

RENEWING THE MIND

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Previous edition published in 2002.

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CONTENTS

1. UNGODLY COUNSEL.....	4
2. RENEWING THE MIND	10
3. ONLY GOD IS GOOD	16
4. UNFADING BEAUTY	21
5. THEOLOGY OF WAR.....	35

1. UNGODLY COUNSEL

Proverbs 11:14 says, "Where no counsel is, the people fall: but in the multitude of counsellors there is safety" (KJV). The verse is understood to teach that Christians must heed the advice of others, and many people use it to impose their foolish suggestions on their victims. As the NIV shows,¹ the verse refers more to warfare than personal decisions, although the principle is not entirely inapplicable. Besides, another verse in Proverbs restates the teaching seemingly without such a restriction: "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (15:22).

However, Christians should never follow suggestions from others without discrimination. Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers" (v. 1). There are three parallel phrases:

Blessed is the man
 who does not
 (1) walk in the counsel of the wicked
 or
 (2) stand in the way of sinners
 or
 (3) sit in the seat of mockers.

Although the three phrases are roughly equivalent, they could illustrate the progressive stages of wickedness of one who strays from God. With each stage, the ungodly becomes more resolute and his hostility against righteousness increases.

The path toward apostasy and perdition begins when a person heeds "the counsel of the wicked." This is sufficient to restrict the application of the two verses from Proverbs. In other words, although the Bible tells us to receive advice from others, it refers to wise and godly advice, and it says that the righteous man rejects stupid and ungodly counsel. In practice, this will often mean that we must reject most of the suggestions that people attempt to force upon us, because most people, including those who claim to be Christians, are ignorant, foolish, and unholy.

The counsel of the wicked is at times explicit and graphic:

My son, if sinners entice you, do not give in to them. If they say, "Come along with us; let's lie in wait for someone's blood, let's waylay some harmless soul; let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit; we will get all sorts of valuable things and fill our houses with plunder; throw in your lot with us, and we will share

¹ "For lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure" (Proverbs 11:14, NIV).

a common purse" – my son, do not go along with them, do not set foot on their paths; for their feet rush into sin, they are swift to shed blood (Proverbs 1:10-16).

We want to believe that those who call themselves Christians would reject this kind of invitations, but we are often disappointed. Christians are often criminals, because they are slow in their development, and because most of them are not Christians at all. A distorted gospel message must be blamed for the large number of false converts in our churches.

Some non-Christian suggestions are not as obviously adverse to the biblical faith, but any deduction from a non-Christian principle or purpose will result in a false and ungodly conclusion. We will consider several examples from Jeffrey J. Fox's *How to Become CEO*,² in which he offers a number of "rules for rising to the top of any organization."

One refreshing aspect of this book is its break from corporate common sense. "Common sense" is overrated. We hear the exclamation, "That's just common sense!" But this is often why it should not to be followed. In ordinary usage, the term means "sound practical judgment that is independent of specialized knowledge, training, or the like; normal native intelligence."³ However, the definition in *Merriam-Webster* is superior, because it also takes into account the basis of this kind of judgment: "the unreflective opinions of ordinary people; sound and prudent but often unsophisticated judgment."⁴

Based on these definitions of the term, we reject the popular notion that Proverbs is a compilation of "common sense" sayings. It is said that much of Proverbs, or even much of the Bible, is just "common sense," as if this is a good argument to follow its teachings. However, it is not common sense for most people to think, "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding" (Proverbs 9:10). Even most Christians do not take seriously the fact that devotion to God is the precondition to the pursuit of wisdom and knowledge.

To many people, common sense rejects the idea that, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child" (Proverbs 22:15). The verse teaches human depravity, that foolishness is "bound up" even in the hearts of those supposedly least corrupted by evil. Thus a Christian philosophy of education would emphasize verbal instructions and moral excellence, not student participation and unbridled creativity. In contrast, contemporary common sense believes that people are born inherently good, and children are in a state of innocence. This anti-Christian premise results in curriculums that maximize children's self-expression instead of self-discipline.

Then, of course, if children are good and innocent, physical punishment constitutes abuse and not education or discipline. So a denial of the first part of Proverbs 22:15 must lead to a rejection of the second part: "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but *the rod of*

² Jeffrey J. Fox, *How to Become CEO*; New York: Hyperion, 1998.

³ *Webster's Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language*; New York: Random House, Inc., 2001.

⁴ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition*; Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2001.

discipline will drive it far from him." It follows that Proverbs 13:24, 23:13-14, and 29:15 are all discarded as false and primitive: "He who spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him"; "Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die. Punish him with the rod and save his soul from death"; "The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother."

The Bible opposes what sinful man thinks. Proverbs, as with the rest of Scripture, does not teach common sense – it teaches against it. By both definitions of the term, the Bible rejects common sense – "normal native intelligence" has been corrupted by sin, and the Bible is infinitely superior to "the unreflective opinions of ordinary people." The Bible is divine revelation, not common sense.

Even considered by itself, although a naïve consensus is sometimes reached by a majority, "normal native intelligence" often fails to arrive at the same conclusions. Fox suggests several rules that deviate from the common sense of corporate culture. For example, "Don't have a drink with the gang," "Skip all office parties," "Don't take work home from the office," "Avoid superiors when you travel," and "Eat in your hotel room" seem to differ from conventional wisdom. Fox himself is successful in his career, and his example shows that skipping office parties does not doom a person to corporate oblivion.

Under "Study these books,"⁵ he lists *Webster's Third Unabridged Dictionary* and the Bible, although it is likely that the latter is included only to enhance one's moral and cultural awareness, rather than to be revered as divine revelation. *The Art of War* is superior to other contemporary secular works, and I know there is *The Art of War for Executives*.⁶ To read Machiavelli's *The Prince* is at least more cultured than *Who Moved My Cheese?*⁷

Nevertheless, our purpose is to discover whether his suggestions, despite their seemingly non-religious and non-moral nature, escape the designation, "the counsel of the wicked." Right way, we question whether *The Art of War* and *The Prince* may be applied to business in accordance with biblical principles. Take as another example, "Always take the job that offers the most money." Fox gives several reasons that commend the rule:

First, all of your benefits, perquisites, bonuses, and subsequent raises will be based on your salary...Second, the higher paid you are, the more visible to top management you will be...Fourth, if two people are candidates for a promotion to a job...the higher paid person always gets the job.⁸

Let us assume that all the reasons are true, but they support the rule only if a certain purpose is presupposed. If this aim is not derived from the Bible, then the proposal is inconsistent with the Christian perspective.

⁵ Fox, p. 71.

⁶ Donald G. Krause, *The Art of War for Executives*; Berkley Publishing Group, 1995.

⁷ Spencer Johnson, *Who Moved My Cheese?*; Putnam Publishing Group, 1998.

⁸ Fox, p. 2.

Fox is not writing a religious book, and assumes only what should be the case in a business environment. However, the Christian is committed to the Bible in every aspect of his life. Therefore, before he understands the Christian purpose of work, he cannot tell if "Always take the job that offers the most money" applies to him. It might be true that one should take the job that offers the most money once the Christian concerns have been addressed, but then the principle can no longer remain as stated.

Even Christians have produced the same kind of books, and they do not write from the biblical perspective. Since they are writing about business, they may consider it inappropriate to bring religious presuppositions to the discussion; however, when they proceed without biblical premises, they inevitably allow another set of presuppositions to dominate the content. If success in career is the highest aim in one's system of thought, then his social and spiritual practices would reflect this. However, if the knowledge of God is supreme, that all subsidiary categories are dominated and permeated by theological presuppositions.

It is impossible to write a neutral book on business or any other subject – it will either be a Christian or non-Christian book. Although Fox's book does not advocate crime, lewdness, and the like, it attempts to be religiously neutral. Therefore, it comes under the category of "the counsel of the wicked."

Those who "walk in the counsel of the wicked" soon begin to "stand in the way of sinners" (v. 1). As a person follows non-Christian ideas, he begins to travel the same path as the sinners. His sympathy for their way of life becomes greater and greater, and now he stands with the wicked. When he finally "sits in the seat of mockers" (v. 1), he has fully joined himself to unrighteousness. He now has a place at their table. More than pursuing the path of evil for himself, he is now one of the "mockers" who scorn the things of God, despising those who expound and follow his precepts.

Such is the road to perdition, and it begins with heeding ungodly counsel. Most of those who claim to be Christians "walk in the counsel of the wicked" every day, but many also "stand in the way of sinners" and "sit in the seat of mockers," often refusing to admit that they have gone that far. One who pays lip service to the Bible might nevertheless follow the unrighteous counsel of non-Christians, and mock those who speak in accordance with Scripture. The fall from righteousness begins from respect and admiration toward ungodly thinking, and ends in intimate fellowship with the wicked.

There are Christian leaders who, because of their unbelief and tradition, even persecute those who have faith in God's promises for healing, prosperity, and other blessings, and mock the Holy Spirit as he performs signs and wonders today. They think that they are doing God a service, but they are defending the orthodoxy of wicked men, and they stand with the non-Christians in service to Satan.

The Psalm moves immediately to the law of the Lord: "But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (v. 2). This indicates that a verse like,

"Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22), does not demand many human counselors. In fact, Psalm 119:24 says, "Your statutes are my delight; they are my counselors." Proverbs 15:22 could still apply to human counselors, but only when they promote the precepts of God.

The turn to wicked living begins from sinful thinking, and so verse 2 addresses the issue at its fundamental level when it says of the righteous man that, "his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night." To "delight" in the law of God is to think on it "day and night." One whose thinking is not permeated with the Bible cannot claim to love the word of God. As Spurgeon writes, "Perhaps some of you can claim a sort of negative purity, because you do not walk in the way of the ungodly; but let me ask you – Is your delight in the law of God? Do you study God's Word? Do you make it the man of your right hand – your best companion and hourly guide?"⁹

To "meditate" on the Bible means to think about what it says, to ponder its meanings and implications. Although the word can mean "to mutter; to make sound with the mouth,"¹⁰ it does not necessarily lead to the translation, "murmurs his law day and night" (NJB). The GNT says that the righteous "study it day and night." The emphasis is on the intellect's contemplation of divine revelation. As Kidner writes, "The mind was the first bastion to defend, in verse 1, and is treated as the key to the whole man...The psalm is content to develop this one theme, implying that whatever really shapes a man's thinking shapes his life."¹¹

God commanded Joshua, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful" (Joshua 1:8). He gave similar instructions for parents and their children: "These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up" (Deuteronomy 6:6-7).

