

The Christian Lifestyle

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Introduction

Although one might not recognize it by looking at many Christians today, Christianity involves a total lifestyle change from that of the world. The apostle Paul teaches that our bodies are the *temple of the Holy Spirit* so that we are not our *own*, so we must *glorify God in your [our] body* (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Therefore, *whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God* (I Corinthians 10:31). This means being a Christian involves the whole person. Nothing is excluded from being dedicated to God's glory. In this way, Christianity is a totalitarian religion in that it concerns everything that a believer does, physically, mentally, and spiritually. There is no room for any aspect of our lives to be exempt from service to God. Therefore, the Christian lifestyle includes (1) what we put *into* our bodies, (2) what we put *on* our bodies, (3) what we do *with* our bodies, (4) what we put into our *minds*, and (5) how we treat God and others.

One thing to remember is that the Lord desires only that which is good for us. James 1:17 declares that *every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights*. As love personified (I John 4:8, 16), He does not give us rules merely to lord it over us or to demonstrate His authority over us. All that He requires is for our best good. Please keep this in mind as you study the material in this paper.

With this in mind, the purpose of this paper is to explore the specifics of what it means to live a Christian lifestyle. It is impossible to cover every specific behavior in one paper. However, we have discussed the major principles and many particulars that relate to them regarding the Christian lifestyle.

Dietary Practices

The issue of food is a very personal matter in relationship to other people, so people naturally resist making changes to their dietary habits. Evangelists and pastors who teach the Biblical truth about diet report that this area is usually the most difficult for people to accept. Nevertheless, God's Word teaches us that some foods should be avoided.

Before sin, God's original diet for mankind consisted of fruits, nuts, and grains (Genesis 1:29). These are defined as the *herb that yields seed* and *every tree whose fruit yields seed*. Originally,

animals (including birds and creeping creatures) ate only herbs (Genesis 1:29). Botanically, this means all fruits, which are produced by the flowers of a plant. Fruits can be grouped as four types:

- Fruits, with or without protective coverings, that contain seeds, a pit that is a single seed, a core and seeds, or seeds alone, whose seeds are sometimes edible and sometimes not— Examples of this kind of fruit include apples, peaches, apricots, bananas, various berries, melons, avocados, tomatoes, cucumbers, squash, and eggplant.
- Fruits that are pods or outer shells containing seeds in which only the seeds are edible— Examples of this kind of fruit include most beans, peas, lentils, pomegranates, and all nuts. Technically, the nut is the outer shell as a fruit, and what we eat is the seed inside the shell.
- Fruits that are pods containing seeds in which the entire pod and its seeds are eaten— Examples of this kind of fruit include green beans, okra, and all grains. Technically, a grain is a fruit that contains a seed. But since the fruit is very thin in comparison to the seed inside it, and it is fused with the seed, sometimes a grain is called both a fruit and a seed.
- Fruit whose seeds are on the outside and in which only the seeds are eaten—The best example of this kind of fruit is corn. The whole ear of corn is a fruit, and the kernels are its seeds. In this way, sometimes the corn that we eat is called both a seed and a fruit.

The bottom line is that the original diet included the edible portion of anything associated with the fruit of a plant.

That original diet, which was a plant-based vegan diet, should at least be considered the ideal diet for the Christian if only because it was the first diet given to mankind by God. In our modern day, we know that it is overall the healthiest diet and that vegans, as well as lacto-ovo vegetarians, live longer on average than do meat-eaters. However, the Scripture nowhere commands a vegetarian diet, so the Church should not require it. At the same time, even though the fat is not that which is forbidden (because it is not that found in the *flesh* of an animal, Leviticus 7:23-25), the harder dairy cheeses, dairy butter, and chicken eggs should be used sparingly because they consist largely of saturated fat and cholesterol, substances we now know are harmful to good heart health.

When sin entered the world, God expanded the diet to include every *herb of the field* (Genesis 3:18). The fact that the text does not specify that the herb yields seed means that it must include vegetables. Botanically, vegetables include potatoes, cassavas, turnips, radishes, onions, garlic, carrots, beets, lettuce, cabbage, spinach, Brussel sprouts, broccoli, kale, cauliflower, and asparagus. These are either the root, stem, or leaves of a plant. Apparently sin affected the plant

life in such a way that a diet of botanically classified fruit became insufficient to meet the nutrition needs of mankind, so that vegetables were added to the diet.

Clean and Unclean Meats

After the global Flood, God gave mankind permission to eat meat, defined as the *flesh* of an animal (Genesis 9:3-4), which would seem to exclude organ meats like kidneys and liver. In the context of clean and unclean animals (Genesis 6:19-20; 7:2, 8-9, 14-16; 8:20), the words *every moving thing* (9:3) must be defined as all *clean* animals as elaborated in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Incidentally, the fact that Noah knew the difference between clean and unclean animals, and the Flood occurred long before the nation of Israel was established, means that this distinction was not originally given to Israel.

In addition to the distinction between clean and unclean animals, the eating of blood was forbidden (Genesis 9:4), a command that was repeated to the nation of Israel (Leviticus 3:17; 7:26; 17:10-16; 19:26; Deuteronomy 12:23). Leviticus 3:17 and 7:23-25 add the fat of clean animals to the list of that which is forbidden to eat. This means that the animal must be slaughtered by having its throat cut and allowing the blood to drain from its body, which is the manner of Jewish kosher foods and of Muslim halal foods. Prohibition against fat would refer to things like beef fat and lard (from hogs). We now know that disease bacteria are more concentrated in the blood and fat of an animal and that organ meats like kidneys and livers function to eliminate toxins in the body and are therefore centers of toxins that can cause disease.

The criteria for determining which animals are clean and which are unclean are spelled out in Leviticus 11 and with less detail in Deuteronomy 14. These criteria are outlined below:

- *Land Animals*

An animal whose primary habitat is the land must both (1) chew the cud and (2) have split hooves in order to be clean (Leviticus 11:3). Of the clean animals typically eaten by people would be included cattle, sheep, goats, deer, and gazelle. Of the unclean animals typically eaten by people would be included the pig or hog, camel, and hare (rabbit), along with squirrel and rats. Of course, animals that eat other animals would be unclean, such as lions, tigers, leopards, cheetahs, wolves, foxes, dogs, domestic cats, and bears.

- *Water Creatures*

For creatures that primarily live in water, whether salt water or fresh water, they must have both (1) fins and (2) scales in order to be clean (Leviticus 11:9). Of the clean water creatures typically eaten by people would be included most kinds of actual fish, such as trout, perch, salmon, haddock,

tuna fish, cod, halibut, herring, anchovy, crappie, bluefish, and sardines. Of unclean water creatures typically eaten by people would be included catfish (it has fins but not scales) and all of what is usually called seafood, such as lobsters, shrimp, clams, crabs, oysters, scallops, squid, and octopus. Of course, mammals that spend much of their time in water that would be unclean include beavers, whales, sharks, seals, otters, sea lions, dolphins, and walrus.

- *Fowl (Birds)*

No specific criteria to distinguish between clean and unclean fowl (birds) are given in Scripture. However, the rather long list of unclean birds given in Leviticus 11:13-19 are all birds that eat carrion (or road kill) and are thus scavengers—the eagle, vulture, buzzard, kite, falcon, raven, ostrich, owl, sea gull, hawk, stork, heron, and bat. Of the clean fowl typically eaten by people would be included chickens, turkeys, quail, ducks, geese, pigeons, and doves.

- *Insects and Creeping Things*

The clean insects are those with jointed legs above their feet, which allows them to leap. All other flying insects are reckoned as unclean (Leviticus 11:20-23). This means that locusts, crickets, and grasshoppers are considered clean. All non-flying creatures that creep or crawl on the earth are unclean. This includes moles, mice, lizards, geckos, chameleons (vv. 29-30), worms, and snakes (v. 42). It is interesting to note that Isaiah 66:17 compares mice and swine's flesh to an abomination.

Most Christian scholars assert that the distinction between clean and unclean animals was originally designed to describe which animals were acceptable and which were unacceptable for making sacrifices to God. Now that the animal sacrificial system has been abolished with the sacrifice of Jesus as the sacrificial Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36; I Peter 1:19), there is no distinction between clean and unclean meats. Therefore, the Christian may eat anything that he pleases.

However, Leviticus 22:20-25 prohibited the sacrificial offering of animals which had physical defects, sores, scabs, and blindness, summarized in verse 25 as *corruption* and *defects*. Note that sacrificial animals are called *the bread of your God* (v. 25; cf. Leviticus 21:6, 8). No Hebrew would have offered an unclean animal as a sacrifice, so that the passage is speaking about animals that were otherwise classified as clean. The fact that an otherwise clean animal was made unclean when it had physical defects implicitly means that unclean animals were *permanently diseased*. Furthermore, the fact that sacrificial animals were in a symbolic sense the *bread* (food) of God means that diseased animals were unacceptable as God's food and therefore unacceptable to people as food. Therefore, the issue of clean and unclean animals was not for the sacrificial system alone but also had ramifications of what was eligible for food. Since the digestive and other bio-systems of Jews and Gentiles are identical, the distinction between clean and unclean meats would naturally

apply to everyone—which is evidenced by the fact that Noah knew about this distinction long before Israelites or Jews came into existence.

This conclusion that unclean animals were permanently diseased could have been inferred even by the simple observation of God’s Old Testament people that many unclean animals cleaned up the scraps of pollution as scavengers. More importantly for us, modern science has confirmed this conclusion. In 1953 Dr. David Macht, a researcher at Johns Hopkins University, conducted research on the toxicity of the various flesh of animals. He tested a representative sample of what the Bible calls clean animals and of those called unclean animals in all of the major categories, land animals, water creatures, and fowl. Without exception, the toxicity levels of the clean animals was within acceptable limits for human consumption, and the toxicity level of the unclean animals was definitely toxic to humans.

New Testament Passages

Several New Testament passages are used to defend the proposition that the issue of clean and unclean meats is not applicable to believers under the new covenant. We will examine these passages below. But first let it be clearly noted that God is just as concerned about our physical health as He is our spiritual well-being. The apostle John hoped that we *may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers* (III John 2). The influence of pagan Greek philosophy that divides a person into a physical body and an immaterial soul, with the soul being more important than the body, is evident in Christianity, partly by the prevailing false attitude that God is more interested in our souls than He is in our bodies. This false attitude feeds (pun intended) the view that it does not matter what we eat. In turn, it gives most Christians a motivation to interpret the passages we will now examine as teaching that this issue of clean and unclean meats no longer matters to God

Mark 7:1-23

In Mark 7:18-19, Jesus asked the question, *Do you not perceive that whatever enters a man from outside cannot defile him, because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and is eliminated, thus purifying all foods?*” As a result of Jesus’ statement here, most believers assert that Jesus thereby abolished the distinction between clean and unclean meats (cf. Matthew 15:1-20).

However, we reject this conclusion for two good reasons. First, the word translated *meats* in the King James’ Version of verse 19 is the word for *foods*, as evidenced by the modern translations. It is a word that never denotes meat apart from other types of food. Thus, the issue in this passage is not about clean and unclean meats at all. Second, the issue is about *ceremonially* unclean foods, specifically foods that were made ceremonially unclean by virtue of people not washing their hands according to the *ceremonial manner* of the Pharisees (Mark 1:2-5; cf. Matthew 15:2-3, 20).

This is the reason that Jesus declared in effect that there is no ceremonially unclean foods that allegedly defile a person. Rather, it is what comes out of a person's heart that defiles him (Mark 7:15, 20-23; cf. Matthew 15:11, 18-20). This evidence means that the only defilement discussed here is spiritual defilement, not physical defilement. For both of these reasons, we conclude that the issue here is not about clean and unclean meats at all.

We can summarize the issues involved in Matthew 15:1-20 and Mark 7:1-23 as follows:

- Not clean meat versus unclean meat, but *food* in general
- Not over *Scripture* (Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14), but *Tradition*
- Not *what* you eat, but *how* you eat
- Not *physical* defilement, but *spiritual* defilement

Acts 10:9-16

This passage describes the apostle Peter's vision of a sheet filled with all kinds of unclean animals, and in which the Lord tells Peter to kill and eat (v. 13). Peter protests that he has never eaten anything unclean before. The Lord replies that what *God has cleansed you must not call common* (v. 15). While Peter is contemplating the vision's meaning, messengers arrive from a Gentile named Cornelius, urging him to go to Cornelius' home and speak to him about spiritual matters (vv. 17-22). When Peter returns with the messengers to the home of Cornelius, the meeting results in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the baptism of Cornelius and his household (vv. 44-48). Then it was that Peter understood the vision, which was that God had used various unclean animals to represent Gentiles and that the Church should not call them unclean. Thus, any Gentiles who accepted Jesus were to be accepted into the family of God (i.e., the Church). See Acts 10:28: cf. 11:4-17. To suggest that the vision has the *dual* meaning of *also* applying to meat ignores the context completely, for it is not about food at all but about reckoning Gentiles as clean or unclean. It is not kosher (pun intended) to draw a conclusion about something when the illustration has nothing to do with it.

Acts 15:19-20, 28-29

Acts 15 is the account of the first Christian council, called the Jerusalem Council, and it concerned what should be required of Gentile converts to Christianity. Verse 5 tells us that it concerned the *law of Moses* as well as circumcision specifically. The fact that the decision of the Council said nothing about abiding by the distinction between clean and unclean meats is understood to mean that at least Gentile Christians do not have to adhere to those specific laws.

