

LIVING WATERS NEWSLETTER

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UNKNOWN WORDS DESCRIBING THE CHURCH

There are many words in scripture that designate some very important things that are unknown and receive little attention by today's religious community. How many church members know the meaning of "propitiation" or "sanctification"? Admittedly there are many words in the Bible that are hard to pronounce, especially the nations and people that Israel faced in the Old Testament. As a rule, the average person reading the Bible will skip over the genealogies and such passages as Ezra 2 that list the names of the people returning from captivity, thinking they have no relevance today. Why should we be concerned that Isaiah named his son Mahershalalhashbaz (Is.8:3)? We say this to admit there are many words in the Bible that are hard to pronounce, and their meaning remains unknown to the majority of Christians.

Over the years in doing research for this newsletter we have found many words we had never heard and were hard to pronounce yet they were words that could, although unknown to most people, well describe the present condition of the modern church. We will now deal with some of these odd unknown words.

QUODLIBET AND THE CHURCH

In *Touchstone Magazine* (described as a *Journal of Mere Christianity*) the Editor printed his editorials under the title *Quodlibet*. This odd sounding word caught our attention. It is from the French, meaning "whatever." The Editor quotes several different sources of present day thought without mentioning the word "quodlibet." Discovering the meaning of the word it had the appearance of an unknown word describing a very well-known attitude in the church today. The world has long lived by the philosophy that everyone is free to do their own thing, whatever they choose to do is right for them. The modern church has in its effort to be acceptable and non-offensive adopted the same philosophy, saying that if one is sincere and feels good about it then it doesn't matter what they believe. Many churches have evoked a consumer mentality which tries to satisfy "whatever" members and potential members demand. This type of religious thinking substitutes the great doctrines of the Bible with cheap slogans. Its majestic hymns are traded for shallow syrupy jingles, often sung off the image from an overhead projector, much like an advertising executive uses to sell a client on an ad campaign. One example of "quodlibet" is that the church seems to be experiencing a "spiritual revolution" in which Biblical faith is being mixed with convenient parts of traditional Christianity, secularism, humanism, materialism, and hedonism. It is a cross-less, Spirit-less, you can-have-your-cake-and-eat-it-too kind of religion. "Whatever" religion knows nothing of real discipleship, real relationships, and sacrifice, but is filled with the flavor of feel good personal experience.

Believing whatever we want to believe and doing whatever we want to do nullifies the Biblical teaching on holiness and godly living. The Lord says: "As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in ignorance, but

like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves in all your behavior, because it is written 'you shall be holy for I am holy'" (I Peter 1:14-16). Living in a world in a time when "whatever" and "anything" goes, and we see little restraint being put upon the lust of men, it is hard to live a holy life before people of the world with whom we must associate, but what makes it doubly hard is the attitude of the religious community toward holiness. Today's church has gone over to a "whatever" ministry. It stresses psychology, psychiatry, counseling, recreation, and services geared to meet our every imagined need in order to face the stress and conflict of modern society. Preaching is tailored to gaining interest on superficial levels not to solid Biblical teachings. Because sin is unpopular, it talks about co-dependency, victimhood and self-image and other psychological garbage. The early church in their propagation of the gospel exploded this thinking which adamantly affirmed that God will bring the whole world, as well as the church, into judgment concerning their conduct and thinking. Their demanding that it is only by coming to know the truth that one comes to know God, for He can be known only through Christ, puts "whatever" out of business. The scriptures are plain on this point "...because they did not receive the love of the truth to be saved, and for this reason God will send upon them a deluding influence that they might believe a lie in order that they all may be damned who did not believe the truth but took pleasure in unrighteousness" (II Thessalonians 2:10-12). Quodlibet is not acceptable with God.

EUDAEMONISM AND FAITH

While reading a book of revival we came across the word *Eudaemonism*, a word we had never heard nor seen. Webster defines the word as "the doctrine happiness or a theory that the highest ethical goal is happiness and personal wellbeing." J. I. Packer, professor of theology at Regent College, used the word in his description of some of the popular so-called revivals taking place in the religious world today. He quotes one preacher as saying, unbelievably, that God decided to throw a party for His people because they "feel so icky about themselves." This thought is the guiding principle behind much of the religious thinking today, whether they admit it or not, that is, God's present priority is entertainment rather than evangelism. It says God's purpose is to make us happy instead of making us holy. This is not to say Christians should not be happy. However, many people confuse happiness with joy. Happiness comes from without and there are many things that can make us happy, but joy comes from within and can only be given by God. Maybe our problem is not that we feel icky about ourselves, but that we really don't know just how desperately icky we are as long as our only concern is our own happiness and well-being.

Faith that has self as its center is quite different from the faith of the scriptures, which comes from hearing the word of Christ (Rom. 10:17) and is centered on God and His word. When righteousness is replaced by happiness, and holiness is replaced with wholeness, truth by feeling, theology by therapy, and worship by entertainment, then Eudaemonism has replaced faith. There is much being preached by TV evangelists that convinces people they can literally have anything they want (all things that

make you happy, usually personal wealth and health) if you only have faith. The problem here is not only a lie concerning the promises of God, but the faith they speak of is not faith in God and His word, but faith in their faith. However, it is not just the TV evangelists and their satellite programs. With all the emphasis on personal experiences and the quest for happiness and entertainment by a generation raised on the philosophy of instant gratification, there has been what David Wells calls a “death of theology.” Strange indeed is the phenomena we are witnessing today...the religious world that learns from social scientists how to grow itself, fills churches that look like shopping malls, counts its numbers the moneyed and powerful, showing the greatest membership and financial growth in history, yet causes barely a ripple in the affairs of society. Eudaemonism has taken over.