Knowledge comes before practice and application, and repetition reinforces God's words in the mind. This has always been the way of the righteous: "Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this" (2 Timothy 2:7). What distinguishes the wicked and the righteous? The wicked follow non-Christian thinking, but the righteous delight in the Bible. This basic difference divides the two groups. Verses 5-6 say, "Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish."

False believers might perform what seems to be good works, but their thoughts betray them: "The Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). Many have distorted the true faith as

⁹ Charles H. Spurgeon, *Treasury of David, Vol. 1*; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers; p. 2.

¹⁰ William Wilson, *Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies*; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers; p. 271.

¹¹ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Psalms 1-72*; Downers Grove, Illinois: 1973; p. 48.

they minimize the relevance of doctrine, claiming that only love and unity are important. However, the Bible says that our thoughts define us; therefore, let those who profess the name of Christ cease whoring after the wisdom of this world. Instead of showing respect to non-Christian ideas, believers should be refuting them and making fun of them.

2. RENEWING THE MIND

Intellectual development is the foundation of spiritual growth. Failure in this area undermines the entire enterprise of discipleship. However, it is often the most neglected aspect of Christian sanctification. Even worse, intellectualism is maligned as an obstacle to conversion and spiritual progress. As one preacher said, "An intellectual spirit is deadly." But this contradicts "the first and greatest commandment" of loving God with all our mind (Matthew 22:37-38). It is impossible for a person to love God with all his mind in a non-mental way.

One of our most urgent tasks is to recover a spirit of biblical intellectualism. Thinking itself is not harmful, but it is the unbiblical content of one's thinking that is destructive. An intellectual spirit is only deadly to an irrational and mystical mindset. According to Colossians 3:10, "The new self is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator." Peter makes Christian knowledge the foundation of "life and godliness" (2 Peter 1:3). Then, Paul writes:

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)

Commentators makes a distinction between doctrine and application, or theory and practice, when they say that Romans 12 begins to set forth the practical applications of the doctrinal expositions that came before it. However, there should not be a sharp dichotomy between doctrine and application, especially when referring to biblical knowledge. As with the previous chapters, Romans 12-16 also teach doctrines – only doctrines about different things.

The word "therefore" stresses that these later chapters follow from the previous ones. "God's mercy" refers to the salvation that he has extended toward his chosen ones. Paul now appeals to the Christians. The proper response to God's saving grace is to pursue sanctification, part of which is "to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God." The word "offer" is a technical term for presenting Levitical sacrifices. The difference is that we are to present our own bodies as "living sacrifices," as opposed to the slain animals of previous times. Our sacrifices carry no redemptive value, but they are our response to what Christ has done.

As Paul explains the redemptive work of Christ and our relation to it, he states, "Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus" (v. 11). "Therefore," he continues, "do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires" (v. 12).

Sanctification involves "putting to death the misdeeds of the body" (8:13). The same word translated "offer" appears in verse 13, which says, "Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness."

As Chrysostom says, "How can the body become a sacrifice? Let the eye look on no evil, and it is a sacrifice. Let the tongue utter nothing base, and it is an offering. Let the hand work no sin, and it is a holocaust.¹ But more, this suffices not, but besides we must actively exert ourselves for good; the hand giving alms, the mouth blessing them that curse us, the ear ever at leisure for listening to God." To offer our bodies as "instruments of righteousness" is "pleasing to God."

Paul says that this is a "spiritual act of worship." These words deserve close attention. They are sometimes misinterpreted, and their significance often left undetected. The word rendered "spiritual" is *logikos*, which is best translated "rational" instead. Several modern translations have "spiritual" (NIV, NASB, NCV, CEV, ESV), so as to emphasize the idea of spiritual worship "in the sense of being inward as opposed to a matter of external rites."² Some scholars contend that *logiken* in this verse is almost synonymous to *pneumatikos*, or "spiritual." However, the *pneuma* word group is common in Paul's writings, whereas *logikos* occurs only here.³ This means that Paul intends the meaning that *logikos* conveys. The best translation is probably "rational service."⁴ The Jerusalem Bible and Ronald Knox emphasize the intellectual nature of Paul's exhortation: "Worship him, I beg you, in a way that is worthy of thinking beings," and "This is the worship due from you as rational creatures." The Latin Vulgate has *rationabile*.⁵

As Thayer says, the term denotes "the worship which is rendered by the reason or soul."⁶ Wuest offers a more theological interpretation and writes, "Israel preached the gospel through the use of object lessons, the Tabernacle, Priesthood, and Offerings. The Church preaches the same gospel in abstract terms."⁷ As Christians, we render to God not ceremonial worship, but as is consistent with rational beings, intellectual worship – worship that is performed from and by the mind, even when this involves bodily expression.

¹ The word means a burnt offering.

² C. E. B. Cranfield, *Romans: A Shorter Commentary*; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985; p. 295.

³ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament); Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 1998; p. 645.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 642.

⁵ *Bblia Sacra Vulgata*: "obsecro itaque vos fratres per misericordiam Dei ut exhibeatis corpora vestra hostiam viventem sanctam Deo placentem rationabile obsequium vestrum"

⁶ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002 (original: 1896); p. 379.

⁷ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Romans in the Greek New Testament*; Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1955; p. 206.

This is not to say that Old Testament worship was non-intellectual. The ceremonial laws were precise, prescribing procedures for many activities from the sacred to the mundane. However, even then the Old Testament gives great emphasis to the intellect and doctrines, as one may note from the repeated commands to teach, hear, and meditate the words of Scripture.

Jesus declares, "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks" (John 4:23). The fact that New Testament believers worship "in spirit and truth" – both words relating to the intellect – does not mean that those who worshiped under the Old Testament did it in flesh and falsehood! The Old Testament religion was already the most intellectually rigorous among the ancient worldviews.

The New Testament does not teach a different gospel, but it is a superior administration of the Abrahamic covenant. We need to repeat this often, since much of popular preaching makes false distinctions between the two Testaments, with disastrous results. This new administration liberates us from the Old Testament ceremonial practices because Christ has fulfilled them. Now we are free to worship God even more as rational beings; therefore, preaching, studying, and thinking receive preeminence in the process of sanctification.

Contemporary preaching emphasizes the practical and procedural, instead of the doctrinal and theological. It encourages Christians to remain as little children without understanding. The result is that we have several generations that do not know much about the Bible. Romans 12:1 stands against this anti-intellectualism of the modern church.

The fact that we are rational creatures carries some important ramifications. Since the essence of our nature is rationality, a program of spiritual development must treat human beings as rational creatures – it will first deal with the mind, the thoughts of the individuals. So Paul says, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

I took a course on sociobiology in college. The subject presupposes biological evolution and applies it to human thought and culture. From the assumption that human beings are descendants of animals, and are animals, it observes and extends the social behavior of animals to explain human behavior. For example, E. O. Wilson attempts to account for altruism and religion using the theory of evolution.⁸

One of the essay questions on the final exam was, "How has this course changed your view of human nature?" I answered, "Only an idiot would let a 100-level course in undergraduate biology change something as important as his view on human nature. It would be like taking a semester of German or Spanish and then immediately adopting it as one's primary language."

Yet such morons abound. With only an elementary understanding of evolutionary theory, and sometimes not even that, they rely on it as one of the most basic principles that control

⁸ E. O. Wilson, *On Human Nature*; Harvard University Press, 1988.

their thinking. In a speech at the American Museum of Natural History, Colin Patterson said, "Can you tell me anything you know about evolution, any one thing that is true? I tried that question on the geology staff at the Field Museum of Natural History and the only answer I got was silence."⁹

If the public is guilty of believing the scientists without examining the evidence, the scientists are guilty of suppressing evidence contrary to their theories:

It is...right and proper to draw the attention of the non-scientific public to the disagreements about evolution. But some recent remarks of evolutionists show that they think this unreasonable. This situation where scientific men rally to the defense of a doctrine that they are unable to define scientifically, much less demonstrate with scientific rigor, attempting to maintain its credit with the public by suppression of criticism and the elimination of difficulties, is abnormal and undesirable in science.¹⁰

It is indeed undesirable, but it is common, not abnormal. Scientists are people, and evolutionists are non-Christian people, and non-Christian people are dishonest.

Many Christians, affected by an anti-intellectual secular philosophy, are also ignorant of the major tenets of their faith, and this demonstrates their disobedience. However, evolutionists do not believe in an omnipotent Spirit who converts the fundamental commitments of men so that they may believe the truth and be saved. The Christian worldview can account for those who convert to the faith without a complete understanding, since it is God who sovereignly exercises an irresistible power on the will of man through the gospel. Nevertheless, the Bible commands the diligent study of God's word to gain a comprehensive grasp of the Christian faith.

Non-Christians, especially since they claim to be so rational, cannot justify a change in fundamental commitments based on an undergraduate course in biology. The ordinary evolutionists cannot offer even one argument showing evidence for the theory and the relevance of the evidence to the theory. They claim to despise dogma, but they accept evolution without any understanding of it. Many of them cannot define or explain the theory of evolution, let alone prove it. Yet they insist that they will believe nothing without evidence. They are liars. As for the scientists who believe in evolution, their thinking is more complicated, but the level of rationality never rises above that of the ordinary fool on the street.

The point I wish to stress is that the final exam implied an agenda to alter or shape the students' thinking. It shows an intention and expectation that the course would change something so fundamental as their view of human nature. The professor wished to

⁹ Colin Patterson, "Evolution and Creationism," New York; November 5, 1981. Dr. Patterson was a senior paleontologist at the British Museum of Natural History.

¹⁰ W. R. Thompson, "Introduction," *Origin of Species*, by Charles Darwin; Dutton: Everyman's Library, 1956; p. xxii. Thompson was Director of the Commonwealth Institute of Biological Control, Ottawa.

demonstrate some of evolution's implications for human behavior so that the students would think more consistently with evolutionary theory.