First, reference to the *law of Moses* is explained as that which put a *yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear* (v. 10). Since it cannot be said that God ever

put a yoke on people's necks, this reference must be to the Jewish notion of the Oral Law (Oral Torah), which were the added traditions of the Jews that they considered to be part of the Mosaic Law. Second, the decision of the council related to food was the prohibition against eating blood and eating things strangled (vv. 20, 29). As we have learned, these issues concerned the blood of clean animals and the manner of slaughtering clean animals for food. Therefore, in reality, this Jerusalem Council's decision implicitly does mean that Gentiles should obey the injunction against unclean meats.

Romans 14:14, 20

The apostle Paul declared in these verses that there is *nothing unclean of itself* but only in the minds of some believers (v. 14), and that *all things indeed are pure* (v. 20). These verses are understood to mean that the old distinction between clean and unclean meats has been abolished.

We reject this understanding for at least two reasons. First, the dispute in the church at Rome is not between those who ate unclean meat and those who did not. Instead, the dispute concerns those in the church who ate *all things* and those who ate only *vegetables* (v. 2). Vegetarianism, as we have already noted, is nowhere commanded in Scripture, although it is a good practice for believers to consider adopting for health reasons. Moreover, the words for *unclean* in verse 14 and the word for *pure* in verse 20 are not the words used in the Septuagint (Greek translation of the Old Testament) to describe the unclean and clean meats in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Also, neither word is used with reference to food outside of Romans 14. Finally, the Greek word for *wine* in verse 21 is a word that either refer to fermented or unfermented wine (pure grape juice). Only those who took the Nazarite vow were prohibited from drinking the juice of the grape (and grapes or raisins themselves) as discussed in Numbers 6:1-4. Therefore, since the discussion of food and drink in Romans 14 has nothing to do with the Mosaic Law or any other Bible teaching, the statements in verses 14 and 20 cannot rightly mean that the distinction between clean and unclean meats is no longer binding under the new covenant.

Second, Romans 14:1 identifies the dispute in the church there as having to do with merely personal opinions: *disputes over doubtful things*. Unfortunately, we cannot be certain as to the exact nature of the dispute. However, one reasonable explanation, given the overwhelming number of verses that deal with food or drink (vv. 2, 3, 6, 14, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23) contrasted with those that deal with the observance of days (vv. 5, 6), is that some may have been arguing that certain days were better than others for fasting from meat. In any case, it is clear that Romans 14 does not address the issue of clean and unclean meats and cannot therefore be properly interpreted as abolishing the significance between those two kinds of meat.

I Corinthians 8:8

This text says, *But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.* The argument is that Christians may eat whatever they desire to eat because whatever we eat will make no difference in our lives.

However, this statement is part of a larger section in verses 4-13 *concerning the eating of things offered to idols* (v. 4). Paul has already said that idols represent false, or *so-called gods* (v. 5), which mean nothing because they do not exist. But he warned that a believer eating food in a temple dedicated to an idol may thereby cause a weaker Christian to stumble back into idol worship if he sees him eating there (vv. 9-10). This he calls *sin against the brethren...[and] against Christ* (v. 12). Verse 13 ends the discussion of the matter this way: *Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*

In this context, I Corinthians 8:8 says nothing about the distinction between clean and unclean meats. Any attempt to do so is misusing the text by attempting to derive an answer that the entire passage is not even asking.

Colossians 2:16

In this text Paul admonishes believers to *let no one judge you in food or in drink.* Therefore, it is argued that no food or drink is forbidden to Christians. But this interpretation ignores the entire context. It is not Moses who is on trial here but certain false teachers, who are basing their teachings on human *philosophy* (v. 8), *empty deceit* (v. 8), *the tradition of men* (v. 8), *the basic principles of the world* (vv. 8, 20), *false humility* (vv. 18, 23), *the worship of angels* (v. 18), *the commandments and doctrines of men* (v. 22), *self-imposed religion* (v. 23), and *neglect of the body* (v. 23).

Although we do not know the precise nature of the false teachings, the above list certainly has nothing to do with the Mosaic Law or any other part of God's law. Much of the teachings may have been applied to some of that law, but these false teachers surely twisted and mangled it through their *philosophy, tradition, and basic principles of the world.* A distortion of truth does not invalidate the truth itself. Paul gives us a clue as to the nature of the false teachings in verses 9-10. Just after warning the church against the false teachings, he stated, *For [Because] in Him [Christ] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him.* This suggests that the false teachers were arguing that if the other believers followed their man-made rules, they would attain to a higher level of spirituality and oneness with God. Paul's response was to remind them that if you are in Christ, *you are complete in Him.*

Once again the context has nothing to do with the distinction between clean and unclean meat, so that the text cannot properly be used to conclude that this distinction has been abolished.

I Timothy 4:3-5

In this passage the apostle Paul states that *in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons...forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.* This has been interpreted to mean that anything can be eaten as long as it is done with thanksgiving and prayer.

First, note that the foods referred to here are *foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving*. This implies, and Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 clearly state, that there are foods that pagans eat that God did *not* create to be eaten. Second, the Greek word for *creature* literally means *creation*, so animal flesh foods are not exclusively the issue here. The broad definition of *creation* as *good* certainly cannot include those things which are poisonous to the human body. This fact automatically qualifies the terms *every* and *nothing* in this passage.

By outlining the key phrases in this passage we can more clearly understand the passage. Please note the following parallelisms in the passage:

- A foods which God created (v. 3)
- B to be received with thanksgiving (v. 3)
- C by those who believe the truth (v. 3)
- A¹ For every creature [creation] of God is good (v. 4)
- B¹ and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving (v. 4)
- C¹ for it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer (v. 5)

Note the parallel lines labeled C and C¹ above. They tell us that the *truth* (v. 3) that informs believers what are the *foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving* (v. 3) is found in the *word of God* (v. 5). God's Word is one of two things that *sanctifies* or *sets apart* foods to be received with thanksgiving. Indeed, Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 set apart clean animals as part of the appropriate human food, meaning they are set apart from *other things* that are not appropriate for human consumption (i.e., unclean meat).

Our analysis demonstrates that I Timothy 4:3-5 does not abolish the distinction between clean and unclean meat any more than they give permission for mankind to eat poisonous plants.

Hebrews 9:9-10

This passage reads as follows: *It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience—concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation.* It is sometimes argued that the foods and drinks under the old covenant are no longer required and that this means there is no more distinction between clean and unclean meats.

However, the reading of the entire chapter reveals that this section of Hebrews concerns a contrast between the earthly sanctuary and its offerings under the old covenant and the heavenly sanctuary and its once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus under the new covenant. Therefore, it is obvious that the reference to *foods and drinks* is to the various meat, grain, and drink offerings of the Old Testament sacrificial system, as specified in the books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers. As such, this passage says nothing about the distinction between clean and unclean meats for human consumption.

In addition to avoiding eating unclean meat, the Christian's concern for physical health means that he or she should avoid eating too much refined sugar products and saturated fat. Cookies, brownies, cakes, pies, sweet breads, ice cream, puddings, and other deserts make fine treats on special occasions. However, they should not be overeaten because too much sugar clogs the system and can lead to ill health. Moderation is the key in eating these sugary foods. We should also watch the amount of saturated fat that we eat for the same health consideration.

Note also that a person can eat only the best foods and still eat an unbalanced and unhealthy diet. Moreover, the volume of food should not be in excess, for we know that the average lifespan is shortened by those who overeat. Therefore, outside of avoiding unclean meat, all other foods may be enjoyed but always in balance and moderation.

Alcohol and Other Drinks

A Brief Look at Alcoholic Beverages

Alcoholic-content wine is made by adding yeast to a mashed fruit, usually grapes (but many other fruits are sometimes used), and heated until the yeast converts all or nearly all of the natural sugars into alcohol in a process called fermentation; it also creates carbon dioxide in the process (creating the fizz-like bubbles). The lower the heat the slower the process, but the wine retains more of its fruity flavor. Different types of yeast and temperatures produce different versions of a wine, but this temperature can never get over about 104 degrees Fahrenheit, or else the yeast bacteria are

killed. The whole process takes from two to three weeks. The bottling of the wine eventually results in the loss of oxygen. Then it is aged to enhance its flavor.

Fruit contains a natural yeast that over time can create the fermentation process even at room temperatures. Many people assume that this means that people in Bible times could not prevent grape juice from fermenting into an alcoholic beverage. However, research shows that there were at least three ways that people in those centuries used to prevent the fermentation process from occurring. One way was to boil the juice down to a syrup, which killed the natural yeast bacteria. Then water was later added to dilute the syrup into a drinkable substance. A second way to prevent fermentation was to seal fresh grape juice in a container with pitch and then store it in a cistern or pool of cool water to keep its temperature below about 40 degrees Fahrenheit. This cold storage method would also prevent the yeast bacteria from multiplying and producing alcohol. A third method was to filter the grape juice through strainers in order to remove the yeast bacteria (although no one knew this was the reason since bacteria was not discovered until 1676).

The same process used to make wine is employed in the making of beer, except the mash consists of water and grain (usually barley, but sometimes wheat). Hops are added to enhance the flavor. The whole process takes about two weeks. Beer has been made from very early ancient times, but it is not mentioned in the Bible.

Whiskey is made by the same process as beer except that it is usually made from corn mash (or sometimes barley, wheat, or rye is used). After the fermentation process is completed, the alcohol is heated to higher temperatures in a process called distillation, in which the liquid turns to steam, which is then captured and condensed. Distillation increases the alcohol level significantly. Then whiskey is aged in wooden casks for anywhere from three to twenty-five years to enhance the flavor. Distillation was known in Biblical times but was not apparently used to distill alcohol until at least the ninth century A.D., and then not commonly until at least the 12th century. Therefore, neither whiskey nor any kind of distilled alcoholic beverages were made in Bible times.

Biblical Words Used for Wine

There are four different Hebrew words for wine in the Old Testament, *yayin* (used 141 times), *tirosh* (used 38 times), *shaker* (used 23 times), and *chemer* (or *khemer*, used 9 times). In the Greek New Testament, two words for wine occur, *oinos* (used 32 times) and *gleukos* (used 1 time). The different usages of five of these words mean that they are generic words that can refer to either fermented or unfermented grape juice. Sometimes the context is sufficiently clear to know which kind of wine is meant, but sometimes it is not. *Shakar* is sometimes translated as *strong drink*, but the Hebrew word is a common root in many different languages for the word *sugar*. It was a sweet drink made from non-grape sources, either dates or other fruit or even grains mixed with honey. Thus, it was not traditional wine at all (since it was not made from grapes). Since it contained a

great deal of sugar, it could ferment easily. However, it could also be prevented from fermenting just as grape juice was often preserved. Nevertheless, almost all Biblical references to it are negative ones.

The Greek word *gleukos*, used only once in the New Testament, is considered by nearly all language experts to refer to fresh, unfermented grape juice.

Commendation and Condemnation of Wine

The New Testament does not provide a sufficient number of references to wine to help us evaluate the subject of what God approves and disapproves in the matter of wine. However, the Old Testament does. Although there are still a great number of Old Testament passages where the context is not clear, there are a sufficient number of times when it is clear so that we can conclude what God commends and what He condemns.

In the following passages, a Hebrew word for *wine* (whether it is translated with that English word or not) is used in the sense that God *commends* it as a good beverage: Genesis 27:28; 49:10-11; Numbers 18:12-27; Deuteronomy 7:9-13; 11:13-14; 12:17-18; 14:23; 33:28; Judges 9:13; Psalms 4:7; 104:14-15; Song of Solomon 5:1; Isaiah 55:1; 65:8; Jeremiah 31:10-12; Hosea 2:8; Joel 2:18-19; and Amos 9:13-14.

In the following passages, a Hebrew word for *wine* is used in the sense that God *condemns* it as a beverage not to be used by His people: Genesis 9:21; 19:32; Leviticus 10:9-11; Deuteronomy 32:33; Psalms 60:3; Proverbs 4:17; 20:1; 23:20, 29-35; 31:4-5; Isaiah 5:11-12; 28:7; Ezekiel 44:21; and Hosea 7:5. At least two of these texts means that God's condemnation of fermented wine is because of the very nature of the wine and not merely to its abuse: Proverbs 20:1 and Proverbs 23:29-35. *Wine is a mocker, Strong drink is a brawler* (Proverbs 20:1). *Do not look on the wine when it is red, When it sparkles in the cup...At the last it bites like a serpent, And stings like a viper* (Proverbs 23:31). These are obviously references to fermented wine, and note that it is the wine itself that is condemned, not merely its abuse.

There is only one exception in the Old Testament (or including the New Testament also) in which the context shows that fermented wine is approved of, and that is in Proverbs 31:6-7. After declaring that kings and princes should not touch wine and strong drink (vv. 4-5), verses 6-7 show in contrast who only is permitted fermented wine—namely, those who are dying and in great pain: *Give strong drink to him who is perishing, And wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, And remember his misery no more.* To those who assert that the latter part of verse 6 authorizes alcoholic wine to the depressed, we now know (and God always knew) that alcohol is a depressant drug that should not be given to those already depressed. So we conclude that the *bitter of heart*, in this context, means those who are in great pain. In Biblical times, alcohol

and certain herbal narcotics were the only pain medications available for the very ill and dying. In lieu of modern pain medications, a prescription of alcohol to one who is dying is hardly a striking endorsement of even moderate social drinking. Actually, the fact that only the dying and those in severe pain should drink an alcoholic beverage makes it clear that the very use of alcohol in any normal circumstance is forbidden.

