

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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GONE WITH THE WIND

Following is a critique of the movie "Gone With the Wind" as written in Dr. Gary North's newsletter entitled *Christian Reconstruction*: "The title of the movie makes it clear what the movie is about: the death of an older society and the birth of a new one. The power of the movie was that it told a story through a woman's transformation: from a pampered, scheming, self-centered adolescent who had no moral bearings to a hunger-driven, scheming, self-centered business woman who had no moral bearings. Scarlett had no faith in God at the beginning of the movie and no faith in God at the end. The church did not play a leadership role in the movie, (when has it ever played such a roll? HB). Redemption was to be found in the romantic affirmation of the soil which is an ancient anti-Christian theme. At any rate the movie was a story about social change and the dying of a culture only to be replaced with another culture that bore the seeds of death and would also some day be 'gone with the wind'."

It was not until the 60's that we witnessed a comparable revolution, not only in society but also in religion. The main players in this revolution were an indulgent generation of teens, starved in churches and spoon-fed by atheistic socialists in our educational institutions, in rebellion against "the system," using the war in Vietnam coupled with all forms of racism as a rallying point to destroy the existence of everything their parents deemed sacred. We are now seeing what they erected to put in the place of the system. It was the lyrics of folk songs and later rock songs that articulated most accurately the ideology of the new faith. Bob Dylan, perhaps the most prolific and poetic spokesman of that generation expressed it in these words: "He who gets hurt will be he who has stalled; the battle outside ragin' will soon shake your windows and rattle your walls, for the times they are a-changin'." And the times have changed and the ways we once held sacred and honorable have long since "gone with the wind."

The world, as well as our country is not what it once was. Fifty or so years ago we lived in a radically different world than the world our children and grandchildren inherited. The news of the day was what was happening in Viet Nam and the struggles of the civil rights movement were just beginning to be felt. Gas cost us \$0.25 a gallon and the minimum wage was what our young people today would call pocket change. There was no such thing as the Internet, WWW, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, I-pads, Smart Phones, Wide-screen T.V.'s and there were very few computers in existence. Medicare and Medicaid was just beginning to hit the scene, and scientists only dreamed of man walking on the moon. All this means that the world that our parents and grandparents knew has "gone with the wind."

In spite of all the good and beneficiary things change has brought, one thing that seems to be the essence of much change we see taking place in our world is the fact that modern man is divorcing himself from any acknowledgement of the reality of God, especially the reality of the God who has anything to do in the affairs of everyday living. This thinking has definitely influenced the church. The modern church no longer allows God to shape its character, outlook and practice. We have become

heavily invested in the mind-set of modernity, a mind-set that correlates with the Biblical concept of "the world." The church has become enfeebled in part because it has lost its sense of God's sovereignty and holiness. Too much Biblical truth and practice has "gone with the wind" because the times "they are a-changin'."

"Old timers" remember with fondness when most church services were "traditional" with the congregation using a printed bulletin and singing hymns from a hymnbook accompanied by a piano and sometimes an organ. The preacher, and many of the men, always wore a coat and tie, and the preacher preached from the traditional "pulpit" and sometimes the sermon lasted for an hour. The "song leader" always led the congregation in hymns and some churches had a "youth minister." The worship service was preceded by a "Sunday School" where the attendees were rewarded for perfect attendance. These times are either "gone with the wind" or are rapidly approaching the time when they shall be "gone." Times change, and so do churches.

A few years ago *The Agape Press* published the following report entitled *Churches Shift to Contemporary*, showing the extent of change taking place in the church: "According to a newly released study more churches incorporate non-traditional music, diverse styles of worship, and modern technologies into their worship experience. This report shows a big increase in contemporary worship styles in America's Protestant churches over the past few years. While 44 percent reported no significant change, 15 percent said their churches moved in much more contemporary directions, while another 36 percent said their worship had become more contemporary. Only 5 percent said their worship had become more traditional during this time period. Contemporary worship outpaced traditional by eleven to one. Larger churches led by younger ministers were most likely to have shifted toward more contemporary, and Pentecostal churches were over twice as likely to move that way. A big change found was in the use of electronic media...computer graphics, music videos, movies, drama, etc. Praise and worship choruses during worship rose from 38 percent to 74 percent. The use of Christian rock, pop, or country music in worship rose from 9 percent to 25 percent. 95 percent of the churches pass an offering basket or plate, 89 percent celebrate communion, 85 percent use a printed bulletin or order of service. The average minister preaches for about 31 minutes."