In the words of René Dubos: "Evolutionary concepts are applied also to social institutions and to the arts. Indeed, most political parties, as well as schools of theology, sociology, history, or arts, teach these concepts and make them the basis of their doctrines. Thus, theoretical biology now pervades all of Western culture indirectly through the concept of progressive historical change."¹¹ And Julian Huxley writes, "The concept of evolution was soon extended into other than biological fields. Inorganic subjects such as...linguistics, social anthropology, and comparative law and religion, began to be studied from an evolutionary angle, until today we are enabled to see evolution as a universal and all-pervading process."¹² Pierre Teilhard de Chardin declares that evolution is "a general condition to which all theories, all systems, all hypotheses must bow and which they must satisfy henceforward if they are to be thinkable and true."¹³

Evolution is a theory of human origins that carries ramifications for subjects outside of biology. Due to its wide acceptance, it has affected secular theories on psychology, education, criminology, and many other areas of study. Huxley believes that evolution is an "all-pervading process." However, if the theory is false, then the secular theories deduced from it can only be all-pervasive nonsense. Pierre Teilhard de Chardin also says, "[Evolution is] above all verification, as well as being immune from any subsequent contradiction by experience."¹⁴ It cannot be verified or falsified. This is not very "scientific," is it? Or is this exactly the way science is done? It is a philosophical principle not derived from, but forcibly imposed upon, empirical data.

Evolution is only one of the many non-Christian theories that seek to deceive and enslave our minds. Non-Christians invent these theories – as numerous and as ludicrous as necessary – in order to eliminate God as the cause and explanation of all human thought and experience.

Regeneration is a radical reconstruction of the intellect and personality after which the person embraces biblical revelation as his first principle. However, he still retains some of the false ideas that he learned before his conversion, and these cause his thoughts and actions to exhibit inconsistencies with his new fundamental commitment. Therefore, sanctification is first an intellectual development, in which we discard unbiblical ideas, such as the theory of evolution and other superstitions, and make our thoughts and actions conform to the word of God.

Paul tells us to throw off the non-Christian intellectual mold, even as the world tries to force us into it: "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed

¹¹ René Dubos, "Humanistic Biology," *American Scientist*, vol. 53; March, 1965; p. 4-19.

¹² Julian Huxley, "Evolution and Genetics," in *What is Science?* edited by J. R. Newman; New York: Simon and Schuster, 1955; p. 256-289.

¹³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*; New York: Harper and Row, 1965; p. 219.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

by the renewing of your mind." Stop thinking like non-Christians, and start thinking like Christians.

Following the first part of verse 2 that teaches the renewing of the mind, the second part of the verse says, "Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will." An anti-intellectual spirit stifles Christian thinking, and destroys the ability "to test and approve what God's will is." Many people claim they wish to know the will of God, but they misunderstand the very nature of God's will and how he teaches it to us.

Spiritual transformation entails the rejection of non-Christian thinking, and the acceptance of the Christian worldview, working out its implications for all of thought and life. Then, we will be able to "test and approve" what the will of God is. It is intellectual discernment that leads to an understanding of the will of God. Paul says that we must train ourselves to think like Christians, so that we may test something to see if it is God's will, and so that we may approve it.

The end of verse 2 is often misinterpreted. Some people want it to suggest that there is a range of possibilities in God's plan so that even if a person fails to attain God's perfect will, perhaps he will still remain in his "permissive" will. They take the three adjectives – good, pleasing, and perfect – to indicate increasing proximity to God's perfect will. However, the adjectives apply equally to the will of God – that is, the will of God is good, pleasing, and perfect.

Christians invented a permissive will in God because they wish to harmonize their false doctrine with the Bible. The disobedient might find some comfort in the theory, since they think that they are at least in God's permissive will. The interpretation preserves the heresy of human autonomy, the blasphemous notion that God does not always get his way. However, according to the Bible, God does not really "permit" anything, as if the universe can exist and function apart from him. If God does not decree and cause an event, it can never happen. This is true whether we are speaking of the death of a sparrow, or a thought in the human mind.

Romans 12:1-2 prescribes the basic structure that must define any program of Christian development. We must think of ourselves as rational creatures, so that every strategy designed to increase godliness must target our minds. The aim is to remove all unbiblical thinking, and to replace it with biblical doctrines and their implications. Knowledge of God's word produces intellectual discernment, by which we are able to test every idea and every plan, so that if it passes the test, to approve of it as the way that God would have us follow. Thus an intellectual spirit that pursues God's word will find life and peace. On the other hand, an anti-intellectual spirit is deadly because it despises the way to knowledge and maturity.

3. ONLY GOD IS GOOD

"Who then can be saved?" the disciples exclaim in Mark 10:26. Is salvation easy to obtain, or difficult? Jesus says, "With man this is impossible" (v. 27). And he says in another place, "But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:14).

Let us start from the beginning of the passage: "As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. 'Good teacher,' he asked, 'what must I do to inherit eternal life?'" (Mark 10:17). Characteristic of the Gospel of Mark, the verse maintains a sense of urgency and activity as the man ran to Christ, and then fell on his knees. There is a perturbing issue on his mind. He wants his answer desperately, and he knows he should seek it from Jesus. The man holds Jesus in high regard as a Jewish teacher, even kneeling before him as he approaches, not as an act of worship, but as an expression of respect.

"Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good – except God alone" (Mark 10:18-19). The reply perplexes many readers. While Jesus would accept worship (Matthew 14:33), now he appears to deny even goodness to himself. He cannot mean that he is sinful, or that he is only a mere man. As he says in one place, "Can any of you prove me guilty of sin?" (John 8:46), and Hebrews 4:15 teaches that although he has been tempted in every way, he was without sin.

Rather than a direct statement of self-abasement, the reply could be an indirect claim to deity. He does not mean that since only God is good, then Jesus is not good; rather, since only God is good, then Jesus must be God. Only God is good, and any goodness attributed to men is relative and derived. How does this man apply goodness to Christ? Jesus' reply exposes the man's superficial idea of goodness, and this proves to be crucial to addressing his question.

Jesus continues, "You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother'" (v. 19). Some interpreters believe that he deliberately omits "You shall not covet" from the list of commandments in anticipation of the man's defect (v. 22). But this is unlikely, because he also leaves out a number of other commandments, and he includes "Do not defraud" on the list, probably derived from Leviticus 19:13. Jesus is offering a summary of the commandments, and the exclusion of some commandments does not necessarily imply that those are the ones the man cannot keep. To paraphrase, "Why do you call me good? Only God is good. Besides, you already know God's commandments, right?"

The man answers, "All these I have kept since I was a boy" (v. 20). "That man possesses the ability to fulfill the commandments of God perfectly was so firmly believed by the rabbis that they spoke in all seriousness of people who has kept the whole Law from A to

Z.¹ He says that he has kept all the commandments, but the Bible tells us we should not believe him.

On another occasion, "an expert in the law" asks Jesus the same question: "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25). When Jesus asks him to state his own interpretation of Scripture on the subject, he answers, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind," and, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (v. 27). Jesus himself has summarized God's law with these two commandments, and so he approves the answer.

However, no one can fulfill this requirement. For a person to measure up to the commandments, he must distort them to conform to his own limitations; otherwise, it would be impossible to keep them. Therefore, wanting "to justify himself," the expert in the law asks, "And who is my neighbor?" (v. 29). If he can restrict the definition of neighbor, then it might become possible to fulfill the requirement. As Jesus says to the Pharisees, "You nullify the word of God by your tradition" (Mark 7:13).

From his false sense of goodness, the man calls Jesus good, and then claims that he himself has been good, that he has kept the commandments. Therefore, Jesus challenges the goodness that the man assigns to him. Jesus does not deny his own goodness, but he realizes that the man does not understand what he is saying when he calls him "good teacher." Based on his entirely inferior notion of goodness, the man probably means that Jesus is one of the better teachers, or even the best one, but he does not think of him as God.

This view of Jesus is common. People say, Jesus was a good man, but he was nothing more. We reply, "Do you know what you are saying? Only God is good." Their standard of goodness is so superficial that, even though they are deep in sin, they judge themselves to be good, and then they assign to Jesus the same kind of goodness. However, if only God is good, then his is the only standard of goodness, and we must make all judgments relative to this standard. When we do this, we perceive that humanity is not justified but condemned, and that their "righteous acts are like filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6).

When a man holds to an inadequate concept of goodness, he deceives himself into thinking that humanity is essentially good. So he attempts to attain salvation by his works, that is, if he thinks he even needs salvation. As he continuously fails to keep God's law, and his depraved nature comes crashing through, he distorts the commandments to make room for abortion, homosexuality, perjury, divination, cessationism, and all kinds of transgressions. If God's law is too high for him, he will reinterpret the law to accommodate his evil nature. If God's law exposes his sins, he will reinterpret the concept of sin to escape the condemnation. It is redemption by redefinition.

However, it is not up to man to define good and evil. God is the judge – it is his standard that we must satisfy, and it is to him that we must give account. Given that this is the case, the Bible declares, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23), and John writes, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us"

¹ Strack and Billerbeck: *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (1:814).

(1 John 1:8). Sin is a fair master, who always pays his wages, and "the wages of sin is death" (Romans 6:23).

Grace does not exclude the preaching of God's law. As Paul explains, "Through the law we become conscious of sin" (Romans 3:20). Since sin is often considered an imaginary religious construction, and the conviction of sin a psychological disorder due to societal dysfunctions, Christians must make it clear that humanity has transgressed God's standard and remains under condemnation. Man is a sinner. He is helpless and hopeless in himself. He needs a power other than himself to save him from destruction.

Machen wrote, "The true schoolmaster to bring men to Christ is found, therefore, now and always in the law of God – the law of God that gives to men the consciousness of sin. A new and more powerful proclamation of that law is perhaps the most pressing need of the hour...a low view of law always brings legalism in religion; a high view of law makes a man a seeker after grace."² Christians often have it reversed: they think that a low view of law makes room for grace, and a high view of law is the basis of legalism. However, it is a low view of law that deceives man into thinking that he can meet its requirements, while a high view of law drives him to seek God's mercy in desperation and humility.