The consistent pattern in the Old Testament of *commendation* of wine when it is unfermented and *condemnation* of wine when it is fermented means that the Scriptures condemn even the moderate social drinking of alcoholic beverages. This truth is confirmed by our modern scientific understanding of the effects of even small amounts of alcohol. It first affects the frontal lobe of the brain even in small amounts that do not produce intoxication. That is the part of the brain where moral judgments and decision-making occurs. The Christian can hardly endorse the use of anything that will impair the ability to make sound judgments of a moral nature. Of course, the physical and mental effects of alcohol are so well known (although ignored by too many) that we do not need to discuss them. But in passing, we know that it has a negative impact on the kidneys, heart, blood pressure, and the entire nervous system.

New Testament Passages on Wine

Despite the evidence from Scripture and our modern knowledge of the effects of alcohol on the mental and physical nature, some Christians still argue on the basis of several New Testament passages that moderate drinking of alcoholic beverages is acceptable as long as one does not become drunk. We will examine those passages in this section.

John 2:1-11

This is undoubtedly the most frequently used story that those who believe in the moderate use of alcohol mention to justify their position. This is the story of Jesus' first recorded miracle, that of turning the water into wine at a wedding feast in Cana. When they ran out of wine, Jesus told them to pour water into the stone water pots, and the water turned into wine. After the master of the feast drank some of it, he went to the bridegroom and said, *Every man at the beginning sets out the good wine, and when the guests have well drunk, then the inferior. You have kept the good wine until now* (v. 10)! It is assumed that the verb *well drunk* means that the guests were already drunk. So when Jesus made water into wine, He must have made the same kind of wine—fermented wine.

However, this Greek verb is often used in the New Testament with the sense of *freely drinking* without a reference to intoxication. Here it could not have been fermented wine for two reasons. First, if the guests were already drunk, then their taste buds would have been dulled so that no one could taste that Jesus' wine was of better quality. Second, if the guests were already drunk, then

Jesus would have contributed to an even higher level of intoxication. And all Christians agree that Jesus would never contribute to anyone's drunkenness. Therefore, the wine that Jesus made was unfermented wine, or pure grape juice, just as the original wine at this feast was unfermented.

Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-39

Three of the gospels tell about an incident where Jesus is eating with a group of *publicans* (tax collectors) and *sinners* (Matthew 9:17; Mark 2:22; Luke 5:37-38) and he is questioned why eats with sinners and does not fast more often. In part of His reply, Jesus said that no one puts *new wine* into *old wineskins*. In its context Jesus was using old wineskins to represent Judaism and the new wine to represent the gospel. He was saying that the gospel cannot be mixed with the religion of the Pharisees because, just as an old wineskin has lost its elasticity, Judaism cannot accept the gospel. Judaism could not contain the gospel just like the wine would burst the old wineskin. Then in Luke 5:39 Jesus adds that *no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, 'The old is better.'* In other words, the Pharisees were so used to drinking their religious traditions that they do not wish to change. Therefore, this story has nothing to do with literal wine at all.

Matthew 11:19; Luke 7:34

In these texts Jesus' critics compare him unfavorably with John the Baptist by declaring that John neither ate bread nor drank wine, while Jesus did both. In fact, Jesus is accused of being both *gluttonous* and a *winebibber*. Modern advocates of moderate drinking teach that this proves Jesus drank fermented wine. It was certainly true that John lived a more austere life in the wilderness. His specific mission was to preach repentance and reformation by rebuking the excesses of his day. His simpler lifestyle provided a good context for such a mission. Jesus' primary mission was to bring the good news of the gospel directly to the people. To do this, He had to mingle with them. As a Nazarite, John abstained from all products of the vine, including wine in either state or the grapes themselves (Luke 1:15; cf. Numbers 6:1-4). Jesus was not a Nazarite but a Nazarene (because He was from Nazareth). Remember that it was Jesus' critics who accused Him of being a drunkard. That does not mean He drank fermented wine any more than His eating bread made Him a glutton.

Matthew 26:27-29; Mark 14:23-25; Luke 22:18, 20

These passages record part of the Last Supper of Jesus with His apostles just before His crucifixion. There Jesus instituted the Holy Communion service as the Christian replacement for the Passover, part of which involves the drinking of wine. Despite the fact that the word *wine* is not even present in these passages, those who favor the moderate use of alcohol declare that through this service Jesus commanded His followers to drink fermented wine.

Actually, Jesus is consistently recorded as having called the content of the communion cup the *fruit of the vine*, which according to first-century Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, refers to fresh grape juice. Exodus 12:15 and 13:7 forbid the very presence of *leaven* in the homes during Passover. The New Testament provide the explanation that leaven is a symbol of wickedness (Matthew 16:12; I Corinthians 5:7-8). Leaven is a yeast, so the leavening process is parallel to the process of fermentation. In light of these facts, including that the contents of the communion cup represent the blood of Jesus, we must surely conclude that the communion cup did, and should always, contain unfermented wine.

Acts 2:13

On the Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit had been poured out, resulting in the 120 believers being able to speak foreign languages that they had not learned (Acts 2:1-4, 6-8, 11). Critics interrupted with *mocking* and said, *They are full of new wine* (v. 13). The Greek word for *new wine* here is *gleukos*, which Greek authorities admit is a reference to new, fresh grape juice. This word illustrates the mocking nature of the accusation that the followers of Jesus were drunk on grape juice. The fact that Peter responded in verse 15 by declaring that it was too early in the day for people to get drunk is taken by advocates of moderate drinking to prove that Christians must sometimes drink fermented wine, or else Peter would have denied that they ever drank it. Actually, Peter responded in the same way that most of us would have if someone accused us of something obviously ridiculous. Indirectly, the fact that critics mocked them as being drunk on fresh grape juice suggests they knew that the followers of Jesus never drank fermented wine.

Romans 14:21

In this verse the apostle Paul declares that *It is good neither to eat meat nor drink wine nor do anything by which your brother stumbles or is offended or is made weak*. The argument used by proponents of moderate drinking is that since verse 20 states that *All things are pure*, Paul is only telling Christians not to eat or drink certain things in the company of weaker church members. Otherwise, the believer can eat or drink whatever he wants to. Since it is assumed that unfermented wine (pure grape juice) would never offend anyone, then Paul must be referring to fermented wine.

It is impossible to know precisely what the dispute over food and wine was at the church in Rome. But it is obvious that the context must determine what Paul meant by *All things are pure* (v. 20). In another place, Paul had declared that *All things are lawful* just after listing several detestable practices (I Corinthians 6:12). Romans 14:1 tells us that the entire discussion in this chapter concerns personal opinions, which no one else should judge. Therefore, Paul was saying that since none of these personal choices was inherently wrong on either side, then they were only wrong if they offended a weaker brother or sister in the church. However, if the weaker members of the church were teaching that certain foods or that wine should be avoided on certain fast days (or for

some other special reasons), the consumption of those things by the stronger members would offend the weaker ones regardless of the nature of the wine, for example. Therefore, Romans 14:21 cannot be used to infer that there is nothing inherently wrong about drinking fermented wine in moderate amounts under normal circumstances.

I Corinthians 11:21

This text states that some of the believers at Corinth were *drunk* when eating and drinking with other believers in the church (vv. 20-21). Advocates of moderate drinking view this as evidence that fermented wine was even served at church fellowship meals and that what was wrong was that some of them actually became intoxicated. The context in this chapter implies that the reference to a meal at church was an Agape, or Love, Feast eaten in connection with the Lord's Supper (20-22).

The Greek word for *drunk* is *methuo*, a word which sometimes simply means *satiated* or *fully satisfied* (as in John 2:10). The use of the word for *hungry* in opposition to the word for *drunk* makes the meaning of *satiated* mandatory here. Two persons or groups contrasted with each other would not be indicated with *hungry* versus *drunk*, but with *hungry* versus *gluttonous* or with *sober* versus *drunk*. Therefore, the meaning of *methuo* in this context must refer to those who were eating selfishly by being gluttonous while other church members had not even eaten. Note verse 22's reference to *shame those who have nothing*. The problem was selfishness in eating; the reference is to the food at the Love Feast and not to drink of any kind at all. Therefore, there is no evidence in this passage that Christians drank fermented wine during their meals.

Ephesians 5:18

This text contrasts two statements in its command—*do not be drunk with wine...but be filled with the Spirit*. Those who favor the moderate use of fermented wine claim that the emphasis is on the word *drunk* rather than on the word *wine*, and that therefore the abuse rather than the use of fermented wine is here condemned by the apostle Paul. Otherwise, they maintain that Paul would have said to drink no wine at all.

Actually, the above interpretation cannot be correct because the text does not contrast moderation with excessive drinking but the *fullness* of wine with the *fullness* of the Spirit. This contrast places the emphasis on wine and the Holy Spirit as sources for two different kinds of fillings. If you are filled with the Holy Spirit, one has no room for anything else. Thus fermented wine is in fact prohibited in this text.

I Timothy 3:8

In this text the apostle Paul instructed that deacons should not be *given to much wine*. Those who argue for a moderate use of fermented wine emphasize that since Paul said *much wine* he must have meant that only an *excess* of fermented wine was prohibited. However, in verse 3 of the same chapter, referring to bishops (vv. 1-2), the literal Greek text says that bishops should be *not near wine*. Then in verse 8 Paul begins with the word *likewise*, meaning that his counsel for deacons is the same as it was for bishops.

We should remember that what is wrong in excess is not necessarily right in moderation. For example, the apostle Peter says that believers no longer run to *excess of riot* (the King James' Version of I Peter 4:4) as the heathen do. Surely that does not mean that believers riot moderately. Therefore, in I Timothy 3:8 Paul is simply saying that deacons should not drink fermented wine. This is confirmed by the statement in verse 11 that their wives should be *temperate*. That Greek word literally means *abstainers from wine*. It is inconceivable that Paul would require deacons' wives to abstain from fermented wine but allow the deacons themselves to drink it moderately. It should also be noted that denial of fermented wine to bishops and deacons does not imply that it may be imbibed by other members of the church, for otherwise in the context, Paul would be giving them permission to be irreverent, double-tongued, and greedy for money (also v. 8).

I Timothy 5:23

This is probably the second most popular text used to justify moderate drinking of alcohol. In this text Paul advised Timothy to *use a little wine for your stomach's sake and your frequent infirmities*. Evidently Timothy suffered repeatedly from some type of intestinal problems. For this reason Paul advised that he *no longer drink only water*, implying that Timothy had avoided all products of the grape like the Nazarites did. In any case, it was only a *little* wine and for medicinal purposes. Therefore, even if the wine here referred to fermented wine, this text cannot properly be used to justify moderate social drinking. It probably referred to unfermented wine because the testimony of ancient history is that unfermented wine was preferred for stomach ailments.

Other Substances

From the Old Testament we established that fermented wine was forbidden in its very use, not merely in its abuse. We have also demonstrated that no statement in the New Testament contradicts that testimony. Therefore, all alcoholic beverages should be avoided by all Christians at all times.

In addition to avoiding alcohol, the believer should also avoid any other substance that is inherently addictive because such a substance tends to control the person using it. For a Christian, the Holy

Spirit should be the only One who has direct influence over him or her. This means that substances like tobacco and caffeine should be avoided, in addition to all of the medical problems known about using both substances. Naturally, the use of recreational drugs and the abuse of pharmaceutical medications should also be avoided.

Some caffeine might be necessary in an emergency when a person must remain awake in order to drive to some other city late at night. But care should be taken not to consume caffeine when no emergency exists.

Outward Appearance

Not only is what we put *into* our bodies important to God, but so is what we put *on* our bodies—in other words, our outward appearance. Our outward appearance is not merely a personal matter but also a spiritual issue. Not only is this true because the Christian's body is not his or her own but belongs to God as His temple (I Corinthians 6:19), but because the Scriptures specifically identify our outward appearance as representing one of two spiritual conditions, one representative of a godly life and one representative of a wicked life. We address the Biblical teaching on the spiritual matter of our outward appearance first and then examine specific New Testament passages that further define what our outward appearance should look like.

Outward Appearance as a Spiritual Issue

Before sin entered the world, Genesis 2:25 tells us that Adam and Eve *were both naked...and were not ashamed*. Then after they sinned, *the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked* (Genesis 3:7). Obviously, they knew they were naked before they sinned, so the issue here concerns spiritual nakedness. Then when they sewed fig leaves together to clothe themselves (Genesis 3:7), the Lord considered it so unacceptable that He *made tunics of skin, and clothed them Himself* (v. 21).

The fact that the Lord clothed them with tunics of skin implies that an animal had to be sacrificed. Because this is a spiritual issue, that animal must have represented Jesus as the Lamb of God, who would one day become the substitutionary sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (John 1:29, 36; I Peter 1:19). Therefore, the fig leaves that Adam and Eve made for themselves represented righteousness by works, and the animal skins that God clothed them with represented righteousness by grace through faith in the Lamb of God. Ever since this time, clothing has become a metaphor for one of these two spiritual paths, as outlined below:

- *I put on righteousness, and it clothed me* (Job 29:14).

