

May 20, 2001

Psalms 119:97 *MEM. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

One of the more obvious marks of a Child of God is his love for the word of God. The child of God will feel pressed to read and study the word of God. There will be a hunger in the heart that can only be satisfied by reading the Scriptures.

There are practical reasons for studying the word of God also:

**Ephesians 4:14** *14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

In Ephesians 4, Paul identifies the various spiritual gifts that are given to individuals in the Gospel Church. The purpose of those gifts is to strengthen the believers in the Biblical faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, so they will not be **tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine**. In other words, so they will be firmly grounded in the faith.

Not only will a Christian desire to be in the word of God; not only does a Christian need to be in the word of God for his own stability, but a Christian is commanded to study God's word. Without God's word, he has no firm foundation upon which to stand:

**2 Timothy 2:14** *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. 15 Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*

Those who are not thoroughly grounded in the word of God are in very serious danger of being swept along with **whatever doctrine sounds good** or whatever doctrine appeals to the flesh. They are also in serious danger of **disastrous compromise** concerning their faith. That is to say, they **do not know for themselves** what is required of them by God. So they follow what others say about the word of God instead of finding out for themselves what God requires of them.

### **Number of unwed couple living together grew in 09.s**

By Ganaro C. Armas, ASSOCIATED PRESS

**WASHINGTON - Living together out of wedlock surged in popularity in the 1990s, even in Bible Belt states where alternative arrangements traditionally have been seen as less socially acceptable.**

Nationally, there were 72 percent more unmarried-partner households than a decade earlier, 2000 census figures show. Homes headed by married couples increased by just 7 percent.

In Indiana, there were 124,851 unmarried-partner households in 2000, or about 2.1 percent of total households. That was up from 67,714, or 1.2 percent, in 1990.

The practice of living together without being married grew even faster in the South. The portion of unmarried couples doubled in Arkansas and Oklahoma, to 4 percent from 2 percent.

Nationally, 52 percent of homes are headed by married couples, down from 55 percent in 1990. Unmarried-couple homes made up 5 percent of all households in 2000, compared with 3 percent in 1990.

In many cases, the biggest increase in unmarried couples came in states with some of the highest divorce rates.

The numbers released so far do not disclose how many unmarried-partner homes were made up of same-sex

couples. That number and additional details will be released during the next year. (Indianapolis Star, 1A, May 20, 2001.)

America is being **paganized** at an alarming rate. And, sad to say, it is being **done** with not only the **approval** of but many times with the **help** of those who say they believe the Bible.

I was an associate pastor in Louisiana for 7 years (1976-1983), just East of Bossier City, which is just across the Red River from Shreveport (Merrywoods Baptist Church, Haughton). Bossier City is the home of Barksdale Air Force Base, and we had a lot of AF men in our church. At that time, Barksdale was the home of a double wing of B-52s (bombers) and a double wing of KC 135s (tankers). For a time, we lived in the flight path; a loaded KC 135 taking off would literally rattle the windows of the house, as it passed right above the house.

Being a large AF base, there were a great number of AF personal living off base. Inner marriage between America Airmen and oriental women was a common sight, and we encountered some godly women among those wives. However, far more common were wives who **retained their oriental culture**, including their Buddhist faith. It was not unusual to go into a home and see a **small statue of Buddha** sitting in a corner and candles burning around that alter.

Christians should consider such an alter (I also see alters built to Marry Marryiolatry) blatant paganism, but upon close examination, it appears that many **Christians also have their pagan alter**.

Far too often, Christianity has devolved, even in Bible Believing and King James Only circles to little more than paganism, as the book that is called a Bible is considered by many **little** more than a **talisman** (charm) to **keep evil away** from the home. Though many professed Christians say they believe the Bible, those same people use it as though it were a cross hanging around their neck.

The following is from a section of NPR's Morning Edition (May 14, 2001), and it should cause great consternation, considering that the man they interviewed, Professor Brown, is a New Testament Theology teacher at Emory University's (United Methodist) Candler School of theology. The introduction of the program posted on NPR's (<http://www.npr.org>) web site reads:

The Bible In America (14.4 | 28.8) -- **The Bible is the best-selling book of all time -- but fewer Americans are actually reading it.** Host Bob Edwards speaks to biblical studies professor Michael Brown about the decline of biblical knowledge in America. (3:35) (Emp. added.)