Without a consciousness of sin, it is impossible for one to understand substitutionary atonement as the means of redemption. Since he cannot perceive the need for it, he cannot make sense of it. The man says, "Teacher, all these I have kept since I was a boy" (Mark 10:20). Jesus wishes to answer his question, "What must I do to inherit eternal life?" However, at this point the man's thinking remains unfavorable to the doctrine of justification by faith.

The chief commandment and the summary of God's law is, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Matthew 22:37). Therefore, a person who obeys God's law would acknowledge God's ownership of his whole life. Let us see, then, if this man would respond accordingly when he faces the demand to act on this commitment.

Jesus says to him, "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me" (Mark 10:21). The man is the one who asks Jesus for an answer. He is the one who calls Jesus a good teacher. Now that Jesus tells him to give away everything, does he act in accordance with God's commandments, and acknowledge God's claim to all that he has? His expression changes, and he leaves, unable to abandon his great wealth (v. 22).

Jesus responds, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" (v. 23). The disciples are amazed at this statement. Their background has conditioned them to assume that God has especially blessed the rich. Indeed, the Bible contains many promises of prosperity for God's people. However, it is often difficult for the rich to enter God's kingdom, because their wealth has a strong grip on their thinking and devotion. Their

² J. Gresham Machen, *What is Faith?*; Carlisle, Pennsylvania: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1991 (original: 1925); p. 141-142.

money is their pride and security, and the lure of wealth causes some of them to do all sorts of immoral deeds. God becomes far from their thoughts. Luke 12:15 says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

But then, Jesus adds, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!" (v. 24). Although wealthy people experience specific difficulties, Jesus now says all kinds of people can find it hard to enter the kingdom. Verse 25 says, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." The disciples understand the implication, and now even more amazed than before, ask, "Who then can be saved?" Jesus answers, "With man this is impossible." A first step to understanding salvation is that man cannot achieve righteousness, and therefore man cannot attain salvation. The non-Christian is spiritually impotent and hostile, unable and unwilling to even cooperate with God.

However, not all are doomed to hellfire. This is the good news: "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God" (v. 27). Salvation is up to God, not man, because man is unable to enter. Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). Thayer defines "draws" as "to draw by inward power, lead, impel," or even "to drag off."³ God extends his grace to his chosen ones by dragging them to Christ with an irresistible inward summon. Therefore, a person's faith in Christ – his coming to Christ for salvation – originates from God's will and not the man's will. God is the one who changes the will of his chosen ones so that they would believe in Christ; therefore, salvation is all of grace, and there is no basis for men to boast (Ephesians 2:9).

Jesus says, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). Faith in Jesus Christ is the only way to salvation.

Many people are offended at the exclusivism, and for this reason they dismiss the Christian faith. They declare that if we claim that only we are correct, then we must be wrong. Now truth and reason are no longer relevant, but openness and democracy are the standard for judgment. Nevertheless, they insist that only their inclusivism is correct, and that all who disagree are wrong. They are hypocrites, and stupid liars.

Then, there are those who claim that they do not denounce Christ, but acknowledge him as a "good teacher," although they insist that he cannot be God or the only hope of mankind. However, these people are not closer to him than those who detest the very sound of his name, because Jesus says, "He who is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). Their view does not support the Christian faith, but rejects its very foundation. It does not show respect for Christ, but commits blasphemy against him.

³ Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2002 (original: 1896); p. 204-205.

With Jesus Christ, it is either all or nothing. A person either confesses him as the Son of God or he does not, but Jesus is not merely a good teacher. As C. S. Lewis wrote, "Let us not come with any patronising nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not left that open to us. He did not intend to."⁴ A person must either denounce the Christian faith as false and face us in fierce debate, and then endure torture in hellfire forever, or he must confess, "Jesus is Lord."

"Who then can be saved?" The answer is that no one can attain salvation apart from God's grace and power. Salvation comes from God alone. It does not depend on man's will and effort, but on God's choice and kindness. It depends on Christ's redemptive work, and it was Christ's deity that made this work sufficient and effective. "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "Why do you call me good? No one is good – except God alone." We must either deny the goodness of Christ and damn our souls to hell, or confess the deity of Christ and be saved from our many sins. There is no middle place; there are no alternatives.

⁴ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*; New York: Touchstone, 1996 (original: 1943); p. 56.

4. UNFADING BEAUTY

Non-Christians are like animals, and when it comes to mate selection, they are driven by the instincts and priorities of animals. The fact that Christians are not mere animals – wild and unintelligent – means that they should look to a higher standard for guidance in courtship and marriage.

Our focus is on the Christian man. He has received authoritative guidelines that define the kind of family he should establish. Once there is a blueprint or purpose, all the considerations come into their proper place. The Bible sets forth the characteristics of a wife that God approves. Most traits should be common to all Christians – for example, no believer should be dishonest, and so a woman who is dishonest cannot be a good wife – but certain traits are specifically emphasized.

The God-given blueprint or purpose for marriage determines what kind of woman can become a wife that God approves. Genesis 2:18 indicates that the wife is to be a "suitable helper" to the man. This carries significant implications for the kind of woman that one should marry. Any woman whose personal ambitions threaten the agenda that God and the husband set for the family is rejected. All feminists are excluded. Those who worship their own gender, and compel others to worship it, must be condemned.

Another purpose for marriage is that God is "seeking godly offspring" (Malachi 2:15). This does not mean that every marriage must produce children, but it is a general principle, and if there are children, they must be raised for faith and holiness. A good wife would contribute to such a program, and not hinder it.

When a number of such biblical precepts are taken into consideration, we conclude that an excellent wife should be reverent, obedient, and competent. These are interchangeable with spiritual, submissive, and capable.

The word *reverent* seems broad, but we have a specific meaning in mind. First, it indicates a true spirituality, which means that the woman must be a Christian. This is difficult, because most people in churches are not true Christians, and even those who are truly converted are usually at such a low level of faith, knowledge, and holiness that the spiritual life in them is hardly detectable. The first step to learning how to find a mate is to go study theology. If a man cannot make basic distinctions between true and false faith, he cannot begin to select a woman to be his wife.

Paul writes, "Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? What harmony is there between Christ and Belial? What does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15). The Christian and the non-Christian submit to two

antithetical authorities, and to the extent that they are consistent with their worldviews, conflicts will arise in the relationship.

However, if both the man and the woman have God's word, the Bible, as their first and final authority, then they would appeal to it to resolve any dispute. Although the husband is the head of the wife, he is not God over the wife, and they both submit to a higher authority, which is the word of God. This authority imposes order and unity in the family, with the husband as the leader as he governs according to God's precepts. Conflicts can be resolved, and resolved in a way that promotes wisdom and virtue. Disagreements are temporary and peripheral.

This is not the case if one is a Christian and the other is a non-Christian. There is no neutral place – a person either has faith in Jesus Christ and worships him as Lord, or he does not. James writes, "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God" (James 4:4). You are either God's friend, or his enemy. If you claim to have no opinion, you are his enemy. Jesus remarks, "He who is not with me is against me, and he who does not gather with me scatters" (Matthew 12:30). A person who does not obey Christ is also one who defies him, and a person who does not love Christ is also one who hates him. It is disastrous for two people who disagree on this fundamental level to unite in the most sacred of all human relationships.

Romans 8:7 states, "The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." On the other hand, a mind that has been made spiritual by regeneration and that is growing in sanctification can obey God's laws. As verse 5 explains, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires." A spiritual person is one whose mind is "set on what the Spirit desires" as revealed in God's word. Therefore, when we say that a woman must be spiritual, we mean that she must be a good Christian, or one whose thoughts and actions are in conformity with the Bible.

A woman who seeks a husband must also apply the same standard. As Paul writes, "A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39). A Christian woman must marry only a Christian man.

God allows the Christian man to marry anyone he wishes as long as the woman is a Christian. In practice, this must exclude backslidden Christians, and those who claim to be Christians but do not exhibit the corresponding doctrine and conduct, because these people might not be Christians at all. Of course, if a person returns to the Lord, and shows true signs of faith, then she becomes a candidate for marriage. Although we must not go beyond the Bible in defining a proper marriage candidate, we must also ensure that the Bible's full meaning is enforced. Thus we must remove any excuse to marry those who claim to be Christians but who might not be Christians at all.

Our second characteristic is obedience. An excellent woman is one who obeys God's word, and she is also one who obeys legitimate authorities according to God's word. Here the emphasis is on the woman's relationship with her husband.

After the fall of man, God says to the woman, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Genesis 3:16). A popular interpretation is that this means the woman would experience sexual desire for her husband, or at least a desire for his companionship, but this is unlikely because it appears unrelated to the last clause of the sentence. Reflecting this view, the Living Bible says, "You shall welcome your husband's affections, and he shall be your master."

Another interpretation understands the verse to say, "Your desire will be to *dominate* your husband, *but* he will rule over you." Judging from a similar expression in Genesis 4:7, this is the better position. Matthew Poole writes:

Thy desires shall be referred or submitted to thy husband's will and pleasure to grant or deny them, as he sees fit...And this punishment was...very grievous to her, because women's affections use to be vehement, and it is irksome to them to have them restrained or denied. Seeing, for want of thy husband's rule and conduct, thou wast seduced by the serpent, and didst abuse that power I gave thee together with thy husband to draw him to sin, thou shalt now be brought down to a lower degree, for he shall rule thee; not with that sweet and gentle hand which he formerly used, as a guide and counsellor only, but by a higher and harder hand, as a lord and governor, to whom I have now given a greater power and authority over thee than he had before, (which through thy pride and corruption will be far more uneasy unto thee than his former empire was,) and who will usurp a further power than I have given him, and will, by my permission, for thy punishment, rule thee many times with rigour, tyranny, and cruelty, which thou wilt groan under, but shalt not be able to deliver thyself from it.¹

Some people assert that before the Fall, man and woman had equal authority in the marriage relationship, and it was only after the woman had sinned that the man was made to rule over her. Poole's comments might be construed to support this position, since he fails to stress the authority that man had over woman even before the Fall, although he includes a weak acknowledgment of it.

He admits that the man ruled before the Fall, but with a "sweet and gentle hand." Now God gives him "greater power and authority...than he had before," implying that he had power over the woman even at the beginning. In any case, it is doubtful that Adam was ever "a guide and counsellor only" to the woman. The Bible indicates that he was a lot more than this.