In describing the American mega-church *The Christian Science Monitor* wrote: "Gone are traditional religious dogma, rituals, and symbols, replaced by uplifting songs and sermons. Congregants are taught that through God they are victors, not victims. The messages are encouraging and easy to swallow and no one is called a sinner. It's 'Jesus meets the power of positive thinking.' There's none of that old time religion; none of the hell and damnation, fire and brimstone preaching. The messages tend to be more upbeat, one of empowerment. And it seems to be working. 'These churches are packed,' says Alan Wolfe, director of the Boise Center of Religion and American Public Life at Boston College. In 1970 there were 10 mega-churches nationwide (defined as non-Catholic churches with at least 2,000 weekly attendants). Today there are 1,210."

An important part of the life in most small churches in the middle of the twentieth century was the yearly revival meeting now "gone with the wind." This was a time when a visiting evangelist was called to hold a one or two week meeting, which sometimes last three weeks and became what was called "a protracted meeting." The revival was usually held in the fall of the year, a time when there was expected to be a "harvest of souls." Most conversions and church memberships happened during the revival meeting. Many would plan to become a Christian and join the church at the revival instead of the regular church services. It was a time of intense calling on "prospects" and preaching directed toward "winning of the lost." Most of the sermons were directed at the unconverted or to "reviving of the backslider." It was, for the most part, hell fire and brimstone preaching, warning of the dangers of hell and the glories of heaven. This engendered a lot of emotionalism and resulted in many responses to the invitation, many which did not last long after the coals of revivalism had turned to ashes. Sometimes a revival would last as long as people were responding to the call to be saved. Many times the evangelist declared that "if no one comes forward tonight we are going to close the meeting." (Since the revival was also a social gathering and offered young people a time when they could have some place to go it meant they used this time as an opportunity for the young men to escort the girls home after the meeting. The story is told that sometimes when the revival was grinding down and the preacher began threatening to close the meeting, some boys would agree for one or two to go forward followed the next night by some more responding etc. so this would keep the meeting going and they would have the opportunity of walking their girls home a few more times). Many times the meetings were closed with what was called "all day singing and dinner on the ground." This soon led to the building of the "fellowship hall."

Most churches were helped and benefited spiritually by the revival meetings. There were many sincere conversions and many lukewarm Christians rededicated themselves to faithful service and many times the revival meeting was a time of healing conflicts within the church. It was a time when the community responded more than they would to the regular weekly services. Much depended on the kind of preaching that had been done during the meeting. One of the voids the revival meeting filled was to provide preaching for churches that had only "part time ministers." It was not uncommon for a preacher to be pastoring two or more churches, which meant they had preaching only once or twice a month. However as Bible Colleges and Seminaries began to produce more preachers and more churches went "full time" the need of revival meetings dwindled. Churches then began to have revivals lasting only a week. Instead of only a fall meeting they would have both a fall and spring revival. The spring revival was usually held at Easter time. As interest in revivals began to wane the church programs began to change the three day revival came into prominence. These usually either began on Sunday and closed on Wednesday or began on Wednesday and closed on Sunday. This gave way to what was called "week-end" revivals that were held only on Saturday and Sunday. Then the inevitable moved in and revival meetings about came to an end. Some churches still have the week-long meetings and many others have turned to special programs which have supplanted the revival meeting. The era of the revival meetings has "gone with the wind" but the memories linger on.

The history of the church is replete with "movements." From the days of John the Apostle who confronted "antichrists" that were active in the early church (I John 2;18, 19, 22; 4:1-3) and the movement to introduce Gnosticism in the time of Paul's ministry (an example of dealing with this is the book of Colossians) to the image based culture at the time of the reformation to the modern movement of church growth and contemporary music, religious movements have come and gone. Some have come and stayed and some have "gone with the wind." Historically religious movements have been based upon innovation and adaptation. Many have been reactions to the existing norm. Others have been born out of deep desire to see the church changed for the better or to lead the church into a deeper spirituality. An example of such movements is the Reformation movement that led the church out of Catholicism.

