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THE REVIEW

“Come Now, and Let Us Reason Together”

By Pastor Mark Strangman, Moderator IBFNA

“Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18).

As I sit down to write this article concerning this amazing glimpse into the mind and compassion of Almighty God, two distinct things occur to me. The first is that we are only five and a half weeks from being together for our annual summer conference. Brother Jim Brown and the good folks from Vernon Forest Baptist Church have been faithfully working and preparing everything for an unforgettable time of great preaching and precious fellowship. “The Just Shall Live by Faith” is our theme, and Hebrews 11 is our Biblical framework for this year's gathering. I am looking forward to seeing you there, June 18-20, and to enjoying the wonderful Piedmont area of North Carolina together.

The second is that this will be my last official article as Moderator of the IBFNA, 2020-2024. This has been a wonderful experience of both leading and learning. I trust that I have faithfully served the Lord in this role and have also served the IBFNA and each of you. It has been a joy to minister alongside my fellow officers, Brother Greg Ward, Secretary, and Brother Vic Perry, Treasurer, as well as our faithful friend and Editor of this periodical, Brother Kevin Hobi. I must also mention that the faithful service of our sister, Donna Dear, has been an inspirational and motivational blessing to me, my fellow officers, and the entire Fellowship. All of you brethren in the IBFNA are so precious to me, and I have thoroughly enjoyed these last four years of service.

As I finish this term of service, I would like to reflect with you concerning the above verse, both its context and its intersection with our lives today. In his outline to the book of Isaiah, Dr. J. Vernon McGee titles the first chapter, “The Solemn Call to the Universe to Come Into the Courtroom to Hear God's Charge Against the Nation Israel.” Chapter 1 serves as an introductory summary statement of the content of the entire book. In verses 1-8, the call is made to the heavens and to the earth to hear God's statement of accusation against His beloved nation. But as we see sprinkled throughout each of the sixty-six chapters, there is always a message of hope. Verse 9 promises a remnant, verses 16-17 promise a



INSIDE PAGES

3 GETTING IT
RIGHT

5 CHURCH'S
SEPARATENESS

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way of cleansing, and the chapter ends with the promised redemption of the city of Jerusalem in verses 26-31.

This serves to remind us that God has not forgotten or forsaken His beloved nation of Israel and the Jewish people. History is replete with situations and events of hatred towards Israel as a nation and antisemitism against His chosen people. It was 6 years ago that, less than 2 miles away from my home and church, the Tree of Life Synagogue in our neighboring community of Squirrel Hill was victim to a horrific shooting spree.

Many of our Christian brethren have accepted the false teaching of replacement theology, believing that God has set aside His love and plan for the nation of Israel. But He has not! The book of Isaiah gives us such hope in the promises of our great God. He will provide the way for her, and one day she will see her blessed Messiah return to save her and embrace her "as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings" (Luke 13:34).

In verse 18 we have a message from the Lord that can be overlooked or not fully understood. He asks the accused to "reason together" with Him. The Hebrew word translated *reason together* means *to come to a right decision by together achieving an understanding*. It is an invitation from the Lord to His people to understand what He will do, to accept it, and to apply it to themselves.

He will provide a means of completely cleansing their sins. Their red-stained sins will be washed and purified white as snow. This is the preview to what the Lord will accomplish through His Messiah, the Suffering Servant of chapters 52-53. He sets forth many other additional applications of this principle as we see the ministry of the Messiah and His rule over all the nations of the earth in the following chapters. God promises a great future for His beloved nation.

In addition to these wonderful truths, there is an underlying truth which we can see through this blessed promise of the Lord. In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul makes the case for a drastic difference between the earthly, temporal wisdom of man and the supreme wisdom of the Lord. He emphasizes this by distinguishing between man's wisdom, which is foolishness to God, and God's wisdom, which is foolishness to man. It is not difficult to see the drastic difference between the two and how the Lord makes it clear which one is preferred.

Having stated that truth, take a moment and consider the almost absurd concept of the Lord sitting down with man and reasoning together with him. This is a situation that is reserved for peers and equals of intellect and standing. God is so immeasurably above His creation that the very notion is difficult to comprehend.

But God invites us to reason with Him. This is only possible in light of the end of verse 18 – the complete answer for our sin. This is what the Lord achieved for you through His beloved Son, and this is what He invites you to do every time you open His Word and read. What an amazing privilege it is to be able to understand the mind of the Lord by reasoning with Him through His Word. It really brings Prov. 3:5-6 into a greater light of understanding and application:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

I trust that you have a regular time to "reason together" with the Lord. Perhaps understanding this truth will give you an even greater blessing as you open His Word and understand His will for your life.