¹ *Matthew Poole's Commentary on the Holy Bible, Vol. 1*; Hendrickson Publishers, p. 11.

Some people wish to believe that the subordination of the woman is only a result of sin, and this has been entirely negated after the death and resurrection of Christ. However, Paul teaches that the authority of the husband over his wife is not only a result of sin, but it is a creation ordinance. By the nature and order of the creation of man and woman, the husband has authority over the wife: "For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man" (1 Corinthians 11:8-9); "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve" (1 Timothy 2:11-13). Any ordinance of God instituted due to the very nature of creation is still in effect.

There are those who take Genesis 3:16 as a predictive declaration that the marriage relationship would become one in which the man and woman each seeks to dominate, to sinfully seize control. It is sometimes accompanied by the assumption that neither one should dominate, but this contradicts what the Bible teaches. One might say that although the verse does not deny the husband's authority, it predicts the tyrannical use of authority; that is, while the woman seeks domination, the man abuses his place in the home. There is no basis for this interpretation. Although some men abuse their authority, this verse does not refer to this.

One important aspect of feminism, including feminist theology, is to subvert the correct structure of the marriage relationship. God has ordained the man as the head of the home, but sin has produced in the woman an urge to usurp the husband's authority, to be liberated from his rule, that is, to defy God's arrangement. However, the joy and hope of both men and women rest in knowing and obeying God's commands, and not in fighting against them.

The leadership of man in the family has been a controversial issue. The cause for the heated debate is not because the Bible is unclear, but it is due to the ideological climate of the day, the women's tendency to resent authority, and the men's abuse of their authority. But these reasons cannot negate God's commands.

God's word regulates the husband's power in the home, and it directs how he must treat his wife: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). Husbands are to love the wives in the same way that Christ loves his church – he died to save her. Thus the Bible commands men to love their wives enough to die for them. Of course, this would include ordinary expressions of sacrificial love in their everyday lives. To the extent that a man lacks this love for his wife, he is less than a real man. Our estimation of a man should never rise higher than his love for God, the Bible, and his wife.

So when we insist on the wife's submission, we do not excuse the husband of his faults. Although we acknowledge the husband's responsibility and that there are actual instances of abuse, the woman's obligation to submit under God-ordained authority remains unchanged. Sin is what drives women's rejection of the Bible's family structure. Thus God's

decree proves true: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." As *Keil & Delitzsch* says, this is a desire "bordering upon disease."²

Then, Peter writes, "Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair and the wearing of gold jewelry and fine clothes. Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight. For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear" (1 Peter 3:1-6).

Peter teaches that wives must submit not only to Christian husbands, but they must submit even if the husbands are non-Christians. Of course, the Bible commands that a Christian woman may marry only a Christian man (1 Corinthians 7:39), and so he is referring to women who became Christians after they had married.

He introduces submission as he states that the men may be "won over without words." This does not mean that it is possible to convert a person to Jesus Christ without telling him the gospel message. It is popular to assume that "action speaks louder than words," but this is false and absurd. These husbands have already heard the gospel, so that Peter says, "If any of them do not believe the word." He is telling the wives that God may still use their "purity and reverence" to impress and convert their husbands, so that they would come to believe what they heard.

Submission, purity, and reverence are the things that make a woman truly beautiful. Contrary to the world's standard, the Christian faith emphasizes inner beauty, so that a woman's worth is not defined or limited by her appearance. A woman who is outwardly attractive might be wicked and grotesque on the inside. Since only the Christian faith has the power to transform the inner person, it follows that no non-Christian woman is truly beautiful.

Even the most attractive non-Christian woman possesses only a beauty that is superficial and fleeting, but "unfading beauty" belongs to the Christian woman who has a "gentle and quiet spirit." As Proverbs 21:9 and 19 say, "Better to live on a corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome wife...Better to live in a desert than with a quarrelsome and ill-tempered wife." Referring to Delilah, the Bible says, "With such nagging she prodded him day after day until he was tired to death" (Judges 16:16). In another place, it says, "A quarrelsome wife is like a constant dripping on a rainy day; restraining her is like restraining the wind or grasping oil with the hand" (Proverbs 27:15-16; also 19:13). Drip...Drip...Drip!

² C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 1*; Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 2001; p. 64.

A "gentle and quiet spirit" will keep the husbands from jumping out the window, and it is also "of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:4). A woman can be like a Venus in the eyes of men, but more like a Medusa in the sight of God. Part of Christian growth involves learning to see people and things as God sees them: "Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter" (Isaiah 5:20).

The Christian's physical appearance does not necessarily deteriorate, because God is able to renew our bodies through faith. Although physical beauty is relatively unimportant, and possesses no spiritual value, it is nevertheless a blessing from God. The aged Sarah was so beautiful that she was coveted by kings. And when Job was restored, God gave him daughters who were physically attractive: "The LORD blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first. He had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen and a thousand donkeys. And he also had seven sons and three daughters. The first daughter he named Jemimah, the second Keziah and the third Keren-Happuch. Nowhere in all the land were there found women as beautiful as Job's daughters, and their father granted them an inheritance along with their brothers" (Job 42:12-15).

Nevertheless, even if natural beauty fades, the Christian's inner beauty can develop and increase throughout life, and continues after death. Paul says, "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). A woman who has no inner beauty will have nothing in the end. And a person who cannot see beyond his physical health and figure lacks wisdom: "For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

Peter continues, "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear" (1 Peter 3:5-6). How did they make themselves beautiful? "They were submissive to their own husbands." Physical beauty is not enough – Sarah made herself beautiful because she "obeyed Abraham and called him her master." Even though she was "a very beautiful woman" (Genesis 12:14) in terms of appearance, she became an example because she attained inner beauty through submission.

Just as Christians become the children of Abraham through faith in Christ (Galatians 3:7), women should pattern themselves after Sarah in her obedience. Peter does not ignore the existence of abusive husbands, but he says, "You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear" (v. 6). The men's ungodly conduct does not excuse the wives from obeying God's commands. He commands women to "do what is right and do not give way to fear" as they submit to their husbands, so that "if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives" (v. 1-2).

Next, Paul writes, "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church... Now as the church submits to Christ,

so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything...However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband" (Ephesians 5:22-24, 33).

The text is explicit and needs no explanation if not for the many attempts by Christian scholars to overturn it. For example, one commentator writes: "To submit meant to yield one's own rights. If the relationship called for it, as in the military, the term could connote obedience, but that meaning is not called for here. In fact, the word 'obey' does not appear in Scripture with respect to wives, though it does with respect to children (6:1) and slaves (6:5)."³

He defines submission as "to yield one's own rights," but this is meaningless, because he does not specify these rights or explain why the surrender of these rights does not lead to obedience. A more popular notion of submission refers to humility and respect in the wife's attitude, and this is contrasted with obedience, which refers to conformity in behavior to the husband's wishes. Under the second definition, the wife may disobey her husband at every point and still remain in full submission, simply because she possesses a respectful attitude.

Verse 21 says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." There is the claim that this means the verses that follow assert a doctrine of mutual submission. Then, the claim is that verse 22 therefore cannot be telling the wives to obey their husbands, because mutual submission among Christians does not necessarily imply mutual obedience, but only a respectful attitude.

This interpretation misses the point of the passage, and in fact, it results in blasphemy against Jesus Christ. Even if we agree that verse 21 defines the interpretation of 5:22-6:9, the content of the passage makes it clear that mutual submission does not mean the same thing in every relationship. The meaning and the basis of mutual submission between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves are different.

Paul says that the wives should obey their husbands because "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" (v. 23). This is not true in any other human relationship – whether between Christians, parents and children, or masters and slaves. If the wives should submit to their husbands in the same sense that the church submits to Christ, then it is impossible that it is referring to the surrender of one's rights or a respectful attitude. The church is to render absolute obedience to Christ in both thought and action; therefore, the meaning of submission in marriage must mean that the wives must be both respectful in attitude and obedient in behavior.

Since the two relationships are analogous, if the interpretation is that the submission of the wives does not mean obedience, then it also means that the church has no obligation to obey Christ. This is blasphemy. Those who teach this weak view of submission think that they champion the cause of women, but instead, they have made a declaration of rebellion

³ *The NIV Study Bible, 10th Anniversary Edition*; Grand Rapids, Michigan: The Zondervan Corporation, 1995; Notes on Ephesians 5:22.

against Jesus Christ on behalf of the whole church. If they refuse to recant, then they declare themselves to be non-Christians.

The husband's part in marriage is defined, not as one of obedience, but sacrificial love: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (v. 25). The foolish assumption that "mutual submission" means the same thing for everyone in every relationship ignores all these details in the text. Paul is not saying that wives should respect their husbands, but that there is no need to obey them, while only the children and slaves should obey. Rather, he is saying that wives must obey their husbands, children their parents, and slaves their masters.

Even more outrageous is the interpreter's claim, "The word 'obey' does not appear in Scripture with respect to wives, though it does with respect to children (6:1) and slaves (6:5)."

First, although the word translated "submit" (*hypotassō*) in verse 22 is different from the word translated "obey" (*hypakouō*) in 6:1 and 6:5, it still carries the meaning of obedience. For example, the same word *hypotassō* is used in Luke 2:51, and it refers to obedience: "Then he went down to Nazareth with them and was obedient to them." But *hypakouō* is used in Ephesians 6:1, where it says, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Does the commentator mean to suggest that Jesus merely submitted to his parents in his attitude, but that he disobeyed them? If so, did Jesus obey the commandment, "Honor your father and mother," cited as the basis for obedience to parents in Ephesians 6:2? If the commentator means that Jesus disobeyed the commandment, and that Jesus was a sinner, then he could not have made atonement. Therefore, in his zeal to assert his unbiblical position on women, the scholar has in principle blasphemed Jesus Christ, rejected the atonement, and forfeited his own salvation.

Again, he says, "The word 'obey' does not appear in Scripture with respect to wives." In other words, the claim is that the Bible uses only *hypotassō* (submit) when it refers to wives, and never *hypakouō* (obey). However, the Bible indeed uses *hypakouō* when it refers to Sarah: "For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to make themselves beautiful. They were submissive to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed [*hypakouō*] Abraham and called him her master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear" (1 Peter 3:5-6).

