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THE BAPTIST HERITAGE

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AUGUST 20, 2001

Leaning on a broken reed

Biblical Christianity has an immensely different nature from the brand promoted in most churches (Baptist and otherwise) in 2001. The message most popular is a tainted, denatured, eviscerated, saccharine-sprinkled mixture of secular philosophy, worldly foolishness, and human sentimentality blended with secular pop-psychology, sensual, worldly music, and sanitized occult practices. Should my reader doubt the accuracy of this assertion, I suggest he or she might visit the local apparition of the Typical Alleged Christian Bookstore and, while suffering through the background of alleged music, browse (I do not suggest that anyone purchase the book.) a copy of The Prayer of Jabez. This most popular book in America (on the date this is written) purports to be a prayer that when repeated several times a day will result in a marvelous, miraculous, mystical transformation. That premise

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this and that

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We have discovered that our mailing list has been corrupted. In order to meet the USPS requirements for mailing, we are required to have CASS certification. We have used a firm to prepare the labels so that these standards are met. Somehow names have been deleted, duplications have appeared, and additions have not been made.

I have no way to know whether or not you have been affected. If you have, I apologize and hope to have the mess fixed.

This publication is mailed to you on purpose. Someone who knows you believed that you would profit by receiving and reading it. If you do not agree, we will remove your name from the next possible mailing. We have no desire to intrude or offend.

It always amazes me that anyone would read our work and I am greatly honored that you allow us to send this publication to you each month. There is no subscription charge and no solicitation for funds. Our mailing list is

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this and that

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not shared or sold and is used solely for the purpose of sending this publication and nothing else.

If there are issues that you have missed and would like them, we will be glad to send them.

If you have requested to have your name removed and it was not, this is not intentional and I also apologize.

If you have requested us to send The Baptist Heritage to someone, I hope they have been receiving it.

For the future, we believe we have a system now in place that will prevent such an occurrence ever happening again.

—Pastor Manley

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*LEANING ON A BROKEN REED**(Continued from page 17)*

double-mindedness and “tossed to and fro” spirituality that results in being carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. The friendship of the world is enmity with God. Enmity is hostility even open warfare. Darkness and light cannot abide together. The wisdom of this world cannot find God nor please Him. James described it well: (3:15) This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. The counsel of this world cannot be sanctified, for it is unholy. One cannot set apart for holy purposes an unholy thing.

The prophet recorded the warning long centuries ago.

Isaiah 5:20 Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! 21 Woe unto *them that are wise in their own eyes, and prudent in their own sight!*

The songwriter phrased it correctly.

“The arm of flesh will fail you;
ye dare not trust your own.”

Christians today in large numbers are most obviously leaning on the flimsy, splintering reeds of Egypt and the unavoidable breakings and the inevitable piercings are certain to come.

—Pastor Manley

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acknowledgment appreciated.

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(the entire substance of the book) is fully compatible with and discerningly identifiable as occult teaching cast in Christianized terminology, but which remains completely contrary to biblical Christianity. It smells of magical incantations, pagan superstition, and occult conjuration. It is not an exposition of biblical Christianity.

One might as well employ a Tibetan prayer wheel whirling in the unceasing Himalayan winds as to recite mechanically any connected collection of words—including those of Scriptural origin. The next logical (from a worldly, mercenary view) level of spiritually perverted invention would be for some enterprising pseudo-evangelical entrepreneur to promote, from the back of his Christianized alternative medicine internet-wagon, an “endless” tape and a pocket-angel recorder so each ‘believer’ may need to exert the physical effort to record the words only once and yet have the ability to re-play them at spiritual will, with un-taxing physical ease. If this idea reaches the mind of one of the current P. T. Barnum-ites infesting contemporary Christian music, then, he/she will cleverly offer her/his CD’s and tapes with the ‘prayer’ backwardly masked to provide the highest “benefit” of subliminal super-spirituality while the flesh is stroked and well-fed by his/her latest ‘hit.’ All of this would have great appeal for those desiring to attain the effortless spirituality of Balaam and the costless worship of Cain.