- *For He [God] has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10).*
- *He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments (Revelation 3:5).*
- *These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 7:14).*
- *Blessed are those who wash their robes [literal Greek text], that they may have the right to the tree of life (Revelation 22:14).*

Please note that from the following Bible passages whenever God's people put on *literal* jewels and paint, He reckons such behavior as reflecting their desire to beautify themselves to attract other lovers (gods) in order that they might save themselves. On the other hand, whenever God Himself is pictured as *figuratively* bedecking His people as His bride, it is a positive thing that He does:

- *Furthermore you sent for men to come from afar, to whom a messenger was sent; and there they came. And you washed yourself for them, painted your eyes, and adorned yourself with ornaments....But righteous men will judge them after the manner of adulteresses (Ezekiel 23:40, 45). Note: All of Ezekiel 23 condemns Samaria and Jerusalem for being spiritual harlots and serving other gods.*
- *I [God] adorned you with ornaments, put bracelets on your wrists, and a chain on your neck. And I put a jewel in your nose, earrings in your ears, and a beautiful crown on your head. Thus you were adorned with gold and silver, and your clothing was of fine linen, silk, and embroidered cloth....You were exceedingly beautiful, and succeeded to royalty. Your fame went out among the nations because of your beauty, for it was perfect through My splendor which I had bestowed on you (Ezekiel 16:11-14). Note: The ornaments and clothes which were figuratively given to God's people was God's own splendor that He gave them.*

From these two passages we conclude that when God's people put on jewels and other ornaments, it leads to their own self-glorification. But when God puts those things on them *figuratively*, it represents His righteousness and glory. This tells us that God loves jewelry, but apparently with our sinful natures, we cannot handle literal jewelry this side of heaven.

New Testament Application

Two New Testament passages apply the Old Testament teaching about literal ornamentation and outward appearance in specific terms. We now examine them and deduce further specific principles and additional specifics based on them.

- *...in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works (I Timothy 2:9-10).*
- *Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel—rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit (I Peter 3:3-4).*

In discussing the clothing, hairstyle, and ornaments of women, I Timothy 2:9 identifies the following three key terms as fundamental principles that should be applied:

- *Modest*—The Greek word means *to be properly arranged in an orderly manner*. Implicit in this concept is the principle of attractiveness or good taste.
- *Propriety*—The Greek word denotes the idea of *humility* or not calling attention to oneself. Implicit in this concept is the principle of simplicity.
- *Moderation*—The Greek word means *self-control* or of sound mind or *sound judgment*.

In the same verse (I Timothy 2:9), four things are listed that are in direct contrast to these three principles: (1) *braided hair*; (2) *gold*; (3) *pearls*; and (4) *costly clothing*. The parallel items in I Peter 3:3 are (1) *arranging the hair*; (2) *wearing gold*; and (3) *putting on fine apparel*. It is evident that *braided hair* and *arranging the hair* relate to the same issue and that both texts forbid any adornment or arrangement of the hair which calls unusual attention to it. It is also evident that the use of *gold* or *pearls* includes all items that have no functional purpose but to adorn the person and would therefore include objects made of silver, diamonds, or other things as well as gold or pearls. It would be just as evident that *costly clothing* and *fine apparel* are parallel thoughts that forbid expensive-looking articles of clothing. Note: There is no Greek word for *fine* in I Peter 3:3. However, because it is obvious that the apostle is not condemning the wearing of apparel per se, the addition of an adjective like *fine* or *expensive* is appropriate to make the statement make sense in the context.

The parallels between I Timothy 2:9 and I Peter 3:3 make it clear that there are actually three categories of outward appearance which are the subject of these passages:

- *Natural*—Because hair is a natural part of a person’s body, the prohibition against fancy treatment of the hair that calls undue attention to it would include similar prohibitions for other natural parts of the body, such as nails, lips, eyes, and so on.
- *Ornamental*—This would include the wearing of gold, silver, diamonds, pearls, or other objects to adorn the body apart from the clothing, since clothing is specified in the third category. As such, finger rings, earrings, nose rings, necklaces, and bracelets, regardless of whether they are expensive, are of an ornamental nature.
- *Functional*—Clothing concerns those things that are of a functional nature, which includes actual articles of clothing, any items used to keep clothing on the body or to make them more functional (e.g., buttons, tie clasps, suspenders, and so on) and any other functional item that is required as a practical matter (e.g., a watch, eyeglasses, and so on).

Before making final application of all these principles and standards of outward appearance, we want to make two things clear. First, note that the word *merely* in I Peter 3:3 was supplied by translators; there is no Greek word there at all. Thus, the messages in I Timothy 2 and I Peter 3 are in full agreement. Second, while I Timothy 2 and I Peter 3 are speaking directly about married women (I Peter 3:1), the same principles and standards would apply to single women and to all men. Otherwise, single women and all men could be immodest, immoderate, and could call attention to themselves by any ornamentation of their liking. So let us be clear that these principles and standards apply to all Christians regardless of gender or marital status.

Regarding items that are *functional* in nature (e.g., buttons, tie clasps, suspenders) and items that are required as a matter of a practical matter (e.g., a watch, eyeglasses, and so on), these items must not violate the principle of simplicity by calling undue attention to the person. This would also include, but not be limited to, those things that are extreme or in bad taste, such as the wearing of clashing colors or patterns that stand out in the way that discordant notes of music stand out. Obviously, sexually suggestive clothing or clothing or hairstyles that significantly blur the distinction between men and women are also taboo (Deuteronomy 22:5), as is any un-Christian message (in either written or symbolic form) worn by a believer. Finally, clothing that is otherwise appropriate but is worn for an occasion that the clothes are not appropriate for, such as wearing more formal clothing to a social occasion in which there is physical exercise in games, attracts undue attention to the person and makes physical participation all but impossible.

Regarding items that are *ornamental* in nature (jewelry), they serve only to attract attention to the person wearing them. While the principle of modesty does require that a person dress attractively, the concern that even functional items not attract unnecessary attention to the person provides the rationale for the prohibition against items of an ornamental nature. Specifically, all ornaments, by definition, are unnecessary and thus attract unnecessarily to the person wearing them. People often

rationalize that they wear a particular object, not to attract attention to themselves, but to represent their love for a close friend, their solidarity with their school, or for some other sentimental reason, such as a reminder of the parent or loved one who gave them the object. By such rationalization, a clever person might conclude that there is no such thing as ornamental jewelry at all, thus voiding God's clear counsel in Scripture. But the Christian should avoid that rationalization.

The wearing of amulets and good luck charms should not be worn because they (1) are unnecessary items and thus ornaments, and (2) reflect a pagan theological view of how to ward off demonic powers.

What about the wedding ring? As a gold or silver object with no inherent practical function, is it an ornament? Actually, that partly depends upon the culture or other social setting (workplace or social places frequently attended) in which you find yourself. For example, if a particular culture tends to judge a married couple as not married because they do not wear wedding rings, then for the sake of promoting a good Christian witness, that couple should wear wedding rings. Or if a believer works or frequently socializes in an environment in which members of the opposite sex tend to make advances to him or her, then the wearing of a wedding ring may discourage that kind of unwanted attention by a married Christian. Another exception might be the case of a married believer whose unbelieving spouse gave him or her the wedding ring. If he or she would be offended by taking it off, it would be better to wear it so that any witness for Jesus is not unnecessarily cut off. In any case, under all these circumstances the wedding ring is not an ornament because it is a cultural requirement. Even where culturally necessary or desirable, wedding rings worn by the Christian should preferably be as simple as possible. Moreover, the wearing of simple wedding rings should not become an excuse for wearing ornamental jewelry.

From the Biblical evidence already discussed, we can now deduce a clear and more complete definition of what is ornamental in nature. An ornament is anything that is not functional or culturally required and/or serves to attract attention to the wearer. It may attract attention by being (1) expensive-looking; (2) outlandish; (3) having no other purpose except to attract attention; or (4) requiring close inspection in order to see that it promotes something else (e.g., a class ring), which then of course has first attracted the attention to the person wearing the object. For example, button earrings are neither expensive-looking nor outlandish but are still ornamental objects because they have no other purpose but to make one more attractive. And because they are not functional or culturally required, button earrings are completely unnecessary, thus unnecessarily adding to the person's attractiveness.

There are a few things, however, that are not functional or culturally required and that do not serve to attract attention to the wearer. For example, a ribbon pinned or a black arm band on one's clothing in order to show solidarity with victims of some tragedy or with a cause like fighting breast cancer is easily identifiable as that which promotes something other than the person wearing

it. The same is true for a simple flag pin, which promotes love for one's country without also calling attention to the person wearing it. Of course, promotional items should only promote that which is appropriate for the Christian. Furthermore, it is not wise to wear more than one promotional item at a time because that would probably tend to draw unusual attention to the person.

Finally, although they are usually silver or gold in appearance, badges are not ornamental jewelry because they are clearly worn to identify someone as a particular officer (e.g., police, fire, or military) and usually as an integral part of a uniform. In other words, there is a social necessity for wearing them.

Regarding the *natural* parts of a person's body, Christians should avoid any practice that calls unnecessary attention to themselves. This is clearly the reason behind the prohibition of braided hair, which must refer to the ancient custom of weaving gold or other expensive materials into a woman's hair. Simple braids in one's hair do not attract undue attention, although really outlandish hair styles do. So is the use of unnatural colors, like green, red, or purple hair, although the use of natural color to hide gray or white hair seems appropriate, if desired. Of course, the length or style of the hair that is culturally identified more with the opposite gender is forbidden because it tends to blur the distinction between men and women, a distinction that God created in the very beginning.

Visible make-up and/or paint on one's body should be avoided because it turns the eyes, lips, and nails into *living* ornaments. By contrast, the judicious use of make-up only to cover a physical blemish would not be prohibited because such use does not make it obvious that the person is wearing it. Indeed, it might even be necessary to prevent attracting undue attention to the person. One should be careful, of course, to determine if the make-up is likely to do any damage to the skin or other organs before deciding to use it.

Like a flag pin, a simple cross promotes something acceptable that does not attract undue attention to a person wearing it. So it would not be considered an ornament unless it looked expensive. The same would be true of a fish. A fish became the first symbol of Christianity sometime during the first three centuries A.D., although no one knows exactly when. Christians associated a fish with Jesus' statement that He would make His followers *fishers of men* (Matthew 4:19; cf. Luke 5:9-10). So they took the Greek word for fish and used its letters as an acronym for "Jesus Christ God's Son, Savior."

The word *crucifix* is derived from a Latin word for *fixed to a cross* and is a cross with the figure of Jesus on it. Early Christians used to hang a crucifix on an eastern wall of their house to indicate the direction of prayer. Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Anglican, Episcopalian, and especially European Lutheran Christians still use a crucifix as sacramental in nature (something

holy) as part of their devotion to God. Sometimes they pray in front of it or stare at it in contemplation. Most Protestants follow the attitude of the sixteenth-century French Protestant Reformer John Calvin (d. 1564), who denounced the crucifix as an idol in violation of the Second Commandment's prohibition against using physical objects in worship (Exodus 20:4-6). The history and use of the crucifix as an object of devotion indeed makes it an idol, even though its defenders call it veneration; the words *veneration* and *worship* are actually synonyms. Therefore, I believe that Christians should neither wear nor display a crucifix.

Some believe that Leviticus 19:28 prohibits tattoos. However, the context there clearly speaks of pagan religious practices so it does not really apply to modern tattoos. There are three reasons that a Christian should not have tattoos. First, we have been made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), so marking it defaces that image. Second, since our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19), marking it with a tattoo is like putting graffiti on a temple wall; it is clearly an act of disrespect. Finally, tattoo inks contain chemicals and heavy metals that can cause cancer. Body-piercing should not be done either for the same reasons, except that it makes one more susceptible to infections rather than to cancer.

Seven Positive Principles of Outward Adornment

In closing this section, we can now identify seven positive principles of outward adornment as follows:

1. One should wear clothing (as least in public).
2. It should reasonably reflect one's gender.
3. It should be appropriate for the occasion.
4. It should be clean and orderly.
5. It should be simple.
6. It should be attractive.
7. It should be functional or culturally required or promotional of something appropriate without also (at the same time) attracting undue attention to the wearer.

Sexual Morality

In addition to what we put *into* our bodies and put *on* our bodies, what we do *with* our bodies also matters to God. In other words, our activities are important to God. These include issues of sexual morality, language, and gambling, which we will cover in that same order in the next three sections.

Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

Regardless of what our secular world says, Biblical marriage is between one man and one woman. This is true for two basic reasons. First, that was the model for marriage instituted in the very first marriage, between Adam and Eve (Genesis 2:18, 21-24). Second, the spiritual symbolism of the sexual act means that any sexual relationship other than between one man and one woman in marriage is out of bounds. This can be seen in the statements in Genesis 2:24 and I Corinthians 6:16-17: (1) *Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh* (Genesis 2:24); and (2) *Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For the two, He says, shall become one flesh. But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with Him* (I Corinthians 6:16-17). These two passages make it clear that the sexual act between a married couple represents the spiritual union that each one is to have with the Lord. We will address the obvious implications of this truth after dealing with the issues of divorce and remarriage.