Many times the beginning of a religious movement is not taken seriously by the mainstream churches and religious systems of the day. In fact they may be designated as heretical and dangerous and must be stamped out or considered laugh-provoking and is something to be ignored. However some movements do not have a "beginning" where a date of its inception can be given. Rather it is a slow process of development within the system which eventually bursts forth as a factor of influence to be reckoned with. Regardless of how a religious movement is born the following pattern seems to characterize such movements. They are born out of an effort to change the status quo and many times are met with ridicule and contempt but gradually become accepted and are absorbed into the mainstream religions, others have simply "gone with the wind." Many times a movement can change the entire system into whatever it is the movement stands for. An example of this is the Charismatic movement which grew out of the Pentecostal churches. The doctrines of the Pentecostal churches, such as speaking in tongues and instant healing were for the most part rejected by all other religious bodies. A few years ago the Pentecostals were looked upon as being a fringe sect because of these practices, however the Charismatic movement very rapidly spilled over into main line denominations, including Anglican and Catholic churches and has now been absorbed by the religious establishment. The 1940's were characterized by a church building craze. It was not the modern mega-church buildings we see today, rather the gothic architecture which had been the character of churches for generations. The 1950's found the churches on the band-wagon of "the Communists are going to get us, and that very soon." Books and sermons were given over to warning the church it would soon be taken over by the Communist threat. The 1960's, growing out of the "flower children and hippie" movements, birthed the rise of the "Jesus movement" where many hippies turned from drugs and "got high on Jesus." This was also the decade the Charismatic movement began to sweep over America and spill into Europe, South America and shortly became worldwide. The 1970's syndrome was "a demon behind every bush and ever sneeze." The 1980's was a maneuver to marry Christianity with Psychology. The 1990's is noted for the "yuppie church movement which said "let's win the baby boomers at any cost." The decade of 2000 has become the "contemporary church" movement characterized by its "laid back, come as you are" attitude, praise choruses, praise bands, and high tech entertainment worship services. Some of these movements have endured while others have "gone with the wind."

Thus far we have been looking at things relative to church life that have “gone with the wind”. Now we turn to Scriptural practices and standards that have also “gone with the wind.”

It is interesting that in Scripture the Greek word “wind” is the same Greek word as “spirit” (example: John 3:6). The Biblical records show many things changed and were replaced by something better. We could say, then, these things that changed have “gone with the wind” meaning the change was brought about by the Spirit and something new established in its place.

An early practice later “gone with the wind” was the matter of offering sacrifice to God. During the Patriarchal times any man could sacrifice to God on an altar they built. (Some examples: Noah, Gen 8:20; Abraham, Gen 12:7;8; Jacob, Gen. 33:20; Moses, Ex. 17:15, 24:4). When the tabernacle was built only the priests were allowed to offer sacrifices and they had to be offered in the tabernacle, and later in the temple. The “high places” of heathen worship where heathen sacrifices were offered were to be “utterly destroyed,” the altars torn down and sacred pillars burned with fire. And the Lord commanded: “You shall seek the Lord in the place which the Lord your God shall choose from all your tribes, to establish His name there for His dwelling, and there you shall come...” (Deut. 12: 2-6). The old system of anyone building an altar and offering sacrifice was over. All sacrifices had to be offered by the priest in the tabernacle and temple. The “high places” were supposed to be “gone with the wind.” However, from the time they entered Canaan until the exile under Nebuchadnezzar, there were many that insisted on “worshipping God” on the “high places” they built. This led to the idolatry of their worshipping the false gods of the pagans on the high places. (An example of the high places is seen in Jeremiah 7:31; 17:3; 19:5; 32:35). Ezekiel 6 describes God’s judgment upon the high places. These high places were “self made religion” (Col. 2:23) or “worship devised by men” much like worship today that has no basis in scripture.

