the sinner, not the sinner's choice of Christ, is the ultimate cause of salvation.
>
> **Particular Redemption or Limited Atonement**
>
> Christ's redeeming work was intended to save the elect only and actually secured salvation for them. His death was substitutionary endurance of the penalty of sin in the place of certain specified sinners. In addition to putting away the sins of His people, Christ's redemption secured everything necessary for their salvation, including faith which unites them to Him. The gift of faith is infallibly applied by the Spirit to all for whom Christ died, therefore guaranteeing their salvation.
>
> **The Efficacious Call of the Spirit or Irresistible Grace**
>
> In addition to the outward general call to salvation which is made to everyone who hears the gospel, the Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation. The internal call (which is made only to the elect) cannot be rejected; it always results in conversion. By means of this special call the Spirit irresistibly draws sinners to Christ. He is not limited in His work of applying salvation by man's will, nor is He dependent upon man's cooperation for success. The Spirit graciously causes the elect sinner to cooperate, to believe, to repent, to come freely and willingly to Christ. God's grace, therefore, is invincible; it never fails to result in the salvation of those to whom it is extended.
>
> [End of quote describing Calvin's teaching.]

Obviously, God knows exactly what happens as it happens and is completely capable of stopping or changing anything that is contrary to His overall plan. But the individual decisions that each person makes can have a great effect for good or bad upon his or her life, as well as the rest of the world.

We simply do not have space here, or in the eternal judgment paper to explain every modern group's teaching on predestination. Some appear almost identical to Calvin, others have variants like "God predetermined all important events in advance, but he lets us make unimportant decisions." We could list more variants, but what would be the point. Anyone who wants to study what different people think can simply do searches on the Internet or at a religious bookstore and read for many years. The purpose of *What Does the Bible Say about Eternal Judgment?* was to help people know what the Bible says and help people with specific problems.

Thanks for writing.

—Norman Edwards 🕮

The Founding Fathers: What Did They Really Say?

These quotations and citations were excerpted from *The Myth of Separation* by David Barton, published by Wallbuilder Press, on the web-site www.joshuanet.org/articles/founding.html. It is possible that some of these men where merely "talking religious" to appeal to religious people, but the vast amount of material and the references in private letters indicate many had a strong belief in God.

Historical Quote	Information Source
Patrick Henry, Founding Father: "It cannot be emphasized too strongly or too often that this great nation was founded, not by religionists, but by Christians, not on religions but on the gospel of Jesus Christ! For this very reason peoples of other faiths have been afforded asylum, prosperity, and freedom of worship here." "[The Bible] is a book worth more than all the other books that were ever printed."	William Wirt, *The Life and Character of Patrick Henry* (Philadelphia: James Webster, 1818), p. 402 John Jay, *The Correspondence and Papers of John Jay*, Henry P. Johnston, ed. (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1890), Vol. IV, p. 393, Oct. 12, 1816. Henry Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1927, 1965), p. 18.
George Washington, First President: "It is impossible to rightly govern the world without God and the Bible."	
John Adams, Second President: (Speaking of July 4, 1776)"I am apt to believe that it will be celebrated by succeeding generations as the great anniversary Festival. It ought to be commemorated, as the day of deliverance, by solemn acts of devotion to God Almighty." "We have no government armed with power capable of contending with human passions unbridled by morality and religion...Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."	John and Abigail Adams, *Letters of John Adams, Addressed To His Wife,* Charles Francis Adams, ed. (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1841), Vol. I, p. 128, July 3, 1776. *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States,* Charles Francis Adams, ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, 1854), Vol. IX, p. 401, June 21, 1776.
Thomas Jefferson, Third President: "And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep forever."	Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (Philadelphia: Matthew Carey, 1794), Query XVIII, p. 237.
John Jay, First Chief Justice of the Supreme Court: "Providence has given to our people the choice of their rulers, and it is the duty as well as the privilege and interest of our Christian nation to select and prefer Christians for their rulers."	Steve C. Dawson, *God's Providence in America's History* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Steve C. Dawson, 1988), p.9:6.
Alex de Tocqueville, French historian who visited the U.S. in the early 1800's: "Upon my arrival in the United States, the religious aspect of the country was the first thing that struck my attention...The Americans combine the notions of Christianity and of liberty so intimately in their minds, that it is impossible to make them conceive the one without the other... Religion in America...must...be regarded as the foremost of the political institutions of that country... From the earliest settlement of the emigrants, politics and	Alexis de Tocqueville, *The Republic of the United States of America and Its Political Institutions, Reviewed and Examined,* Henry Reeves, trans. (Garden City, NY: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1851), Vol. I, p. 335.

religion contracted an alliance which has never been dissolved."

John Quincy Adams, Sixth President (son of John Adams, 2nd President):

"[T]he birth-day of the nation is indissolubly linked with the birth-day of the Saviour [and] forms a leading even in the progress of the gospel dispensation..[T]he Declaration of Independence first organized the social compact on the foundation of the Redeemer's mission upon earth [and] laid the corner stone of human government upon the first precepts of Christianity."

John Quincy Adams, *An Oration Delivered Before the Inhabitants of the Town of Newburyport at their Request on the Sixty-First Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence* (Newburyport: Charles Whipple, 1837), pp. 5-6.

Noah Webster, Founding Father:

"[T]he religion which has introduced civil liberty, is the religion of Christ and his apostles, which enjoins humility, piety and benevolence; which acknowledges in every person a brother, or a sister, and a citizen with equal rights. This is genuine Christianity, and to this we owe our free constitutions of government."