This truth about marriage implies that a couple dating each other ought to meet three criteria in order to have the hope of a successful marriage. First, they should be physically attracted to each other. This is because God invented sex and gave both genders sex hormones that result in the physical desire for intimacy. Second, if sexual intercourse represents the spiritual oneness that God wants with each one of us, then two people considering marriage must be certain to be on the same spiritual wavelength concerning their relationship and responsibilities to God. As Amos 3:3 asks rhetorically, *Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?* Thus, marriage outside of one's faith is always spiritually dangerous. Finally, if the couple is to become one in spirit, they must be compatible in their personalities and general view of life. If not, conflicts will almost surely arise and threaten to tear their marriage apart. It is better not to marry someone than to chance a marriage with someone with a different outlook on life or with an incompatible personality.

One more thing should be considered. The engagement period should be sufficiently long to be reasonably certain that those three criteria are met. But it should not be so long that they become so tempted that they yield to the desire to have sexual intimacy before marriage (I Corinthians 7:8-9).

Of course, if a person has the ability to remain celibate and single, that is also acceptable to God. Marriage, then, is not considered mandatory. But celibacy is considered a gift in the New Testament, a gift that most people do not have (Matthew 19:10-12; I Corinthians 7:1-2, 7-9).

Jesus endorsed marriage as between one man and one woman when He favorably quoted from Genesis 1 and 2 in Matthew 19:4-6 and Mark 10:6-8. He also taught that God permitted divorce in the Law of Moses because of the hardness of the people's hearts (Matthew 19:7-8; Mark 10:2-6). Finally, Jesus declared that the only valid reason for divorce is sexual immorality (Matthew

19:9; 5:32; cf. Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18). Jesus also declared that a person is not free to remarry unless the former spouse commits sexual immorality, that is, has sexual relations with someone else, which could occur within or outside of a second marriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). The apostle Paul provides one exception to this remarriage standard. If an unbelieving spouse leaves the marriage, then the believing spouse is free to remarry (I Corinthians 7:15). Otherwise, the believing spouse should remain in the marriage (I Corinthians 7:12-14). It is apparent, then, that God still considers a married couple still married unless and until one party commits fornication or adultery with someone else. Of course, a person is free to remarry if his or her spouse dies because neither one in that case was the cause of the separation (Matthew 19:6; Mark 10:9), and that kind of separation makes continued oneness impossible.

Abortion

With all the controversy over abortion rights in the last several decades, the question often arises whether or not abortion is a sin.

According to Psalms 139:13-16, God *forms* and *weaves* (literal Hebrew for *covered*) a human being in the mother's womb (v. 13) and makes the person in *secret...in the lowest parts of the earth* (v. 15). This suggests that the fetus is a human being. Then in Psalms 51:5, David declared that *in sin my mother conceived me*. There is no evidence that David was conceived out of wedlock or under any other sinful circumstance. Therefore, he is saying that sin begins at conception. According to Exodus 21:22-25, if a pregnant woman is accidentally caused to give birth prematurely, the one causing the premature birth must pay damages (as in a property case) even if no harm comes to either the mother or the child. But if the mother and/or the child is harmed, then the perpetrator is to be judged according to the principle of a *life for life, eye for eye, and tooth for tooth* (vv. 23-24).

The conclusion seems self-evident as follows:

- A human fetus is a human being (Psalms 139:13-16).
- Sin begins at conception because a human fetus' nature is sinful (Psalms 51:5).
- An accidental cause of a death of a human fetus calls for the death penalty under ancient Israel's civil laws (Exodus 21:22-25).
- Therefore, the intentional killing of a human fetus must be viewed by God as murder. Thus, having an intentional abortion is murder.

Although no exceptions are given in the Bible, a merciful God might be expected to allow for some exceptions. Perhaps in cases of rape or incest or where the health or life of the mother is at stake, an abortion might be morally permitted. But since Scripture does not tell us that, it is an individual decision that must be weighed very carefully.

Sexual Perversions

The Biblical teaching of marriage, divorce, and remarriage implicitly makes the following sexual relationships morally wrong because they pervert the very meaning of the sexual relationship:

- *Casual Sex (or Fornication)*—This term usually refers to sexual relationships between two unmarried people, although sometimes the Bible uses it interchangeably with the word *adultery*.

Obviously, since a sexual union is supposed to represent the oneness that God desires with each one of us, having promiscuous sex destroys that oneness and thus violates God's will. Paul also declared that sexual relationships should be confined to marriage (I Corinthians 7:2).

- *Prostitution*—This is the practice of committing fornication or adultery with someone who pays or receives money or something else of value for performing the sexual act.

If casual sexual relationships are immoral, then prostitution simply adds to the wickedness by reducing an act that is supposed to represent spiritual oneness to a financial transaction. Prostitution and the playing of the harlot is frequently used in the Scriptures to indicate a spiritual harlotry between Gods' professed people and their illicit spiritual relationships to other gods (Isaiah 1:21; 23:16; Jeremiah 2:20; 3:1, 6, 8; Ezekiel 16:15-16, 28, 31, 35, 41; 23:44; Hosea 4:15; Revelation 17:5; cf. Revelation 14:8; 17:2, 4; 18:3, 9; 19:2). It is also considered a sin against one's own body, which belongs to God (I Corinthians 6:15-20).

- *Adultery*—This term usually refers to sexual relationships between a married person and someone other than his or her spouse.

See Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 20:10; Numbers 5:11-31; Ezekiel 16:38; John 8:3-5; and I Corinthians 6:9. It is often used with the idea of spiritual adultery in which God's professed people, who are spiritually "married" to Him are engaging in spiritually illicit relationships with other gods (Jeremiah 9:2; 23:10; Hosea 7:4; Ezekiel 23:45; James 4:4).

- *Polygamy*—This term refers to the practice of a man having more than one wife at the same time.

Polygamy destroys the symbol of oneness that the marriage relationship is supposed to represent between God and His people. Occasionally, it is attempted to be justified by referring to the fact that Jacob (Israel) had four wives (Genesis 29:23, 25, 28; 30:3-4, 9), David had eight wives (I Samuel 18:20-27; 25:39-43; II Samuel 3:5; 11:3, 26-27; I Chronicles 3:1-3), and Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines (I Kings 11:3). Note: A concubine is a woman who lives and

occasionally has sexual relations with a man who she is not married to. However, Scripture never says God approved of those polygamous relationships. The fact that God may have overlooked certain things in *times of ignorance* does not negate the fact that He *now commands all men everywhere to repent* (Acts 17:30).

- *Incest*—This term refers to sexual relationships between close relatives (Leviticus 20:11-12).

In the first few generations after Creation, many people must have had to marry close relatives. Cain, for example, was the second son of Adam and Eve, and had no one else to marry except an unnamed sister. Apparently, in the beginning children born to close relatives did not produce babies with birth defects. But over time, the effects of sin have led to this problem. This is the reason that by Moses' day, it was forbidden and called incest. See also Deuteronomy 27:20 and 27:22-23.

- *Rape*—Rape is a sexual relationship that results from force or the threat of force or perhaps even blackmail.

Obviously, the use or threat of use of force or of blackmail in order to have a sexual relationship is despicable behavior that does not represent the voluntary oneness that sexual relations within marriage is designed to symbolize. It is not only immoral but a crime against humanity (Deuteronomy 22:25-29).

- *Homosexuality*—This term refers to the sexual relationship between two men or two women.

Regardless of our modern Western culture, homosexuality is a perversion of the spiritual oneness that the sexual relationship within marriage is designed to represent. The fact that many countries have now legalized the marriage between two people of the same sex does not invalidate God's Word. Two men or two women do not have the natural anatomy to be joined together as one person. By forcing different means in an attempt to experience this oneness, two such persons ignore the designs of God's Creation and therefore cannot by definition symbolize this oneness even if they are legally married. Such marriages may be legally recognized by the world, but God never recognizes these as legitimate marriages. See Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; and Romans 1:26-27. [Note: Some object to the prohibition against homosexuality and other sexual sins by denying the validity of Old Testament laws. But laws against sexual perversions are obviously based on the natural order of God's Creation and violate the spiritual oneness that sexual relations were intended to represent within a marriage between a man and a woman. Therefore, these perversions are violations of God's moral law and must be understood as permanently applying to all peoples in

all cultures for all times. Just because they were violations of the Mosaic Law in ancient Israel does not invalidate their immoral nature.]

While the Christian should never engage in gay-bashing or discrimination against anyone for his sexual orientation or lifestyle, neither should he or she refuse to call it sin. Many excuse this sin on the grounds that some people are born with this inclination. We have no doubt about that, but every one of us is born with one or more inclinations to commit specific sins. But God does not hold us accountable for our inclinations, but only for our yielding to them. Therefore, there is no excuse for homosexual behavior.

- *Bestiality*—This term describes the sexual act between a man or woman with an animal or beast.

Bestiality is perverse because the spiritual oneness that sexual relations within marriage is designed to symbolize cannot possibly exist between two different species. It defies the natural order that God created. It is absurd and therefore a gross perversion. See Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 18:23; 20:15-16; and Deuteronomy 27:21.

- *Masturbation*—This refers to the practice of a person who gives himself or herself sexual pleasure through his or her own stimulation.

Although the Bible does not mention this practice, it is surely condemned by God because it again violates the spiritual oneness that sexual pleasure is designed to represent in the oneness between a married man and his female wife. As with all the sexual perversions, it also violates the principle that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 6:19-20). See also I Thessalonians 4:3-5, which in the context of counsel to abstain from sexual immorality, Paul admonishes the believer to *possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in passion of lust*. This means to sanctify, or *set apart*, one's sex organs for the physical union between a husband and his wife.

Objections to the Prohibition against Homosexuality

The issue of homosexuality in modern society has led Christian homosexuals (gays) to attempt to defend it on the basis of Scripture. For this reason, we will examine their objections to the traditional opposition to this practice on the basis of three primary Bible passages and their related texts.

Genesis 19:4-11

This passage in Genesis describes the story of two angels disguised as men who visited Lot in the city of Sodom. They were there to warn Lot and his family because God was about to destroy it.

While staying at Lot's house, several men from the city came and demanded that the two male visitors come out so that they many *know* them (Genesis 19:5). The traditional Christian interpretation of this word for *know* is that, depending upon the context, it sometimes refers to a sexual, intimate knowing of another person, as in *Adam knew his wife Eve, and she conceived and bore Cain* (Genesis 4:1).

Christian defenders of the gay lifestyle argue that the Hebrew word simply refers to the ordinary sense of knowing anything. However, when Lot offered his two daughters instead, he said that *they have not known a man* (v. 8). Of course, they knew their father in the normal sense of that word. Therefore, Lot was saying that they had never had sexual relations with a man. There is also a very similar story in Judges 9:22-25 in which several men in the city of Gibeah (v. 15) demanded that a male visitor of a resident come out that they *may know him* (v. 22). The man of the house refused but offered his virgin daughter and his concubine, which the men *knew* her and *abused* her all night until morning (vv. 24-25). The context is clear that when the men *knew* the concubine it means they had sex with her. Therefore, the men in Sodom were attempting to force sexual relations with Lot's two male visitors.

Jude 7 also refers to Sodom and its sister city of Gomorrah and declares that they had *given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh*. Some defenders of the gay lifestyle interpret the term *strange flesh* as referring to foreign idols or people. The New Testament writers had four different Greek words to choose from to identify someone as a foreigner or stranger. Not one of those words or their roots is even related to the Greek word here. This means that Jude taught that the Sodomites were following after *different* or *other* flesh that was *different* or *other* from or than what is natural and normal. Therefore, Jude is teaching us that it was not merely the sin of wanting to rape Lot's male guests, but the fact that they wanted unnatural flesh. The weight of all the evidence leads us to only one conclusion—that the sexually immoral sin of Sodom was homosexuality. It is often argued that the real sin of Sodom was not homosexuality but inhospitality toward visitors. Their behavior certainly reflected a lack of hospitality in their attempted rape of Lot's two male visitors. But Jude 7 says they were guilty of sexual immorality. Given the obvious facts of the story, the sexual immorality of Sodom was its practice of homosexuality.

Romans 1:26-27

The apostle Paul refers to those who worshiped the creature or creation rather than the God of Creation (vv. 18-25). In this context he then says that *For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due* (vv. 26-27).

Defenders of the gay lifestyle assert that all of this refers to idolatrous religious practices that were common in Paul's day. But a careful reading of Paul's words reveals that three times their idolatrous practices involving the worship of the creature rather than the Creator was the *reason* God gave them over to this sexual perversion (vv. 24, 26, 28) and a long list of other sins (vv. 29-31). This cause-and-effect relationship proves that the sexual perversion and other sins were separate from the idolatrous religious practices of worshiping the creation. Moreover, the use of the word *lust* in verses 24 and 27 and to *natural use* in verses 26-27 all speak of sexual perversion, that is, sexual activity that violates both natural law and God's law. In addition, verse 27's reference to men who willingly choose men over women points to the inescapable conclusion that Paul here condemns homosexual behavior.

I Corinthians 6:9 and I Timothy 1:9-10

Both of these passages list numerous evil behaviors that Paul condemns, including *homosexuals* and *sodomites*. Christian defenders of the gay lifestyle object to the translation of the words *homosexuals* and *sodomites*. The Greek word for *sodomites* is a word that combines words meaning *male* and *bed*. The word for *bed* is known to have been a slang term for *intercourse*, so that the term means *male intercourse*. The Greek word for *homosexuals* has the basic meaning of *soft*. Philo, the Jewish philosopher and theologian of the late first century B.C. and the early first century A.D., used this word to refer to effeminate young males who dressed like women and hired themselves out to male homosexual prostitutes. In this context, then, the term translated as *sodomites* refers to male homosexuals and the term translated as *homosexuals* refer to male homosexuals who sold themselves to male homosexual prostitutes. Because they are in a list of wicked behaviors, both are therefore condemned.