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The idea would be an unprecedented money-making endeavor because this generation of Christians has no intention of exerting the effort required to put on the whole armor of God and to enter the field of battle where the believer must actually, individually, up close, and personally wrestle against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, and against spiritual wickedness in high places. "I'm on the battlefield for my Lord" is not the most chosen theme song. No longer is there a need to take the whole armor of God, that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand, because, according to this tome, we have a magical incantation that will scatter the enemy and achieve greatness while we relax in our favorite chair, letting our subconscious do the work. Nor, possessing this secret, must we stand opposing the enemy with loins girt about with truth, having on the breastplate of righteousness, with feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, holding the shield of faith, quenching the fiery darts of the wicked, while looking through the helmet of salvation, lugging along the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. The Christian soldier has become the cautious diplomat. Effortless Christianity has arrived.

The contemporary pulpit has so long and so well advanced "a pedestaled ego, a pampered flesh, and a pleased soul" variety of Christianity that eats,

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bellest against me? 6 Lo, thou trustest in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; whereon if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it: so is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all that trust in him.

Much later Ezekiel touched upon a similar description of Egyptian help.

Ezekiel 29 6 And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I *am* the LORD, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel. 7 When they took hold of thee by thy hand, thou didst break, and rend all their shoulder: and when they leaned upon thee, thou brakest, and madest all their loins to be at a stand.

Egypt is used consistently in the Scriptures for a picture of the world. When the people of God rely on the strength and wisdom of world, they are leaning on a reed that will break. When that reed breaks (and it always will), it will not only pierce the hand of the one leaning on it, it will disjoint the shoulder, and sprain the back.

There is no spiritual strength in Egyptian methods and no spiritual wisdom in Egyptian philosophy. There is no value in Egyptian scholarship. There is no merit in Egyptian advice. To utilize Egypt for suggestions and guidance as to how best to serve the LORD, build a church, conduct married life, accumulate wealth, rear a family, translate a text or determine its authority, understand a passage, preach a sermon, or reach a generation is foolishness that will invite destruction. That practice is the sad but ideal example of

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their hearts and studied the blessed Book to prepare their sermons, the present crop buy outline books, subscribe to sermon services and use video tapes of "The Beverly Hillbillies" and "Mayberry" to provide texts for messages and dialogues. Though the Puritans preached for three hours and their congregations would rather stay for a second sermon than go home, the modern preacher feels comfortable in covering the whole council of God in fifteen minutes, twelve of which are extra-biblical illustrations. In most churches, there is a famine of the hearing of the word of God---by choice. Excitement, entertainment, and invention have replaced exposition.

The average preacher today is using the compass of the world to steer the course of his ministry. Many will candidly admit that they must "give the people what they want." One day, that preacher will give an account for why he did not give the people what they needed and what God has said they must hear.

Centuries ago, Assyria launched a war against Hezekiah. Rabshakeh was sent by Sennacherib to deliver an ultimatum. Though by no means a godly man, Rabshakeh offered sound advice to the men of Judah.

Isaiah 36 4 And Rabshakeh said unto them, Say ye now to Hezekiah, Thus saith the great king, the king of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest? I say, sayest thou, (but they are but vain words) I have counsel and strength for war: now on whom dost thou trust, that thou re-

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drinks, and makes merry, that the pews are swelled with bloated backsliders and deceived pagans. Disciplined disciples are as rare as spiritual saints, believing believers, or a Baptist who knows two Baptist distinctives. The questions on the hearts of the average church members have nothing whatsoever to do with serving the LORD. The thoughts of their hearts and the conversations of their mouths are the same as those of the crowd in the nightclubs, taverns, and social gatherings: namely--politics, sports, television programs, hit movies, best-selling books, changing interest rates, the stock market, good vacation spots, and (Karl Marx's proposal) retirement.

