

Expository Files



Jon W. Quinn, Warren E. Berkley - Editors

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Emotion, As A Test Of Fellowship

by Warren E. Berkley

Jack Deere tells his readers he was “**surprised by the voice of God,**” in his book under that title. Zondervan Publishing House advertises the book by explaining: “Jack Deere could have given you all the reasons why such things disappeared once the Bible was complete. That is, until Jack searched the Bible deeply enough for it to search him. What he found revolutionized his Christian walk – and it can transform yours as well,” (from back cover of *Surprised By The Voice of God*, by Jack Deere; Zondervan, 1996).

Right away you know, Mr. Deere is promoting a Charismatic agenda. He reports to his readers his “conversion” to the Charismatic belief and practice, explaining that he used to tell people, “Read your Bible every day.” Through experiences with people he narrates in the book, he relates his gradual change. Now he is excited about how God speaks today through prophecies, dreams and visions.

About halfway through the book, Deere makes the charge that “***The Bible deists of today worship the Bible.***”

He uses the word “deists” to accommodate his argument and build prejudice against the non-charismatic. Deism generally identifies those who say they believe in God, but that He is inactive (as defined by the individual deist). Deists may or may not deny providence, but they are united in denying “supernatural revelation.” They say, of God: He created the universe and

then “abandoned it, assuming no control over life, exerting no influence on natural phenomena, **and giving no supernatural revelation,**” (American Heritage Dictionary). Thomas Jefferson, for example, “...saw evident proofs of the necessity of a superintending power [providence, -web], to maintain the universe in its course and order,” but he did not make an appeal to revelation. Thomas Paine spoke of God as the Creator (and said his eternal destiny was in the hands of God), but Paine did not accept the inspiration, authority and sufficiency of the Scriptures. Classic Deism rejects Scripture. Jack Deere creates his own type of deists, i.e., those who do not embrace his particular charismatic agenda. To him, a “Bible deist” is one who resist “subjective revelatory experiences,” (p.#254). Those who believe the Bible is sufficient – according to Deere – are “Bible deists.”

What comes next is expected. Deere pauses in his accusations against the non-charismatic long enough to insert this note of further prejudice: “Incidentally, I have just given you a test to determine whether or not you are a Bible deists. If you have grown angrier as you have read the last few pages, then you probably are a Bible deist,” (p.#256).

This shows something I think is common in the Charismatic movement: an emotional test of fellowship. If you do not display the expected emotions (in the manner creedalized by the group or the leader), you are judged unsound, unanointed and unfaithful. For all their talk of being loving, accepting, diverse and tolerant, this becomes the reality in many Charismatic groups. They are protective and defensive of their system, and their system has a subjective essence; an emotional definition.

A friend of mine (who describes himself as “born again,” evangelical but non-denominational) attempted to embrace the Charismatic Movement a few years ago but left for this very reason. If you didn’t display emotions (as dictated by the group), you were considered not a part of the “anointed,” therefore “withdrawn from” in effect if not formally.

This element of modern Charismatic religion falls on one point: **Nothing should be made a test of fellowship but as determined by one thing: the “doctrine which you learned,” (Rom. 16:17,18).** “If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness...,” (see 1 Tim. 6:3-5), Paul said, “from such withdraw yourself.” I cannot decide (as an individual or with others) that a certain form of emotional expression is a

sign of standing with God. I can only warn, rebuke and withdraw as directed by the Word of God. (See also Gal. 1:6-12, Eph. 5:11; 2 Jno. 9 and 2 Thess. 3:6).

Let us guard against the influence of current trends in the religious culture (pre-modern, modern or post-modern). We must not allow human defined expectations of emotion to become competitive and creedal. ***One thing*** must govern all that we believe, teach, practice.

One paraphrase of 1 Cor. 12:2 (though admittedly an individual paraphrase), may well express something thought-worthy: *“Remember how you were when you didn’t know God, led from one phony god to another, never knowing what you were doing, **just doing it because everybody else did it?** It’s different in this life. God wants us to use our intelligence, to seek to understand as well as we can.”* (Eugene Peterson, the Message).