Looking forward to seeing you all in North Carolina at the conference. For more information on the conference, see the details on page 7 of the *Review*.

May God richly bless the IBFNA.

Book Review: *Getting It Right* by Bob Payne

Brother Paul Gustine

Editor's note: What follows is a book review of Brother Bob Payne's Getting It Right: A Call for Contextual Accuracy and Precision in Interpreting the Word of God (North Fort Myers, FL: Faithful Life Publishers, 2023). Dr. Payne is Pastor of The Baptist Church of Danbury, CT. He will be teaching on "The Accuracy of the Old Testament" in Egypt this summer.

This book is a concise, clear, readable, fundamental study essential to a believer standing for the truth of the Word of God. One must know what the Word teaches. This is a plea for the normal hermeneutic to be consistently applied. The student of the Word must be dependent on the Holy Spirit and humbly seek to rightly divide the Word (2 Tim. 2:15).

There are three elements to the one biblical hermeneutic (as taught by the late Dr. Clay Nuttall). It takes effort to discover the grammatical information in a text. Then the text must be integrated with the historical context of the passage. And finally, the passage needs to be understood in the context of the book of the Bible. This is how one should arrive at his theology. Doing so will make him a dispensationalist:

Dispensationalism is not the basis of my hermeneutic. It is the result of the one Biblical hermeneutic. If one approaches the scriptures with a consistently normal hermeneutic, he will by all means end up as a dispensationalist (3-4).

Consistency in applying the one Biblical hermeneutic allows Baptists to advance beyond reformed theology. On this point Bob Payne cites a book by Andy Woods, *Ever Reforming: Dispensational Theology and the Completion of the Protestant Reformation* (although he cautions wisely that the publisher, Dispensational Publishing House, Taos, NM, offers other books that are hyper-dispensational).

"The Reformation focused on some wonderful doctrines that all Bible believers can support, but unfortunately, it did not go far enough" (11). This point makes me think of the title of a much older book: *Baptists, The Only Thorough Religious Reformers* by John Quincy Adams (1876; reprint, Rochester, NY: Backus Book Publishers, 1980).

Getting It Right identifies some of the errors of reformed theology or covenant theology. "In Bible prophecy, the amillennialist interprets prophecies of Christ's first coming literally (since they were undeniably fulfilled that way), and yet interprets prophecies of His second coming figuratively" (13). Following the normal hermeneutic, one expects, for instance, that the prophecies of The Day of the Lord in the Old and New Testaments will be fulfilled literally.

This consistency is important today so that one not be wooed back into covenant theology and amillennialism by the writings coming from The Gospel Coalition (thegospelcoalition.org/article/why-i-changed-my-mind-about-the-millennium; by Sam Storms, January 9, 2013).

Payne charges: "The exaltation of human reasoning in hermeneutics glorifies man and leads to arrogance" (14). We need to strive for "the obvious, simple meaning of a biblical text" (14). Reformed theologians typically regard themselves as Christianity's intelligentsia. Dispensational fundamentalists are simpletons and dolts, combative and unloving. Payne has a great quote by George Houghton in the *Faith Pulpit* describing the character needed in those who stand militantly for Biblical truth. It is "an ethical, careful, kind and yet firm outspokenness which stands for the truth and is willing to defend it against error."

Payne warns against undue reliance upon historical theology. Just because an interpretation is old does not make it true. We must also

account for progressive revelation. "What is normative in our dispensation of Grace is not always normative in a former dispensation" (16). We must distinguish between Israel and the Church. This is at the heart of the difference between covenant theology and dispensationalism.

This naturally leads to identifying the confusion found in progressive dispensationalism. Progressive dispensationalism is a search for a mediating position between covenant theology and dispensationalism. He has wonderful quotes from Charles Ryrie, Robert Delnay, and Manfred Kober, presenting the errant theology of progressive dispensationalism. The root of the problem is the "complementary hermeneutic." "It is an admixture of a literal and a nonliteral interpretation of the scriptures" (24).

Chapter four deals with "pop eschatology," where "the newspaper becomes more important than the Bible, and prophetic scriptures are twisted and reshaped to fit into the mold of current events" (28). Chapter five corrects "erroneous teaching concerning the judgment seat of Christ" (32). If the Bema judgment is a rehearsal of unconfessed sins of a believer, then it is contrary "to the holiness of God and to the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ" (33; quoting J. Dwight Pentecost). Unconfessed sin is addressed by the Father with His children in this life, not later. The purpose of the Bema of Christ is rewards. "Faithful stewards will be rewarded, and unfaithful ones will experience loss of rewards (1 Cor. 3:10-15; 1 Cor. 4:2)" (35).