The text of the program is as follows (Bob Edwards' comments are without quotes, and the emphasis is mine):

Biblical references are part of everyday speech. An eye for an eye. David and Goliath. Forbidden fruit. But a growing number of people are not familiar with the sources of these references. A Gallop poll last year showed that fewer people are reading the Bible. Only 59% of those surveyed said they read the Bible occasionally. Down from 73% in the 1980s. Emory University's New Testament professor Michael Brown (whose grammar was not good, *ed.*) says people have been moving away from traditional religious practices.

Since 60s, there has been a decrease and let's say a general cultural knowledge about the Bible and awareness of what actually is in the Bible. I think that even as Fundamentalism has grown in some places, actually reading the Bible has decreased. And so people know generally or they think they know generally what is in the Bible, but they don't know the specifics.

Though the number of professions of Christ and of Christians who say they believe the Bible is growing, knowledge about the Bible is decreasing, and **shacking up** is increasing.

The lack of scriptural understanding is allowing false doctrines and sin to flourish unhindered among Bible Believers. This lack of knowledge of the word of God permits the **many false prophets** Christ warned about to prosper and **deceive many**. (Mat. 24:11.) It is **all the counsel of God**, the entire word of God, that keeps at bay the **grievous wolves** who shall arise from within the ranks of the Church. (Acts 20:26-30.) We are continually warned by the Holy Spirit that those who do not keep themselves Biblically informed will be victims of the **wolves** and of the **false teachers** that are so rampant in the church.

[Bob Edwards again] Do you find that you have to stop assuming that your students know the basics about the bible and (chuckle) you have to go back to teaching that?

Yes. I mean at one point, I thought that things like knowing the books of the Bible was a Sunday School type topic, that they would have covered that. But they don't even know that. So you have, you have to really teach them the basics—how many books there are, what order they come in, how many gospels there are. I mean, there's some basic stuff people just don't know.

Here Mr. Brown is saying that basic facts such as how many books in the Bible and what books make up the Gospels must be taught to theology students. What are the churches teaching?

[Bob Edwards] They know about the Ark. They know about Eden.

In general. But they haven't read the story. They know, you know, the general story about the Garden of Eden, but when you actually take them to Genesis, and they read it, they are surprised. There's a lot in the story they didn't know.

Remember, these are theology students, and it sounds as though they are getting the facts about the word of God from Hollywood movies, including the *Left Behind* series, and from TV specials such as *Noah's Ark*. Their ideas about the word of God are not coming from the word of God.

[Bob Edwards] The Bible continues to be a big best seller, so how is it that ignorance of the Bible is in the increase?

That's amazing, isn't it? (Laugh) Yea, people buy it. Apparently, they are buying it in droves. They just don't read it. In some ways, it's kind of **like a talisman** (charm) for some people. They feel that if they have it in their house, that makes things better. But they don't read it. And when I used to teach undergraduates, I would come across a lot of Freshmen students, in particular, who brought their Bibles with them to school that grandmother, or their mother, somebody gave them a Bible as a graduation gift, and they, and they brought it with them, but they just didn't read it.

How many churchgoers do the same thing. They carry their Bibles to church, but at home, they have not spent over a few moments that past week reading it, let alone serious study. Those people act as though the Bible is little more than a good luck charm, for they do not read nor study it.

[Bob Edwards] I was going to suggest that, that maybe all these Bibles are being bought as gifts (chuckle).

Yea. (chuckle) I think that is what's going on.

Once upon a time, you could talk about this in public schools.

You could. I wouldn't have a problem with teaching Bible in public schools if you had people who, who were credited first of all, and who didn't do it as a platform for evangelization, but just taught the Bible **within its proper context**. But the thing that scares me is that most of the times when it's, when it's proposed as an elective course in public schools or something like that, it's not for that reason. It's for the reason of evangelization. It's because people feel that, you know, the moral climate in the country is become so bad that we need to inject a little moral truth into our educational process. And that really kind of scares me.

How many parents who do not even read the Bible on their own want the Bible taught to their children in the schools, whether public, private or Christian? Can we expect God to honour such a double standard?

[Bob Edwards] There is beautiful literature there, but it can't be divorced from faith.

The only proper context of Scripture is to tell man how to please God. Also, has the ready acceptance of divorce in our culture resulted from divorcing Scripture from faith?