“The Anointing”
In First John 2
Warren E. Berkley

“But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things,” 1 John 2:20.

“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him,” 1 John 2:27

This article serves at least three purposes: (1) to explain further a comment I made in a recent public panel discussion, (2) to change what I have written before on this passage, and (3) to provoke further study of the text among readers.

Until recent study my conclusion was, this anointing has reference to the spiritual gifts certain Christians had in the first century, during that time while the New Testament was being written (see 1 Cor. 12-14). I based this on the contextual indications that those anointed in this sense knew all things and did “not need that anyone teach” them. That made good sense to me.

I now see something else in this passage that I believe warrants study. I trust the readers of Expository Files to let me bring something up for study, without dogmatically insisting my view is perfect. Here's a question to consider: *Is it an absolute, that spiritually gifted or inspired Christians in the first century did not need to be taught?*

That is not an absolute! The apostle Paul wrote an epistle to the church at Corinth to teach them. There were Christians there who had spiritual gifts, yet they needed to be taught by an apostle (1 Cor. 12:1), not only about the use of the gifts, but also about everything else addressed in First and Second Corinthians. Given that, I cannot argue that those with spiritual gifts did not need anyone to teach them. Thus, I cannot make that argument in the context of 1 John 2. Even if the "anointing" in 1 Jno. 2:20,27 could be classified as related to spiritual gifts, that cannot be upheld on the basis of the phrase, "you do not need that anyone teach you." At this point in my study, I was compelled to go back into the context and give the matter fresh, hopefully objective attention.

Whatever John means by this "anointing" they had received, it certainly did not exclude being taught by the apostle John! Consider:

"These things we write to you...", 1 Jno. 1:4

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you...", 1 Jno. 1:5

"These things I write to you...", 1 Jno. 2:1

"I write to you...", 1 Jno. 2;12,13, etc.

Again let me stress the point. If we argue that the "anointing" is a reference to spiritual gifts *because* of the statement, "you do not need that anyone teach you," that line of argument is defeated by the fact that ***John is teaching them!***

Here is an approach that is worthy of thought. Why must the "anointing" be understood in some miraculous (spiritual gifts/inspiration) sense? Why not understand this as simply ***their reception of truth***. They were anointed by the truth the Holy Spirit revealed. This is what they had "received from Him." This is what was abiding in them. ***They were taught people!***

So what is meant, "you do not need that anyone teach you?" They didn't need to listen to the Gnostic religious philosophers. They didn't need to be taught by the "false prophets" who had "gone out into the world," (1 Jno. 4:1).

This conclusion seems to me to be yielded from the context. John wants to impress upon his readers, they have been taught! “These things we write to you ... this is the message ... I write to you ... I have written to you ... you know it ... let that abide in you ... if what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son, etc.” Then in verse 26, “These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.” Immediately after this: “But the anointing, etc.”

My present understanding is, John is not talking about some special measure of the Holy Spirit, spiritual gifts or some sort of direct indwelling. He is saying, **you have been taught!** Don’t let anyone deceive you or teach you a lie.

Part of our problem with the “anointing” is, we see the word and think we must quickly respond to charismatic claims. We must. But let’s not respond so quickly that we miss the powerful point John is making. What protects us against deceivers is not the performance of spiritual gifts; not some mysterious indwelling or emotional empowerment. What protects us is the truth within us combined with the practice of righteousness. We can know “all things” we need to know *today* by our dependence on the sufficient scriptures given by the Holy Spirit.

There is some evidence that the Gnostic teachers used a word similar to “anointing.” They were talking about someone being *initiated* into their cult, receiving enlightenment or perhaps the secrets of the order. John wants to impress upon Christians, they have received a much higher initiation/enlightenment from the Holy Spirit. They had been taught! John said, “the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.” Our fellowship with God does not require any teaching but what the Holy Spirit has given.