Language

The use of language is also something that people do with their bodies, for the tongue is certainly a part of the body. Therefore, our tongue itself should be consecrated so that we avoid speaking or writing in certain ways. There are two fundamental passages of Scripture that form the basis for this important issue. First, there is the Third Commandment of Exodus 20:7: *You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*. This commandment refers to three things: (1) claiming to belong to the Lord while living a lifestyle in disregard of His commandments; (2) the use of God's name to support false statements (Leviticus 19:12); and (3) the use of words that *profane* God's name (Leviticus 19:12), that is, that *defile* or *pollute* it by treating something holy in an irreverent manner.

As pertaining specifically to language in an ordinary context, profanity would include any reference to God that treats His name irreverently or in a frivolous or common way. Profane phrases would include, but not be limited to, expressions like "God d-a-m-n it" and other words

for God, including abbreviations or slang references to God, such as *golly* (a form of *God*), *geeze* (short for *Jesus*), *gee* (short for *Jesus*), and *gosh* (slang for *God*).

The second passage of Scripture that forms the basis for telling us how to use our tongues is Matthew 5:33-37. Here Jesus forbids oaths to the Lord (v. 33). His focus is on truth-telling and thus does not constitute a prohibition against taking an oath in a courtroom or other legal or formal setting, as some teach. It also applies to the common Jewish practice at that time of making oaths of affirmation of some truth or of a promise to do something by saying “I swear” and then invoking God’s name or other things. So it is not speaking here of profanity but of a careless use of words in the making of vows (promises), especially if one is swearing falsely. Therefore, the principle here involves truth-telling and frivolous statements. None of this would preclude the telling of jokes as long as it is clean in its language and content.

These principles would then surely mean that the Christian should avoid vulgarity, which is the use of words that one’s culture associates with inappropriate language, and with the use of words in an inappropriate way. Vulgar words in modern English would include, but not be limited to, words like *c-r-a-p*, *s-h-i-t*, and *f-u-c-k*. Other words used inappropriately in anger or contempt would include, but not be limited to, words like *damn*, *hell*, and *bloody*.

Words are usually picked up fairly easily from other people that we associate with. This is one reason that we should select our friends carefully and avoid friendships with those who use profanity or other careless speech.

Gambling

Gambling in any form involves a game of chance in which the player pays for the long shot of winning at the expense of others. This includes, but is not limited to, poker and other betting games, betting on sporting events (including office pools), casino games, buying lottery tickets, children betting with marbles, and so on.

Gambling is morally wrong for several reasons. First, it tends to undermine the work ethic in an attempt to “get rich quick” (Proverbs 12:11; 13:11; 28:20; II Thessalonians 3:10). Second, gambling violates the spirit of loving your neighbor as yourself, for in gambling one is attempting to take something of value from your neighbor (defined as anyone with whom we come in contact) on the basis of luck (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:25-28; cf. Luke 10:29-37). Third, gambling is wrong because it is a disregard of the Biblical principle of responsible stewardship, the concept that everything is God’s who loans some things to us and who gives us the ability to get wealth (Psalms 24:1; 50:10; Deuteronomy 8:17-18; Matthew 25:14-30). Finally, gambling is morally wrong because it tends to be habit-forming, or addictive, so that the “game”

controls the person (I Corinthians 6:12). For the Christian, the Holy Spirit is the only thing who should have that kind of influence on us (I Corinthians 6:19-20).

As a result of violating all these Biblical principles, we believe that it is wrong to play poker and other betting games, to bet on sporting events, to play casino games in general, and to buy lottery tickets because they are all different forms of gambling.

The use of playing cards should probably also be avoided. They apparently originated in association with certain occult beliefs and in fortune-telling and were introduced into Europe in the late fourteenth century. We concede that merely because something had pagan origins does not automatically make something immoral, for the necktie was anciently regarded as a phallic symbol (of the penis) and now it is merely one of the articles of clothing which men wear to show respect at more formal occasions. Also, the Messianic title of Sun of Righteousness (Malachi 4:2) was used even at a time when literal sun worship was prevalent. However, the New Testament teaches us that we should not do anything that is lawful if it is likely to cause another Christian to stumble back into sin (Romans 14:21; I Corinthians 8:9; Revelation 2:14). This stumbling-block principle leads us to avoid the use of playing cards because its common association with gambling might lead another believer back into the gambling habit. Besides, there are numerous other decks of cards used for a variety of card games that we do not need to use the standard deck of playing cards.

Music

In addition to God's concern for what we put into our bodies, put on our bodies, and do with our bodies, He is also concerned with what we put into our minds. This includes the areas of music and entertainment, which we discuss in that order next.

Review our paper entitled "The Christian Church: Its Purpose, Importance, Structure, Authority, and Functions" for our thorough discussion of music. Here I will attempt to give a brief summary of music principles. Remember that music is not only a matter of personal taste, but music is either good or bad depending upon how it affects the body and/or the mind. Good secular music meets these five criteria:

- Its beat (or rhythm) is subordinate to the melody and harmony.
- It avoids frequent repetitive syncopation.
- It has no dissonance (clashing sounds).
- It has no mantras (the frequent repetition of the same sounds).
- Its lyrics, if it has any, are appropriate for the Christian.

Rock music is bad because (1) its beat usually dominates the melody and harmony; the “harder” the rock music the more dominant is the beat; (2) it employs frequent repetitive syncopation; (3) it sometimes contains mantra sounds; and (4) its lyrics are often sexually immoral or promoting of recreational drugs.

Jazz is bad music because (1) its beat is dominant over the melody and harmony; (2) it employs frequent syncopation and swing and blue notes; swing notes alternate between lengthening and shortening two consecutive notes, and blue notes are those that are a slightly different pitch from the normal pitch—both swing and blue notes tend to cause involuntary movements of parts of the body; and (3) it often contains dissonance.

Rhythm and blues music is bad because (1) its beat is dominant over the melody and harmony; (2) it employs blue notes (see the previous paragraph); and (3) its lyrics generally are about the sad and seamier side of life. Rap music is bad because it is all beat and syncopation. Country and western music is generally bad music because even though the music itself is usually good, the lyrics are usually about the sad and seamier side of life. Reggae is bad music because it combines elements of blue and swing notes (see the previous paragraph). Also, ragtime music is bad because it makes extensive use of syncopated rhythm.

Folk music is generally good because the music itself is almost always good and the lyrics tell a story that is usually acceptable. Of course, patriotic music is usually good because of the nature of its content, although the rockier versions should be avoided. Finally, classical music is usually good, although some pieces of classical music contain dissonance. Unfortunately, the evidence is that most secular music should be avoided, which tells you of the inherent power of music that Satan has perverted so much of it.

Dancing is often associated with music. Some believers have defended most forms of dancing today on the basis that Scripture shows that some of God’s people danced. In Scripture, as is often but not always the case in the secular world today, dancing was an expression of joy (Exodus 15:20; I Samuel 21:11; 29:5; II Samuel 6:14; Job 21:11-12; Psalms 30:11; 149:3; 150:4; Ecclesiastes 3:4; Jeremiah 31:4, 13; Luke 15:25). With one exception where children are said to dance (Job 21:11-2, presumably both boys and girls together), dancing in the Scriptures is never portrayed as something that men and women do together. Common sense tells us the reason is that the various movements of the body in dance when men and women dance together tend to lead to sexually suggestive thoughts and feelings, and like music itself, dancing is a powerful medium. We do not know the precise nature of dancing in the Bible, but we can say with certainty that it was not sensual in nature.

Naturally, the Christian should therefore avoid dancing with a member of the opposite sex. Some argue that square dancing, folk dancing, and ballet dancing are not sexually suggestive and

therefore acceptable. Actually, square dancing involves holding the opposite sex tightly in order to swing their partners around. Some folk dancing is performed between members of the opposite sex. And the tights and/or skirts worn by ballet dancers highlight or otherwise reveals the anatomy, making it sexually suggestive for most men.

Entertainment

Even what we do to entertain ourselves is under the purview of God. For example, theatrical and film performances that portray violence, sexual immorality, pornographic scenes, or other evil acts should be avoided because the believer ought to meditate on those things that are noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (Philippians 4:8). The reason for this is that what we behold, or look at, tends to change us (I Corinthians 3:18), so that those who say they are totally unaffected by watching such performances are simply wrong according to Scripture. Pornography is particularly vicious because it tends to be addictive, drawing the person into deeper feelings for sexual immorality. For this reason, Scripture tells us to make a covenant with our eyes not to look upon certain things (Job 31:1; Psalms 101:3; 119:37) or approve of others doing evil things (Romans 1:32).

Television, videos, radio, audio recordings, in addition to books and other written materials can bring us good things or reports of important events in the world. None of these things is inherently evil, of course. But care should be taken to avoid focusing on the evil that is in the world or that is portrayed visually or audibly in either electronic or printed mediums.

The word *occult* comes from the Latin word for *hidden*, *secret*, or *clandestine* and refers to a hidden knowledge or knowledge of the paranormal. It is a group of supernatural practices called the magical arts, which has existed from the beginning of history. It is based on the idea that one can communicate with the dead, who are alleged to be the source of this hidden knowledge and of paranormal phenomena.

These practices include playing the Ouija board game and tarot cards (used for fortune-telling), and consulting with palm readers, fortune-tellers, psychics, spirit mediums, witches, sorcerers, soothsayers, and astrologers, and attending séances. These or things like these are all condemned in the Bible, according to Exodus 7:11, 22:18, Leviticus 20:27, Deuteronomy 18:10-12, I Samuel 28:7, Jeremiah 27:9, Daniel 5:11, Malachi 3:5, Revelation 9:21; 18:3, 21:8, and 22:15. The reason for this is that the Christian is in a spiritual war against evil angelic powers and rulers of darkness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12) who are led by Satan himself (Revelation 12:9). Such demonic forces are not metaphors but real beings who rebelled against God in heaven and were cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:9). Their purpose is to deceive the whole world (Revelation 16:14), and they can work supernatural signs and alter their appearance (II Corinthians 11:14) in order to accomplish their diabolical mission. Therefore, the Christian should not make light of

any of the occult associations or view them as harmless means of entertainment. This would include paying attention to astrological charts or signs.

The reason for the prohibitions against all such associations is that the Christian is in a spiritual war against non-human spiritual powers and rulers of darkness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12) who are led by Satan himself (Revelation 12:9). Such demonic forces are not metaphors but real beings who rebelled against God in heaven and were thus cast out of heaven (Revelation 12:9). Their purpose is to deceive the whole world (Revelation 16:14), and they can work supernatural signs (miracles, Revelation 16:14) and alter their appearance (II Corinthians 11:14) in order to accomplish their diabolical mission. Therefore, the Christian should not make light of these occult associations or view them as harmless means of entertainment, but should avoid them like the plague. This would even include paying any attention to astrological charts or signs.

Sometimes Christians have the idea that pleasure is somehow sinful in itself. This is reflected in the saying, “This is sinfully delicious.” But actually, I know of at least three evidences that prove that is wrong. First, God created sex; He could have made us to procreate in a very different way, but He did not. Second, God created us with taste buds so that some foods are especially pleasurable. Finally, God placed our first parents in the Garden of Eden, and the Hebrew word for *Eden* means *pleasure*.

There are many things that the Christian may Biblically engage in for recreation and entertainment to recoup their physical and mental capacities. Taking vacations, attending the circus or the fair, going to music concerts (where good music is played) or parties (where alcohol is not served), watching, attending, or playing sports, reading or viewing historical and numerous other innocent things, and playing innocent games are all acceptable Christian activities as long as one does not spend an inordinate amount of time on them. Again, believers are stewards, not only of our bodies, but also of our minds and our time so that we should use them wisely and prudently.

Integrity of Character

God is also concerned with our relationships with other people. The Christian should be above suspicion and full of integrity in all of his or her conduct. While it is difficult to cover every aspect of our numerous relationships with other people, we will attempt to deal with as many as possible here.

The fundamental bases for living a life full of integrity in relation to other people are the fifth, sixth, eighth, ninth, and tenth commandments, recorded in Exodus 20:12-17. Of course, the seventh commandment against adultery we already discussed in the section on “Sexual Morality.” The fifth commandment instructs us to honor our parents (v. 12); the sixth commandment says not to murder (v. 13); the seventh commandment is the prohibition against adultery (v. 14); the eighth

commandment is the prohibition against stealing (v. 15); the ninth commandment instructs us not to lie or bear false witness (v.16); and the tenth commandment warns against coveting what someone else has (v. 17). Behind all of these commandments is the concept that each person has basic dignity and value because God created all of us in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). From these commandments we can deduce what constitutes a just lifestyle in relationship to our fellow human beings.

Honesty

Basic honesty is required by God in our dealings with others. We should refrain from cheating anyone for any reason, whether in our business/financial dealings or in anything else. A Christian student will not cheat on an exam or other assignment, and a Christian employee or employer will not cheat his employees, fellow employees, or employer in any way. That includes giving an honest day's work for an honest day's wages or salary. Cheating not only hurts someone else but oneself as well.