Among believers, the most interest implied in questions is knowing "how close can I live to the world and still have the blessing of God?" The number asking, "what must I do to live closer to the LORD?" decreases annually. "Do I have to give up (some bad habit or activity)?" is asked far more frequently than "What can I give up to have more time to serve my LORD better?" Christians spend more time watching sports than they do in reading their Bibles. Those who claim they simply cannot memorize Scripture easily rattle off the league standings of their favorite team and throw in the starting line-up without hesitation.

The average Christian considers Christianity to be on the same level as any other optional pastime in his/her life. It is measured in terms of convenience; it

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*LEANING ON A BROKEN REED**(Continued from page 5)*

is no longer a life, a vocation, and it cannot be allowed to interfere with either the leisure time or the chosen career. Relocation plans and dreams for the future are made exactly as old Lot made his. The man raised by godly Abraham chose to move where the grass was greener so he could have a good income giving him and his family a pleasant life. He did not place the spiritual needs of his family on his priorities list; but he sought to meet the material needs first and later, social acceptance became a necessity. In choosing where to live, he probably said to Abraham, even as I have often heard, "We will surely find a good church there and if not we can still serve the LORD."

Strangely, I had a call this very night regarding a husband and wife who, over twenty years ago, made such a decision as did Lot over twenty years ago, leaving a sound church and moving for a better job. Their two children are now grown and are ungodly. They themselves have been out of church since shortly after the move and have lives that reflect a television soap opera. Now, as they have come to see the shortness of life, he realizes the price he has paid is terrible. He is now concerned that his home is in danger of destruction. He is burdened that his sons will die and spend eternity in hell. His aged mother is nearing death and he realizes that he has never witnessed to her and has no life testimony to give his witness credibility. In his words, he is praying for miracles. His burden is twenty

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"he draws a crowd," sail up Willow Creek because "they are hot," read books on salesmanship because "we are in the business of selling Jesus," adopt the Purpose Driven Church as the manual of arms—and preach prayer imagery, creative speech, and whatever comes up the hill tomorrow. Why? They are superstitious and desperate for an easy solution.

So are the folks in the pews. If they can find someone who will promise to solve family problems, make the marriage one long honeymoon, guarantee financial freedom, or grant a wonderful retirement, they will drive hundreds of miles or pay bushels of money. They too are superstitious and desperate for an easy solution.

The old Book of God has been replaced by the new volumes of men and demons. I say demons because some of the contemporary writers speak of "receiving" their books. Since their writings are in conflict with the written word of God, I have no hesitation in saying that the message "received" was not from the Holy Spirit. Churches use advertising modeled after the world, enlistment tactics patterned after the world, and literature based upon the world. The godly writers of the past centuries have been replaced by the carnal appeasers with the shallow, trite, drivel of their new age novels.

Whereas an earlier generation of preachers read Flavel, Owens, Baxter, Boston, Spurgeon to stimulate

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*LEANING ON A BROKEN REED**(Continued from page 13)*

hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.

These pagans devoted their time to the discovery of something new. The Apostle defined their problem as superstition. No other word could better describe the current climate of Christianity. Preachers are in a lather running from one conference to the next seminar lusting for the easiest way to increase the attendance and income of his church. Christians run after the latest guru offering the newest secret discovery offering guaranteed success in the least number of steps possible. The thesaurus provides as a synonym for "fad" the word "cult." One of the marks of a cult is the transference of allegiance from the Bible to the leader. Certainly, the leader quotes Scripture—Satan himself is a fine repeater of Scripture, but he always wrests the passage from its context and twisting it, makes a square peg to fit the round hole. Christian, if you have the habit of pilgrimages to a particular leader, the practice of finding yourself often quoting a man or his interpretation of Scripture, or the routine of patterning your life on a formula sold (dollars changed hands) to you and which you are honor-bound not to share with others, then you have succumbed to the beguilement of a cult.