Sarah was the wife of Abraham, and she obeyed (*hypakouō*) her husband, Then, Christian wives are told to emulate her, and specifically her obedience to Abraham. It follows that *hypakouō* is applied to all Christian wives. Therefore, whether the Bible uses *hypakouō* or *hypotassō*, it insists that wives must respect and obey their husbands. Any interpreter who suggests something less is incompetent or dishonest, or both.

If wives complain that this is too difficult, they should remember that the husbands' duty is much more challenging: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her" (Ephesians 5:25). The command is not for a husband to merely

show affection, but to love his wife more than his own life, and to cherish her more than his own welfare.

Just as many men are difficult to obey because they are incompetent and overbearing, many women are difficult to love because they are rebellious and obnoxious. The situation is difficult for both men and women, not because of God's command, but because of sin. If God had not produced divine love in our hearts, it would indeed be impossible to love as Christ loves. It is best for both the husband and the wife to follow God's word, since it is certainly easier to obey a loving husband, and to love an obedient wife. Nevertheless, each one is accountable to God regardless of what the other does (1 Peter 3:1-7). A husband's lack of affection does not excuse the wife's lack of obedience. On the other hand, it is possible for a husband's affection to extinguish the wife's rebellion, and for a wife's submission to stimulate the husband's affection.

Galatians 3:28 is often used to argue against "inequality" or gender distinctions: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The argument is that since there is "neither male nor female" in Christ, then there should be no distinction in role or difference in authority in the marriage relationship. However, the argument backfires.

First, if Paul intends to abolish such distinctions in this verse, then it would be foolish for him to say other things that reinforce these distinctions: "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord," and "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ" (Ephesians 5:22, 6:5). Thus the argument must deny the inspiration, inerrancy, and consistency of the Bible.

Second, if Paul intends to abolish gender distinctions in this verse, then it would be impossible for him to oppose homosexual relationships and marriages, at least among Christians, or those who are in Christ. In fact, there could be no distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality, because there would be no such thing as sexuality. However, Paul denounces homosexuality, and even condemns homosexuals to hell (Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10). Thus the argument must again deny the inspiration, inerrancy, and consistency of the Bible; moreover, it excuses all kinds of sexual perversions.

Therefore, the argument is not a defense for equality in Christ, but it is an attack on the foundation of the Christian faith, and an excuse for rebellion and transgression. Once the implication is clear, anyone who refuses to withdraw the argument must be a false teacher, or even a non-Christian.

Galatians 3:28 does not abolish all gender distinctions, and certainly not those that the Bible explicitly asserts. Rather, the context shows that it refers to each person's equal access to justification in Christ through faith: "You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ

Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:26-29).

Regardless of race, gender, and social status, every person has equal access to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, that is, every person who has been chosen by God (Romans 11:7). And regardless of race, gender, and social status, every person who has attained salvation through faith has the same standing in Christ – one is not more justified or accepted than another. Galatians 3:28 carries no reference to gender equality in any other setting.

The Bible never teaches that women are inferior as human beings. In fact, we know that men and women are equal as human beings because it teaches that both were made in God's image: "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." Nevertheless, God has ordained that women must submit to their husbands in the marriage relationship. They are not inferior in their being, but they are subordinate in their authority.

As Elizabeth Handford writes, "If you are intellectually honest, you have to admit that it is impossible to find a single loophole, a single exception, an 'if' or 'unless.' The Scriptures say, without qualification, to the open-minded reader, that a woman ought to obey her husband."⁴ A wife must obey her husband, Paul says, "so that no one will malign the word of God" (Titus 2:5). A rebellious woman dishonors God and brings shame to his people.

A Christian woman should be reverent, obedient, and also competent. It is possible that a wife might be spiritual and submissive, but not very capable. This deficiency would hinder her from fulfilling her role as a helper to her husband.

Proverbs 31:10-31 consists of a poem, constructed acrostically using the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, in which the writer extols the virtues of a "fully-capable"⁵ wife:

A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies.
Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She
brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life.

She selects wool and flax and works with eager hands. She is like the
merchant ships, bringing her food from afar. She gets up while it is still
dark; she provides food for her family and portions for her servant girls.
She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
She sets about her work vigorously; her arms are strong for her tasks. She
sees that her trading is profitable, and her lamp does not go out at night.
In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers.
She opens her arms to the poor and extends her hands to the needy. When

⁴ Elizabeth Rice Handford, *Me? Obey Him?*; Murfreesboro, Tennessee: Sword of the Lord Publishers, 1994; p. 31.

⁵ Jay E. Adams, *The Christian Counselor's Commentary: Proverbs*; Woodruff, South Carolina: Timeless Texts, 1997; p. 228.

it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet. She makes coverings for her bed; she is clothed in fine linen and purple. Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land. She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies the merchants with sashes. She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come. She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue. She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness.

Her children arise and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praises her: "Many women do noble things, but you surpass them all." Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised. Give her the reward she has earned, and let her works bring her praise at the city gate.

The husband has given the woman great latitude in making decisions. His "full confidence" in her is based not only on her pure motives, but also on her capability as a helper in the household. She is a helper, but the text lists an astounding array of virtues and abilities unmatched by many men, so that one commentator writes, "This lady's standard is not implied to be within the reach of all, for it presupposes unusual gifts and material resources."⁶

However, the statement is misleading, because it argues in a circle. It is as if he says, "Such a woman is unusual because such a woman is unusual." He assumes that if most women cannot measure up to this standard, this means that this standard is not meant for most women. This makes no sense. No one can measure up to God's law, but this does not mean that God's law is meant for no one. Rather, it means that God's law is meant for everyone, and everyone is condemned by it. Likewise, the natural conclusion is that if most women cannot measure up to this standard, this means that most women cannot be considered "a wife of noble character" (v. 10).

Indeed, verse 10 suggests that such a woman is rare: "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies." The passage does not say that a man must only marry such a woman. Rather, it admits that such a woman is rare, but she is the ideal and the implication is that a man should find a woman who is as close as possible to someone like this.

Nevertheless, it is true that a wife's responsibility and potential would vary according to the "materials resources" involved. Most women would not have the opportunity to manage mansions, farms, servants, and real estate. Still, the principle remains the same – the wife should be a capable helper to the husband. The point is that this is the kind of wife that the man should seek.

⁶ Derek Kidner, *Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries: Proverbs*; Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1964; p. 184.

This woman is characterized by diligence: "She...works with eager hands...She gets up while it is still dark...She sets about her work vigorously...and her lamp does not go out at night. In her hand she holds the distaff and grasps the spindle with her fingers...She watches over the affairs of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness" (v. 13, 15, 17-19, 27). But she is diligent in a specific kind of work – "she watches over the affairs of her household." Many women are diligent, but they are working hard only to pursue their personal ambitions, and not to benefit her husband or household. Since both the man and the woman spend much of their time in advancing their respective careers, no one watches over the affairs of the household. A woman of "noble character" is diligent because of love for her husband and household.

This does not necessarily mean that the woman cannot have a career, but the emphasis is on her motive and agenda. Regardless of whether she pursues a career, are her priorities structured around the husband and the family, or herself? Martha Peace writes:

Put him first over the children, your parents, friends, job, ladies' Bible studies, etc....Willingly and cheerfully rearrange your schedule for him when necessary...Do whatever you can to make him look good, to accomplish his goals. Some examples are offer to run errands for him, organize your day to be available to help him with his projects...Consider his work (job, goals, hobbies, work for the Lord) as more important than your own...Think of specific ways that you can help him accomplish his goals. Examples are get up early in the mornings to help him get off to work having had a good breakfast, take care in recording telephone messages for him, anticipate any needs he may have in order to attain a specific goal, and keep careful records of money spent to keep up with the budget...Realize that just as God is glorified when man obeys Him, your husband is glorified when you obey your husband.⁷

She does not assume that the wife has no career, but she says, "Put him first over your job...Consider his work as more important than your own."

Then, this woman is characterized by keen foresight, "When it snows, she has no fear for her household; for all of them are clothed in scarlet...She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come" (v. 21, 25). Instead of fretting about future contingencies, she can "laugh at the days to come." Her foresight reaches beyond the home: "She considers a field and buys it; out of her earnings she plants a vineyard...She sees that her trading is profitable" (v. 16, 18). She has excellent business sense, and brings income into the household.

She possesses another important quality: "She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue" (v. 26). She is able to teach the children, and carry fruitful conversations with her husband. As *Keil & Delitzsch* observes, "Such graceful instruction she communicates now to this and now to that member of her household, for nothing that goes

⁷ Martha Peace, *The Excellent Wife: A Biblical Perspective*; Bemidji, Minnesota: Focus Publishing Incorporated, 1999; p. 55-56.

on in her house escapes her observation."⁸ And Jay Adams writes, "Indeed, she is well versed in biblical teaching and can speak wisely to others, including her children. She is not gruff, sarcastic, short-tempered or careless in speech."⁹

My work is in Christian doctrine and ministry, and I enjoy conversations with my wife on God, the Bible, and the miraculous manifestations of the Spirit. The spiritual and intellectual demands of these conversations, including faith in God's powerful operations, and an uncommon precision in reasoning and expression, are such that most people would find difficult, if not intolerable. The fact that she could rise to the challenge and make her own contributions brings me tremendous delight, and makes her a truly fitting companion.

A woman should have the intellectual capability and knowledge to discuss the husband's work, even if only on an elementary level. For example, if her husband is an engineer, she should learn something about the subject, enough to engage in meaningful conversations with him about it. Marriage is a special and unique covenant – it is unbiblical and contradictory if the wife is not the husband's best friend. She should be his closest companion and confidant, so that he needs no outsiders to discuss his most intimate thoughts and plans. Likewise, the husband should take an interest in the wife's work and thoughts. In any case, all Christians should be able to talk about God, if nothing else (Deuteronomy 11:18-21; Joshua 1:8; Malachi 3:16-18).

The passage concludes, "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised" (v. 30). The fear of the Lord is the foundation for all her virtues and abilities. Likewise, reverence is the foundation for a woman's obedience and competence. Just as an unspiritual man is worthless, an irreverent woman is good for nothing. But when a woman's works flow from her love for God, "Her husband has full confidence in her and lacks nothing of value. She brings him good, not harm, all the days of her life" (v. 11-12). "Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting" (v. 30), but the "unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit...is of great worth in God's sight" (1 Peter 3:4).