Trust In The Lord, Prov. 3:5-6 **George Slover**

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths.” (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Much of the wisdom of Proverbs is directed to the young man. The oft repeated “my son” phrase sets the context for what follows. The picture is of a father offering wise advice to the son. The father warns about those things in life such as wine, sensual pleasure, and evil companions that can hinder the boy from the desired goals. In the passage above he points him toward the Lord.

Actually, the truths taught here would be useful for one at any stage of life and for one of any gender. However, life is especially frightening to that young boy who is trying to become a man. The uncertainties of the future often overwhelm him. During this time he is receiving advice from worldly friends. So, son here is the secret to ultimate success.

“Trust in the Lord”. Do not place your trust in evil companions (Proverbs 1:10), nor precious possessions (Proverbs 1:13), nor brute power (Proverbs 1:11, for they lead to heartache. Do not look on the wine for it is a mocker (Proverbs 23:29-35). Keep yourself far from the harlot (Proverbs 5:3-11) for she will lead to death. Do not trust in these tangible objects, but believe in the invisible, but living God!

“With all of your heart” - Yield the decisions of life to him - your marriage and your career. Give God all of your heart. Do not withhold any area of your life from the Lord. Do not compromise with God by saying “Well I’ll give up my bad friends, but keep my wine.” Make a bold and daring move and give your all to the Lord.

“Lean not on your own understanding”. Do not be arrogant for the Lord knows best. Listen to your mother and your father – the voice of experience. (Proverbs 1:8) You are not wise enough to be your own guide.

In all your ways acknowledge Him and He Will direct your paths. My son, God is there for you and your welfare. He will help you during those challenging times and through all of the storms. He will help you to make the right decisions and lead you in the right way. God can be your security and help you to face any challenge!

What a great motto for life! Live by it!

See More of bro. Slover’s studies at www.smcofc.com

Hezekiah and Isaiah
(2 Kings 18:1-19; Isaiah 36-39)
By Jon W. Quinn

King Hezekiah, one of the most faithful kings of Judah, and the prophet Isaiah were contemporaries and faithful men of God. They lived in a time where the nation of Judah had suffered through long periods of unfaithfulness, and the revival of faith experienced during Hezekiah's reign was short-lived and incomplete as far as the population was concerned.

The Assyrian empire had overrun Syria and Israel. With the start of the reign of Sargon II, Assyria had conquered Samaria, the capital of Israel. His son, Sennacherib, then attacked Judah. His campaign in 701 BC failed due to God's intervention. The righteousness of king Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet were instrumental in Sennacherib's downfall.

Hezekiah's Early Reign
(2 Kings. 18:1-12)

Following the evil reign of Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah, Judah had four good kings. However, they had not tear down their high places that had been used to worship idols.

The next king, Ahaz, who was Hezekiah's father, was evil. He became so degraded that he even sacrificed children as burnt offerings to pagan gods.

Hezekiah, however, did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and Judah prospered during his reign (2 Kings 18:1-8). He tore down the high places so they could only be used again if they were rebuilt. In fact, the people had even turned the bronze serpent that God had told Moses to make seven centuries before into an idol. So Hezekiah destroyed the bronze serpent (vs. 4).

God blessed Hezekiah so that he was able to break the Assyrian domination and defeat the Philistines as well (vs. 7,8). While the long faithless kingdom of Israel (Samaria) to the north was destroyed at this time, Judah to the south was spared 2 Kings 18:9-12).

God blesses those who obey him (see also Matthew 6:24; 7:7-11). Blessings come to the faithful in many ways; physical as well as spiritual. Many mistakenly consider the physical as more important than the spiritual (Matthew 6:19-21). Faith is living righteously; trusting that God will give what is necessary; and being content (Philippians 4:11-13).

The Proverb writer said that righteousness exalts a nation (Proverbs 14:34). That was true for Judah and it is true for our own nation today. But sin is a disgrace and will ultimately weaken and destroy a nation. Those that live by faith have a good example in Hezekiah.