Obviously, a Christian will not murder anyone nor mistreat animals either, for even the lesser creatures were still created by the same God who made us. The command against murder includes the murder of someone's character by slandering or libeling them. Doing so also violates the eighth commandment's prohibition against stealing, for it robs someone of his or her reputation. Neither will a believer steal even little things like pencils, pens, or paper clips from this workplace.

The word for *murder* in Exodus 20:13's sixth commandment (*kill* in the King James' Version) includes the premeditated, unlawful killing of a person and manslaughter, an act resulting from a willful act that was not intended to kill the person (Numbers 35:11). This Hebrew word is never used in the Old Testament for killing in war. Therefore, the sixth commandment does not include killing in war, as long as the one killed was a combatant who had not surrendered.

It is also true that at times God commanded His nation to go to war against an enemy. But originally, He promised that He would directly defeat their enemies (Exodus 23:27-31) without their assistance. But because of their sin God must have altered His plans and allowed them to fight their enemies. Even so, this was when God's people were part of a political nation, and that nation needed to flourish if it had any chance of accurately representing Him to the nations around them. Today God's people are scattered among all the nations rather than God having a theocracy. It is true that in some wars there is a just side. But (1) an individual combatant cannot decide which wars he will fight in and which he will not fight; and (2) even when a war is a just war, sometimes orders are given that force combatants to do immoral things, such as when both sides in World War II sometimes indiscriminately bombed whole cities rather than only military targets in those cities. Therefore, my conclusion is that a Christian should not serve as a combatant in the armed forces. However, depending upon his skill, he may morally serve as a noncombatant as a

cook, mechanic, engineer, supply worker, medic, nurse, or doctor. In this way he can patriotically serve his country without unnecessarily putting himself into moral dilemmas.

Naturally, a Christian will not lie, that is, intentionally tell a mistruth or otherwise seek to mislead or deceive anyone. He or she will operate above-board in all that is done. This ninth commandment not only prohibits giving knowingly false testimony in a court proceeding but also in any other human setting.

In order to avoid the implications of the other commandments, the tenth commandment warns us not to covet things, tangible or otherwise, that belong to someone else. Therefore, if we do not covet—have an intense desire for what others possess—then it is much more difficult to cheat, lie, murder, or steal from them. On the positive side, this commandment means that we should be *content* with what we have (Philippians 4:11; I Timothy 6:8; Hebrews 13:5). This does not exclude trying to improve what you have with harder work and more education. However, it does mean that we should not work ourselves to a frenzy in order to get ahead. Take things in stride even as we pursue any improvement in our lives. Taking things to the extreme will only cause us grief and possibly others close to us harm.

Respect for Others

The fifth commandment's requirement to honor one's parents also includes all people, though honoring our parents is done in a different way from how we honor others. Nevertheless, it implies the need to respect other people, especially our parents, elders, and other leaders.

The basic dignity and respect that we owe all people means that the Christian will not discriminate against anyone on the basis of gender, race, color, ethnicity, sexual orientation (even though we disagree with the gay lifestyle), or religion, for we are all equally made in the image of God. Without any kind of bias, the believer should also refrain from making jokes that make fun of others or from negative comments about people who are different in some way from us.

This dignity of and respect for others will also be reflected in the believer's concern for the sick, the poor, and the downtrodden of this world. Jesus spent much time healing people from their physical ailments, so showing sympathy for them is certainly something that we should do even in cases where someone's illness may have been caused by their own behavior (such as from smoking or eating an unhealthy diet). The Christian is called upon to be non-judgmental (Matthew 7:1-5; Luke 6:37-38).

This non-judgmental attitude should be applied to the poor as well. Many people have the attitude that the poor are in their impoverished condition because they did not work hard enough, do not want to work at all, or failed to take advantages of an education that would have prevented them

from becoming poor. Much of this is often true, although discrimination of various kinds also partly contributes to people's poverty. In any case, we are called upon to be non-judgmental. Certainly, some who were poor in Biblical times contributed to their own poverty, but the Scriptures mention this rarely while frequently commanding God's people to care for them. Too many of our current political attitudes have affected how some Christian people view the poor. Either we should change our political attitudes or change how we view the poor as equally God's children.

The basic respect we owe others includes our relationship to our work colleagues and bosses. Not only should we treat them all with respect, but also show respect in our collective relationship with them. For example, if we are a professional person, whether we join a professional organization of our profession or not (doctors, dentists, architects, etc.), we ought to live up to its specific standards for our profession. That shows an attitude that upholds the integrity of our profession. In some cases, the professional association serves to enforce its ethical standards of conduct by disciplining the professionals in its field. In these cases, the Christian really has the obligation to join that professional association.

Also, if we work as non-management in a workplace represented by a union, we owe a certain amount of respect for the union. Some Christians oppose unions on the moral grounds that they exist for the purpose of blackmailing the employer to pay higher wages and to improve working conditions. But this is not blackmail or extortion because in societies where unions are legal and have been officially institutionalized into the economy, they are entitled to engage in the process called collective bargaining in order to determine the wages and other working conditions, a process in which *both* the employer and the union *equally share* in the authority to determine. Therefore, it is not blackmail or extortion but the institutionalized process of shared power. Of course, there may be good reasons why a Christian may not want to join a union. The union that represents him may be infamous for its corruption or have a decided tendency for some of its members to behave violently during strikes. Or, the Christian might believe that if economic and social conditions in society deteriorate badly, unions in general might resort to the violence that seemed to characterize unions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries before unions were fully legalized and institutionalized into the economy. Or, the believer might believe that he should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. Of course, if that is the reason, then such a Christian should also oppose membership in professional organizations or in a business organization like the Chamber of Commerce. Failure to have a consistent attitude on this issue will make such a believer a political hypocrite. Finally, a Christian may simply oppose the whole process of collective bargaining and does not want to show approval of it by his membership in a union.

However, even if a Christian chooses not to join the union, he or she owes it the finances (dues) that are necessary for it to represent them through the collective bargaining process and within the

workplace. This is because in societies where unions are legal and fully institutionalized into the economy, the union legally must represent all of the non-management employees within its jurisdiction. Therefore, even if the believer politically disagrees with the entire concept of unions and collective bargaining, he or she should share equally in its costs of representing the employees. The objection that the union might support political agendas that the individual does not support is not sufficient to overcome the obligation to pay one's fair share, because all of us pay taxes to a government whose activities we do not support 100 percent of the time.

Second, in cases where a labor strike is legal, the Christian should not cross the picket line and work during the strike. Remember that in a unionized workplace, the law states that both the employer and the union have an equal say in determining the wages and other conditions of employment. Society has decided that this collective bargaining process is the manner in which these conditions should be determined wherever the workers have voted to be represented by a union. Therefore, any attempt to "break" the strike by working during a legal strike subverts the collective bargaining process and thus the law that has institutionalized it. In such cases, the failure to work during a strike does not therefore represent a lack of fulfilling one's obligations to the employer. Rather, working during a legal strike represents disrespect and contempt for one's fellow workers and the process by which they help determine their wages and working conditions.

Political Relationships

Finally, there is the matter of the Christian's relationship to the entire community within its political structure. What are the believer's obligations within this context?

The most fundamental thing that Christians should do in this area is to pray for our political leaders and honor them with our respect (Romans 13:7; I Timothy 2:1-2; I Peter 2:17). Second, we owe them our obedience because their existence is necessary to maintain an orderly society by punishing evildoers (Romans 13:1-5). The only exception to obedience made in Scripture is in cases where the government requires disobedience to something that God has commanded; in those cases, *we ought to obey God rather than men* (Acts 5:29). Finally, the believer should pay his taxes (Romans 13:6-7; Matthew 22:17-21; Mark 12:14-17; Luke 20:22-25). Although no one likes to pay taxes, and people often disagree on how government spends its tax revenues, the Bible still commands us to pay them as a moral obligation.

For those believers who live in a representative democracy, do we have the right to vote and/or otherwise engage in political activity? First, let us acknowledge that despite its inefficiencies and weaknesses, the representative democratic system is the best form of government yet designed by man to protect the natural and God-given rights that all people should enjoy as a result of being equally made in the image of God. Since voting and political participation in the political system is the lifeblood that maintains such a political system, it follows that the least believers can do is

to inform themselves and vote. Other ways of engaging in the political system should be up to the individual.

In relation to moral issues, the Christian should remember that there is no theocracy in the world today and that God therefore does not seek to directly rule through any nation's political system. Therefore, it is not the believer's business to attempt to persuade government to legislate matters of personal morality unless they negatively impact others in society. God's method is persuasion not force, for He is love (I John 4:8, 16). At the same time, where a reasonable interpretation of natural law happens to concur with one of God's laws, there is no prohibition against legislating moral behavior. This would be at the level of forbidding people to murder, steal, slander, libel, and bear false testimony in legal proceedings, to name just the clearest level of morality. These are things that directly impact other people's rights. But for individual morality that does not directly impact other people, we ought to let God deal with those personal matters of morality.

The one area in the political arena that Christians have a positive obligation to engage in if living in a representative democracy is the area of church-state relations. Because there is no theocracy in the world today, the Christian should seek to maintain a reasonable separation of church and state. Not only should this be the case because of the principle of respect for all people in the context of no theocracy, but history has demonstrated that a close relationship between religion and the government has always led to enforcement of some theological doctrines and the persecution of religious minorities. Without religious freedom, freedom itself is not complete. This means that in a democratic nation, the Christian should at least contact his political representatives and vote for candidates more likely to create or maintain (depending upon the condition in the nation one lives in) a reasonable separation of church and state.

There is one other area in the political arena that merits attention in regard to Christian behavior. Romans 13:1-5 states that government leaders are *appointed by God* (v. 1) and therefore to resist them is to *resist(s) the ordinance of God* (v. 2). The apostle Paul declares that government authority exists to place a check on evil by engaging in *wrath on him who practices evil* (v. 4). In other words, the purpose for government is to enforce what is called the Rule of Law. As such, the Christian should recognize that even a bad government is better than no government at all. Therefore, in order to remain in compliance with the Rule of Law, the Christian should never support or fight in a violent revolution to overthrow any government. Violent revolution violates the Rule of Law and usually results in anarchy and chaos even if it is only temporary. Besides, it is God who *appoints* (Romans 13:1) rulers and *removes* them (Daniel 2:21; 4:32), and He does not need His followers to help Him do it.

There is one type of exception to the requirement to obey the government outside of its requiring believers to disobey God. This type of exception is called civil disobedience. The concept of civil disobedience is to peacefully disobey a law and willingly take the legal consequences in order to

call public attention to an issue of public moral importance in hopes of getting the law changed. For example, during the days of slavery, Americans were legally required to turn in runaway slaves to the authorities so they could return them to slavery. Christians should have, and many did, disobey that law, accepted any legal consequences for violating that law, and hoped that this civil disobedience would call sufficient public attention to the entire issue of slavery in the hope that the nation would end slavery. In the modern era, some have disobeyed the law in order to call public attention to racial or other forms of discrimination in the hope of ending that discrimination. In both examples, those participating in the civil disobedience were working within the Rule of Law because they willingly accepted the legal consequences of their disobedience.

Worship Lifestyle

Finally, God is concerned about our relationship with Him. In terms of a believer's lifestyle, *worship* is the key word that describes that relationship. There are numerous Hebrew and Greek words in Scripture that are used for *worship* and related attitudes, including words for *reverence*, *awe*, and *fear*. Combining them together gives us the following definition of Biblical worship: Worship is the giving of extravagant honor, respect, and devotion to God with a sense of awe (humility) that one is in the presence of Almighty God. This means that worship should be directed toward God. True worship is God-centered, not believer-centered.

Public Worship

Review our paper entitled "The Christian Church: Its Purpose, Importance, Structure, Authority, and Functions" for the reasons and activities that should make up public worship and our paper entitled "The Case for the Sabbath" for a defense of the seventh-day Sabbath (Saturday). Since Christians are admonished not to forsake *the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting [encouraging] one another*, we ought to worship together on Sabbath if illness or injury does not prohibit such attendance. Then the remainder of the Sabbath can be spent reading, listening to, or viewing Christian content, playing Bible games, spending time in nature (as God's Creation), discussing Christian matters with believers and/or unbelievers, and visiting the sick or the elderly in nursing homes and retirement centers. During Sabbath hours, which extend from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday, all forms of entertainment and other secular activities should be avoided.

After a public worship service, the remainder of the day can be spent on any activity that enhances the believer's understanding and faith in the Lord, such as reading, listening to, or viewing Christian content, playing Bible games, spending time in nature (as God's Creation), discussing Christian matters with other believers and/or unbelievers, and visiting the sick or the elderly in nursing homes and retirement centers. During that time, all forms of entertainment and other secular activities are avoided.

Regarding the observance of annual Christian holidays, the believer may certainly celebrate Christmas even though December 25 was certainly not the day of Jesus' birth because shepherds did not take their sheep out in wilderness pastures during the wintertime in Palestine (Luke 2:8-20). However, observing Christmas does not require the believer to violate any of God's commandments or other instructions, as long as one remembers that the reason for the season is the incarnation of Jesus and not Santa Claus and does not immerse himself or herself in the over-commercialization of the modern celebration of Christmas.