The remainder of the book is a serious inspection of Old Testament and New Testament passages that Bob Payne has picked from his pastoral and teaching experience. I guarantee that he will make you think. One study that he has done is significant to correct the error of hyper-dispensationalism (or ultradispensationalism), which was mentioned briefly earlier in the book. The text is Luke 17:20b-21, "the kingdom of God is within you." Bob Payne concludes:

So we see from an understanding of the background, grammar, and context of

this passage that Christ is neither teaching that the literal earthly kingdom has been abolished, nor that the kingdom that Christ offered was only a spiritual one. This passage simply tells the Pharisees that although the presence of the King in their midst made the earthly kingdom possible, the fact that they had rejected Him meant that there would be no earthly kingdom (which would be detectable by signs) at this time. It would be postponed until a later time (68).

Payne identifies the postponement in Matthew 12, resulting from the rejection of the testimony of who Jesus was. Thereafter, Jesus was no longer offering the kingdom to Israel, but was preparing for the cross.

This understanding is essential to reject one of the tenets of the hyper-dispensationalists. They contend that Peter in Acts was still offering the gospel of the kingdom to the Jews of Jerusalem. (*The Companion Bible*. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publishers, 1990. This is the work of E. W. Bullinger. See Appendices #140, #167, and #181 where Bullinger concludes: "The church did not begin at Pentecost as is so commonly taught and believed.")

Bob Payne also shows that by the normal hermeneutic the kingdom (in which Jesus is given the throne of his father David to reign over the House of Jacob forever; Luke 1:32-33) is not a spiritual one. This confronts the eschatology of reformed theology, which has no millennial reign of Christ. They affirm the literal return of the Lord Jesus Christ, a general resurrection, a general judgment, and the new heavens and the new earth, but not the millennial reign (*The Gospel Coalition, Foundation Documents, Confessional Statement, "XIII The Restoration of All Things"*).

Getting It Right has been produced attractively by Faithful Life Publishers. I encourage you to investigate the website for more resources. I am thankful to know both the author, Bob Payne, and the publisher, Jim Wendorf, because of the IBFNA. Their work is excellent.

The Separateness of the Church—Part One

J. Gresham Machen

Editor's note: What follows is Part One of a sermon preached in the chapel of Princeton Theological Seminary on Sunday, March 8, 1925.

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden underfoot of men” (Matt. 5:13). In these words our Lord established at the very beginning the distinctness and separateness of the Church. If the sharp distinction is ever broken down between the Church and the world, then the power of the Church is gone. The Church then becomes like salt that has lost its savor, and is fit only to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

It is a great principle, and there never has been a time in all the centuries of Christian history when it has not had to be taken to heart. The really serious attack upon Christianity has not been the attack carried on by fire and sword, by the threat of bonds or death, but it has been the more subtle attack that has been masked by friendly words; it has been not the attack from without but the attack from within. The enemy has done his deadliest work when he has come with words of love and compromise and peace.

And how persistent the attack has been! Never in the centuries of the Church's life has it been altogether relaxed; always there has been the deadly chemical process, by which, if it had been unchecked, the precious salt would have been merged with the insipidity of the world, and would have been thenceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and to be trodden under foot of men.

The process began at the very beginning, in the days when our Lord still walked the Galilean hills. There were many in those days who heard him gladly; he enjoyed at first the favor of the people. But in that favor he saw a deadly peril;

he would have nothing of a half-discipleship that meant the merging of the company of his disciples with the world. How ruthlessly he checked a sentimental enthusiasm! “Let the dead bury their dead,” he told the enthusiast who came eagerly to him but was not willing at once to forsake all. “One thing thou lackest,” he said to the rich young ruler, and the young man went sorrowfully away.

Truly Jesus did not make it easy to be a follower of him. “He that is not with me,” he said, “is against me.” “If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife and children, he cannot be my disciple.” How serious a thing it was in those days to stand for Christ!

And it was a serious thing not only in the sphere of conduct but also in the sphere of thought. There could be no greater mistake than to suppose that a man in those days could think as he liked and still be a follower of Jesus. On the contrary the offence lay just as much in the sphere of doctrine as in the sphere of life.