Noah Webster, *History of the United States* (New Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1832), p. 300, ¶ 578.

"The moral principles and precepts contained in the Scriptures ought to form the basis of all our civil constitutions and law... All the miseries and evils which men suffer from vice, crime, ambition, injustice, oppression, slavery, and war, proceed from their despising or neglecting the precepts contained in the Bible."

Noah Webster, *History of the United States* (New Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1832), p. 339, ¶ 53.

Dr. Jedediah Morse, The Father of American Geography:

"To the kindly influence of Christianity we owe that degree of civil freedom, and political and social happiness which mankind now enjoys. In proportion as the genuine effects of Christianity are diminished in any nation...in the same proportion will the people of that nation recede from the blessings of genuine freedom... All efforts to destroy the foundations of our holy religion, ultimately tend to the subversion also of our political freedom and happiness. Whenever the pillars of Christianity shall be overthrown, our present republican forms of government, and all the blessings which flow from them, must fall with them."

Jedediah Morse's Election Sermon given at Charleston, Mass. on April 25, 1799, taken from an original in the Evans collection compiled by the American Antiquarian Society.

William Holmes McGuffey, Publisher of the McGuffey Readers, a vital cornerstone of this nation's early education system:

"From no source has the author drawn more copiously than from the Sacred Scriptures. For this [I[certainly apprehend no censure. In a Christian country, that man is to be pitied, who, at this day, can honestly object to imbuing the minds of youth with the language and spirit of the Word of God."

William H. McGuffey, *McGuffey's Eclectic Fourth Reader* (Cincinnati: Winthrop B. Smith & Co., 1853), p. 3, preface.

Abraham Lincoln, Sixteenth President:

"But for [the Bible] we could not know right from wrong. All things most desirable for man's welfare...are to be found portrayed in it."

Abraham Lincoln, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln,* Roy P. Basler, ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Union Press, 1853), p. 542, September 7, 1864.

Harry S. Truman, Thirty-Third President (not a "founding father," but still interesting):

"The basis of our Bill of Rights comes from the teachings we get from Exodus and St. Matthew, from Isaiah and St. Paul. I don't think we emphasize that enough these days. If we don't have a proper fundamental moral background, we will finally end up with a...government which does not believe in rights for anybody except the State!"

Steve C. Dawson, *God's Providence in America's History* (Rancho Cordova, CA: Steve C. Dawson, 1988), p.13:1.

Our founding fathers did not consider that a requirement of belief in God as a religious test. What they considered a religious test would be what we today would consider **a statement of denomination.** Hard to believe? Well how else can you interpret the following:

Excerpt from the Tennessee constitution of 1796:

"Article VIII, Section II. No person who denies the being of God, or a future state of rewards and punishments, shall hold any office in the civil department of this State.

Article IX, Section IV. That no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under this state."

The Constitutions of the United States of America with the Latest Amendments (Trenton: Moore & Lake, 1813), pp. 342, 344.

Oath required for office in State of Delaware (1776):

"I, _____, do profess faith in God the Father, and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, and in the Holy Spirit, one God, blessed for evermore; and I do acknowledge the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be given by divine inspiration." 🕮

Church of the Holy Trinity v. U.S.; 143 U.S. 457, 469-470 (1892).

USA Leaders Acknowledge God

While most modern legislation rarely acknowledges the Bible, sometimes our leaders do exactly that. We cannot be sure why they do it. It may be to honor God's Word, to placate their guilt or fear, or to attract support from religious people. For whatever reasons, Senate Joint Resolution 165 was passed by the Senate on March 31 the House on September 21 and signed by Ronald Reagan on October 4, 1982. See the Congressional Record, Vol. 128 (1982) or copy at right.

Share Your Shelter

Our Savior never argued or tried to force someone to believe in Him. We should not do that either. But if *Shelter in the Word* has helped you, you can share it with others who might be interested in it or helped by it. One of these methods might work for you.

1. Talk to them about what you have learned and encourage them to study the Bible themselves.
2. Copy your *Shelter* and give it to them (almost any office or copy store will do this for $1 to $2).
3. Give them your *Shelter* (we will send you a replacement issue if you write or call).
4. Copy just this page or write down the address or phone so they can request their own subscription.

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Public Law 97-280, 96 Stat, 1211

October 4, 1982

Joint Resolution Authoring and Requesting the President to Proclaim 1983 as the "Year of the Bible".

Whereas the Bible, the Word of God, has made a unique contribution in shaping the United States as a distinctive and blessed nation and people;

Whereas deeply held religious convictions springing from the Holy Scriptures led to the early settlement of our Nation;

Whereas Biblical teachings inspired concepts of civil government that are contained in our Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States;

Whereas many of our great national leaders-among them Presidents Washington, Jackson, Lincoln, and Wilson-paid tribute to the surpassing influence of the Bible in our country's development, as in the words of President Jackson that the Bible is "the rock on which our Republic rests";

Whereas the history of our Nation clearly illustrates the value of voluntarily applying the teachings of the Scriptures in the lives of individuals, families, and societies;

Whereas this Nation now faces great challenges that will test this Nation as it has never been tested before; and

Whereas that renewing our knowledge of and faith in God through Holy Scripture can strengthen us as a nation and a people: Now, therefore, be it Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That the President is authorized and requested to designate 1983 as a national "Year of the Bible" in recognition of both the formative influence the Bible has been for our Nation, and our national need to study and apply the teachings of the Holy Scriptures." 🕮