Sennacherib's Invasion (701 B.C.) (2 Kings 18:13-19; Isaiah 36 and 37)

When Sennacherib invaded Judah, Hezekiah paid tribute to him, hoping to avoid a siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 18:14). Sennacherib, however, sent a large army to besiege Jerusalem in spite of the bribe attempt. He promised to deport the Jews to a "good" land, saying they had no hope. It was a beautiful piece of propaganda. Sennacherib first explained that it was hopeless to resist because their ally Egypt could not help them (2 Kings 18:20,21). He continued by stating that God would not help, since Hezekiah had torn down the high places, failing to understand that the high places had been torn down to please Jehovah (2 Kings 18:22). He then mocked Judah's military by saying that the warriors of Judah could not ride war horses, even if Assyria provided them (2 Kings 18:23). He then claimed that God had sent the Assyrians to destroy Judah (2 Kings 18:25). He reminded them that sieges meant food would become scarce and that they would starve (2 Kings 18:27). Sennacherib suggested that God could not save Jerusalem anymore than the gods of the other nations had saved their people (2 Kings 18:33). Finally, he painted a very rosy (an false) picture of how idyllic it would be to become Assyria's slaves (2 Kings 18:31,32).

Hezekiah sought God's help. Isaiah prophesied that the Assyrians would hear that Pharaoh Tirhakah was going to fight the Assyrians and return to Assyria (2 Kings 19:7-9). Assyrian records show that Sennacherib defeated Tirhakah at the battle of Eltekan in 701 B.C. Sennacherib subsequently sent a letter stating that God could not stop Assyria from conquering Jerusalem. Hezekiah "spread the letter before the Lord" and prayed for deliverance (2 Kings 19:14). God responded through Isaiah that the Assyrian army would be destroyed (2 Kings 19:32-34).

It was that very night that the angel of the Lord struck the Assyrians that night, killing 185,000 (2 Kings 19:35). As prophesied, Sennacherib returned to Nineveh where he was killed by two of his sons; this happened 20 years later. We in the Chicago area can travel to the University of Chicago and visit the Oriental Institute, a museum with many ancient artifacts on display, and see an ancient Assyrian record where Sennacherib boasts “I have shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage.” Unfortunately for Sennacherib, his “caged bird” had a powerful God who delivered the captive. The Assyrian record is silent about the defeat at Jerusalem (ancient kings did not like their failures recorded).

We serve a God who is the ruler of all nations (Psalm 113:3,4; 115:1-9). Do not put your hope in the hopeless. Put it in the throne of the true and eternal Kings. He is also a God who loves and protects his faithful people, then and today (Psalm 37:27,28; 2 Timothy 4:17,18; 1:12; 1 Peter 1:5).

Hezekiah's Illness (Isaiah 38)

Hezekiah became mortally ill, and without God's intervention he knew he would die (Isaiah 38:1). He wept and prayed for recovery. (Isaiah 38:2,3) God granted him an additional 15 years of life (Isaiah 38:4,5). This reminds us of how God hears the prayers of righteous people (James 5:16; 1 John 3:22). We need to live according to God's word and be confident of the purpose and power of prayer offered according to the Lord's will..

Hezekiah's Foolishness (Isaiah 39)

Hezekiah showed the treasures of his kingdom to the Babylonian king's envoys (Isaiah 39:1,2). That was a mistake. Hezekiah was righteous, but not perfect. The Babylonians evidently decided that one day those treasures would be theirs. God was displeased. Through Isaiah, God informed Hezekiah that his treasures would be carried to Babylon, along with some of his descendants (Isaiah 39:5,6).

What had led Hezekiah to show the treasures to the Babylonians? The answer was pride at his wealth. Many are too preoccupied with materialism and that often brings disaster (“He who dies with the most toys wins”) How foolish! (2 Chronicles 32:31)!

Realize the value of your faith. And prove that you esteem it highly by your actions in putting spiritual things first (1 Peter 1:7).