Then the old priesthood as well as the whole sacrificial system was destined to be “gone with the wind” (Heb. 7:12; 10:1-4). The Old Testament priesthood and sacrificial system was only a shadow of the future reality; it did not embody the reality itself: “For the Law since it was only a shadow of good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually make perfect those who draw near” (Heb. 10:1). Therefore it had to be replaced with a better priesthood and sacrifice that was real and lasting. The sacrifice for sin that replaced the old sacrifices is stated in these words: “but He (Christ) having offered one sacrifice for sins, for all time, sat down at the right hand of God” (Heb. 7:12). Then the Hebrew writer states: “Where there is forgiveness of these things, there remains no longer any offering for sin” (Heb. 0:18). This means the sacrifice of Christ covered all sin. Nothing we do can make us any better in the sight of God. All our good works in the church cannot add to our salvation, nor make us anymore acceptable to God. The old sacrifices and the priest that offered them are “gone with the wind.” The wind that took them away is stated by Paul in Colossians 2:14-17: “Having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us; he has taken out of the way, having nailed it to the cross when he had disarmed the rulers and authorities, he made a public display of them, having triumphed over them. Therefore let no one act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in

respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.” Does this mean the Law has “gone with the wind”? Has the law passed away? Does it mean that since “we are not under law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14) the law died? The law did not die, rather we died. Using the example of a woman bound by law to her husband until the husband dies (Rom. 7:1-6) Paul shows that we “were made to die to the law through the body of Christ” (ver.4).

Anders Nygren, the noted German theologian in his *Commentary of Romans* states: “To Paul there can be no thought of the law dying. It is not a case of the Christian’s decision to regard the law as a repealed and nonexistent nor can it be said that, with the coming of Christ, the law was outdated and abolished. The law continues and constantly lays its claim on man, regardless of whether he acknowledges it or not. One does not escape the sway of the law by neglecting its mandate. The law does not die. There is only one way to liberation. Only in the fact that the Christian has died with Christ is he really and truly set beyond the realm of the law.”

Jesus has much to say about the Law. One of the most important statements concerning the law is his declaration in the Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:17, 18: “Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter and stroke shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished.” There are two different words used here to convey the idea of fulfill. In verse 17 the word “fulfill” means to make full, amply supply, and finish. The word “accomplished” (fulfilled, KJV) in verse 18 means: to become, to come to pass, to happen (*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*). Neither of these words can be interpreted as meaning the end of the law. Fulfilling is not abolishing, but meeting all the law’s demands, something no human being could do. An example of his fulfilling the law is seen in the fact that the law condemns sin, and the condemnation of sin is death. The law pronounces that death must pass upon all who have sinned. This punishment must be carried out. Christ therefore paid the penalty of death by dying on the cross and thus fulfilled the law in that respect.

One aspect of the law that we can say is “gone with the wind” is the keeping of the Sabbath. Most Christians have no problem accepting the fact that the moral law is still in effect until it comes to the fourth commandment: Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Nowhere in the teaching of Jesus do we find any declaration that the Sabbath is to be abolished, nor is there any questioning of the validity of the basis of the divine command. However, we cannot overlook the teaching of Paul in Colossians 2:16, 17 where he lists the Sabbath day among “things which are a mere shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.” This makes it clear that the ceremonial significance and formalism of Sabbath observances were ended, being swept away by Christ. The fulfillment of the Sabbath, then, is in the new creation. As W.F. Moulton noted in *Ellicott’s Commentary*: Heb. 4:10: “Man’s Sabbath-rest begins when he enters into God’s rest (Gen. 2:2): as that is the goal of the creative work, so to the people of God this rest is the goal of their life of ‘works’.” Hebrews 3 and 4 show the Sabbath prefigured our rest in Christ, both now and in eternity. The essence of the Sabbath is our rest in Christ. The Pharisees and legalist among the Jews in Jesus’

day had added so much tradition as to make the Sabbath a burdensome religious requirement. Those today who insist a Christian keep the day as the Jews did fall into the same legalistic trap, not realizing the significance of the ceremonial aspect being fulfilled in Christ, and fail to see the spiritual aspect of our rest in him.