When it comes to reverence, the woman should exhibit signs of regeneration. There should be a hunger for the word of God. She should demonstrate a disposition toward faith and holiness, and a willingness to change her thinking and lifestyle to conform to the Bible's teachings. Her behavior under pressure could expose a false or temporary faith: "The one who received the seed that fell on rocky places is the man who hears the word and at once receives it with joy. But since he has no root, he lasts only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, he quickly falls away" (Matthew 13:20-21). At the minimum, a woman must resemble the biblical description of a Christian before she is considered a candidate for marriage.

As for obedience, it is often difficult to ascertain if a woman will submit to her husband. However, one may observe if she obeys the existing authority figures, such as the government (Romans 13:1-5), parents (Ephesians 6:1-3), pastor (Hebrews 13:17), and

⁸ Keil and Delitzsch, Vol. 6; p. 488.

⁹ Adams, p. 230.

employer (1 Peter 2:18-19). Does she follow their instructions? What is her attitude toward rules and restrictions? If it seems that she refuses to obey various forms of authority, then it is probable that she might also refuse to obey her husband after she marries.

Competence is more easily assessed. One should observe whether the woman is organized, punctual, and knowledgeable, and whether she accomplishes her tasks with excellence. She should possess basic communication skills, sufficient to convey her thoughts in a coherent manner. Abilities in household administration, accounting, sewing, and cooking are also desirable. The man should not be overly picky, but look for general tendencies.

Although we must learn the Christian idea of an excellent wife, and it is helpful to list definite items to consider, the Bible also explains that such superior individuals are rare because of sin. Only those who have been saved by Jesus Christ can even approach the Bible's lofty standard. Nevertheless, since we realize that even Christians still strive for perfection, the man must allow for certain deficiencies in the woman, just as he asks for her love and support despite the many deficiencies in him. Moreover, it is possible for a Christian to improve, so there is no reason to wait until one finds a woman who has no flaws, or to delude oneself that such a woman exists.

We have not addressed issues such as romantic love and personal preferences. This is not to diminish their importance, but since our purpose has been to consider the objective characteristics of an excellent woman, we have ignored the subjective aspects of a relationship. A man should surely take the subjective into account when he considers marriage.

The Bible says that a good wife is hard to find: "A wife of noble character who can find? She is worth far more than rubies" (Proverbs 31:10). She is reverent, obedient, and competent – she worships God as ruler over all; she obeys her husband as head of the home; she fulfills her role as helper to her husband. However, similar to most men, most women are also irreverent, disobedient, and incompetent, so that if one can find a woman who even remotely resembles the Bible's description, he should know that he is indeed favored by the Lord.

5. THEOLOGY OF WAR

The Christian faith is essentially non-violent. However, some people claim that it forbids all physical force regardless of the circumstances. They think that the Christian position is religious pacifism – it is immoral and sinful to participate in any war, and one never has the right or duty to take lives. Although these people consider themselves full of love and obedience, their position in fact represents a blatant defiance against what God has revealed on the matter.

The Bible records many instances in which God's people went to war by his command or approval:

The Amalekites came and attacked the Israelites at Rephidim. Moses said to Joshua, "Choose some of our men and go out to fight the Amalekites. Tomorrow I will stand on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hands." So Joshua fought the Amalekites as Moses had ordered, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went to the top of the hill. As long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning, but whenever he lowered his hands, the Amalekites were winning. When Moses' hands grew tired, they took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur held his hands up – one on one side, one on the other – so that his hands remained steady till sunset. So Joshua overcame the Amalekite army with the sword. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it, because I will completely blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven." Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner." (Exodus 17:8-15)

After the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, the LORD said to Joshua son of Nun, Moses' aide: "Moses my servant is dead. Now then, you and all these people, get ready to cross the Jordan River into the land I am about to give to them – to the Israelites. I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses. Your territory will extend from the desert to Lebanon, and from the great river, the Euphrates – all the Hittite country – to the Great Sea on the west. No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you." (Joshua 1:1-5)

God initiated a number of wars to accomplish his plans and purposes, and many of them were not fought in self-defense. When King Saul disobeyed God and spared King Agag, Samuel hastened to complete the assignment: "But Samuel said, 'As your sword has made women childless, so shall your mother be childless among women.' And Samuel hewed Agag to pieces before the LORD at Gilgal" (1 Samuel 15:33, NASB).

When God's people inquired him concerning military decisions, he often responded with approval and assurance, and sometimes dictated the strategies that led them to victory:

David and his men reached Ziklag on the third day. Now the Amalekites had raided the Negev and Ziklag. They had attacked Ziklag and burned it, and had taken captive the women and all who were in it, both young and old. They killed none of them, but carried them off as they went on their way. When David and his men came to Ziklag, they found it destroyed by fire and their wives and sons and daughters taken captive. So David and his men wept aloud until they had no strength left to weep. David's two wives had been captured – Ahinoam of Jezreel and Abigail, the widow of Nabal of Carmel. David was greatly distressed because the men were talking of stoning him; each one was bitter in spirit because of his sons and daughters. But David found strength in the LORD his God. Then David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, "Bring me the ephod." Abiathar brought it to him, and David inquired of the LORD, "Shall I pursue this raiding party? Will I overtake them?" "Pursue them," he answered. "You will certainly overtake them and succeed in the rescue." (1 Samuel 30:1-8)

Then the Spirit of the LORD came upon Jahaziel son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite and descendant of Asaph, as he stood in the assembly. He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's. Tomorrow march down against them. They will be climbing up by the Pass of Ziz, and you will find them at the end of the gorge in the Desert of Jeruel. You will not have to fight this battle. Take up your positions; stand firm and see the deliverance the LORD will give you, O Judah and Jerusalem. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the LORD will be with you.'" Jehoshaphat bowed with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the LORD. (2 Chronicles 20:14-18)

Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Take the whole army with you, and go up and attack Ai. For I have delivered into your hands the king of Ai, his people, his city and his land. You shall do to Ai and its king as you did to Jericho and its king, except that you may carry off their plunder and livestock for yourselves. Set an ambush behind the city." (Joshua 8:1-2)

As David said, "Praise be to the LORD my Rock, who trains my hands for war, my fingers for battle" (Psalm 144:1). The Bible portrays God himself as a mighty warrior, an active fighter in war, conquering his enemies:

The LORD is a warrior; the LORD is his name. (Exodus 15:3)

Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you." (Numbers 10:35)

The chariots of God are tens of thousands and thousands of thousands; the Lord has come from Sinai into his sanctuary. When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious – that you, O LORD God, might dwell there. (Psalm 68:17-18)

The LORD will march out like a mighty man, like a warrior he will stir up his zeal; with a shout he will raise the battle cry and will triumph over his enemies. (Isaiah 42:13)

The New Testament does not contain the same kind of passages on warfare, but this does not translate into a lack of clarity on the subject, because the New is in implicit agreement with the Old. There is no reason to assume a sharp dichotomy between the Old and New Testaments, when the Bible itself asserts an essential unity. As Loraine Boettner writes, "There is absolutely no question that in the Old Testament wars were sanctioned as a means of gaining righteous ends...When rightly understood the two Testaments are supplementary, not contradictory. The silence of the New Testament on the subject of war apparently rests on the assumption that the subject had been adequately treated and did not call for any addition or modification."¹ The New Testament does not teach pacifism, and it does not overturn the Old Testament view of war.

Jesus says in Matthew 5:39, "But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." This is often used to support pacifism. However, we must be sensitive to the use of hyperbolic language. The verse appears in a context where Jesus also says, "If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell" (Matthew 5:29-30).

Although it is literally true that it is better to lose a part of the body than to be thrown into hell, Jesus does not in fact advocate that as a solution to sin; rather, he is using graphic language to teach what has been called the mortification of the flesh. It is possible that Jesus also employs hyperbole in verse 39. It teaches against avenging oneself of personal insults and wrongs, and does not constitute a welcome of abuse. Both Jesus and Paul give evidence to this understanding:

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together.

¹ Loraine Boettner, *The Christian Attitude Toward War*; Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1985; p. 18-19.

I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John 18:19-23)

Paul looked straight at the Sanhedrin and said, "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day." At this the high priest Ananias ordered those standing near Paul to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him, "God will strike you, you whitewashed wall! You sit there to judge me according to the law, yet you yourself violate the law by commanding that I be struck!" (Acts 23:1-3)

They did not "turn the other cheek," but criticized the wrongful violence used against them. Thus the Sermon on the Mount does not teach that one must always show no reaction under unjust treatment.

Moreover, Matthew 5:39 applies to personal injustice, and does not forbid military action, capital punishment, or self-defense. But the verse is often used to forbid these other things rather than to encourage patience when one suffers personal insults and wrongs. As Boettner explains, "If we are truly Christian, we will live unselfish lives, not always seeking to vindicate our own petty dignity, but returning good for evil...A reasonable amount of patience on our part, together with the manifestation of a good motive, will go a long way toward smoothing over difficulties."² This is the verse's intended meaning. It does not exclude the use of physical force for reasons of retributive justice, national security, and so on.

John the Baptist "went into all the country around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (Luke 3:3). Some soldiers asked him, "And what should we do?" John knew that Roman soldiers fought wars and killed people, and if there was ever an opportunity to speak against military service, this would be it. But he answered, "Don't extort money and don't accuse people falsely – be content with your pay" (v. 14). He warned them about the temptations that they frequently faced, but he did not speak against their profession, and he did not call them murderers or any such thing.

The pacifist often uses the sixth commandment to condemn all wars: "Thou shalt not kill" (Exodus 20:13, KJV). The translation of the Hebrew word *rasah* (or *ratsach*) as "kill" has been the reason for much confusion on warfare, capital punishment, and self-defense. The NIV correctly states the commandment as, "You shall not murder." It is "a more precise reading than the too-general KJV 'thou shalt not kill.'"³

² Ibid., p. 20.

³ R. Laird Harris, editor, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, Vol. 2; Chicago: Moody Press, 1980; p. 860.