As Sennacherib's envoys of old, often the world mocks God. "Don't be so foolish as to depend on God." The envoys sought to destroy the people's morale and trust. But there was strong leadership in Hezekiah and Isaiah and others. The envoys failed, and Sennacherib's boasting proved empty. So will the boasts of the world against God today. As Jesus said, "Believe in God, believe also in Me."

The Divine Assembly
(Matthew 18:20)
By Wayne S. Walker

As I was growing up, worshipping with a relatively small congregation, preachers would often encourage us by quoting Matthew 18:20, which says, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." However, through the years, I have heard others question this usage since it is not directly found in the context of the verse. They conclude that the passage does not warrant an application to the worship assemblies of the saints. Can the verse be related to our assemblies for worship? I believe that it can if we carefully examine what the context says.

Starting in verse 1 of chapter 18, Jesus begins the discourse by talking about the purity of little children and our need to become like them to please God. In verse 7 He then discusses the nature of offenses and how they can be harmful to those who have become like little children, telling the parable of the ninety and nine to illustrate the importance of these precious souls in God's sight. Based on this, He says that we should be concerned if a brother has trespassed against us and that it is our responsibility to work at straightening out the matter in verses 15-17, including action by the whole church if necessary.

Now, in verse 18, Jesus gives all the apostles the same power to bind and loose what heaven has already bound and loosed that He had given Peter in Matthew 16:18. How do we know this? Notice in verse 1 that it is the disciples (the twelve, Mark 9:35-37) who ask Jesus the question, and the rest of the chapter is His response to them: "...Set him in the midst of THEM....Verily I say to YOU" (emphasis mine, WSW). He is still speaking to this same group in verse 18.

Again, addressing the same people in verse 19, He states, "That if two OF YOU shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (emphasis mine, WSW). This appears to teach that in those days before the written word was completed these individuals who have a difference may come to the apostles for a settlement. And if two of the apostles reach a decision upon it, no doubt inspired by the Spirit, Jesus would be with them as they bind and loose. (Since we do not have living apostles today, what Jesus here reveals would be true of the word that they left us.)

Upon what basis did Jesus say that He would be with even two of the apostles in their decisions? Why was that true? "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." This is not addressed directly to the apostles (i.e., "two or three OF YOU"), but is a general statement of truth used to establish truth in a particular situation. The specific application involved a gathering of two or three of the apostles to reach a decision. Since there are no longer living apostles, this situation no longer applies. Therefore, we must make whatever application is in force today. I am convinced that Jesus's promise is true not only of an apostolic meeting in the first century, but of our assemblies for Bible study and worship today as well.

The divine place is indicated by the phrase, "For where," meaning wherever. In times past, God specified the place to worship. The only place where the Hebrew people could worship God acceptably on the feast days of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles was in Jerusalem, because that was the place where God had put His name. However, this is not true in our age as Jesus taught that it is the attitude of worship ("in spirit and in truth") that is important while the place is unimportant (John 4:20-24).

The divine congregation may consist of just "two or three." The Lord's congregation in the universal sense includes all the saved (Hebrews 12:23). However, Jesus is here evidently speaking of a smaller group, the local church (1 Corinthians 1:2). From a purely human standpoint, there may be something uplifting and moving about being part of a large crowd who is worshipping and praising God together. Yet, Jesus here intimates that it does not necessarily take large numbers to please God (cf. Noah, 1 Peter 3:20).

The divine assembling means that they "are gathered together." It is true that we are specifically told that in the first century the disciples gathered on the first day of the week to break bread (Acts 20:7). However, from Acts 2:42-47 we learn that the early Christians met daily for a while, thus indicating that our gathering together is not necessarily limited to the first day of the week. In Hebrews 10:24-25 we learn that the Lord wants His people to be in the habit of assembling with the saints. Why do some of us think that "once a week" is enough? We miss so many blessings that way!

The divine reason for assembling is "in my name." Doing something "in the name of Jesus" is more than just saying "in the name of Jesus" whenever we happen to do something that we think is good; rather, it is doing the will of the Father in heaven who speaks to us through His Son Jesus Christ (Matthew 7:21-23, Hebrews 1:1-2). The name of Jesus is a symbol of His authority (Matthew 28:18, Colossians 3:17). One of the reasons why Christians are to assemble for worship and Bible study is that the inspired word of God says that our Lord and Savior wants us to do so.