Modern preachers and Christians are always on the prowl for some new thing to improve their spiritual life. Preachers race to the Glass Cathedral because

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years too late. Lot found his last minute concern made him seem as a mad man to his lost family. I pray this home will be salvaged; but even if she stays, the home is severely damaged. I pray his two sons and their families will be saved; but they too now have enormous baggage to bear. I pray for his aged mother; but if she is to be saved, it must be soon, because her days are few. I pray for this man that I saw saved all those years ago and who made such a wrong decision; but what guilt his very words convey and what peace his choices have cost him. However, how different his prayers and mine would be today if he had listened those twenty plus years ago to sound counsel and stayed in the house of God. His story is not as much of an exception as I would that it were. There are multitudes of Lots in America today. They have vexed their righteous souls and lost their families because they reversed the command of the Lord Jesus to seek the kingdom of heaven before food and clothing.

Understand that I am not writing regarding professing Christians from churches affiliated with the National Council of Churches, where the inspiration, the infallibility, and the inerrancy of Scripture is not even given lip service. Nor do I write of folks deceived by cults and charismatic centers. I do not even include liberal Baptist churches where the Gospel was transmuted into a social adjustment a century ago. All those groups have moved into apostasy; they have

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*LEANING ON A BROKEN REED**(Continued from page 7)*

long since departed from the faith. I am writing regarding Christians from those churches, most of them Baptist, that lay some claim to be Bible based, Bible honoring, Bible believing churches. (Actually, even most of these churches now advertise themselves as "need filling," rather than as Bible preaching. I wait for the day some church honestly calls itself the Smorgasbord Baptist Church.)

The pulpits in many churches have well prepared their congregations for such a book and the floodtide of other materials promoting the occult and paganism. There is no necessity of the believer (in the modern preaching) to be found praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints, because, as this book suggests, we may learn a prayer whose mere repetition compels heaven to perform our bidding. We, according to the current book, have access to a formula that guarantees success and unbridled joy. (All the while, poor old Jabez will never receive a single royalty check for someone selling his marvelous composition for great gain.) How any true believer can be suckered into accepting the false premise of this popular folly can only be explained by the wiles of the devil using the biblical ignorance of fad-following Christianity.

No repetition of any words will effect a spiritual change that is godly. Note that I do not deny that

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The lust of the pagan has been invited into the sanctity of the church (again I reference churches that have historically stood for the word of God). The Apostle Paul found this pagan lust in Athens while he waited for Silas and Timothy to join him.

Acts 17 16 Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was stirred in him, when he saw the city wholly given to idolatry. *17* Therefore disputed he in the synagogue with the Jews, and with the devout persons, and in the market daily with them that met with him. *18* Then certain philosophers of the Epicureans, and of the Stoicks, encountered him. And some said, What will this babler say? other some, He seemeth to be a setter forth of strange gods: because he preached unto them Jesus, and the resurrection. *19* And they took him, and brought him unto Areopagus, saying, May we know what this new doctrine, whereof thou speakest, is? *20* For thou bringest certain strange things to our ears: we would know therefore what these things mean. *21* (For all the Athenians and strangers which were there spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing.) *22* Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars'

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*LEANING ON A BROKEN REED**(Continued from page 11)*

cited. The expositor has been replaced with an entertainer.

The sad truth is that too many preachers are not depending on either the word of God or the Holy Ghost to produce results. These preachers have sought and have purchased that which Simon the sorcerer only tried to buy—the “power” of the Holy Ghost. However, they do not understand that the “spirit” with which they are dealing is “another spirit” and they are, in fact, preaching “another gospel.”