Murder is the deliberate termination of a human life without biblical justification. This justification is a reason derived from the Bible that establishes the killing as morally acceptable or even necessary according to God's command. If to kill a person requires such a justification in the mind of the one who kills, then murder is not only a physical act, but it is as much intellectual as it is physical. This is consistent with Matthew 5:22 and 1 John 3:15⁴ -- one who strikes with an unjustified intent to kill is a murderer in God's sight even if the victim survives.⁵ In fact, God regards him as a murderer even if he does not strike at all.

There are those who wish to think that the commandment defines all intentional killing of human beings as murder. However, if they seize on the words of the commandment alone and refuse to allow the rest of the Bible to define what the commandment means, then the verse could condemn even the killing of vegetables and bacteria, since it does not exclude anything in its wording. Just by being alive, these people continuously kill bacteria, viruses, and such things, and they kill vegetables and perhaps even animals for food. Therefore, those who refuse to allow other parts of the Bible to define the meaning of this commandment condemn themselves as murderers. By their standard, they commit murder themselves, but they dictate to others as to what they are allowed to murder. They seize on several words in the Bible to advance their self-righteous prejudice, but it backfires on them. The Bible clearly narrows the definition of murder, so that it does not refer to the killing of anything for any reason.

God permits the slaughter of animals for food: "The fear and dread of you will fall upon all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air, upon every creature that moves along the ground, and upon all the fish of the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything" (Genesis 9:2-3).⁶ Therefore, it is not murder to kill an animal. It is still not murder to kill an animal that belongs to another person without his permission, but it would be theft. God provides instructions for the treatment of animals and warns against abuse, and Proverbs 12:10 says, "A righteous man cares for the needs of his animal." Nevertheless, a righteous man may kill his livestock to put food on the table, and he has not committed murder.

Then, God restricts the definition of murder to the killing of human beings, because he made them in his own image: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man" (Genesis 9:6). The verse institutes capital punishment as the appropriate compensation for murder, but the execution itself is not murder. By the same principle, not all wars involve murder, since some wars are divinely sanctioned, either by special revelation or biblical precepts.

⁴ "But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell" (Matthew 5:22). "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him" (1 John 3:15).

⁵ One who accidentally kills another is held accountable, but it is not the same as murder. See Numbers 35:10-15.

⁶ The expression "everything that lives and moves" does not include human beings, but refers to "all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air...all the fish of the sea."

Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture. Any passage should be understood in the light of the whole scope of divine revelation – never out of context, and often not only within its immediate context. In any case, the same people who distort the commandment on murder often refuse to acknowledge the Bible's condemnation against homosexuality, materialism, divination, and non-Christian religions, but they think that they occupy the moral high ground when it comes to murder. They are self-righteous hypocrites.

Prior to his arrest, Jesus instructed his disciples: "Then Jesus asked them, 'When I sent you without purse, bag or sandals, did you lack anything?' 'Nothing,' they answered. He said to them, 'But now if you have a purse, take it, and also a bag; and if you don't have a sword, sell your cloak and buy one'" (Luke 22:35-36). Some pacifists claim that the sword refers to "the sword of the Spirit" (Ephesians 6:17), but the purse, bag, cloak, and sandals are not figurative, and there is no reason to believe that the sword is figurative. In fact, the interpretation is impossible because one cannot sell a cloak for money to buy the sword of the Spirit. Likewise, contrary to another absurd claim, the sword does not represent an aggressive spiritual attitude, since one cannot sell a cloak for money to buy an attitude.

Jesus clearly told his disciples to buy weapons for self-defense. He would soon leave them, and so he instructed them to obtain tools for self-preservation, such as sandals and swords. God permits us to acquire tools, including weapons, to ensure our own safety and welfare, although this freedom is probably regulated and restricted by the laws of the land.

As Jesus was betrayed and arrested, Peter⁷ struck with his sword and wounded one of the men: "While he was still speaking a crowd came up, and the man who was called Judas, one of the Twelve, was leading them. He approached Jesus to kiss him, but Jesus asked him, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?' When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, 'Lord, should we strike with our swords?' And one of them struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. But Jesus answered, 'No more of this!' And he touched the man's ear and healed him" (Luke 22:47-51).

Pacifists object that Jesus stopped the disciples, and healed the one already wounded by Peter. Matthew's account adds, "'Put your sword back in its place,' Jesus said to him, 'for all who draw the sword will die by the sword'" (Matthew 26:52). We agree that Jesus did not want the disciples to defend him in this instance, but the passage cannot show that he opposed the use of weapons in self-defense. He was the one who told the disciples to buy swords, and then we read, "The disciples said, 'See, Lord, here are two swords.' 'That is enough,' he replied" (Luke 22:38). One interpretation claims that Jesus cried, "That is enough!" – that is, to express frustration that the disciples misunderstood him when he was in fact referring to the sword of the Spirit. Again, this interpretation is false, because he told the disciples to sell their cloaks to buy swords, but the sword of the Spirit is not purchased with money.

He said, "All who draw the sword will die by the sword." The statement came in the form of a proverb, which affects the intended sense and usage, but we can answer the pacifist

⁷ See John 18:10.

interpretation without exploiting this fact. First, if it is meant to be a universal prohibition against violence, even in self-defense, then he could have instructed the disciples to dispose of their swords, but he did not. Then, he said, "Put your sword back in its place" (Matthew 26:52), rather than to discard it. If he did not want the disciples to own and use weapons, this would be another lost opportunity to tell them.

Finally, the obvious reason that Jesus restrained the disciples is recorded in John's account: "Jesus commanded Peter, 'Put your sword away! Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?'" (John 18:11). He had been telling the disciples about the things that he must suffer (Matthew 16:21), and this was one situation where injustice was not to be resisted: "Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me?" He was supposed to suffer for our sake. He was the one arrested, and it was up to him to give up himself so that we could be saved. Pacifists overlook the very sacrifice of Christ in order to advance their own self-righteous interpretation. This sin is worse than murder.

Another popular objection against physical force is the command to "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39). We have seen that the definitions of terms are crucial, and the pacifist definition of murder is unbiblical and ridiculous. The pacifist definition of love is also false. Scripture must interpret Scripture, so that what is stated in one part of the Bible must be defined and illustrated by other parts of the Bible.

First, the use of force and the command of love are not mutually exclusive. We have seen what the Old Testament says about war, but it is the same Old Testament that issues the command of love: "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:18). Therefore, we reject the view that the Old Testament teaches a "law ethic" that is superseded by a New Testament "love ethic." The Bible is one book, and teaches one view of law and love. Both Testaments declare the same command of love, and assumes the same definition of love.

Romans 13:10 offers a definition of love: "Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law."⁸ Love does not abolish God's law, but fulfills it. Love performs what the law commands. Galatians 5:14 says that love is a summary of the law, and not a replacement: "The entire law is summed up in a single command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" A summary that summarizes nothing is meaningless. Since the summary refers to what it summarizes, then what is summarized must remain; otherwise, the summary would refer to nothing, and would be nothing. Therefore, the meaning of love depends on the law of God.

There is the teaching that if one walks in love, he will not need to consciously obey the Ten Commandments. One who loves another will not murder him, steal from him, lie to him, and so on. However, if there are no commandments against these things, it is impossible to know that love would not do these things. Millions of people have committed the sins of murder, adultery, homosexuality, theft, and perjury in the name of "love," but that is not the Bible's idea of love. "Love" by itself is without content, and remains undefined. God defines love by his commandments.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 13 contains a description of love, not a definition.

Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command" (John 14:15). To walk in love is to obey God's laws, including the Ten Commandments. As Ezekiel prophesied, "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and *move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws*" (Ezekiel 36:26-27). The Christian is not free from God's laws, but he has received the desire and ability to obey them.

In the place where the Bible says, "Love does no harm to its neighbor" (Romans 13:10), it also says that God has ordained that the law official should punish the wrongdoer by the sword: "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" (v. 4). Pacifists impose their own definition of love on the Bible, so that it cannot accommodate verse 4, and it must pervert the meaning of verse 10. It is pointless to consult a text if we refuse to allow it to define its own terms. If we allow the Bible to define love for itself, then there is no contradiction. It teaches that the command of love does not always exclude the use of force.

This difference in the definition of love fuels numerous conflicts between Christians and non-Christians. Some non-Christians would impose their unbiblical definition on the command of love, and then attempt to manipulate Christians with it. Their notion of love forbids words and actions that they find offensive, and so Christians who condemn their sins are regarded as unloving. However, Christians are obligated to love only as the Bible defines the term. If we walk in love, we will speak the truth (Ephesians 4:15). As the Bible says, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them" (Ephesians 5:11).

If the non-Christians wish to hold us accountable to a command in the Bible, then they cannot complain when we uphold all the commands in the Bible as we condemn adultery, homosexuality, abortion, covetousness, dishonesty, drunkenness, all non-Christian beliefs and religions, and many other things. The Bible says, "God is love" (1 John 4:8), and the same God sends non-Christians to hell (Matthew 10:28). Thus the Bible's idea of love is consistent with truth, justice, and hellfire.

Of course, non-Christian pacifists do not care what the Bible says; rather, they favor an ideological principle that has not been scrutinized, but that has been taught to them. They are like those who say, "I will think for myself – I will not let anyone tell me what to believe," when this very principle came from their parents and teachers. In effect, they only refuse to hear from God, but they remain susceptible to all kinds of influences from their culture. They believe that they are independent thinkers, but they are just pawns, and total morons.

The non-Christian teachers tell them, in effect, "Do not let anyone tell you what to think – think for yourselves. And in this lecture, I will tell you exactly what you must think when you think for yourselves." Students who dare to oppose evolution, homosexuality, abortion, and other non-Christian dogmas discover that the teachers do not want them to be independent at all, not even a little bit. It is a sham. It is a cult: "You are free to go, but

don't you dare leave." In contrast, we do not stupidly boast about independent thinking, but we realize that it is necessary to submit to a first principle or ultimate authority. The issue is which principle or authority offers the truth. Men will either submit their thoughts to God and gain the very mind of Christ, or they will become ensnared to the deceptions of Satan, wallowing in absurd theories and lies, all the while thinking that they are intellectual pioneers and heroes.