The divine presence is shown by the fact that Christ promises "I am there." Omnipresence is a characteristic of deity; and since Christ is divine, His presence is able to be anywhere and everywhere. In fact He has said that He will be with all His followers wherever they are as they go about doing His will (Matthew 28:20). There is a sense in which all men are in God's presence at all times since God knows and sees all that we do. There is a sense in which Christians are always in God's presence because He cares for us and acknowledges us as His own. But there is evidently a special sense in which we come into God's presence when we are assembled in obedience to His commands (Acts 10:33).

The divine relationship mentioned is "in the midst of them." Even when Christ was on earth, He liked to be in the midst of His disciples (John 20:19). Of course, we understand that the person of Jesus is in heaven, sitting on His throne at the right hand of the Father. Therefore, He cannot physically be in our midst. However, Christ's being spiritually in our midst today represents the access to God that we have through Him (Romans 5:1-2, Hebrews 4:15). It symbolizes the fellowship that we have with Him and with the Father (1 John 1:4-7).

God has not intended that His people live completely as individuals and try to make it through this life to heaven wholly on their own. Therefore, He

has ordained that they gather together so that in expressing their praise and devotion to Him through worship, they can also strengthen and encourage one another. When we assemble as a local congregation, we edify ourselves through our singing, praying, Bible study, and fellowship with the saints. It is unfortunate that a goodly number of professing Christians do not avail themselves of the benefits to be obtained from the divine assembly.

Topic Page

ME-CENTERED RELIGION

Bobby L. Graham

It has become increasingly fashionable to hear people protest organized or institutional religion in recent decades, as they have sought to invent their own religious systems, based on what they desire and think. This writer also finds much in current systems to protest, but for vastly different, biblical reasons. Their protests are grounded in their own selfish notions, and mine are based on the teaching of God's Word. One main impetus giving rise to the community churches of recent decades has been the emphasis on selfish desires rather than the will of God. When human beings begin to view themselves as equal to God, they begin acting so by asserting their own will over His will and arrogating to themselves divine prerogatives. The *importance of the individual* truly has become the central organizing thread around which so much of the thinking and teaching of our time has clustered. For this reason there has been much discussion of "The Me Generation."

Out of this emphasis on self, an entire "theology" has evolved, giving rise to me-centered religion. From beginning to end, however, such a religion is similar to those religions so often decried by "The Me Generation," in its fundamental traits, to which we shall call attention in this article. Those traits form the basic tenets of the theology undergirding this religion.

1. *I am my own person; nobody tells me what to do.*

Expressed in this assertion is the autonomy or independence of the individual from God and all others. Of course, such thinking runs into a brick wall when civil government is involved! To think that people can

become so proud that they banish God from their concerns and lives in the thought that they are capable of directing their own course and that they are answerable to no one except self is the outrageous conclusion from this statement. Involved also is the idea of the authority of the individual, who views himself as supreme. He no longer is accountable to God, if there is a God. The Humanist Manifesto I and II from the last seventy years well express what has become dominant thinking with many. Many of this stripe believe that humans are the only “deity” involved in this world. Such thinking enthrones man and dethrones God. It is difficult to appeal to such thinking for self-denial, humility, lowliness, and trust in God (Mt. 16:24), or even for compassion, mercy, and kindness in human relations, when such arrogance prevails.

The entire record of divine revelation demonstrates man’s amenability to God. By reason of creation God has ever had dominion over His creation. Early He directed Adam and Eve in their lives, though they soon manifested the spirit of self-sufficiency and autonomy that we here condemn. Whenever human beings have obeyed the Lord, whether as individuals or as nations, they have benefited greatly. On the other hand disobedience to God has always brought troubles. The Christian belongs to God in a special sense, having been bought by Him for a price (1 Cor. 6:19-20). He is obligated to live to God’s glory in both body and spirit. Any doubters need to consult the inhabitants of Sodom, Jonah, or the nation of Israel to learn the value of seeking the guidance of God in their lives.