Right. But I think that there are a number of ways to deal with that in, in a manner that's **intellectually**

**honest**, and doesn't seek to cut off conversation, or to **promote one particular cultural** agenda over that of others. I mean, I started studying the Bible because I thought it was important to my, to my faith journey, and it has been. But I'm much less now inclined to quote the Bible and to use it as a source of authority in a theological agreement than I was when I first started this, because, like now, I realize a lot more about the Bible, in that it has a lot of limitations in its use in that regard.

The **intellectually honest person will teach** the Bible in its true context -- that is, that there is only one Christian Faith, one God and only one way to that God, and that is through the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ. (Eph. 4:3-6.) The *exclusiveness* of Christianity makes it anathema to the ungodly.

## Humanist Manifesto II

**ELEVENTH: The principle of moral equality must be furthered through elimination of all discrimination based upon race, religion, sex, age, or national origin.** This means equality of opportunity and recognition of talent and merit. Individuals should be encouraged to contribute to their own betterment. If unable, then society should provide means to satisfy their basic economic, health, and cultural needs, including, wherever resources make possible, a minimum guaranteed annual income. We are concerned for the welfare of the aged, the infirm, the disadvantaged, and also for the outcasts -- the mentally retarded, abandoned, or abused children, the handicapped, prisoners, and addicts -- for all who are neglected or ignored by society. Practicing humanists should make it their vocation to humanize personal relations.

We believe in the right to universal education. Everyone has a right to the cultural opportunity to fulfill his or her unique capacities and talents. The schools should foster satisfying and productive living. They should be open at all levels to any and all; the achievement of excellence should be encouraged. Innovative and experimental forms of education are to be welcomed. The energy and idealism of the young deserve to be appreciated and channeled to constructive purposes.

**We deplore racial, religious, ethnic, or class antagonisms. Although we believe in cultural diversity and encourage racial and ethnic pride, we reject separations which promote alienation and set people and groups against each other; we envision an integrated community where people have a maximum opportunity for free and voluntary association.**

We are critical of sexism or sexual chauvinism -- male or female. We believe in equal rights for both women and men to fulfill their unique careers and potentialities as they see fit, free of invidious discrimination. (<http://humanist.net/>)

Professor Brown's problem, and the world's problem, with the Holy Scriptures is that it promotes -- one particular cultural agenda over that of others -- a teaching the unconverted find absolutely repugnant. By the way, what in the world is a -- faith journey ?

Michael Brown is a professor of New Testament and Christian origins at Emory University's Candler School of Theology (Atlanta, Ga, ed.). He's the author of *What They Don't Tell You, a Survivor's Guide to Biblical Studies*.

End of program.

According to the web site:

Professor Brown's research interests include prayer in the ancient world, issues in Pauline theology, early Christian biblical interpretation, early North African Christianity, the Bible and modern culture, and methods and strategies for teaching the Bible. His current research focuses on early Christian interpretations of the Lord's Prayer. (From <http://www.emory.edu/CANDLER/Brown.html>.)

About Chandler:

Mission

Candler School of Theology is grounded in the Christian faith and shaped by the Wesleyan tradition of evangelical piety, ecumenical openness, and social concern. Its mission is to educate--through scholarship, teaching, and service--faithful and creative leaders for the church's ministries in the world.

## The School

Candler School of Theology is a professional school of Emory University and one of thirteen official seminaries of the United Methodist Church. Founded by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1914, the school became part of Emory when the university was chartered in 1915, occupying the first building on the Atlanta campus.

The theology school offers programs leading to master of divinity, master of theological studies, master of theology, and doctor of theology degrees. The school also provides continuing education opportunities for clergy, church professionals, and lay persons. (<http://www.emory.edu/CANDLER/>)

### The new Christian paganism.

*And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us to day before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, **when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies.** (1 Sam. 4:3.)*

The Bible has been reduced to the same level as the Israelites did the ark. It will save us! and the Lord delivered them to the Philistines. When God completed His purpose with the ark in the hands of the Philistines, He Himself delivered His ark from the pagan hands.

What will the Lord do here, as we let the Bible lie unopened in our homes?

Psalms 119:97 *MEM. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.*

Do you love the word of God?

Is it your meditation?

If you are depending on the preacher or upon your spouse to acquire scriptural knowledge for you, you will not receive anything.

**Ephesians 4:14** *14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;*

**2 Timothy 2:14** *Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers. 15 **Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.** 16 But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. 17 And their word will eat as doth a canker: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; 18 Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.*