Regarding the observance of Lent, Easter, and Halloween, we think that they should not be observed as such because Lent and Easter originated in an anti-Sabbath and anti-Jewish context and Halloween is associated with ghosts and goblins, representing real evil demonic forces. See our paper "The Case for the Sabbath" for a more complete explanation of why the believer should not observe Lent, Easter, and Halloween.

Personal Worship

Waiting for the public worship service once a week to worship God is not any more sufficient to feed the spiritual life than eating once a week would be sufficient to feed the physical life. Personal worship that can be done on a limited basis each day includes an initial prayer at the beginning of the morning and just before retiring to bed in the evening. Furthermore, reading the Bible or some other devotional Christian book and listening to Scripture being read on a compact disk while driving to and/or from work is another daily form of personal worship. The believer should also pray and ask for God's blessing on each meal that is eaten, for this is the example that Jesus set (Matthew 14:19-20; 15:36-37; Mark 6:41-42; 8:6-9; Luke 9:16-17; John 6:11-12).

Prayer and Meditation

We must first point out that prayer is not for God but for us. First, He knows what we need before we ask Him (Matthew 6:8). Second, prayer should not be an attempt to persuade God to do anything for us because we are to pray that His will be done (Matthew 6:10). Third, God is not an egomaniac needing us to praise Him or acknowledge His holiness and authority, for He is love personified (I John 4:8, 16). Yet we are told to ask God for things (Matthew 7:8-11) and to acknowledge His holiness and authority when we pray (Matthew 6:9-10; Luke 11:2).

Since prayer is not for God's benefit, it must be for *our* benefit. Indeed, the experiences of believers who pray much and even modern science confirms this. Brain scan tests reveal that prayer, and any other form of focused thinking, affects the brain in at least three ways: (1) it improves overall brain chemistry; (2) it increases activity in the frontal lobe; and (3) it increases activity in areas of the brain that deal with our social relationships. This means that prayer benefits us in at least three ways: (1) it makes us generally healthier even though we cannot simply will

ourselves into becoming free of all illness (2) it strengthens our ability to make sound moral judgments (because these are made in the frontal lobe area); and (3) it strengthens our relationships with others; and since prayer is communication with God, it particularly enhances our relationship with Him. Finally, since prayer is a form of communication that enhances relationships, we should also share with God our hopes and dreams and our joys and sorrows, again even though He already knows these things. Thus, prayer is like talking to God as a friend.

The Lord's Prayer is the *model* prayer because the apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray, and this prayer was His response to their request (Luke 11:1) and Jesus said to pray in this *manner* (Matthew 6:9). Therefore, this prayer sets forth the kinds of things that should be in our prayers. Those principles are as follows:

- Acknowledge God's (the Father's) holiness and supremacy—*Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come* (Matthew 6:9-10).
- Pray that His will be done—*Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10).
- Ask for specific blessings—*Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one* (Matthew 6:11-13).

Although the *doxology*—a word that means *to give glory* (to God)—is not in the Greek text according to the manuscript evidence (and it is not in Luke 11:4 either), it is an appropriate feature to add at the end of our prayers just as did the early Church according to Christian history. Doxologies are found in at least five New Testament books, where it is always followed by the word *Amen*, which means *so be it* or *let it be so* (Romans 11:36; Ephesians 3:21; I Timothy 1:17; II Timothy 4:18; Revelation 5:13-14; 19:1-4). Christians have traditionally included near the end of their prayers the expression *in Jesus' name*. This means that the prayer is given with the authority of Jesus, much like a police officer who tells a suspect to stop *in the name of the law* is appealing to the authority of the law for him to stop. The reason for this is that it is Jesus' righteousness, as symbolized by the incense on the altar of incense that mixes with our prayers so that they are acceptable to God the Father (Revelation 8:3-4). Note: That incense must represent the imputed righteousness of Jesus because Revelation 8:3-4 says that it is mingled with our prayers, and the only thing that could make our prayers (and other good actions) unacceptable is our sinful nature, which spiritually pollutes them. And the only remedy for our sinful nature until it is taken away instantaneously at the Second Coming of Jesus (Philippians 3:20-21) is the imputed righteousness of Jesus.

There are three things we must avoid in our prayers: (1) public prayer should not be a display of one's devotion for others because prayer is designed to direct people's attention to God not

ourselves (Matthew 6:5); (2) public prayer should not be long prayers (Matthew 6:7); and (3) our prayers, public or private, should not consist of *vain repetitions* (Matthew 6:7). This last point means that we should avoid mantras, a repetition of words or phrases over and over again, as some do with the use of prayer beads. Note: Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox believers, Anglicans, Episcopalians, and some but not most Lutherans use prayer beads to count out their prayer phrases. Incidentally, prayer beads are used by Hindus, Buddhists, and Muslims as well.

If it is Jesus who makes our prayers acceptable to God the Father (Revelation 8:3-4), and the Holy Spirit translates our prayers while we are making them (Romans 8:26-27), then it follows that we are to pray to God the Father through the Holy Spirit and in the name (authority) of Jesus.

In I Thessalonians 5:17 the apostle Paul counsels believers to *pray without ceasing*. Since we could not function in life if we continually prayed in a direct, conscious way, it must mean to maintain an *attitude* of prayer throughout the day. Think of it as picking up the phone and calling God in the morning and then leaving the phone line on all day. An attitude of prayer enables God to talk back to us throughout the day, albeit not in an audible voice.

Christian meditation is to focus our thoughts on God, His law, and His actions according to Psalms 1:2, 63:6, 77:12, 119:15, 23, 48, 78, 148, 143:5, and I Timothy 4:13-15. But we should avoid all Eastern meditation techniques, for they are designed to empty the mind and focus on finding an inner peace inside the person. Not only is this believer-centered rather than God-centered, it is designed to alter one's state of consciousness, usually through sound mantras which tend to hypnotize the person. This amounts to *vain repetitions* that Jesus forbade (Matthew 6:7). It also allows demonic spirits to enter you. Note Jesus' parable in Matthew 12:43-45 in which a woman sweeps her house clean, representing cleaning one's mind, and then many more spirits enter into it. Jesus told a parable to illustrate this last point in Matthew 12:43-45: *When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first.*

If prayer is talking to God as a Friend, then we may appropriately talk to Him whether we are kneeling, prostrating, sitting, standing, or even lying down. Respectful people bow before an earthly monarch. So how much more is it appropriate to bow before the King of the universe? Since kneeling or prostrating represent a kind of permanent bowing during prayer, they are acceptable body postures during prayer. They also represent a physical sign of surrender or submission to God. Although the Bible does not command it, when physically possible (when not driving or operating a machine), it is a good thing to close one's eyes during prayer in order to prevent distractions. After all, prayer is talking to God, so that avoiding distractions are more important than for communication with one's fellow man. At the same time, lifting the open eyes

toward heaven avoids most distractions and “faces” God’s direction. Therefore, that would also be appropriate.

Regarding the hands during prayer, typically they are folded or clasped together. This not only prevents one from becoming distracted due to touching something, but it also signifies respect, thanks, and a request. The Bible describes numerous people who prayed with their hands lifted up toward heaven. With no closed fists, the raising of hands during prayer or other worship activities represents a person’s openness to receive God’s blessings and thus demonstrates that we need Him. While the open palm is an ancient custom that is associated with openness and truth, the Christian should not use this position of the hands when in a quiet, still posture with eyes closed, because this is associated with the practice of occultists and is an invitation for demons to come into a person.

Examples of texts in which the lifting up of hands in prayer include I Kings 8:2; Psalms 28:2; 63:4; Luke 24:50; and I Timothy 2:8. Examples of texts which describe the lifting up of hands specifically while kneeling include Ezra 9:5; I Kings 8:54; and II Chronicles 6:12-13. An example of prostrating oneself on the ground with head bowed during prayer is found in Nehemiah 8:6.

Praying through the sanctuary is a prayer in which the person visualizes each piece of furniture in the Old Testament sanctuary and prays about the theme that each piece of furniture represents. There are six pieces of furniture—the altar of burnt offering, the laver, the candlestick, the table of showbread, the altar of incense, and the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25, 27, 30). The altar of burnt offering represents Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. The laver represents the need for spiritual cleansing (including baptism). The candlestick represents Jesus as the Light of the world. The table of showbread represents Jesus as the Bread of life. The altar of incense represents our need of Jesus’ imputed righteousness to make our prayers and good works acceptable to God. And the Ark of the Covenant represents God’s judgment, His Ten Commandments as the basis of that judgment, and the very presence of God.

If the believer simply prays about any of these themes there would be no problem because they are all Biblical. However, visualizing each piece of furniture as you move through your prayer makes those visual images idols and such a prayer a form of idolatry. Therefore, the believer should avoid “praying through the sanctuary”.

We probably should clarify what idolatry means. The Second Commandment (Exodus 20:4-6) forbids the use of any graven (or carved) image of *any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth* and bowing down to them in worship. Remember that I previously defined worship as directing *reverence, awe, and devotion* to God. Note that the Second Commandment prohibits representations of *any* object whatsoever being worshiped, which would include things that represent God. People who worship what we

generally call idols do not usually think that those idols themselves are a god but that they *represent* a god. Hindus, for example, also believe that their gods and goddesses inhabit its images because they have a pantheistic concept so that their gods are everywhere and in everything. Note also that the Israelites who worshiped the golden calf did so as a representation of the true God, according to Exodus 32:4-5 [“This is your god...that brought you out of the land of Egypt!” And “Tomorrow is a feast to the Lord.”].

Therefore, an idol is anything that is regarded as holy or sacred (has been *set apart* for a religious purpose) which is the recipient of an act of worship, such as bowing down, hugging or kissing it, or staring at it in awe or devotion. Technically, when a little girl hugs and kisses her doll, she is worshipping it. However, the doll is not considered holy, that is, it is not *set apart* for a religious purpose, and therefore hugging or kissing her doll is not an act of idolatry. I had previously mentioned that some Christians even worship the Bible by bowing in its direction, kissing it, and/or staring at it with awe. Certainly the Bible is a holy book and should be carefully handled, but any act of worship toward it makes even it an idol. Given these principles of worship, then, an idol does not necessarily have to be a graven image; it can also be other physical objects, pictures (or icons), and even mental or visualized objects. In an extended meaning, anything that we regard more than God is also an idol, such as a car, house, other possessions, another person, or a job.

Spiritual formation is a term that has a broad meaning but when used Biblically, it refers to the process of perfecting one’s character so that it better reflects the character of God. This is what is called progressive sanctification. *Spiritual exercises* are those spiritual activities that strengthen (by exercising them) one’s faith and promotes that Christian growth. Biblically, there are essentially four spiritual exercises: (1) praying; (2) singing (or listening to good Christian music); (3) Bible study; and (4) meditation on or contemplation of genuine Christian ideas and themes. The latter should occur during prayer, singing, and Bible study, but it can also happen while reading, viewing, or listening to any genuinely Christian material, thinking while writing or otherwise producing Christian material, and by thinking by itself. All four of these exercises should occur during public and private, personal worship. They are good, wholesome, and necessary activities for Christian growth.

However, words and expressions also have meaning according to their usage. According to their usage meanings today, *spiritual formation* and *spiritual exercises* refer to a general enhancement of a person’s spiritual life and to spiritual exercises that go well beyond the Biblical methods of promoting Christian growth. Ignatius of Loyola (d. 1556) was the Spanish Catholic founder of the Jesuit order who originated the concept of and the term *spiritual exercises*. Ignatius promoted mystical exercises that included contemplation or meditation and centered prayer. In such an exercise the believer chooses a sacred word or Biblical story and then sits quietly with closed eyes and without words and lets go so that the Holy Spirit guides him into a direct, mystical experience

with God. The believer also has a more experienced Christian who serves as his spiritual guide or director, who offers spiritual advice and teaches him how to exercise more effectively.

As these terms are used today, spiritual formation and spiritual exercises are dangerous and should be avoided by the Christian for a number of reasons. First, these mystical exercises represent the adoption of Eastern meditation techniques that open the mind to demonic influences. Second, they are believer-centered as they focus on the person's emotional experience rather than on a Word-based experience. Finally, the concept of a spiritual guide or director allows someone to exercise too much influence or even control over the believer. It is one thing to occasionally ask a more experienced Christian for spiritual advice. But it is quite another thing for you to rely on one person to be your spiritual guide, for that is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Secret Societies

Many believe that secret societies are harmless charitable organizations. But, first, many of them, including the Freemasons, are actually religious organizations that are incompatible with Christianity. They recognize an unknown deity to whom they pray and conduct forms of worship that is definitely not Christian in nature. So the admonition *Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers* (II Corinthians 6:14) certainly applies to such organizations. Second, secret societies all have different levels membership, and their members' activities are hidden to those below them. They are so shrouded in secrecy that an ordinary member has no way of knowing what the higher levels are doing. Yet whatever they do is done in the name of the entire society, so that all members bear some responsibility for the unknown actions of those other members. That is a dangerous position for a Christian to be in.

Third, many oaths are required in most of these societies, oaths that usually promise blind obedience to the higher members. No believer should consent to offer such obedience except to God. Finally, the trappings of the secret societies—things like secret hand signals and passwords—violate the spirit of humility by tending to puff up the member who has knowledge that others cannot yet possess. For all of these reasons, the Christian lifestyle is incompatible with membership in secret societies and interferes with the God-centered approach to life that is required of the Christian in his or her worship.