Be yourself.

Guided by the basic understanding of individual autonomy, legions have fallen victim to the appeal of one strain of modern psychiatry to live out their own individual dreams, to actualize their own potential in an effort to maximize their self-realization. The most important person is “you,” and the most significant culture is self-development along lines of one’s own choosing. Nothing that hinders the developing of self is allowable; all else become secondary.

Against this incorrigible spirit of self-determinism lies the demand of God for the alteration of self (Gal. 2:20). Only when the old self is crucified and the new self is formed in one’s life, according to the image of Jesus Christ, does one become spiritually useful to this world. To remain in the old mode of sinful living is to remain a spiritual drag and part of the world’s principal

problem. The changes wrought by the Lord through the power of His Spirit-given Word produce a life that is both salt and light (Mt. 5:13-16). Only in subordinating oneself to the will of Christ does one escape the slavery to sin that captures the old self (Rom. 6:10-18).

2. *Your own self-realization is more important than any externally imposed creed.*

With the dominance of self imbedded in the modern psyche, the groundwork is likewise laid for rejection of creeds (any religious idea or ideal that infringes upon what the individual desires or conflicts with it). The stubborn will of the individual becomes the impenetrable wall guarding the person against any Biblical concept of God or man. As the Gentiles rejected the idea of God, so have many today similarly repudiated Him. Lip service is too often the only service offered, and that until conscience no longer cries out for something more. No one knows you better than you do, and nobody thinks more highly of you than you do. Thus one reasons himself into a stance of rejecting all that affords not the pleasure, contentment, or satisfaction that self demands. He then forms attitudes, speaks, and acts on the basis of what will promote his own self-realization (or self-actualization).

The value of the benevolent will of God should never be set aside. God has never spoken from whim but for man's earthly and eternal good (Deut. 6:24). God's own selfish pleasure has never been the motive behind the divine mind or plan, and man's own selfish pleasure is always the motive that short-circuits the divine plan (Jas. 4:3; Mt. 6:24).

3. *Express the deity (god) within you.*

Though the materialist does not believe in any deity, he acts as if man is deity. He worships and serves the creature—both idols and self—rather than the Creator (Rom. 1:25). Others seem to think that the human being is somewhat divine, though they fail to believe in God in any genuine Biblical sense. The outcome of this endeavor is the defying of God and the deifying of man. The saddest reality of the present is that many live their lives as if there is no God. In doing so, they impede their own spiritual development and, to some degree, obstruct the salutary influence of the Bible.

SOURCES OF ME-CENTERED THINKING

Every major stream has its tributaries; this “stream” of thought is no exceptions. Into it have flowed the influential contributions of many decades, thus gradually conditioning the minds of people for an acceptance of what once was unthinkable. What are these sources?

1. **Denominational creeds:** They have fostered the idea of diversity of thought about God and His service is acceptable. They have also encouraged people to believe what they wish, making humans the final arbiters of what they choose.
2. **New Age Thought/Eastern Religions:** Being a hodgepodge of religious thought, it offers people something they want, encourages people’s autonomous view of themselves, and presents a view of humans as divine.
3. **Secularism:** Possibly its major contribution has been its “Don’t Worry—Be Happy” thinking.
4. **Pluralism:** This concept has become a major contributing stream in its stress on there being many paths to God.
5. **Ecumenicalism:** Recent decades have witnessed the merging of different religious bodies by the surrender of convictions and beliefs. In such a climate, it becomes acceptable to surrender God-required teaching to the preeminence of the individual.
6. **Segmental Role of God:** Too often God has been assigned His place in life, which has usually been some small part of life or some particular time in life, instead of the totality of one’s life. Such thinking motivates one think of himself as superior to God.