Sermons and services are psychologically programmed for results. It is not so strange that a certain children’s program can predict the number of “results” that its workers will (or should) produce given a set of numbers in attendance. It is worthy of note that certain “evangelistic efforts” can forecast the number of decisions a crusade will have based on estimated attendance. Certain promotional programs are issued with a “guarantee” that if the program is followed exactly that a specified outcome will follow. All of these activities are built on human psychological and salesmanship techniques—not even one is predicated on the work of the Holy Ghost. No man, no program, no technique, and no prayer can harness the Spirit of God and compel Him to perform on demand or in a specified way. That thought, even expressed in ignorance, is blasphemous.

We are in the age of The Athenian Christian.

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a spiritual change will be effected; I do assert that the change will not, for it cannot, be godly. It may result in a self-hypnotic euphoria or a psychological adjustment. It may just as well create an environment for demonic oppression or possession. The repetition of words has no godly spiritual power. Scripture, by direct precept or indirect example, never suggests such a foolish conception. The Lord Jesus rebuke the Pharisees for their vain repetition and their much speaking. Scripture firmly condemns the very thought of a prayer possessing “power.” Had this ecumenist writer used the biblical ending to the “prayer” (that he has prayed for thirty years), “in the name of the Lord Jesus,” I assure you that it would not be on “the top of the chart.”

While this latest adventure in cunningly devised fables is before us, may I call attention to the fact that the thrust of the conclusion of the book would be completely changed if the King James Version had been used instead of the NEW King James Version? While good men continue to assure me that not “a single important doctrine is affected or endangered” by the use of these revised translations, I continue to be wary when I repeatedly find such modifications as this. It seems highly revealing that an altered sentence must be formed before the ‘prayer’ has modern appeal. “That it might not grieve me” is adjusted to “that I might not hurt others.” Much more than a sim-

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*LEANING ON A BROKEN REED**(Continued from page 9)*

ple “updating of the language” has taken place to replace the “not grieve me” of Jabez with the “not hurt others” of this conjuring prayer. This NEW is indeed more pleasing to the itching ears of this “feel-good” generation of Christians. Itching ears, if the truth be taught, do not need a gentle scratching; they need an old-fashioned thumping. It is true, however, that the practice of thumping such ears will not cause a book to approach, let alone lodge on, the ‘best-sellers’ list. Only Christian fiction writers of romance novels or end-time tales dwell there.

The pulpit has so diluted the message of the Gospel and embellished the word of God that the pew has neither the firm anchor to withstand the storms of life nor the armor to repel the attack of the enemy. There has been so little of the word of God preached in recent decades that many simply have no basis on which to judge or to discern the biblical basis of any thing that they read. The current trend to flash the text on a screen is a brazen thief. The sitter in the pew is not orientated to the Book of God; a Book he/she may hold in her/his hand and read for one’s own self. No one is expected even carry a Bible to such a church. The attendees in such a church are deprived of the training to read the Scriptures without the benefit of clergy present, of the experience in finding the Scripture for his/ her self, and of the privilege of making notes in his/her Bible for later recall. The next genera-

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tion of believers will remain unfamiliar with their own Bible, unable to use it for personal spiritual growth, and unequipped to fend the fiery darts of the wicked one.

“But,” one says, “seekers (that is the new politically correct term for sinners) do not bring a Bible to church.” Then I suggest that the church provide pew Bibles and the preacher train the members to bring theirs so the “seeker” will know where to do his/her seeking. “But,” says another, “it takes too long for the “seeker” to find the text.” If a preacher cannot wait for the slowest text finder in his congregation to find the passage or if the congregation cannot wait for that slowest person—adult or child—to have the text, then I am bold to say that the preacher and the congregation are self-centered servants of their bellies, schedules, or lusts. Nothing is more important in any message than that the word of God be seen, read, and applied with understanding. Perhaps the preacher could drop a joke or two from the message and give that time to page turning. Perhaps the preacher could provide the page number in the pew Bible where his text is to be found. Even better, the preacher should learn how to give directions as to how to find the text. The actual truth is that most of the sermons preached in these “seeker-friendly” organizations do not have enough Scripture in them to move the dust even if someone brought a Bible and found every passage

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