LATITUDINARIANISM IN THE CHURCH

We came across an unknown word the other day and thought “what in the world is *Latitudinarianism*”? Webster defined the word as “broad and liberal standards of religious belief and conduct.” Further investigation showed that the word came into prominence in the religious world in the early seventeenth century to describe certain clergymen in the church of England who were indifferent to what they regarded as petty issues which divided Puritans and high churchmen. Although they professed a belief in most doctrines of faith, they attached little importance to them. Their attitude was to allow wide latitude in religious beliefs, so they became known as “Latitudinarians.” They believed in being tolerant to anything anyone wanted to believe. The heart of latitudinarianism is that they retained the outward forms of faith, but in the words of McClintock and Strong in their *Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature* they “took at once for their basis science and toleration and regarded the differences among Christians as unimportant when compared with their essential unity. The watchword of the party was love and toleration.” In plain words they did not take the scriptures seriously and felt everyone was left to believe and practice whatever they wanted.

Most have probably never heard the word, but regardless of what we call this type of thinking, it is alive and well in the religious world today. The common idea prevalent among many church people today is that no one can really know what is right or wrong because after all no one has perfect knowledge or perfect understanding. We must therefore be tolerant and indulgent of other positions. Along with this idea is the belief that the Bible is a mysterious book and we cannot really understand it (the Book of Revelation becomes the classic scapegoat on this point). Another facet of latitudinarianism is to say that even if the Bible does contain teaching on what is considered by some to be important subjects, does it make any difference whether we believe and understand them?

We might be looked upon as being too simplistic to moderns (Simpletons and fools for Christ), but if we believe the Bible at all we must believe it all, and it is clear on the subject of believing and understanding. The words of Christ are plain: “I am the way, and the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through me” (Jn. 14:6), and there is a “broad way which leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it” (Mt. 7:13). This leaves no room to tolerate any other way. Ephesians 5:17 gives us a direct command to “...understand what the will of the Lord is.” Jesus, in speaking to the religious elite in his day, told them why they did not believe and why they

did not understand: “Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear my word, he who has God hears the words of God, for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God” (Jn. 8:43, 47). He further said, “If any man is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching...” (Jn. 7:17). Anyone who says they cannot know the things of God is confessing they do not have the Spirit of God but the spirit of the world. “Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God” (I Cor. 2:12). The last verse of this chapter states an astonishing fact (ignored by most Christians) that “we have the mind of Christ.”

Many religious leaders today are tolerant of those who believe and practice humanism while intolerant of those who believe and practice the Scriptures. The modern religious system has no trouble tolerating a church agenda which is to be popular rather than prophetic, mystical rather than holy, successful rather than obedient, and to entertain rather than worship. They are the modern latitudinarians.

OCHRONOSIS, A MODERN CHURCH SICKNESS

In a book on preaching the word “ochronosis” is used. Webster defines the word “*ochre*” to mean an earthly yellow and red pigment but said nothing of “ochronosis.” The Greek dictionary defines *nosis* as “sickness that relates to the mind.” A medical dictionary defines the term as “a condition marked by brown discoloration of ligaments, cartilages and tissues.” To put this into a spiritual perspective the disease of ochronosis is when there is injected into the teaching and practice of the Word another doctrine that corrupts and colors the thinking of the church. In simple terms we are referring to false teaching and doctrines in the church, which today is a disease of epidemic proportions. Note some examples of how ochronosis has infected the church: For 1800 years of church history, Theologians, Bible Scholars, Preachers, Seminaries and Bible Colleges believed in a literal six-day creation. Then with the advance of the technological power of science in the 19th century, churchmen suddenly discovered that a “day” did not mean “day” but a million years. The same is true with Scriptural teaching on origins, then along comes Darwin and suddenly we are taught “theistic evolution.” The Word was adequate for centuries for “teaching, reproof, and correction in righteousness” that completely equipped the man of God. Then Drs. Jung and Freud came on the scene and suddenly our problems are psychological not spiritual, so we forsake the spiritual (the Word) and turn to Drs. Larry Crabb, Paul Meier, Frank Minirth, James Dobson, and Spock. The Bible teaches a simple plan for church government: Apostles, Prophets (early gifts) Evangelists, Pastor-teachers, and Deacons. We now have such terms as: Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Youth Minister, Singles Minister, Music minister, Old Folks minister, Preaching Ministers, CEO’s and a host of other titles not found in Scripture. What happened to the fact that all believers are ministers? Ochronosis has set in when the authority of the Scriptures is colored with human thinking and loses its importance. Clichés pass for content, pep talks for sermons and vague sentiment for serious teaching of the Word.

The answer of Erasmus to Luther when he (Erasmus) attacked the sovereignty of God, “What difference does it make?” has become the cure-all statement for the disease of ochronosis in the church today. The rust of ochronosis has tainted the gospel to the extent that it has lost its power and purpose to most people. This does make a difference. Ochronosis “faith” is not faith.