There were “hard sayings,” then as now, to be accepted by the disciples of Jesus, as well as hard commands. “I am the bread which came down from heaven,” said Jesus. It was indeed a hard saying. No wonder the Jews murmured at him. “Is not this Jesus,” they said, “the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?” “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”

Jesus did not make the thing easy for these murmurers. “Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.” At that many even of his disciples were offended. “This is a hard saying,” they said, “who can hear it?” And so they left him.

“From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him.” Many of them went back—but not all. “Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.” Thus was the precious salt preserved.

Then came the gathering clouds, and finally the Cross. In the hour of his agony they all left him and fled; apparently the movement that he had initiated was hopelessly dead. But such was not the will of God. The disciples were sifted, but there was still something left. Peter was forgiven; the disciples saw the risen Lord; the salt was still preserved.

One hundred and twenty persons were gathered in Jerusalem. It was not a large company; but salt, if it truly have its savor, can permeate the whole lump. The Spirit came in accordance with our Lord’s promise, and Peter preached the first sermon in the Christian Church.

It was hardly a concessive sermon. “Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” How unkind Peter was! But by that merciful unkindness they were pricked in their hearts, and three thousand souls were saved.

So there stood the first Christian Church in the midst a hostile world. At first sight it might have seemed to be a mere Jewish sect; the disciples continued to attend the temple services and to lead the life of Jews. But in reality that little company was as separate as if it had been shut off by desert wastes or the wide reaches of the sea; an invisible barrier, to be crossed only by the wonder of the new birth, separated the disciples of Jesus from the surrounding world.

“Of the rest,” we are told, “durst no man join himself to them.” “And fear came upon every soul.” So it will always be. When the disciples of Jesus are really faithful to their Lord, they inspire fear; even when Christians are despised

and persecuted and harried, they have sometimes made their persecutors secretly afraid.

It is not so, indeed, when there is compromise in the Christian camp; it is not so when those who minister in the name of Christ have—as was said in praise some time ago in my hearing of a group of ministers in our day—it is not so when those who minister in the name of Christ “have their ears to the ground.” But it will be so whenever Christians have their ears, not to the ground, but open only to the voice of God, and when they say simply, in the face of opposition or flattery, as Peter said, “We must obey God rather than men.”

But after those persecutions, there came in the early Church a time of peace—deadly, menacing, deceptive peace, a peace more dangerous by far than the bitterest war. Many of the sect of the Pharisees came into the Church—false brethren privily brought in. These were not true Christians, because they trusted in their own works for salvation, and no man can be a Christian who does that. They were not even true adherents of the old covenant; for the old covenant, despite the Law, was a preparation for the Saviour’s coming, and the Law was a schoolmaster unto Christ.

Yet they were Christians in name, and they tried to dominate the councils of the Church. It was a serious menace; for a moment it looked as though even Peter, true apostle though he was at heart, were being deceived. His principles were right, but by his actions his principles, at Antioch, for one fatal moment, were belied.

But it was not God’s will that the Church should perish; and the man of the hour was there. There was one man who would not consider consequences where a great principle was at stake, who put all personal considerations resolutely aside and refused to become unfaithful to Christ through any fear of “splitting the Church.” “When I saw that they walked not uprightly,” said Paul, “according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all...” Thus was the precious salt preserved.

2024 IBFNA Family Conference



Conference Theme: “The Just Shall Live by Faith”

Date: June 18-20, 2024

Host: Vernon Forest Baptist Church, Winston Salem, NC

Join us for an exposition of Hebrews 11 led by Dr. George Matzko and others.

Conference Schedule:

Tuesday, June 18:

- 8am Registration
- 9am Devotions – Greg Ward
- 9:45am Prayer
- 10am Break
- 10:15am Heb. 10:35-11:1 – Jim Brown
- 11:30am Lunch
- 1:30pm Heb. 11:2-7 – Jeff Briden
- 7:00pm Heb. 11:8-19 – Mike McCubbins

Wednesday, June 19:

- 9am Devotions – Greg Ward
- 9:45am Prayer
- 10:00am Break
- 10:15am The Heavens Declare the Glory of God – George Matzko
- 11:30am Break
- 11:45am Business Mtg
- 7:00pm The God of Creation – George Matzko

Thursday, June 20:

- 9am Devotions – Greg Ward
- 9:45am Prayer
- 10:15am Halfway Houses on the Road to Biblical Creation – George Matzko
- 11:30am Lunch
- 1:30pm Heb. 11:20-22 – Brian Bee
- 2:45pm Heb. 11:23-31 – Bob Thompson
- 4:00pm Heb. 11:32-40 – Mark Strangman

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