It is easy to see the convergence of these varied sources into the stream of me-centered religion. How many of have not been victimized to some extent by the thinking here reviewed. May all of us guard our hearts diligently, that we might subject ourselves to God. We must view ourselves as bondservants of Jesus Christ and even speak of ourselves in this way. What a difference between the way we have viewed such matters and the way Paul frequently spoke of himself!

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Plan of Salvation
The Plan of Salvation
By Jon W. Quinn

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*Plan #1*

Announced by the apostles, inspired by the Holy Spirit, to new believers in Christ who asked what they must do:

"Repent, and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." (ACTS 2:38)

*Plan #2*

On the back page of a tract, sinners were urged to pray this prayer to be saved. This prayer is not found in the Bible; nor were alien sinners commanded to pray for their forgiveness.

**The Sinner's Prayer:**

"O' Lord, I accept that I am a sinner and that Jesus died for my sins. I now accept Him into my heart as Lord and Savior asking for your mercy and forgiveness in His name. Amen."

The editors of Expository Files are happy with plan #1 and thankful to the God of all grace for it. We cannot recommend Plan #2 at all, but will change our minds when this prayer can be shown to us in the Bible.

Final Page

***The American Teen and God***  
***By Jon Quinn***

*O God, You have taught me from my youth,  
And I still declare Your wondrous deeds.  
18 And even when I am old and gray, O God, do not forsake me,  
Until I declare Your strength to this generation,*

*Your power to all who are to come.  
19 For Your righteousness, O God, reaches to the heavens,  
You who have done great things;  
O God, who is like You? (Psalm 71:17-19)*

In the Old Testament, warnings were given concerning developing proper reverence for the Lord and His Law as it related to the future wellbeing of the nation itself.

"So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time." (Deuteronomy 4:40).

Most American teens believe in God. A majority of them worship in conventional congregations, but their Bible knowledge is shallow. They find it difficult to express the effect that their faith makes in their lives, a new survey says.

Still, the very comprehensive National of Study of Youth and Religion concluded that "religion really does matter" to teens. As one might expect, it was found that devout teens hold more traditional sexual and other values than their nonreligious counterparts. There is also indications that religious teens are better off in emotional health, have greater academic success, are more involved in their community, show more concern for others and are more likely to avoid risky behavior.

The four-year effort was conducted by 133 researchers and consultants led by sociologist Christian Smith of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Smith says the material "is not just about teenagers. It speaks more broadly about the direction of American religion."

While America is becoming a more diverse nation, at least 80 percent of teens still identify as Protestant, Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Mormon or Jewish, with most teens adhering to their parents' faith tradition, the report said.

Substantial majorities said they: Were affiliated with a local congregation (82 percent); had few or no doubts about their beliefs in the past year (80 percent); felt "extremely," "very" or "somewhat" close to God (71 percent);

prayed alone a few times a week or more often (65 percent); and "definitely" believed in divine miracles from God (61 percent). Fifty-two percent said they attended worship two to three times a month or more often.

It was found that that many teens' religious knowledge was "meager, nebulous and often fallacious" and engagement with the substance of their traditions remarkably shallow. Most seemed hard put to express coherently their beliefs and what difference they make.

Many were so detached from the traditions of their faith, says the report, that they're virtually following a different creed in which an undemanding God exists mostly to solve problems and make people feel good. Truth in any absolute, theological sense, takes a back seat.

"God is something like a combination Divine Butler and Cosmic Therapist" who's on call as needed, Smith writes. He says the trend reflects tendencies among teens' Baby Boomer parents. The report speculates that poor educational and youth programs, and competition for teens' time from school, sports, friends and entertainment also are part of the picture.

While most teens are somewhat appreciative of religious beliefs, we can see that the all important aspect of reverence for the Lord's commandments, as stated in Deuteronomy 4:40, is lacking. Jesus said, "If you love Me, you will keep My commandments." (John 14:15).

More reverential obedience to the Lord, God Almighty would be an ideal which, if realized, would wonderfully bless our nation

*"Righteousness exalts a nation,  
But sin is a disgrace to any people." (Proverbs 14:34).*