Due to some restrictions in the Jewish law and the exclusiveness of Jewish nation there existed throughout the Old Testament until the life of Christ, a barrier of a dividing wall between the Jew and Gentile. It was this dividing wall that prompted the Samaritan woman at the well to say to Jesus: "how is it that you being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?" For the Jews have no dealings with Samaritans." (John 4:9). This wall is illustrated in the account of Peter dealing with Cornelius: Peter said to him "You know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him..." Further: "And when Peter came to Jerusalem, those who were circumcised took issue with him, saying, 'you went to uncircumcised men and ate with them...'" (Acts 10:28; 11:2, 3). In the time of Jesus, to call a Jew "a Samaritan" was a derogatory term on the same level of being accused of having a demon. (John 8:48). The Apostle Paul deals with this problem in the book of Romans. He asks: "Is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes of Gentiles also, and He will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith" (Rom. 3:29, 30). Jesus had made this clear in the beginning of his ministry when he said: "For God so loved the world (Jew and Gentile) that he gave his only begotten son..." (Jn. 3:16). That this dividing wall has "gone with the wind" is stated plainly by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:14-17: "For he himself is our peace, who made both groups into one, and broke down the dividing wall of the barrier, by abolishing in his flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in himself he might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. And he came and preached peace, peace to those who are far away and to those who were near. For through him we both have one access in the spirit to the Father." Later referring to "the commandments contained in ordinances" the Apostle states: "having cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us and which was hostile to us he has taken out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). This means that not only the wall dividing Jew and Gentile, but all walls dividing God's people should be "gone with the wind." This is stated very accurately by George Eldon Ladd in his work *A Theology of The New Testament* when he states: "The hostility that existed between Jew and Gentile may be taken as typical of all barriers that break fellowship between human beings. Because of reconciliation to God in Christ, people who have been estranged from one another are to be reconciled and every dividing wall of hostility removed, because Christ is our peace. Instead of two individuals, Jew and Gentile, who were separated by hostility, there is one new person created in peace because reconciliation to God is in one body through the cross. This hostility between individual and individual is brought to an end. The reconciliation of the hostility between Jew and Greek may be taken as representative of every sort of interpersonal hostility. In Christ there is peace among human beings." This is made possible by the fact that all barriers between people have "gone with the wind."

The last subject in Scripture we will note that has "gone with the wind" is all things that are said to be "mysteries" in Scripture. There are several things in Scripture that are said to be "mysteries" but this does not mean they can't be understood. The interesting thing about the "mysteries" in the Scripture is they are always discussed in the context of having been revealed, made known, and understood. In fact John in the book of Revelation states that "the mystery of God is finished, as He preached to His servants the prophets" (Rev. 10:7). Mysteries are things that are hidden and cannot be known until or unless God reveals them. The things that were at one time hidden from people in the Old Testament, and are still hidden from the world, can be known and understood now by the people of God. *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* states that mysteries in scripture are "divine plans, concealed from all except the recipients of revelation, concealed until God's good time; nor, in other words, a divine secret, but one designed by God to be revealed when and to whom he chooses." Paul shows mysteries were revealed secrets, Divine purposes hidden from humanity for ages, but finally disclosed by revelation to all people (Rom. 16:25, 26); however the mysteries are proclaimed to all even though they are understood only by those to whom they have been revealed. The word "mystery" is recorded 27 times in the New Testament and all have been revealed by the Apostles and can be understood by all who believe.

A passage we must keep in mind when we read of "mysteries" in Scripture is Deuteronomy 29:29, a passage neglected and seldom used by commentators, states: "The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, that we may observe all the words of this law." If something has not been revealed in His word, then it is one of the "secret things that belong to the Lord our God" and we cannot know them. But if it is revealed in His word it can be known and understood. God has revealed Himself in His Son, therefore, to make the Bible so mysterious, complicated and unable to understand is a contradiction of God's revelation in Scripture. A classic example of God revealing mysteries is I Corinthians 2:7-16. In verses 7-9 the Apostle states: "We speak God's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God predestined before the ages to our glory...but just as it is written, 'Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.'" Then he explains this in verse 10: "For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God." The Apostles continues: "Now we have received the, not the spirit of this world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God" (ver12). This is an example of the fact that whenever a "mystery" is mentioned in Scripture there is always an explanation of the mystery. One of the favorite expressions Paul uses in his epistles is "Do you not know" (I Cor. 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; Rom. 6:3, 16; 7:1), inferring that these are things they should know and understand.

A word of caution. Peter said in II Peter 3:16 that Paul "according to the wisdom given him, wrote as in all his letters, speaking some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort to their own destruction." He did not say these things could not be understood, rather they were hard to understand. This affirms that we are to understand what was once a "mystery" but is now "gone with the wind."